Venture for Canada
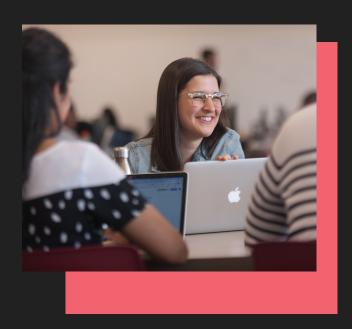
Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers Collaboration Impact Framework.

A knowledge sharing report

ventureforcanada

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INTRODUCTION

A Framework For Systems Change.

In May 2020, the Future Skills Centre, founded by Ryerson University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, announced a $15M Shock Proofing investment as a part of their pandemic response plan. The Government of Canada's Future Skills Program funding objective was to support industries facing challenges to look for new opportunities for workers and to accelerate skills training to navigate an evolving job market. Among 400+ applications, Venture for Canada's (VFC) Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers project was one of 64 initiatives that received investment.

Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers supports the design of a reskilling program focusing on racialized or Indigenous youth in Ontario. The Future Skills Centre invested $302,400 between April 5, 2021, and April 30, 2022.

Through community-based participatory consultation and comprehensive assessments, the initiative will design and prototype a holistic training program that can be easily implemented and scaled across sectors. The goal is to develop an entrepreneurial skills-building training program with two pathways for youth displaced from the retail industry: reskilling for sales-adjacent or customer success employment at Canadian startups; upskilling for IT/digital roles at Canadian small businesses, including retailers and eCommerce startups.

The project has four phases designed by the team at Venture for Canada. These phases capitalize on innovation and sharing learnings by adopting Blueprint's framework of aligning evidence generation to the innovation cycle. Phase 1) Collaboration-Impact Framework is outlined in this report. This concept generation phase asks, "how might we address the issue?"

A formula for a systems change approach to mass employment sector changes doesn't exist, and we hope to demonstrate that the Collaboration-Impact Framework is a critical phase leading to long-term sustainability and systems change. Our Steering Committee and Subcommittee structure designed by VFC team members Scott Stirrett and Juanita Lee-Garcia in the proposal stage, implemented by Una Louder, prioritizes relationship building, values, and cross-sectoral buy-in to lead the change in skills-based training.

The subsequent phases are, Phase 2) community-based participatory research, followed by Phase 3) designing the structure and curriculum, and Phase 4) prototyping the training curriculum and structure.

The long-term goal of the project is to inform methods and reskilling frameworks for industries at a high risk of automatization to help workers gain the skills and competencies needed to succeed in high-growth industries while fostering life-long learning.

We hope that you gain insights, resources and tips on how to work with a partnership consortium.

Juanita Lee-Garcia and Una Lounder

In the first half of 2020, 1.3 million Canadian retail jobs were lost due to the pandemic and retail was among the [top three sectors](#) with the largest drop in labour demand. It is also an industry where [21% of jobs](#) are at high risk of automation with few or no options to transition into lower-risk occupations without significant retraining, according to a 2019 McKinsey study.

Using a Collaboration Impact Framework.

Retail is an important sector for young people, offering opportunities for entry-level experience and skills development. It is also a multi-billion dollar industry in Canada and the [largest private-sector employer.](#) In scoping the retail reskilling and training programs space in Canada, VFC identified a dearth of programming for retail workers.

In Canada, [gaps exist](#) in foundational skills development and training opportunities for youth looking to bridge their post-secondary to work transition. The pandemic and automation have widened these [gaps](#) and displacement factors disproportionately affect [women, Indigenous, and racialized communities](#).

Our Collaboration Impact Framework's first step gathered multi-sector partners in a true [co-creation](#) process —the collaborative development of new value together with experts and/or stakeholders — of a comprehensive skills training program. The relationships building process with the project's collaborators required multiple conversations and negotiation, ultimately including those whose mission aligned with the project's proposed outcomes.

The project's collaborators include organizations that play a vital role in supporting retail workers from various angles, ensuring that we can influence the exit (retail) and entry (technology) sectors and those in between. Venture for Canada is proud to have built a consortium of collaborators made up of [The Retail Council of Canada](#), [The Centre for](#)

[Indigenous Innovation](#) and Technology, [Riipen Inc,](#) [Shopify Inc,](#) and [Sales Talent Agency.](#) Representatives from the project collaborator organizations participate on the [Steering Committee](#) alongside external volunteer sector leaders.

Project Steering Committee participant, Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook, Director of Research, Centre for Indigenous Innovation and Technology illustrates the critical importance of cross-sector collaboration, particularly as we look to post-pandemic recovery, saying,

"Many of the social, economic and environmental challenges facing communities in urban centres across Canada are increasingly complex and multi-faceted and have their roots in systemic inequities and failures. As such, the way that we approach problem solving and solutions pathways need to address issues at a systems level and across sectoral boundaries. The global COVID pandemic and accelerating impacts of climate change have particularly challenged institutions and governments to think and act in ways that are more inclusive and collaborative."

Joint collaboration between government, academic institutions, non-profits, foundations and the private sector on initiatives and platforms enables each partner to leverage their unique strengths and experiences, contributing to more holistic and robust processes and solutions outcomes that can benefit the greatest diversity of communities and stakeholders.

The project's co-creation and cross-sectoral approaches are deliberate in the desire to dismantle systemic barriers for Indigenous and racialized youth to enter and be supported in roles at small businesses and startups. Indigenous inclusion in the technology sector ensures that Indigenous communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

IMPACT ALIGNMENTS TO BUILD A SHARED UNDERSTANDING

To establish a shared understanding of the project's short and long-term impact, we aligned our goals with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 4, 8, 10, and 17 most closely align with our project and inform our impact measurement framework. Quality Education (Goal 4) aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8) is a primary focus as we promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10) addresses inequality in Canada, given that the displacement in the real sector disproportionately impacts women, racialized, and Indigenous folks.

In addition to the UN SDGs, we're addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 92 regarding Business and Reconciliation. This

will be realized in how we build and maintain respectful partnerships with Indigenous organizations.

The project requires engagement and consultation with Indigenous leaders and necessitates active learning and unlearning, external training, and relationship building before action and implementation. Through all phases, the project will seek consultation from Indigenous representatives and organizations. Honouring a respectful and reciprocal dialogue means taking the time to convene with the right people, sharing lived experiences, and holding space for trust. While many projects require rigid timelines, the Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers project plan is agile, dynamic, and measures success in both impact outcomes and process design.

TANYA CHUNG-TIAM-FOOK, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island and globally have been innovating and evolving diverse technologies for thousands of years, often using holistic and creative problem-solving, rigorous experimentation, and resilience testing. Indigenous innovators and models of technology have much to teach the technology sector about more resilient and nature-attuned ways to design and build sustainable and inclusive cities and economies of the future. As one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, there is a great deal of largely untapped innovation talent and potential among Indigenous Peoples. The creation of culturally relevant and valuable spaces and opportunities for young Indigenous people promises to advance social wellbeing and transformational change in Indigenous communities and institutions, as well as drive systemic change within Canada's innovation econo-

Co-Creating a Collaboration Impact Framework.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CROSS SECTOR LEADERSHIP

Reskilling programs have a track record of falling short and missing the mark on sustainable impact. This is often due to a lack of holistic design approaches resulting from little or no collaboration across entry and exit industries.

Ali Jaffer, Chief Operating Officer at Generation, an education to employment global nonprofit working across 15 countries, emphasizes the importance of collaboration,

"In my experience, there are too often silos between job seekers, employers, and training providers. When brave souls try to reach across to communicate, they are frequently ignored or unheard. It can be disheartening and can perpetuate the isolated worldview. It is therefore meaningful when system players collaborate to withstand the challenges that inevitably stand in their way, and set a course to persevere"

Looking to other successful international retraining program models, the Public Policy Forum found that "companies, educational institutions, and other organizations work together to fund training initiatives that benefit workers and firms alike." Demonstrated domestically, Irving Shipbuilding Inc. found success in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) by building new pathways for skills training and career transition

that addressed the rapidly changing skillsets evolving from a disrupted industry. In Calgary, a cross-sector collaboration led to the success of EDGE UP (Energy to Digital Growth Education and Upskilling Project), which recently completed a two-year pilot program providing training for displaced oil and gas professionals for careers in information technology

Phase 1) Collaboration-Impact Framework of the Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers project prioritizes participation from multiple sectors to solve a complex and urgent problem. A Project Steering Committee and various subcommittees form a consortium of retail, innovation, and technology sector leaders and organizations working to maximize short-term results and create long-term outcomes through a co-creation lens.

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As one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada, there is a great deal of largely untapped innovation talent and potential among Indigenous Peoples.

Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook

COLLABORATION IMPACT FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

Strong relationships and collaboration lead to significant impact. True co-creation is built on trust, values, and authenticity, yet this foundational planning and collaborative stage often gets overlooked. By prioritizing alignment, positionality, communication, shared values, and intentionality from the outset, the project is set up to create an innovative roadmap for working together. Understanding that shared vision, values, co-created decision-making processes, and communications practices and systems are critical considerations for effectively working together motivated us to seek out a tested framework to adopt.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers Collaboration Framework draws on key principles and concepts outlined in Collective Impact. Collective Impact describes an intentional way of working together and sharing information to solve complex problems. Collective Impact has been widely utilized as an effective method for cross-sector collaboration to address inter-connected social and environmental challenges.

Collective Impact considers 5 key conditions:

1. Common Agenda
2. Shared Measurement
3. Mutually Reinforcing Activities
4. Continuous Communication
5. Backbone Support

Collective Impact demonstrates that large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations.

VISION, VALUES, METHODS, OBSTACLES, MEASURES (V2MOM)

The Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers consortium also co-created a V2MOM (Vision, Values, Methods, Obstacles, Measures) as a way to determine the group's guiding principles. Designed and successfully implemented by Salesforce, V2MOM has 5 key components that focus collective energy. The V2MOM framework, implemented by various teams at Venture for Canada, is a comprehensive and effective framework that creates alignment on the "how" of project collaboration and creating sustainable impact

HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

.
When it comes to taking action, the Steering Committee and subcommittees practice values-based consensus decision-making:

•   Transparency and Accountability: Decisions take place in open communication channels.
•   Equity and Inclusiveness: All interests who are needed and willing to contribute to a solution.
•   Effectiveness and Efficiency: Solutions are tested to make sure they make practical sense.
•   Responsiveness: Concerns are authentically addressed.
•   Forum Neutrality: Different perspectives are welcome; the process itself has no bias.

Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers
Project V2MOM
Collaborators Framework

- Vision: Defines what you want to do or achieve
- Values: Principles and beliefs that help you pursue the vision.
- Methods: Actions and steps that help you get the job done.
- Obstacles: Challenges, problems, and issues you have to overcome to achieve the vision.
- Measures: Measurable results you aim to achieve

Source: Salesforce

VISION

Through community-based participatory consultation and comprehensive assessments, design a reskilling program for retail workers, focusing on racialized and Indigenous youth in Ontario.

Collaborators will gain critical insights on skilling young Canadians who face systemic entry barriers shared via reports and resources created by VFC.

Design and deliver community-based participatory research for community engagement.

MEASURES

Design a reskilling program for retail workers, focusing on racialized and Indigenous youth in Ontario by April 2022 and Submit funding and project reporting on time at the end of July, December, and April.

Identify risks and gaps in each of the project component and Create an open-source collaboration-impact framework.

Identify risks and gaps in each of the project component and Create an open-source collaboration-impact framework.

VALUES

Empowerment
Equity
Impact
Respect
Transparency

OBSTACLES

Scheduling
Cross committee communication
Technology
Scope

METHODS

Cascading Levels of Linked Collaboration. A Steering Committee and Subcommittees inform, guide, consult, support, and co-create throughout the key phases of the Reskilling Retail Workers project.

Collaboration structures may change throughout the project.

Subcommittees play a critical hands-on role in designing the program and content.

Project Steering Committee advises the project's structure and provides guidance and oversight to the project.

Moreover, we recognized as a group that while intentions are nice, we must be cognizant of the impact these have and that impact trumps intention.

FORMALIZED INTENTIONS

The Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers Collaboration Framework clearly outlines best practices and agreed-upon expectations for communication and governance. There is a strong commitment to equity, openness, transparency, and values-based decision-making in all project activities. This commitment is reflected in the foundational agreements and communication practices of the Steering Committee and subcommittees. For example, an emphasis is placed on context, positionality, and how the committee hosts and participates in meetings and virtual gathering spaces. Personal introductions beyond job titles, experiential storytelling, and an opportunity to share history, values, and motivations are core components of the collaborative process. "From an Indigenous perspective, building relationships and collaboration are at the core of everything we do as human beings. Collaborative relationships require us to deeply listen to and learn from one another's stories, experiences and insights, thereby complexifying and amplifying the knowledge and expertise that we are able to collectively hold. In this way, we can work together to co-create more responsive, enduring and mutually valuable outcomes", shared Tanya Chunk-Tiam-Fook. Additionally, a Common Language Appendix is leveraged within the project's parameters to maximize clear communications and mitigate common mistranslations or misunderstandings across sectors or differences in terminology.

Collaboration and knowledge sharing are paramount to the success of the project. Foundational agreements clearly outline that Intellectual Property (IP) created within the collaboration belongs to everyone. Moreover, to incorporate our intention to weave reconciliation and respectful relations with Indigenous communities into all components of the project plan we consulted with project Steering Committee participant, Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook, Director of Research, Centre for Indigenous Innovation and Technology on the Collaborator Memorandums of Agreement (MOA)s and Volunteer Agreements that ask participants to adhere to the following statements:

> "Venture for Canada's obligation and intention to make the Project Intellectual Property available free of charge to the public using as many channels as is required to fully support and facilitate the goals and objectives of the Project."

> "May be supported by the use of know-how, skills, and practices developed by Indigenous peoples related to biodiversity, agriculture, health, and craftsmanship, collectively known as Traditional Knowledge ("TK") and/or intangible forms in which TK and culture are expressed including oral stories, dances, songs or ceremonies, known collectively as Traditional Cultural Expressions ("TCEs")." The agreements are clear that "Venture for Canada and project collaborators agree that the project will make all reasonable attempts to acknowledge this use of TK and/or TCEs in the promotion of the outcomes of this agreement."

By co-creating, publishing, and disseminating collaboration frameworks, impact measurement, and methodologies, the project intends to contribute to the body of knowledge on cross-sectoral

collaboration in social innovation for job pathways and strengthen the case for a distributed sense of responsibility across sectors for these types of projects.

We believe this consortium will lead to industry alignment, the development of a theory of change, and innovative skills training frameworks.

One of the most important dimensions leading to success in skill development and placement programs is that the voices of all types of stakeholders are brought together. These voices each contribute to a symphony which comprises thoughtful consultation and engagement approaches, meaningful incentive systems, and relevant content and timing.

Ali Jaffer, Chief Operating Officer at Generation

Putting the Collaboration Impact Framwork into Action.

Through this project, the goal is to learn about the skills needed to successfully make a career transition from the retail sector into the startup ecosystem in Canada. Through our collaboration with the Retail Council of Canada, we have identified a significant gap in data on retail workers, particularly the career progression of racialized and/or Indigenous youth working in retail in Canada. Beyond the skills needed to make a successful transition into the technology sector or other high-growth industries, we hope to learn about the existing skills and education that workers have to identify which skills and competencies are transferable and in-demand. Workers may already have the skills required to enter an in-demand sector but lack the confidence of language in communicating and demonstrating these skills in new applications and hiring practices.

HYPOTHESIS

We've coined this concept **'skills-language literacy.'** When we refer to 'skills language literacy' we mean the ability to understand individual transferable skills in-depth and the competency of communicating the value of these skills to the entry sector. We will explore perceived skills gaps and skills 'language literacy' from both the employee and employer perspectives.

Our hypothesis is that reskilling needs to happen at the individual and organizational levels and that there must be a mutual understanding of what constitutes a "skill set," and how we identify those skills in the hiring process. We believe the behaviours of the labour sector may also have to

change for reskilling programs to succeed.

PHASE 2: COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The next phase of the Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers Project will combine community-based participatory research and methods with industry insights and data. The goal will be to identify the skills and competencies of retail workers and assess real and perceived gaps to employment in lower-risk roles with high-growth industries.

In our ongoing commitment to cross-sector collaboration and building on the growing body of knowledge, we are looking closely at the work out of Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship (BII+E), an organization that is leading in job pathway research and methods, with recent projects in the food retail and energy sectors. In-kind support has been provided to the project by BII+E with Nisa Malli, Manager Innovative + Inclusive Economy Workstream, participating on the project Steering Committee.

The recently published 2021 edition of the Job Pathways Playbook includes a library of downloadable research tools that are methods-focused, open-source, and adaptable. The Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers project will adapt foundational research tools and methods created in the Job Pathways Playbook in our data collection

"Nimble and responsive identification of and movement between areas of high and low demand is a critical test of the ability of labour markets to respond to rapid changes, serving both workers and employers. But so often Future of Work conversations frame the future as something market-driven that workers must prepare themselves for, rather than something we can make choices as a country about the kind of economy and society we want, the skills we will need to build it, and how we will support workers in making those transitions. We are excited to work with Venture For Canada on this collaborative, innovative, and evidence-driven project in an important, and deeply impacted, sector."

Nisa Malli explains, "Our Job Pathways approach moves beyond pure supply and demand, recognizing that skills, competencies, and expertise is held by people, who need jobs that pay enough to live in the communities where the demand is, under decent and safe working conditions, at hours that meet their caregiving and commuting requirements, and many other measures that you can really only identify if you talk to workers and employers in those jobs." These findings and resources, made public as part of BII+E's knowledge mobilization efforts, will have a ripple effect informing the efforts of non-policy institutions.

-END.

GET IN TOUCH

As the Reskilling Displaced Retail Workers Project moves into the research and data collection phase, community-based, participatory engagement remains a priority to the success of the initiative. If you are a retailer, a tech company seeking ambitious talent, or a retail worker in Canada, we want to connect with you! Join our recovery community to participate in data collection, prototyping, or to stay up to date on the project's progress: Join Our Recovery Community.

We are a consortium of non-Indegenous and Indigenous organizations. In this project, there are opportunities to learn and unlearn and we will continue to have those conversations. This is a place for mistakes, learning, and understanding. Project collaborators respectfully acknowledge that the sacred lands upon which we operate, and the built communities and cities across the country, are the traditional treaty lands, homelands, and nunangat of the respective First Nations, Métis Nations, and Inuit who are the long-time stewards of these lands. We work on the lands and regions that are still home to diverse Indigenous peoples and we are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on these lands. We continue to respect, honour and value friendship accords between Indigenous groups and communities that we work with and will continue to expand our agreements as treaty peoples.

Acknowledgements

Resources

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Wendy Cukier; Mohamed Elmi; Dan Munro; Anjum Sultana, "Skills for the Post-Pandemic World," December 2020
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USEFUL LINKS

Centre for Indigenous Innovation and Technology

https://ciit.io/

Collective Impact Forum

https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/what-collective-impact

EDGE UP

https://edgeupyyc.com/

Generation

https://www.generation.org/

Reskilling Retail Workers Steering Committee

https://perspectives.ventureforcanada.ca/article/venture-for-canada-announces-reskilling-retail-workers-project-steering-committee

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https://www.retailcouncil.org/

Sales Talent Agency

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United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

https://sdgs.un.org/goals