



Project Insights Report

# Capturing Change in Indigenous Labour Markets: Local Approach, Pan-Canadian Impact



**PARTNERS**

The Sir Sandford Fleming College of Applied Arts and Technology



**LOCATIONS**

Ontario



**INVESTMENT**

\$211,547.59



**PUBLISHED**

October 2024



**CONTRIBUTORS**

Katie McLaren,  
*Research and Evaluation Associate at FSC*

## Executive Summary

There is a significant gap in the labour market information (LMI) specifically tailored to Indigenous communities. Existing labour market data fails to capture the unique cultural, social and economic contexts of Indigenous peoples, hindering effective policy and program development. The current data available is limited and dispersed, and much of it does not meet the needs of Indigenous communities.

To address this, “Capturing change in Indigenous labour markets: Local approach, pan-Canadian impact,” aimed to bridge the gap in LMI for Indigenous communities. The project began through a partnership with Fleming College’s Workforce Labour Advisor and the Chair of Indigenous Studies. This initiative aimed to consolidate and enhance accessibility to Indigenous-specific LMI by developing a new Indigenous LMI system. The project focused on understanding the evolution of Indigenous labour markets, identifying information gaps at the community level and leveraging this data to enhance educational programming and policy.

The project successfully developed an Indigenous-specific LMI platform through a blend of technology development and community engagement. Fleming College demonstrated the platform widely, reaching over 100 participants in 26 sessions, which led to heightened demand post-project. This interest prompted additional sessions with 12 organizations and adoption by Confederation College, highlighting its effectiveness in addressing Indigenous program development needs.

Despite initial success, challenges in outreach and engagement surfaced due to the project’s constrained 12-month timeline, suggesting the need for longer engagement periods and enhanced resource allocation for broader impact. Nevertheless, the project left a lasting impact on Fleming College’s program development, embedding Indigenous LMI to better align with market demands and integrate Indigenous perspectives in institutional practices.

The project stands as a valuable model for other regions and populations, as it demonstrates the importance of localized and culturally relevant data in shaping educational and policy frameworks. Improving the relevance and accessibility of LMI for Indigenous communities supports more informed decision-making in the educational and employment sectors. The project underscored the importance of community-centred approaches in technological development by filling a critical information gap and setting a precedent for future LMI systems.

#### KEY INSIGHTS

- 1 There was more interest in and demand for training on the new platform than anticipated, prompting Fleming College to continue engagement activities past the official project close.
- 2 Growing demand underscores the importance of Indigenous LMI. Post-project, the surge in interest led to expanded sessions, hosted by Fleming College, across Canada and the platform's adoption by Confederation College, highlighting its effectiveness and relevance in supporting Indigenous program development.
- 3 Fleming College was able to showcase the platform widely. The project team gave demonstrations to over 100 participants in 26 different training sessions.

## ▶ The Issue

Across Canada, there is a significant gap in LMI specifically tailored to Indigenous communities. The current LMI data do not account for the unique cultural, social and economic contexts of Indigenous communities. Many of the existing labour market indicators do not fully capture the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Indigenous Peoples. For instance, traditional employment metrics may not account for factors such as cultural attachment to the land, self-employment in Indigenous-owned businesses, or participation in the informal economy within Indigenous communities. Additionally, the data collection methods may not capture the diverse experiences of Indigenous people, especially those living in rural or remote communities.

Historically, the available LMI has been sparse and dispersed across various sources, making it difficult to access and often irrelevant to the specific needs of Indigenous Peoples. This lack of detailed and localized data has made it challenging for educational institutions and policy-makers to develop programs and initiatives that effectively address these communities' employment needs.

Attempts to gather and utilize Indigenous-specific LMI were fragmented and lacked a cohesive strategy that could be applied at both local and national levels. The existing approaches failed to provide a clear picture of how local labour markets were performing; how they were affected by technological, social or economic changes; and how these factors specifically impacted Indigenous communities. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, significantly altering the economic landscape and increasing the urgency for accurate and actionable labour market intelligence.



## 🔧 What We Investigated

Fleming College launched the “Capturing change in Indigenous labour markets: Local approach, pan-Canadian impact” project to develop a new Indigenous-focused labour market system. The LMI system was meant to consolidate and enhance the accessibility of labour market data, tailored specifically to the needs of Indigenous populations to support employment and educational opportunities. The proposed technology aimed to sort information into key attributes, including occupation, industry, location and specific community.

The project aimed to understand how Indigenous labour markets have evolved, identify gaps in LMI at the community level and determine how these insights could inform educational programming and policy.

The project engaged Indigenous communities and educational institutions across Canada, ensuring that the developed labour market system reflected and benefitted Indigenous Peoples. The approach used to develop the LMI system combined technology development and community engagement. The project team developed the system and tested it through training sessions and demonstrations with Indigenous communities and educational partners.

## ✔ What We're Learning

The project was successful in creating and implementing the Indigenous-specific LMI platform. The platform was able to fill a gap by consolidating relevant Indigenous data in an accessible format. Fleming College was able to showcase the platform widely by conducting demonstrations to over 100 participants in 26 different training sessions.

### **There is strong demand for an Indigenous LMI**

After the project concluded, there was a surge in demand for demonstrations and training on the new platform, revealing a strong interest in Indigenous LMI. This led Fleming College to host additional sessions with 12 different organizations across Canada and plan more outreach for the subsequent year. Additionally, Confederation College has since adopted the platform to support Indigenous program development. This showcases both the platform's effectiveness and relevance.

### **In future, lengthen the timeline and begin stakeholder engagement early**

The original 12-month timeline proved too short for thorough outreach and training. Project partners felt that a longer period might have allowed for more comprehensive engagement and wider dissemination, potentially enhancing the platform's impact and use. Project partners noted a need to integrate outreach efforts from the start of the project and could have benefitted from dedicating resources to increasing visibility and engagement with key stakeholders in Indigenous communities and the industry and education sectors.

### **This project will have lasting organizational impact**

The project had a lasting impact on Fleming College's program development, with new proposals now including Indigenous LMI to better match market needs and opportunities. This integration shows the enduring influence of the project on institutional practices. It will ensure that Indigenous perspectives are considered in program development and refinement.

## **★ Why It Matters**

The project demonstrates the importance of developing LMI tools that are tailored to the unique needs of Indigenous communities. Many of the LMI tools available have not been designed with the focus of including Indigenous labour market data and thus may not be relevant to address labour market needs within these communities. Creating specialized tools ensures that the data centre an Indigenous perspective and are relevant to community needs. This allows for more accurate data to be used in decision-making when developing programming and services with Indigenous communities.



### **State of Skills: Innovation in Training, Recruitment and Upskilling for Skilled Trades**

Canada needs to address long standing shortages of skilled tradespeople to advance policy priorities around decarbonization, affordable housing and transforming industry to add more value to what we produce.

The successful launch of this platform highlights the necessity for continued easy-to-use labour market tools that address the needs of under-represented groups, and of leaders of institutional programs and services. The platform's model could be applied to different communities and regions across the country, ensuring relevant labour market data is collected and used to inform programming. Policy- and program-makers should ensure that the data used to inform their designs are relevant and represent the needs of the communities and groups they are trying to serve.

[Read Thematic Report](#)

This project also highlights the importance of user engagement when developing new digital tools. Effective implementation requires more than just introducing systems; it demands significant efforts to ensure that users can effectively utilize these tools and that the tools are relevant to their needs. It is vital for practitioners to build in adequate resources and time for user testing, feedback and training on new digital tools. These will help to maximize the adoption and impact of these tools.

## ► What's Next

Fleming College continues to host training sessions on the developed tool and pursue further knowledge mobilization opportunities for the project.

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).

### How to Cite This Report

McLaren, K. (2024). Project Insights Report: Capturing Change in Indigenous Labour Markets: Local Approach, Pan-Canadian Impact, The Sir Sandford Fleming College of Applied Arts and Technology. Toronto: Future Skills Centre. <https://fsc-ccf.ca/projects/fleming/>

Funded by the  
Government of Canada's  
Future Skills Program



Capturing Change in Indigenous Labour Markets: Local Approach, Pan-Canadian Impact 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.

