



Measuring outcomes of NPower Canada alumni pre and post COVID-19 onset

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Executive Summary

NPower Canada engaged [Blueprint](#) to conduct a two-year external evaluation, from June 2019 to May 2021, of the organization's workforce development program delivery and outcomes. The purpose of this evaluation has been to verify the extent to which NPower Canada has fulfilled its mission of placing underserved young adults into quality jobs, and to provide NPower Canada with recommendations for continued improvement and innovation, particularly with respect to its program delivery, evaluation framework, data collection and reporting systems.

[In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began, shortly following the initial phase of the evaluation.](#) Over the past year, Blueprint has undertaken a rigorous analysis of NPower Canada's data holdings to measure the outcomes achieved by NPower Canada's workforce development for its youth beneficiaries pre- and post-COVID-19 onset.

This report explores three key questions:

1. To what extent has NPower Canada consistently met its target of 80% employed or in education or training by 12 months from graduation?

Blueprint analyzed outcomes data for participants and alumni who graduated from NPower Canada's IT training programs between January 2014 and February 2020. We found that, prior to the onset of the pandemic, NPower Canada was significantly exceeding its target of 80% of program alumni employed or in education or training within 12 months of program graduation.

2. How did alumni outcomes shift in the immediate wake of the onset of COVID-19?

Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic has had sizeable impacts on the Canadian and global economies, we explored the extent to which it impacted alumni employment rates. Although we found some differences between the outcomes achieved by NPower Canada alumni who graduated pre and post COVID-19 onset, outcomes for participants who graduated programming post COVID-19 onset are currently on track to meet or exceed NPower Canada's 80% target within 12 months of graduation.

3. How have outcomes evolved as NPower Canada has continued to pivot its program delivery model and employer engagement strategies post COVID-19 onset?

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, NPower Canada launched fully virtual programming and adapted the way in which it trains youth and connects them with employment opportunities. We analyzed the most recent outcomes available for participants to understand the extent to which these adaptations have impacted alumni outcomes. We found that, after being negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, outcomes have steadily improved over time for youth who graduated post COVID-19 onset.

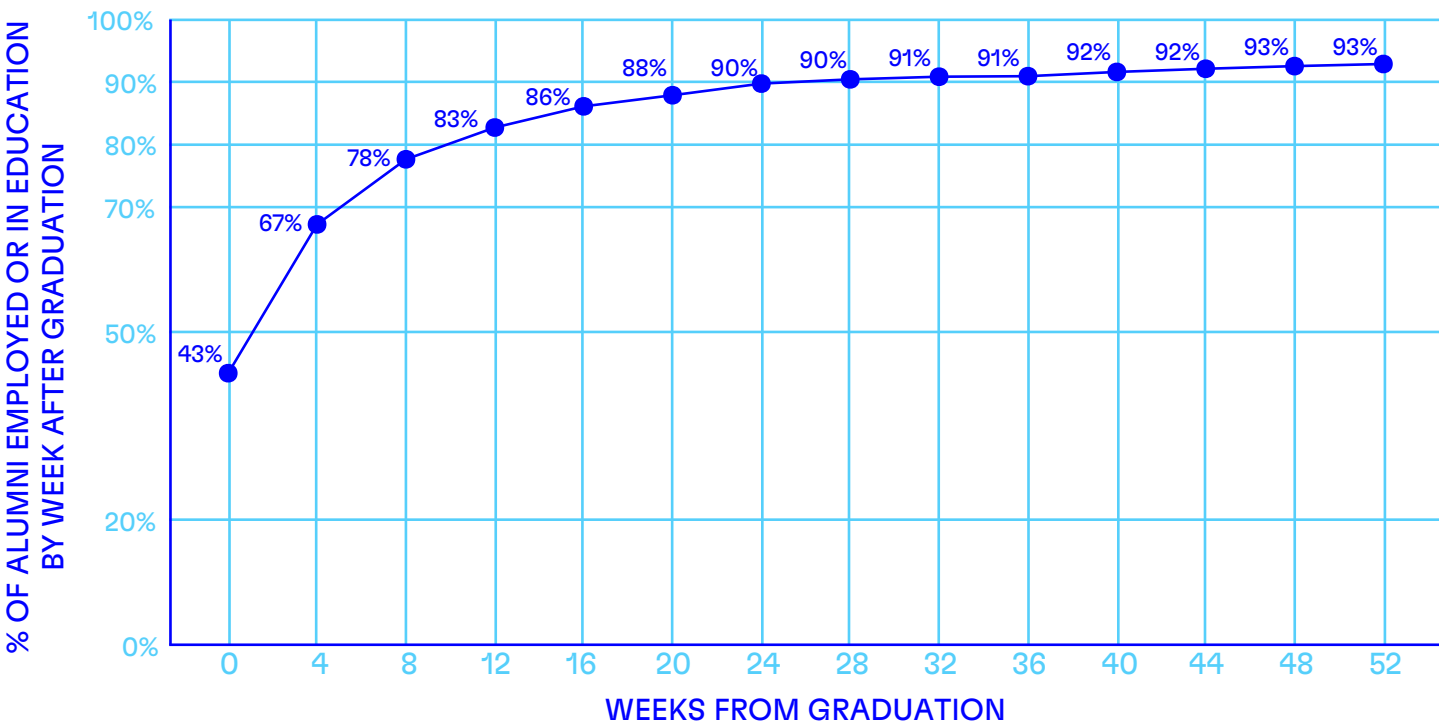
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, NPower Canada was exceeding its target for employment and education outcomes post-graduation

NPower Canada's aims to place at least 80% of program alumni in employment or education and training within 12 months (or 52 weeks) of their graduation from programming. This is an ambitious target relative to other comparable workforce development training programs that target youth facing barriers to employment.

The figure below shows, for follow-up periods from 0 to 52 weeks, the percentage of alumni who were employed, or enrolled in education or training at some point after graduation. Our analysis includes all participants who graduated from an NPower Canada program between 2014 and February 2020.

FIGURE 1 PRE-COVID-19 EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION OUTCOMES



We found that NPower Canada was exceeding its 80% target prior to the onset of the pandemic. At 28 weeks from graduation (approximately 6 months), 90% of alumni had been employed since graduation, or enrolled in education or training. Alumni outcomes pass the 80% threshold at approximately 12 weeks from graduation. This provides a benchmark of the effectiveness of NPower Canada's approach to training and job placement in the context of a healthy economy.

Building on this pre-COVID-19 onset analysis, the rest of the memo explores the changes in outcomes that NPower Canada alumni have experienced immediately before and after the onset of the pandemic in Canada.

Because of the way education outcomes are stored in the data, it is possible that the rate of enrollment in education or training is overstated. As currently collected, education outcomes in the data are not associated with a specific time period, so we cannot determine the specific number of weeks an alumnus was enrolled in an education or training program after graduation. Rather than disposing of education outcomes entirely, we effectively consider all alumni who enrolled in education or training after graduation to be enrolled in education or training at all times after graduation. We consider this potential inaccuracy to be acceptable because of the small difference that education outcomes make to the achievement of the target. As we can see in Figure 2, the employment rate of pre-COVID-19 alumni by 28 weeks from graduation is 85%, which exceeds the target irrespective of education or training outcomes.

COVID-19 *initially* reduced alumni employment outcomes

The first case of COVID-19 in Canada was reported on February 20th, 2020. Since then, the pandemic has had an enormous impact on the Canadian economy. Between February and April of 2020, Statistic's Canada's annualized estimate of monthly GDP dropped by 18%. Impacts were felt in all major industry categories. A slow recovery is underway, but the full effects of the pandemic on youth accessing education and employment remains unclear.

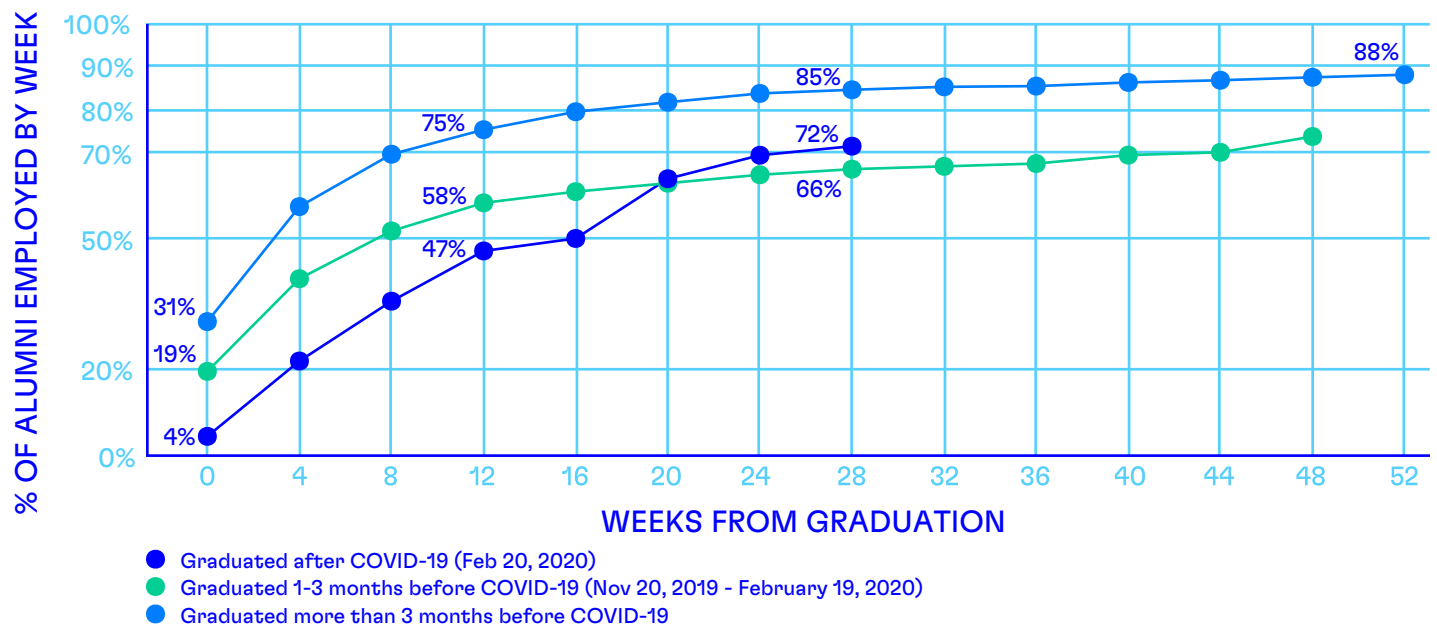
To understand the potential impact of the pandemic on NPower Canada alumni outcomes, we separated alumni into three groups:

- Those who graduated after the first recorded Canadian case of COVID-19 (February 20th, 2020)
- Those who graduated approximately three months prior to the first recorded Canadian case of COVID-19 (November 20, 2019 to February 19, 2020)
- Those who graduated more than 3 months prior to the first recorded Canadian case of COVID-19

In the figure below, the x-axis represents the number of weeks from graduation, and the y-axis represents the percentage of alumni who had been employed by that number of weeks. Key follow-up points are flagged with precise numbers: 0 weeks (the week of graduation), 12 weeks (approximately 3 months), 28 weeks (approximately 6 months), and 52 weeks (approximately one year).

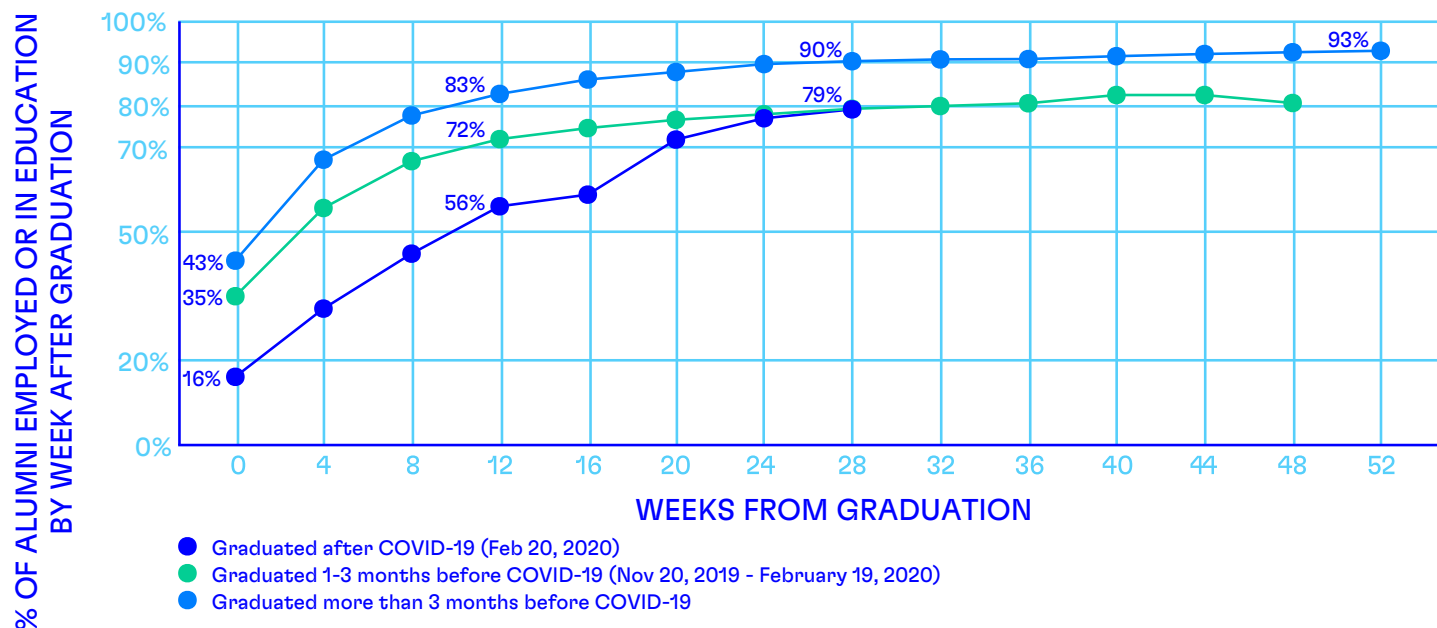


FIGURE 2 PERCENTAGE OF ALUMNI EMPLOYED BY WEEK FROM GRADUATION



Overall, our analysis provides evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on alumni employment rates. The data indicated that alumni who graduated after the outbreak was underway have lower employment rates than those who graduated more than 3 months prior to the first case.

FIGURE 3 RATE OF EMPLOYMENT OR ENROLLMENT IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING BY FOLLOW-UP WEEK



However, we found that within approximately 6 months of graduation (or 28 weeks) nearly 80% of all participants who graduated programming immediately before or anytime after the onset of the pandemic were employed or enrolled in education or training.

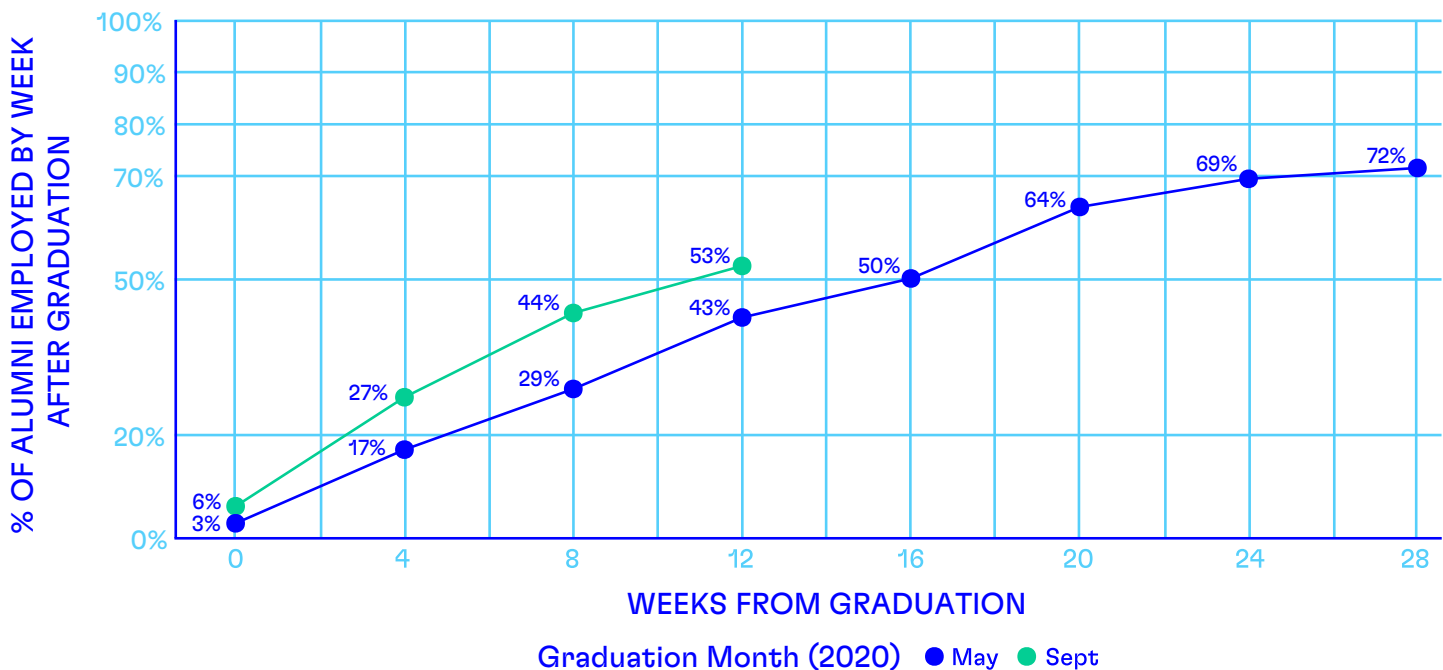
Outcomes for graduating cohorts have steadily improved since the onset of the pandemic

Our analysis suggests that the adaptations NPower Canada has made to programming in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have been effective. Recently collected outcomes have shown strong trends among participants who graduated after the onset of the pandemic in Canada. They indicate that more recent graduates have shown faster labour market attachment. Outcomes have not returned

to where they were for alumni who graduated more than 3 months prior to the onset of the pandemic, but they have surpassed those of alumni who graduated 3 months or fewer prior to it.

Eleven cohorts of participants have graduated since the first reported case of COVID-19 in Canada. In total, this represents 448 alumni. 239 (roughly half) of these alumni graduated in May 2020, and the remainder (209) graduated in September 2020. The chart below shows the rate of employment for May and September 2020 graduates by weeks from graduation. The chart shows that as we move further away from the onset of the pandemic, employment rates for graduates are increasing. This provides preliminary evidence to suggest that the adaptations NPower Canada has made to programming in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have been effective.

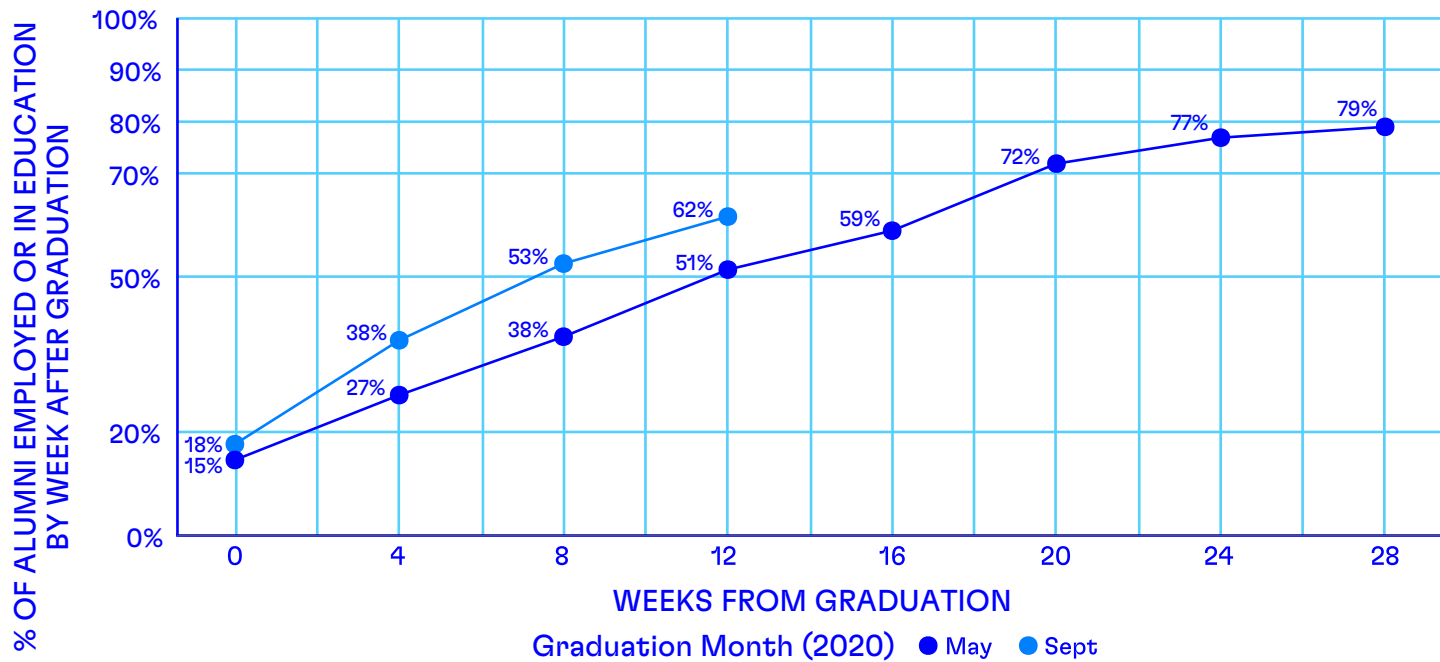
FIGURE 4 RATE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR SEPTEMBER AND MAY 2020 GRADUATES



The chart below shows the rate of employment or education by follow-up week after graduation. At 28 weeks from graduation, **employment and education outcomes for May 2020 graduates are approaching NPower**

Canada's target of 80%. If they follow the same trajectory, employment and education outcomes for September 2020 graduates will exceed the target.

FIGURE 5 RATE OF EMPLOYMENT OR ENROLLMENT IN EDUCATION OR TRAINING FOR SEPTEMBER AND MAY 2020 GRADUATES



NPower Canada continues to place youth into high quality jobs

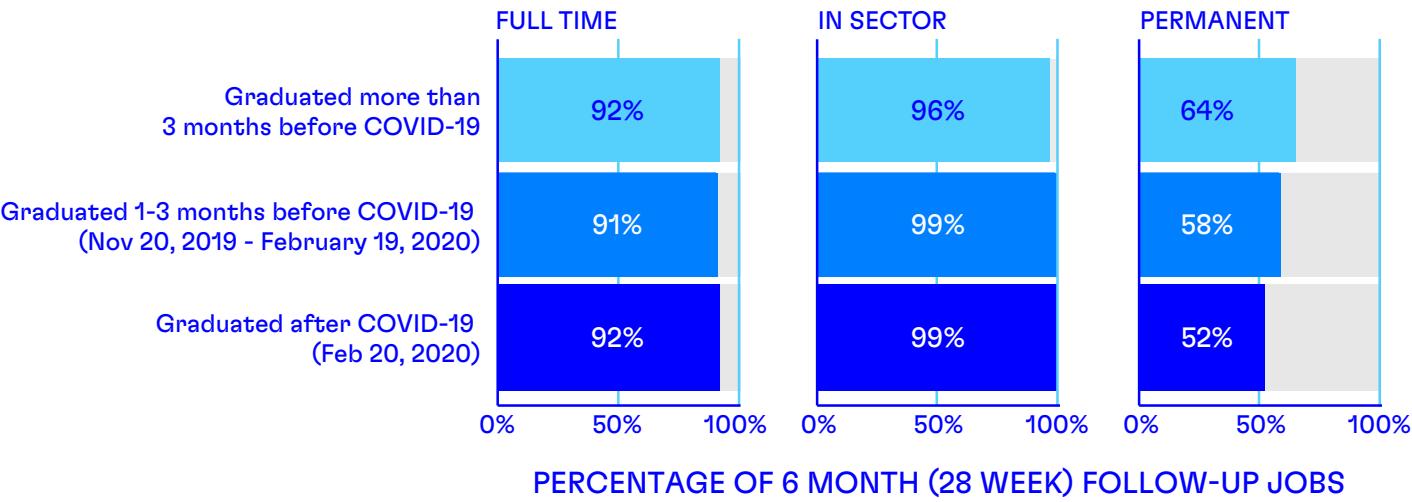
To further understand the changes in outcomes that NPower Canada alumni may have experienced before and after the onset of the pandemic, we analyzed the characteristics of jobs that NPower Canada alumni were employed in at 28 weeks from graduation.

Our findings, summarized in Figure 6, show that prior to the onset of the pandemic, NPower Canada alumni who got job placements were achieving a high rate of full-time

employment in the sector. Most participants were finding permanent employment opportunities (i.e., jobs with no fixed contract term at the outset). Figure 6 shows that alumni who graduated before and after the onset of the pandemic achieved similar levels of full-time employment in the sector. However, alumni who graduated after the onset of the pandemic, were less likely to get permanent jobs. NPower Canada continues to provide its program graduates with five (5) years of post-program support, including ongoing job placement services to support alumni with finding their next employment opportunity in cases where contractual work does not convert to permanent employment.



FIGURE 6 JOB CHARACTERISTICS AT 28 WEEKS FROM GRADUATION



ABOUT OUR ANALYTICAL APPROACH

What sample of participants are included in our analysis?

- We use all available data to calculate outcomes at each follow-up point. This means that each follow-up point has its own associated sample of alumni.
- An alumnus is in the sample for a given follow-up week if X or more weeks passed between the date of their graduation and the date of the analysis.
- If this is true, it means that there has been enough time between their graduation and the analysis to determine if they were employed in week X.
- An alumnus is excluded from the sample if their contact record indicates that NPower Canada has lost contact with them at some point following graduation.

Why do we use weeks instead of months?

- NPower Canada’s outcome targets are specified in terms of months, but our analysis denominates time in terms of weeks.
- This is for the simple reason that weeks are much easier to work with analytically, on account of the fact that they are always the same number of days.
- We use periods of four weeks as approximate stand-ins for months.

What outcome metrics did we use?

METRIC	DESCRIPTION
% of alumni employed by X weeks from graduation	For a given number of weeks X from graduation, the number of alumni who were employed during any week between graduation and X weeks after graduation divided by the number of alumni in the sample for X weeks from graduation, as a percentage.
% of alumni who enrolled in training or education after graduation	For a given number of weeks X from graduation, the number of alumni who were enrolled in education or training at any point after graduation divided by the number of alumni in the sample for X weeks from graduation, as a percentage.
% of alumni who enrolled in in training or education after graduation or who were employed by X weeks from graduation	For a given number of weeks X from graduation, the number of alumni who were enrolled in education or training at any point after graduation or who had been employed by X weeks from graduation divided by the number of alumni in the sample for X weeks from graduation, as a percentage.

How do we determine whether or not an alumnus was employed at X weeks from graduation?

NPower Canada’s Salesforce database holds different sources of employment data, which have been utilized to determine whether or not an alumnus was employed at X weeks from graduation:

- Work placement records
- Alumni Surveys
- Current Employment Status

Our preliminary analysis found that some jobs are represented in all three, and others in one or two of the three records. For example, if an alumnus has not completed



the online Alumni Survey form sent to them, but NPower Canada staff have confirmed with their supervisor that they are still employed, their employment information is entered into Current Employment Status, but the Alumni Survey record remains empty. Partly due to the multiple ways in which employment information is verified and recorded, including telephone, email and SMS touchpoints with both alumni and employers, the same job may be represented in multiple of the three sources, but information about the job can sometimes conflict or be formatted differently. Our final approach for determining employment status X weeks after graduation is as follows:

1. If there is a work placement record with a start date before X weeks from the alumnus' graduation and either a missing end date, or an end date after X weeks from the alumnus' graduation, we consider the alumnus employed at X weeks.
2. If not 1, but the alumnus has a current employment status with a start date before X weeks from their graduation we consider the alumnus employed at X weeks.
3. If neither 1 nor 2, but the alumnus has responded to an alumni survey and recorded the details of a job with a start date before X weeks from their graduation we consider the alumnus employed at X weeks.
4. If neither 1, 2, nor 3, but more than X weeks have passed between the alumnus' graduation date and the start of the analysis we consider the alumnus unemployed at X weeks.

How do we determine whether or not alumni enrolled in training or education after graduation?

We count an alumnus as enrolled in training or education after graduation if there is any record of them enrolling in training at any point after graduation. Because of limitations in NPower Canada's data holdings, we cannot assign

enrollment in training to a specific point in time, so we cannot treat education outcomes in the same way as we treat employment outcomes (i.e. by calculating enrollment at and enrollment by a given number of weeks after graduation). Another limitation is that only one instance of training can be tracked, so if an alumnus enrolled in multiple education or training programs after graduating, only the latest one would be available for our analysis.

How is NPower Canada working to ensure that it collects necessary data in the best way possible?

The analysis work that has taken place over the course of this project has informed recommendations about how NPower Canada should collect and store data about its participants and alumni to enable more robust and seamless analysis of trends over time, expanding beyond moment-in-time outcome reporting. NPower Canada has begun implementing these recommendations by undertaking an overhaul of its Salesforce deployment, which began in August 2020. NPower Canada has introduced its Salesforce implementation consultants to Blueprint to identify and address areas for improvement in its data collection and reporting systems. For example, among other efficiencies, NPower Canada's improved Salesforce deployment will ensure that data about alumni employment are automatically centralized, and that spells of enrollment in education and training are captured with specific dates while allowing for multiple entries. These changes will enable more precise and accurate analysis of NPower Canada alumni outcomes, particularly with respect to career progression and further educational attainment. NPower Canada expects to complete its Salesforce overhaul by April 30, 2021.



Blueprint