

## Project Insights Report

# Advanced Digital and Professional Training (AdaPT)



### PARTNERS

Diversity Institute  
Blueprint ADE  
Technation Canada



### LOCATIONS

Alberta  
Nova Scotia  
Ontario



### INVESTMENT

\$6,145,724.00



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## Executive Summary

The Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) program is a sector-based training initiative designed to address the disconnect between the skills of postsecondary graduates and the needs of the IT sector. Delivered by Toronto Metropolitan University's Diversity Institute and TECHNATION, the program provides intensive skills training, as well as wraparound supports for equity-deserving groups, including racialized groups; women; and individuals without backgrounds in science, technology, engineering or mathematics. Since 2019, multiple cohorts have completed the program across four provinces: Ontario, Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia. Across these regions, an increasing share of participants have successfully transitioned into jobs requiring digital skills following program completion. In 2021, Blueprint Inc. carried out a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the program's progress. Blueprint's findings indicated a strong potential for scaling, though survey data collection and stream-specific refinements remain areas for growth.

### KEY INSIGHTS

- 1 Ninety-two percent of program participants identified as a member of one or more equity-seeking groups, surpassing the target of 75%.
- 2 The largest perceived skills gains reported by participants have been in advanced digital skills, while the lowest perceived gains have been in oral communication.
- 3 Delivery across four regions and via multiple modes demonstrated the feasibility of scaling, though challenges remain in meeting survey completion goals and data linkage goals.

## ► The Issue

Postsecondary graduates, particularly those from equity-deserving groups, often face challenges in transitioning into digital careers due to a mismatch between their skills and industry's needs. This disconnect leaves a significant pool of talent untapped, exacerbating labour shortages in the IT sector.

Originally funded by the province of Ontario from 2014 to 2019, ADaPT collaborated with industry partners to support job seekers under 30, including youth facing systemic barriers to employment. During that period, the program was delivered in multiple formats to 20 cohorts. While that phase of ADaPT met most of its diversity targets for equity-seeking groups, it fell short in achieving representation goals for women and Indigenous persons.



## 🔧 What We Investigated

ADaPT is a sector-based training model targeting final-semester postsecondary students and postsecondary graduates with diverse backgrounds for entry-level digital roles. The program is delivered via three modes: virtual classrooms (synchronous), online (asynchronous), and in person. It involves nine weeks (70+ hours) of intensive digital literacy training, as well as communications, research and business financials training. Additionally, wraparound support such as job search assistance is provided.

The Diversity Institute and TECHNATION first received funding from Future Skills Centre (FSC) for ADaPT in 2019. Six cohorts participated in Toronto, Calgary and Halifax between September 2020 and June 2021.

In 2021, the Diversity Institute received an additional grant from FSC through the Scaling Up Skills Development initiative to serve more participants from target populations, including mid-career displaced workers and newcomers, thereby supporting digital and professional skill development. Twenty core curriculum cohorts participated between fall 2021 and winter 2023.

The impact evaluation, completed by consortium partner Blueprint, aims to assess whether ADaPT improves employment outcomes for its participants and how program design and delivery can be optimized for scaling. Specifically, it examines how closely the program is delivered as intended (i.e. implementation fidelity), participant reach and satisfaction, skill gains, and long-term labour market impacts. Using a randomized controlled trial design, the study compares outcomes across three groups: the virtual classroom (treatment group #1), the asynchronous online stream (treatment group #2), and a control group with access to LinkedIn Learning. Data was collected through surveys, interviews and administrative records, with long-term outcomes linked to Statistics Canada data sets. Early findings focus on program implementation, participant experiences and interim outcomes.

## What We're Learning

A number of ADaPT cohorts have successfully participated, with 93% of participants completing the program. Additionally, 92% of participants identified as a member of one or more equity-seeking groups, surpassing the target of 75%.

Overall, the program had a positive impact on participants' employment. Nearly 70% of participants have reported becoming employed at the time of program completion. The program's impact on job placement doesn't stop at graduation—more participants find jobs over time, particularly in digital fields. Seventy-eight percent of participants reported getting a job in a digital role within nine months after program completion. Additionally, feelings around job security and career advancement improved in participants.

Participants reported the most significant improvements in advanced digital skills, while oral communication showed the least perceived gains. This suggests that incorporating additional interactive components to strengthen communication skills could enhance overall learning outcomes.

Program outcomes varied across regions, largely due to differences in local employer engagement and participant demographics. Toronto cohorts achieved the highest employment rates, benefitting from strong, well-established employer networks that facilitated smoother transitions into digital roles. This highlights the importance of sustained partnerships with employers to align training with labour market demands.

Calgary participants, on the other hand, were generally older and had been out of school longer. The fact that a technical college was the primary partner in Calgary (rather than a university, as in Toronto and Halifax) may have influenced both participant demographics and employment outcomes. Meanwhile, Halifax participants were more likely to be newcomers and to hold advanced degrees, which may have impacted their employment trajectories.

Wage subsidies played a crucial role in increasing employer engagement and securing placements for ADaPT participants. TECHNATION's Career Ready wage subsidy program, in particular, was a key driver for employer participation, lowering hiring costs and encouraging businesses to onboard ADaPT graduates. The impact of wage subsidies was especially evident in the newcomer cohorts, as many participants were international graduates on work permits who faced additional barriers to securing employment. By offsetting financial risks, wage subsidies helped expand access to work-integrated learning opportunities and increased placement rates among ADaPT participants.

The randomized controlled trial evaluation led by Blueprint exceeded enrolment and research consent targets, with 1,093 participants randomized and 812 consenting to participate in the research. Participants valued the tailored training and accessibility of the program, but survey completion rates were lower than expected, averaging 65%–70% across cohorts. Initial findings suggest that participants are improving digital and professional skills, though impact results will be available in the final report.

## ★ Why It Matters

Programs like ADaPT are critical in addressing both labour shortages and equity gaps in the digital economy. By tailoring its approach to underserved groups, ADaPT ensures broader participation in the workforce while meeting the needs of an evolving IT sector. The program's success highlights the importance of inclusive, scalable training models that respond to regional and demographic needs. Insights from outcomes and evaluations will inform future efforts to expand ADaPT's reach and optimize its impact, thereby contributing to Canada's skills development ecosystem.



### **State of Skills: Enhancing Career Prospects and Well-Being for Canadian Youth**

To stem the recent downturn in labour market conditions of youth and to lay the groundwork for them to play a pivotal role in fostering growth and inclusion, it is imperative to address and dismantle the multiple and intersectional barriers they encounter.

[Read Thematic Report](#)

## ► What's Next

Through surveys, participants identified areas for improvement, including a need for stronger alignment between training and prior technical knowledge, more opportunities for networking, a more flexible program pace, and additional interactive exercises to enhance digital skills in the online stream.

The evaluation has continued. Additional randomized controlled trials using an updated consent model to improve survey participation rates have been taking place in 2024–2025. A final report will analyze long-term outcomes, including employment and skill gains, with findings expected to inform scaling strategies. Planned expansions include deeper regional engagement and continued tailoring for newcomer and equity-deserving groups to ensure ADaPT's impact aligns with Canada's evolving workforce needs.

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**

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