

Building Data Capacity in Newcomer Employment Services

Case Study

In October 2021, the Immigrant Employment Council of British Columbia (IEC-BC) joined the Practitioner Data Initiative (PDI). Their goals were to increase capacity to continuously use data to strengthen their services, improve labour market outcomes for newcomers and demonstrate the value of their initiatives.

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FSC is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint ADE, and The Conference Board of Canada

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Future Skills Centre or the Government of Canada.



About IEC-BC

Since 2008, IEC-BC has worked with employers, immigrants, governments and industry partners to foster a labor market where immigrants can use their skills, training and education to meaningfully contribute to BC's economic and societal goals. They provide a variety of services, including mentorships, skill assessments, platforms linking employers with newcomers and specialized training for seamless workplace integration. **Through these programs, IEC-BC facilitates the professional growth of newcomers while strengthening the economic vitality of the province, fostering a diverse and prosperous community.**

2000+

newcomers registered for IEC-BC programs (2021-22)

600+

employers engaged (2021-22)

87

community partners engaged (2021-22)

17

staff

15

years of service

IEC-BC recently underwent rapid organizational growth, making it essential to strengthen their data capacity. Enhanced data insights will position them to offer improved services, better align programs with the needs of their community and demonstrate the value of their innovative initiatives to funders. Finally, a robust data-driven narrative is an important component of IEC-BC's commitment to becoming a champion of data literacy in the sector.

What is the Practitioner Data Initiative (PDI)?

PDI is a pan-Canadian initiative that combines Blueprint's expert consultation and strategic support with a one-time financial investment of \$100-200K from the Future Skills Centre (FSC).

PDI responds to the challenges nonprofits face in harnessing the power of their own data to improve their services and impact. As part of PDI, Blueprint marries financial investment with trusted and technology-neutral advice grounded in deep expertise with program data, technology solutions and nonprofit service delivery.

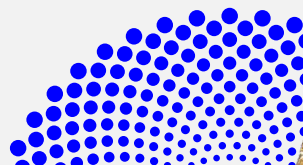
Through a series of collaborative workshops and capacity-building activities, PDI:

- Articulates an organization's goals for data storytelling and how their data collection is tied to outcomes and impact
- Assesses an organization's current data capacity, with a review of processes, technologies and skills, culminating in a roadmap for improving data capacity
- Provides ongoing coaching and support as the implementation of the roadmap begins

PDI engagements last 12-24 months with opportunities to participate in peer learning events with other PDI partners.

“PDI enabled us to break down barriers that prevented us from sharing data or to collaborate with other programs in the organization.”

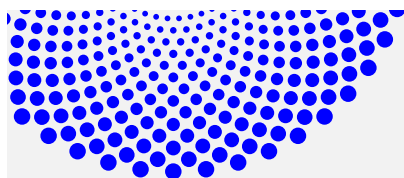
**- Farizan Razie,
Coordinator,
Centralized
Services**



Challenges

When they joined PDI, IEC-BC faced challenges that are common in their sector. Most notably, their data was fragmented across various systems and spreadsheets, which created the following issues:

- **Difficulties efficiently accessing, analyzing and deploying data**, which lead to a less precise understanding of the organization's impact and goal attainment.
- **Lack of unified communication platforms and integrated data**, which created significant barriers to effective cross-program collaboration, reducing the ability to synchronize efforts toward broader organizational objectives.
- **Limited ability to effectively communicate their achievements**, which made it harder to demonstrate their success to access new funding opportunities.



“One of the big things that came out of PDI is that we have resources dedicated to building and consolidating data effectively, rather than it being on the side of someone's desk.”

– **Dimitry Morales,**
Senior Manager



“The PDI project, leveraging the Dynamics platform, significantly enhanced the efficiency of our program by automating various operations, from stakeholder communication to data collection. This not only saved time but also elevated the professionalism of our program.”

– **Noha Hamed,**
ASCEND
Coordinator



Better Data for Better Decisions

Through their PDI engagement, IEC-BC has been able to:

Make data-driven decisions to better serve clients:

- By implementing Dynamics (an ERP) for improved data management and data integration, they have streamlined the collection, storage and analysis of data.
- IEC-BC can now break down data silos by consolidating data from various programs into one central repository, fostering better internal communication and collaboration across multiple programs.

Identify opportunities for strategic improvement

by streamlining processes for increased efficiency.

For example:

- IEC-BC reduced time spent by staff on routine, manual tasks related to client engagement by using Dynamics to automate email communications with their employer partners. This has freed up time that staff can spend on other more impactful tasks.
- Dynamics also allowed IEC-BC to improve the impact of their email communications and improve stakeholder relationships. By tracking how their

employer partners engage with their emails, IEC-BC has improved the process of segmenting emails to different groups of partners, thereby ensuring that individuals are receiving information that is relevant and of interest to them. Improving relationships with employers will enhance IEC-BC's ability to help newcomers find jobs.

- The data that IEC-BC collect and use to improve their processes will also help them more effectively communicate the nature and impact of their work to potential funders.

Develop a clear roadmap and foster a growth-oriented mindset:

- The roadmap to increased data capacity that IEC-BC created through PDI, and the workshops and support that led to that roadmap, changed their perception of what's possible in their roles and their organization.
- Tasks that previously seemed daunting now seem more achievable, which has fostered the growth-oriented mindset necessary to meet their organizational objectives and goals.

What's Next?

IEC-BC is continuing to increase their data capacity in several ways, including:

- Onboarding more programs onto Dynamics to further strengthen collaboration across programs and increase the value of their services to clients, along with establishing processes and governance to ensure data control and privacy.
- Leveraging their improved data capacity to provide thought leadership and demonstrate the impact of their work to partners, funders and the community.
- Embedding data into their decision-making processes to identify program strengths, weaknesses and emerging trends, resulting in more effective interventions and improved outcomes.

Sustainability

IEC-BC is employing several strategies for securing ongoing support from funders and stakeholders for their data capacity work:

- Actively demonstrating the impact and efficiency of the data management system to show that it is an effective tool to improve the execution of programs and the overall impact of the organization.
- Including the costs of data management tools and customization in their project proposals across their organization.
- Leveraging its preferred nonprofit status with Microsoft to save costs.

“The infusion of enhanced data insights empowers us to elevate our programs, showcasing tangible value to our partners and funders.”

**– Rania Younes,
Senior Manager,
Employer Networks
and National
Engagement**



As a consortium partner of the Future Skills Centre, Blueprint works with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively generate and use evidence to help solve pressing future skills challenges. To learn more about how Blueprint is helping to build data capacity among frontline nonprofits across Canada, visit: www.blueprint-ade.ca. To learn more about the Future Skills Centre, a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development, visit www.fsc-ccf.ca.