



Project Insights Report

Future of Work Skills Development Program



PARTNERS

Greater Fredericton
Community Economic
Development Agency
Inc (operating as Planet
Hatch)



LOCATIONS

New Brunswick
Newfoundland and
Labrador
Nova Scotia
Prince Edward Island



INVESTMENT

\$164,315



PUBLISHED

July 2024



CONTRIBUTORS

Steven Tobin,
*Strategic Advisor at
FSC*

Laura McDonough,
*Associate Director of
Knowledge Mobilization
& Insights at FSC*

☰ Executive Summary

The Future of Work Skills Development Program, initiated in response to evolving Canadian labour market challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and by rapid technological advancements, aimed to bridge the skills gap youth face in New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada. The project targeted the integration of human-centric skills—like emotional intelligence—with technical competencies, thereby addressing the inadequacies of traditional educational pathways in preparing students for future job markets. Over 850 participants engaged in a curriculum that included both experiential and self-directed learning and covered essential skills for future work environments.

The program's implementation revealed several key insights. Because of the program's flexible module delivery and the fact that it accommodated various learning preferences, participants were engaged and retained their skills. Despite challenges in data collection due to participant hesitancy in sharing personal information, post-training feedback from employers highlighted an increase in workplace skill recognition and employee confidence. The project also successfully fostered inclusivity, drawing significant participation from diverse demographic groups, which enriched the learning experience and underscored the need for the program's comprehensive approach. Program developers strategically chose to work with 19 educational and private-sector partners. These partnerships proved crucial, facilitating the program's integration into existing educational frameworks and its scalability.

These findings underscore the need for adaptive training models that are responsive to technological and economic shifts. These findings also emphasize the importance of integrating soft skills with technical training. The success of the Future of Work Skills Development Program provides a valuable model for future workforce training initiatives, highlighting the benefits of flexible learning options, the strategic use of technology in program management, and the importance of inclusivity in educational programs.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 1** The flexibility in module delivery—whether in person or online, sequential or à la carte—was important in accommodating diverse learning preferences and schedules, though a structured, sequential delivery was found to enhance comprehension and skill retention among participants.
- 2** Despite the success in participant engagement, challenges in data collection were noted because participants were reluctant to submit personal information and complete satisfaction surveys. This impacted the program organizers' ability to fully assess the program's effectiveness from the participants' perspective.
- 3** Program organizers established partnerships with 19 educational and private-sector entities. These partnerships were critical for the program's delivery and expansion, for ensuring that the program was integrated into existing educational frameworks, and for enhancing the program's sustainability and impact.

The Issue

The rapid acceleration of automation and machine learning threatens to displace workers and significantly disrupt job prospects, including for current and future students. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these existing challenges in the Canadian labour market. Studies indicate that by 2028, over 50% of occupations in Canada will require a significant overhaul of skills, with 62% of executives acknowledging the need for staff retraining due to automation. This shift highlights a growing demand for human-centric jobs that AI and machine learning find difficult to replicate, jobs that emphasize skills like emotional intelligence, creativity and problem solving.

Employers across various industries have reported increasing difficulties in finding talent equipped with these necessary skills. The traditional educational pathways are not adequately preparing students for these shifts, leading to a skills gap that needs to be addressed to future-proof the Canadian workforce. The urgency for solutions is clear, as the evolving job market requires a workforce that can adapt to new technologies while maintaining the human-centric skills that automation cannot replace.

Previous attempts to bridge this skills gap have often fallen short, primarily because they do not integrate the necessary human-centric skills with the technological competencies that modern workplaces require. Many training programs focus either too heavily on technical skills without fostering soft skills or vice versa. Additionally, the rapid pace of technological change means that traditional educational and training programs struggle to keep up, leaving a disconnect between the skills taught and those demanded by employers. This gap necessitates a new approach that will dynamically integrate both sets of skills and offer practical, experiential learning opportunities to adequately prepare the workforce for future challenges.



What We Investigated

This project centred on several key research questions aimed at addressing the urgent needs of the Canadian labour market, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on job prospects and the accelerating trend of technology adoption. The primary questions explored included:

- How can we effectively equip recent and future graduates with skills that are resilient against technological disruptions?
- What innovative training methods might enhance these skills?
- How can these training methods be integrated into existing educational frameworks to ensure broad and effective dissemination?

The project involved multiple stakeholders, including the Greater Fredericton Community Economic Development Agency Inc. (operating as Planet Hatch) and educational institutions across Atlantic Canada. These partners worked together to design and implement the Future of Work Skills Development Program, which aimed to train over 750 participants in 12 in-demand future work skills through a blend of experiential and self-directed learning opportunities.

The objective of the project was to test and refine a training program that could be integrated into the curricula of secondary and postsecondary institutions or offered as a stand-alone program. The project was implemented in two phases. The first phase focused on piloting the program with over 250 students using existing educational partnerships. The second phase aimed at reaching an additional 500 participants by expanding partnerships and introducing the program to the private sector for onboarding and professional development purposes.

The intervention methodology included developing a curriculum based on the Future of Work skills identified by the World Economic Forum and the Conference Board of Canada, and delivering this curriculum through various modalities, including in person and online sessions. The target demographic was primarily youth aged 15 to 29, with a focus on ensuring inclusivity and diversity among participants. Project administrators also collected and analyzed data on participant engagement, satisfaction, and skills progression through pre- and post-program surveys, as well as the long-term impact of the training through follow-up surveys.

What We're Learning

Over 850 participants engaged in the Future of Work Skills Development Program, surpassing the initial target of 750. There was significant participation from women, non-binary individuals, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, and various racial and linguistic groups.

Flexibility to accommodate different learning styles

The flexibility in module delivery—whether in person or online, sequential or à la carte—proved vital in accommodating diverse learning preferences and schedules. However, it was noted that a structured, sequential delivery of modules enhanced comprehension and skill retention among participants. This structured approach facilitated a clearer understanding of the curriculum, allowing students to build on previously acquired knowledge.

Challenges with evaluating skill acquisition and impact

Program administrators faced challenges in collecting data on program impact. This was despite the program's success in exceeding participation targets, and the adoption of HubSpot as a customer relationship management tool, which proved instrumental in organizing participant information and tracking participants' progress. Participants were reluctant to submit personal information and complete satisfaction surveys. This impacted the administrators' ability to fully assess the program's effectiveness from the participants' perspective. However, feedback from employers was overwhelmingly positive, with all reporting observed increases in employee confidence and recognition of necessary workplace skills post-training.

A network of engaged partners was the foundation for success

The program successfully established connections with 19 educational and private sector entities, which was critical for the program's delivery and expansion. These partnerships not only facilitated the reach of the program but also ensured its integration into existing educational frameworks, enhancing its sustainability and impact.

Why It Matters

The Canadian labour market will continue to be turbulent and unpredictable in the coming years, given the accelerating pace of technological change brought on by artificial intelligence, automation and virtual reality, as well as the rapid changes in the climate and the need to accelerate the transition to a net-zero economy. To stay relevant, all workers, including youth, will need to maximize their transferable technical and soft skills to allow them to move between jobs, sectors and industries as needed.

With its combination of technical and soft skills training, this project is relevant to employers, training organizations and postsecondary institutions looking to integrate both elements into their own programs. The project's lessons are relevant for practitioners seeking to implement similar efforts in their own regions.



State of Skills: Quality of Work

As Canada navigates continuing labour shortages in critical areas of the economy, policymakers and employers are looking for more effective approaches to recruit and retain workers

[Read Thematic Report](#)

► **What's Next**

The [Greater Fredericton Community Economic Development Agency Inc.](#) continues to offer training for young people in Atlantic Canada, with a special focus on international students and newcomer youth aged 16 to 18. [Planet Hatch](#) continues to offer support for entrepreneurs and small businesses in the Greater Fredericton region.

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

How to Cite This Report

McDonough, L. & Tobin, S. (2024). Project Insights Report:Future of Work Skills Development Program. Greater Fredericton Community Economic Development Agency Inc. Toronto: Future Skills Centre. <https://fsc-ccf.ca/projects/future-of-work-skills-dev/>

Future of Work Skills Development Program 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.

© Copyright 2025 – Future Skills Centre / Centre des Compétences futures