

# Using behavioural insights to increase post-secondary and career services participation



## PARTNERS

Behavioural Insights Team



## LOCATIONS

Alberta  
British Columbia  
Saskatchewan



## INVESTMENT

\$880,943



## PUBLISHED

March 2024

## ☰ Executive Summary

In the context of a rapidly changing world of work, Canadians need access to better and more relevant labour market information (LMI) to make informed decisions while navigating the labour market.

This project, through the execution of a number of randomized control trials, tested how best to inform, empower, and engage Canadians when it comes to making decisions about work.

First, in helping high school students in British Columbia make more informed career pathway decisions regarding post-secondary education, the project found that providing simple and clearly explained LMI that is localized and specific about career pathways and opportunities yields better outcomes. The LMI is most impactful when it is provided through trusted intermediaries such as family and friends, or workers in the field.

Second, in rigorously testing ways to boost the uptake of employment services among job seekers in Alberta and Saskatchewan, we found that it is crucial for communication methods to be personalized and clearly outline the benefits and next steps of the services available. At the same time, integrating income security programs like employment insurance (EI) with career and employment services enhances labour market attachment and likelihood of taking advantage of such services.

### KEY INSIGHTS

- 1 Provide simple, localized LMI to high school students to best inform their choices about postsecondary education, prioritizing insights on the outlook for jobs in a holistic manner that includes insights on salary as well as educational and skill requirements.
- 2 Engage non-traditional “messengers” (e.g., parents, workers, teachers) to deliver high quality LMI, not just government websites.

**3**

Integrate income security programs like EI with career and employment services to improve uptake and re-employment chances.

## ▶ The Issue

Confronted with a dynamic labour market and changing skill requirements, it is increasingly difficult for Canadians to navigate and understand their potential career pathways.

The project, leveraging randomized control trials, tested a number of methods to better understand how best to support high-school students and job seekers in making informed decisions.



## 🔧 What We Investigated

The project undertook a wide-ranging and rigorous, mixed-methods approach to the research including (i) a detailed review and critical assessment of the existing evidence base; (ii) over 50 interviews; (iii) in-classroom, qualitative research; and (iv) four randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to test their research hypotheses.

Taken together, these efforts help to answer the following research questions:

1. In what way can labour market information help high school students make informed decisions about postsecondary education pathways?

2. What specific labour market information data points are most helpful in empowering students?
3. What is the best way to share labour market information with students?
4. Does sending a follow-up email to recent EI applicants who have not yet enrolled in training increase overall uptake?
5. How do different outreach approaches to recent EI applicants impact uptake of employment services when compared to current practices?

## ✔ What We're Learning

In terms of providing LMI to high school students to help them make more informed decisions about occupational pathways and postsecondary education, the project found the following:

- Prioritize the following data points: educational and skill requirements, holistic job outlook, and salary or salary range;
- Restrict LMI provided to one or two other data points related to labour market outcomes;
- Share localized, disaggregated LMI that provides specific data about career pathways and opportunities in students' locations of interest;
- Provide LMI in ways that are more likely to capture student attention and feel personally relevant, such as a facilitated, in classroom approach;
- Keep language simple and provide short, clear definitions when they are required; and
- Engage trusted messengers (e.g., workers from the field, family, and friends) in LMI delivery.

With respect to increasing participation in publicly funded employment services among jobseekers, the project found the following:

- Ensure that outreach to engage jobseekers is simple, personalized, reinforces legitimacy (e.g., connection to government), has a single, clear next step, and emphasizes the most compelling aspects of service;
- Integrate income security programs like EI with career (employment) services;
- Overall, the status quo emails in Alberta performed as well as the new and innovative approaches;
- In Saskatchewan, there was a 24% relative increase (from 5.1% to 6.7%) in uptake among those who received a follow-up email, but this result was not statistically significant.

## ★ Why It Matters

Economic uncertainty, technological changes and more recently the job losses and labour shortages have increased the need for accurate LMI addressing the workplace, career pathways and educational concerns of Canadians.



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Better labour market transitions  
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This project adds to an existing body of knowledge on how best to support students and jobseekers navigate, through better labour market information, their education, career and employment pathways. This evidence can support policymakers to confirm that the design of their programs is aligned with practices that maximize positive outcomes. The project's summary of these practices is also relevant to other institutions that support students and jobseekers, such as universities, colleges, skills and training organizations and community service agencies. These organizations can use the evidence summarized by the project to make the case for funding particular interventions and to design effective programs that leverage LMI.

The future labour market will be a tumultuous one, as it will be shaped in part by a transition to a “net-zero carbon” economy, an increasing pace of workplace technological change, globalization and other forces. Canadian workers will face rapid shifts in labour and skills demand between sectors, and pressure to upgrade their knowledge and skills

[Read Thematic Report](#)

## ► What's Next

The Future Skills Centre has funded projects to improve the accuracy, timeliness and relevance of information to Canadian employers, workers and policymakers for their skills development strategies. Over the coming months, the Future Skills Centre will share more evidence generated from the diverse portfolio of projects on LMI, both individually and insights generated across this group.

Have questions about our work? Do you need access to a report in English or French? Please contact [communications@fsc-ccf.ca](mailto:communications@fsc-ccf.ca).

Funded by the  
Government of Canada's  
Future Skills Program



Using behavioural insights to increase post-secondary and career services participation is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

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