

# Learning Brief for the Planet Hatch's Future of Work Skills Development Program



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**SRDC's Learning Support for Future Skills Centre Projects**

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## INTRODUCTION

Through a number of thematic calls for proposals, the Future Skills Centre (FSC) has supported the development, refinement, or expansion of approaches to develop skills for workers from a variety of backgrounds and in a variety of sectors and regions. These projects identify emerging and in-demand skills, and test new methods of training delivery. The insights that come from these projects will help inform governments, the private sector, labour, educational training institutions, non-profits, and academics on the broader adoption of novel approaches to training and skills development. Furthermore, the projects are required to mobilize knowledge and evidence among key stakeholders, institutions, and decision makers for the purposes of improving policies and practices in Canada. FSC has engaged the Social Research & Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to support this process by developing and then implementing a customized learning support plan for each of several projects, based on past activities and current status.

This document presents the learning brief of one of the selected projects, *Future of Work Skills Development Program project*, implemented by the Greater Fredericton Community Economic Development Agency Inc. (operating as Planet Hatch), from April 2021 to March 2022. Planet Hatch's mission is to support entrepreneurs and startups to grow into well-positioned, internationally competitive companies, which they accomplish through programs, mentorship & coaching, funding, events, and their facility.

SRDC's learning brief addresses four learning stages of the project: defining, designing, testing, and scaling and some gapfilling questions related the project implementation (See Appendix A). To do so, first, SRDC reviewed all the documentation related to the project, including the initial proposal, quarterly and annual reports, project information sheet prepared by FSC, work plan and evidence generation plan, theory of change, and project learning report. SRDC was unable to speak to anyone from Planet Hatch due to employee turnover.

This learning brief presents the findings, namely what the project has achieved, lessons learned, and recommendations with respect to evidence generation for the future that FSC can utilize, filter, and distill for its ongoing dissemination products.

## OBJECTIVES

The Future of Work Skills Development Program aimed to promote resiliency amongst current and future entrants to the Canadian labour market by providing skills training addressing 10 top in-demand future of work skills (such as problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and creativity).

The program's delivery model emphasized self-directed and active learning, experiential learning, and targeted skills training. The goal was to engage over 750 participants through partnerships with secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, youth organizations, and the private sector.

- Complete Go-to-Market Strategy: Create public-facing assets that provide information about the program and generate leads.
- Build the Future of Work program into the customer relationship management (CRM) platform, Hubspot, and establish the customer (or participant) journey.
- Expand secondary and post-secondary partnerships that lead to a total of 750 program participants completing Future of Work Skills Program training within New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada.
- Define and refine a Performance Evaluation Framework: Establish research partnerships, collect data and report findings.
- Knowledge Mobilization: Generate interest, share knowledge and experience, validate and legitimize the program, and fulfill funding requirements.
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Deliver the program to youth between the ages of 15 and 29.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

### DEFINING PHASE

The COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the ongoing move towards automation and the adoption of new technologies has a significant impact on the job prospects of recent and future graduates. In Canada, it's estimated that over "50% of occupations will undergo a significant skills overhaul" by 2028 according to the Humans Wanted report published by RBC in 2018. As a result, **employers are shifting their interest on prospective employees with soft skills that cannot be replicated by technology.**

Planet Hatch aimed to support graduate employment and re-employment, by **focusing their training on recent and future graduates.** They aimed to reach this population by formalizing relationships with **post-secondary institutions and secondary schools** in New Brunswick who could deliver the Future of Work Skills Development program. They also planned to reach out to **private sector employers** who could future-proof new and existing employees with the program as part of their professional development plan.



## What Worked, What Didn't, and Why?

According to their research, **educational institutions seek skills development training** and support, and organizational leaders **recognize a skills gap and need for human-centric skills-based training** amongst new, junior talent/employees confirming the targeted delivery partners were well selected.

In addition, interviews with **private sector employers confirmed the skill gap** amongst new and junior employees as well as the general professional development and training gap that the Future of Work Skills program could fill.

**Partnering with secondary and post-secondary institutions and nonprofit organizations worked well for this project.** Through these partnerships, the Future of Work Skills Program **exceeded its target** of 750 program participants and delivered live module-based training to over 850 youth.

## DESIGNING PHASE

Planet Hatch proposed providing soft skills training to equip recent and future graduates with the tools they need to navigate and overcome the ongoing labour market disruption caused by automation and the adoption of new technologies. More specifically, they borrowed their **Future of Work Skills** definition from the **World Economic Forum** (*Future of Jobs 2018 report*), **which they merged with the Innovation Literacy Skills**, as defined by the Conference Board of Canada (see Table 1). Merging these two types of skills was done to differentiate their skills training offering with a unique value proposition.

**Table 1 Future of Work Skills within Innovation Literacy Skills**

Innovative Literacy Skills Future of Work Skills	Creativity, Problem-Solving, and Continuous Improvement Skills	Risk Assessment and Risk-Taking Skills	Relationship-Building and Communication Skills	Implementation Skills
Analytical thinking and innovation	✓	✓		
Active learning and learning strategies				
Creativity, originality and initiative	✓			
Critical thinking and analysis	✓			
Complex problem-solving	✓	✓		

Leadership and social influence			✓	
Emotional intelligence			✓	
Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation	✓			
Systems analysis and evaluation		✓		

The resulting program consists of **12 modules, categorized into one of three themes**. Each module is dedicated to an individual Future of Work skill. The three module themes reflect three of the Innovation Literacy skills. The fourth Innovation Literacy skill, Implementation Skills, is incorporated into all modules through activities and self-reflection exercises.

Program delivery was **developed to be flexible to increase accessibility** for all learners and its adoption by delivery/project partners. The program features modules that can be delivered

- in a comprehensive & sequential manner or selected ‘a la carte’;
- in-person or online; and
- by experienced Planet Hatch facilitators or through channel partners following a train-the-trainer approach.

Each module of the Future of Work program highlights a single Future of Work skill as the main topic. The learning objective of each module identifies skill awareness and understanding. Learning outcomes of each module will articulate the importance of each skill and apply them in a workplace setting (see Table 2).

The content of the program is **relevant to all audiences from high school to post-graduate students**, and learners get the opportunity to use and refine the skills they learn through **various integrated experiential and self-directed learning opportunities**.

**Table 2 Overview of the Future of Work Curriculum**

Module	Topic	Learning Objective	Learning Outcomes
1	Active learning and learning strategies skills	Students will recognize the value of implementing various learning strategies to emphasize lifelong learning as a necessary twenty-first century skill	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of active learning</li> <li>2. Apply a variety of learning strategy skills to a given workplace scenario</li> </ol>
2	Creativity, originality, and initiative skills	Students will recognize the value of creative thinking and personal autonomy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of creativity, originality, and initiative in the workplace</li> <li>2. Apply skills focused on creativity and originality to a variety of work scenarios</li> </ol>



3	Critical thinking and analysis skills	Students will recognize the value of thinking critically and of effectively assessing information, individuals, and policy decisions toward positive change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of critical thinking and analysis skills</li> <li>2. Apply critical thinking and analysis skills to a variety of workplace scenarios</li> </ol>
4	Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation skills	Students will recognize the value of producing unique solutions through problem-solving and logical reasoning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of reasoning, problem-solving, and ideation skills</li> <li>2. Apply reasoning and problem-solving to generate unique, creative ideas in the workplace</li> </ol>
5	Analytical thinking and innovation skills	Students will recognize the value of applying innovative, data-driven solutions to complex problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of innovation and analytical thinking</li> <li>2. Apply analytical thinking and innovative solutions to a variety of workplace scenarios</li> </ol>
6	Complex problem-solving	Students will recognize the value of using data, knowledge, and collaboration to resolve intricate problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of complex problem-solving</li> <li>2. Apply innovative, logical, collaborative solutions to a variety of complex problems in the workplace</li> </ol>
7	Systems analysis and evaluation skills	Students will recognize the value of assessing systems for efficiencies and making informed decisions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of systems analysis and evaluation skills</li> <li>2. Apply a critical eye to systems inefficiencies and develop effective solutions to gaps and drawbacks through systems analysis</li> </ol>
8	Leadership and social influence skills	Students will recognize the value of effective, forward-thinking leadership and the ability to use social skills to positively impact others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of effective leadership and social influence skills</li> <li>2. Apply leadership skills to a variety of workplace scenarios, and use social influence skills to positively impact others</li> </ol>
9	Emotional intelligence skills	Students will recognize the value of emotional intelligence as a significant gauge of others' emotional well-being, as well as a standard for a balanced, healthy work environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of emotional intelligence skills</li> <li>2. Apply emotional intelligence skills in the workplace to contribute to a healthy, encouraging work environment</li> </ol>
10	Workplace readiness	Students will recognize the value of workplace readiness skills as integral competencies for twenty-first century workers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the importance of workplace readiness skills</li> <li>2. Apply a strong understanding of workplace readiness skills to a variety of work situations</li> </ol>
11-12	Implementation skills and internship	Students will recognize the value of applying Future of Work skills and strategies to real-world scenarios	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulate the overall importance of Future of Work skills</li> <li>2. Apply each of the Future of Work skills to a tangible work scenario</li> </ol>

## What Worked, What Didn't, and Why?

Planet Hatch was able to confirm the **appropriateness of the curriculum content for all ages** in their first implementation phase stating that **only the experiential and self-directed learning tasks had to be adjusted by age group**.

**Customer journey automation was a challenge** reported by the project lead in the various quarterly reports. The Future of Work Skills program can be non-sequential and each module trains participants to develop one of the ten skills; therefore, clients/partners can request individualized program delivery with program modules delivered in a different order for each client/partner with as few or as many modules as they choose. It is this **degree of customization of the program delivery with each client/partner that proves challenging**. By the end of the project, the **team established a customer journey for program participants as well as program partners** from the education sector and established efficiencies and introduced automated practices and standardized program experience.

Despite having the *à la carte* option, **the training proved most effective when delivered in a sequential order** and when participants are able to complete the full program. The cross-curricular overlap of the content within the sequential path through the 12 modules allows students to grasp ideas and develop skills. When a participant is able to revisit ideas, relate what they are doing in the present to past skills development training and activities, their likelihood of comprehension and retention increases.

Having a **strong and consistent structure and flow during each module is ideal** for students' progression of learning. When expectations are clearly displayed, an agenda is set, and the self-directed learning tasks are presented at the end of the module, students are better able to receive new information, retain knowledge, and anticipate what's to come. This creates a better learning environment.

The **ideal length of a single module delivery is 2 hours**, less than that was too rushed and hindered students' participation and engagement and 3 hours proved challenging, especially for online delivery where learners would lose focus.

It is **unclear what the experiential learning opportunities consisted of**. A significant number of post-secondary institutions were approached through their office of experiential learning or community engagement, and SRDC investigated whether the experiential learning component was included in the design of the program to facilitate the recruitment of institutions through these types of offices but could not discuss it with the project lead. In addition, SRDC was **unable to ascertain the extent to which equity and diversity were infused in the content**: an important consideration considering they served a diverse group of learners: male, female, and non-binary learners, individuals with a disability, Indigenous people, francophones and

anglophones, racialized individuals, and citizens, newcomers, immigrants, and refugee claimants. The entire team did however complete the Joint Economic Development Initiative Inc.'s Indigenous Reconciliation Awareness training.

## TESTING PHASE

The project was implemented in two phases. The **first phase focused on piloting** the program with existing educational partners by **embedding the Future of Work Skills Development Program into existing curricula, or as a stand-alone feature program** to reach over 250 students. In addition, the project team endeavoured to formalize relationships with new secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, and the private sector in Atlantic Canada to scale program access in the next phase.

**Phase II focused on scaling program access** to an additional 500 participants by expanding partnerships to additional partners in Atlantic Canada and introducing the program to early adopters from the private sector as part of their onboarding training for recent full-time hires as well as short-term work-based learning opportunities such as internships and co-ops. Phase II also **analyzed learning outcomes from Phase I** and **refined the performance evaluation framework** of the program through a partnership with iHub.

The metrics involved in the testing phase included: 1) the number of participants engaged, participant satisfaction, and self-reported skills performance progression, 2) partner satisfaction and reported participant performance, and 3) program access scaled regionally (discussed further in the following section).

All participants were asked to complete questionnaires (pre-/post-surveys [all participants] and follow-up surveys 3–6 months after [those who completed multiple modules]) to **collect a demographic, and socioeconomic data, and skills proficiency levels and outcomes at different points in time**. Participants self-assessed through the same skill proficiency questions at various intervals to determine skills progression and outcomes. The questionnaires also **collected data and feedback on other program-related topics such as modalities of delivery, implementation models, private sector impact, and potential for systemic change**. Further pedagogic research was planned during phase 2 of the project.

## What Worked, What Didn't, and Why?

The project lead reports that **collecting demographic information and participant feedback proved most challenging** throughout the project. Participants were resistant to submitting personal information through online forms, as well as taking the time to complete satisfaction surveys. Although the team applied various tactics to increase form completion and submission,

the challenge persisted (general and personalized reminders, having the instructor discuss the forms in class and provide time to complete them right away, etc.). The data collection tools were integrated into Hubspot, their Client Relation Management (CRM) platform, which helped tracking and follow-up, but did not significantly influence the form completion rate.

Because of the data collection setbacks, **SRDC was unable to determine the level of satisfaction of participants with the training, the skills gained following program completion, or gather any feedback on the training.**

Conversely, they managed to **survey employers**, all of which (100 per cent) **observed an increase in employee confidence and agreed that their employees now know the skills required to be successful** in the workplace.

Planet Hatch reported having **refined a module based on early data collection** (unspecified) and reporting to meet the needs of partners and program participants. They did so by taking the existing curriculum and supplementing it with experiential and self-directed learning exercises and adjusting the module content and accompanying assets and resources to suit the program participants based on their learning level.

Based on the documentation alone, it is unclear if a performance evaluation framework was developed and deployed in phase II.

## SCALING PHASE

Phase II of the project, as previously indicated, is where the scaling efforts took place and when Planet Hatch expended their network to reach program/delivery partners around New Brunswick and in Atlantic Canada more broadly.

FSC's funding immediately went towards **hiring two new resources: the Future Skills Specialist and the Project Manager**. This increased human resource capacity equipped Planet Hatch with the advanced skills training, project delivery, and business expansion capabilities needed to bring the project to fruition.

The **program's Go-to-Market strategy yielded early successes leading to multiple opportunities** during phase I, which meant phase II started sooner than anticipated. Despite these early wins, the team revised their Go-to-Market strategy objectives and timeline, which enabled them to work with a contractor to conduct discovery research, validate the market, and develop a business model and materials. Planet Hatch reports that this initial investment better equipped the team for the effective implementation of the strategy and allowed them to prioritize the other objectives properly, focusing on establishing partnerships and delivery of the program in the education sector. Based on the documentation, it seems like the **implementation**

of the program in the private sector was set aside in favour of a focus on secondary and post-secondary institutions.

In phase I, Planet Hatch had one program partner and by the end of phase II, they partnered with 19 entities from the education (secondary and post-secondary) and private sector.

At this stage, it is **unknown whether the delivery partners are still offering the program or if the program itself can sustainably continue** to be offered following the end of the program.

### What worked, what didn't, and why?

The project lead reported that developing **a brand identity with a clear voice, tone, style, and imagery proved to resonate with the target market**. The education sector, specifically, required various documentation that could be shared clearly communicating the program's value and the “ask.” As a result, the project team developed informative documents and lesson plans for educators.

Something else that contributed to the success of their scaling activities is **having tools and technologies that increased the efficiencies**. For example, Canva was extensively used for the creation of their branded materials and Hubspot—a customer relationship management (CRM) platform—was prioritized to establish and track customer (or participant) journey. These tools save time and resources in the long run.

As indicated earlier, the **varying level of customization of the program delivery for each client/partner proved challenging** until the team established efficiencies and introduced automated practices and standardized program experience.

## PROJECT LEARNING

### Meeting Original Objectives

1. Complete Go-to-Market Strategy: Create public-facing assets that provide information about the program and generate leads.

**Objective met.** Planet Hatch developed promoting materials to facilitate their scaling efforts.

2. Build the Future of Work program into the customer relationship management (CRM) platform, Hubspot, and establish the customer (or participant) journey.

**Objective met.** Hubspot was used as their CRM tool. While the customization for each partner proved difficult to start, the team developed standard practices and automated practices that ultimately made Hubspot a key to the program's success.

3. Expand secondary and post-secondary partnerships that lead to a total of 750 program participants completing Future of Work Skill Program training within New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada.

**Objective surpassed.** The program exceeded its objective by training 850 participants.

4. Define and refine a Performance Evaluation Framework: Establish research partnerships, collect data and report findings.

**Objective met.** Planet Hatch reports having used Phase I data to improve the training program, but it is unclear how this was done exactly.

5. Knowledge Mobilization: Generate interest, share knowledge and experience, validate and legitimize the program, and fulfill funding requirements.

**Objective met.** Published three media release articles announcing FSC funding, and two different partnerships with universities and published five thought-leadership articles through social media platforms which received engagement online.

6. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Deliver the program to youth between the ages of 15 and 29.

**Objective surpassed.** The primary project objective was to deliver the Future of Work Skills program to 750 participants, specifically youth aged 15 to 29 (as defined by the FSC-CCF). The program not only exceeded that figure (850 participants), but went beyond just including youth and reached various equity-deserving groups. Of those participants who completed the demographic form, 52 per cent identified as women, 5 per cent identified as non-binary, 8 per cent identified as individuals with a disability, 3 per cent identified as Indigenous, 5 per cent identified as Francophone, 38 per cent identified as a racialized individual, 45 per cent identified as having immigrated to Canada, 3 per cent identified as a refugee claimant, and 25 per cent identified as being a Canadian citizen by birth.

## Practices that Seemed Effective

Devising a **training program that is appropriate for all youth** (15–29) requiring only minor age-appropriate adjustments to the experiential and self-directed learning components.



**Flexible training also supported the scaling efforts as the program** could be embedded in partner curriculum or be standalone, be taken up sequentially or *à la carte*, be delivered in person or online, by Planet Hatch or by trained partner staff.

**Partnering with secondary and post-secondary institutions worked well for this project.** Through these partnerships, the Future of Work Skills Program **exceeded its target** of 750 program participants and delivered live module-based training to over 850 youth.

**Using appropriate tools and technologies leading to efficiencies.** The project lead believes their CRM platform facilitated their scaling efforts and Canva helped them develop clear branding for the program.

## Practices to Revise

The **response rate to the pre-, post-, and follow-up surveys was low despite attempting various mitigating measures to increase completion.** The data collection tools were integrated into Hubspot, which helped tracking and follow-up, but did not significantly influence the form completion rate.

The ***a la carte* feature of the program**, though attractive to partners, was difficult to implement by the project lead. Indeed, the degree of customization of the program by partners quickly became overwhelming and led to lower skill gains and participant satisfaction.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THOSE WORKING IN THIS AREA IN THE FUTURE

Planet Hatch suggests **developing administrative processes and practises, making coordination and organization a priority.** During a scaling phase, these processes greatly facilitate tracking partners, participants, materials, data and information, and more.

**Selecting the right partnerships is essential** to meeting project objectives. Knowing the stakeholders and the target market is key to scaling up any program. The best place to prioritize engaging strategic partners with whom you have a mutually beneficial relationship and then expand to partners after the successful implementation in these strategic partners is successful.

When developing and scaling a program, **investing in a customer relationship management (CRM) platform and establishing the customer (or participant) journey should be prioritized.** Effectively managing and tracking clients, customers and/or participants' experience and information is one central place that creates efficiencies, increases retention, and

equips project managers with data and information. As your project/program scales, a CRM can save time and resources.

## APPENDIX A: LEARNING SUPPORT PLAN

Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Documen- tation	Possible information sources			
				Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
Defining	The training is being scaled by approaching school boards, post-secondary institutions, and private organizations to offer the training or include in their curriculum. What was the rationale for choosing these outlets?	Yes		Interview			
Defining	The rationale for the Future of Work Skills training is well positioned relative to increased automation and the need for those skills in the labour market as identified by employers, but where does the youth focus come from?	Yes		Interview			

Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Possible information sources				
			Documen- tation	Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
Design	What is the reason to focus the delivery of the training on an experiential learning and a self-directed approach?	Yes		Interview			
Design	How are equity and diversity infused in the content and can this training potentially be more effective for certain groups than others?	Yes		Interview			
Testing	Are participants satisfied following the training and do they report improved skills? How do various participant characteristics or circumstances influence outcomes and/or implementation?	Yes		Interview	Polls, focus groups, interviews		
Testing	What changes had to be made to address the different delivery settings (school board, post-secondary institution, private organization)?	Yes		Interview		Partner polls, focus groups, interviews	

Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Possible information sources				
			Documen- tation	Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
Testing	How is the training valued by employers?	Yes		Interview			Employer polls, focus groups, interviews
	<b>Additional/Gapfilling Questions</b>						
	Data collection was identified as a significant issue. Is this just for the satisfaction survey or also for the pre/post skills assessments?	Yes		Interview			
	The proposal indicated that the evaluation activities following the end of phase 1 would be used to refine the development of the performance evaluation for phase 2? Has that happened and are there any materials from the phase 1 review available?	Yes		Interview			
	Was a performance evaluation framework developed and deployed for phase 2?	Yes		Interview			
Scaling	What has been the successes and challenges to increasing the network	Yes		Interview			

Learning Stage	Learning and Gapfilling Questions	Is more information required?	Possible information sources				
			Documen- tation	Project Lead	Participants	Project Partners	Other Stakeholders
	of partners implementing the Future of Work Skills in their organizations?						
Scaling	Is the program designed so that partners implementing it can continue to offer the training with modest resources? In other words, is the training sustainable?	Yes		Interview		Partner polls, focus groups, interviews	



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