Backgrounder

Future Skills Centre Invests in Skills Initiatives to Support an Inclusive Future of Work

Toronto, June 16, 2025 – The Future Skills Centre (FSC) has announced an investment of $7.6 million through the [Skills Horizon](#) open call for proposals to support 35 new projects that will strengthen labour market inclusion and outcomes, shaping long-term solutions for Canada's skills and workforce development.

These projects focus on the priorities essential to Canada's prosperity, including solutions for labour market shifts driven by climate and technology changes, enhancing worker mobility while supporting the adaptability of the small and medium-sized businesses to achieve a critical outcome of a more inclusive economy.

All funded projects align with the [focus areas](#) the Centre believes will support Canada's prosperity.

Funding Recipients:

Pathways to Jobs

The accelerated pace of economic uncertainty means that, more than ever, Canada's workers need to upskill or reskill as they navigate to new jobs or sectors throughout their careers.

Partner: SEIU Healthcare Training Centre
Project Name: *IEN Career Pathway Program*
Location: Ontario
Canada faces a critical nursing shortage, with Ontario needing 33,200 more nurses by 2032. The IEN Career Pathway Program addresses this gap by supporting internationally educated nurses (IENs) through immigration assistance, credential evaluation, financial aid, and a 12-week education program. The program prepares candidates for licensing exams, enhances English proficiency to CELBAN standards, and helps with workforce integration. Once licensed, nurses are connected to secure, unionized jobs. The initiative will also assess the effectiveness of supports to accelerating licensure and employment among IENs, generating insights for policymakers and institutions working to expand healthcare workforce pipelines.

Partner: Purpose Construction Inc**.**
Project Name: *Scaling Purpose Homes*
Location: Manitoba
Winnipeg faces a shortage of affordable housing, barriers to construction jobs for marginalized groups, and a growing need for skilled, green construction workers. Scaling Purpose Homes will expand a successful pilot that trained 40 Indigenous participants while building five

affordable housing units. The program will construct 22 affordable units in 2025/26 while training 30 Indigenous participants, while integrating micro-credentialing, modular construction, and green building techniques, and preparing trainees for careers in sustainable construction. The project will also generate evidence on how hands-on training embedded in community housing projects impacts participant employment outcomes and workforce sustainability in green construction.

Partner: Bow Valley College
Project Name: *Advancing IEN Care Pathways*
Location: Alberta
Alberta faces healthcare workforce shortages, particularly in rural acute care and continuing care. Bow Valley College will expand its existing bridging program for Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) by introducing micro-credentials in emergency and inpatient care, geriatric and palliative care, and chronic disease management. Training will incorporate simulation-based learning, virtual reality, and high-fidelity labs. Developed in collaboration with healthcare employers, the program ensures job readiness and regulatory compliance. The project will also test the effectiveness of immersive learning technologies and targeted micro-credentials in accelerating IENs' integration into specialized healthcare roles, generating scalable insights for workforce development.

Partner: Pinnguaq Association (now operating as Ampere)
Project Name: *Assessing Pathways to Youth Employment Success in Rural, Remote, Northern, and Indigenous Communities*
Location: Nunavut, Yukon, Ontario
Indigenous and rural, remote, and northern youth (RRNI) remain underrepresented in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) careers despite Canada's growing tech workforce. Ampere's Inclusive Futures initiative has delivered multiple employment programs, but key knowledge gaps remain about which program components best support long-term employment success. This project will use surveys, focus groups, and interviews to evaluate how skills training, mentorship, and community support influence career outcomes. Findings will inform program improvements and ensure alignment with labour market needs. The research will generate recommendations for educators, policymakers, and employers to strengthen youth pathways, fostering greater inclusion in Canada's tech sector.

Tech and Automation

Technological advances and automation including AI are affecting the skills needed in Canada's labour market, and skills training will need to keep up to prepare workers and employers for a more digital and connected world.

Partner: Electricity Human Resources Canada (EHRC)
Project Name: *Powering AI: A Workforce Perspective*
Location: Canada-wide

AI is transforming Canada's electricity industry, increasing productivity while driving higher power demands, particularly from AI data centers. This project will assess workforce impacts by analyzing AI-driven skill shifts, modeling the workforce needed to expand electricity capacity, and identifying gaps in training and recruitment. Through stakeholder engagement, labor market analysis, and workforce modeling, the project will deliver actionable recommendations for upskilling, reskilling, and workforce retention. Findings will support industry, policymakers, and educators in preparing for AI-related transformations in grid optimization and renewable energy.

Partner: Suncrest College
Project Name: DATA IN a New WaY (Digital and Tech Access for Indigenous and Newcomers, Women and Youth)
Location: Saskatchewan

Rural equity-deserving groups in Saskatchewan face significant barriers to accessing digital skills training. Suncrest College, in partnership with Southeast College and Yorkton Tribal Council, will expand the Computer Science Training Through Projects program to include two First Nations cohorts and two cohorts of newcomers, women, and youth. The tuition-free program will provide equipment, internet access, and childcare, while offering mentored, project-based digital skills training. Participants will work on real-world projects, present their work, and gain a clear pathway to digital careers. In addition to service delivery, the project will evaluate the effectiveness of project-based learning and holistic supports in improving digital skills outcomes for underrepresented rural populations. Findings will inform future rural upskilling initiatives and program design.

Partner: University of Victoria
Project Name: *Evaluating Opportunities and Challenges with Digital Twin Technology Adoption*
Location: British Columbia
Digital twin technologies are transforming key sectors such as agriculture, mining, utilities, construction, and emergency response, offering opportunities to strengthen training modalities but also creating critical needs for workforce reskilling. These technologies integrate 3D data collection, data networks, AI analytics, and virtual environments, but sector readiness and training capacity remain unclear. This research will assess skills gaps, workforce barriers, and opportunities through sector interviews and surveys. Findings will inform training initiatives to prepare workers for digital twin adoption while mitigating job displacement risks. The research will provide actionable insights for industries, policymakers, and future skills experts.

Partner: The Dais at Toronto Metropolitan University
Project Name: *From promise to shared prosperity: Economic and labour implications of AI adoption in three key sectors*
Location: Canada-wide
As AI adoption accelerates, Canadian workers and employers need policies and programs to maximize benefits and mitigate risks. Building on its 2024 research with the Future Skills Centre, the Dais will expand its study of AI's impact on skills and productivity, focusing on

sectoral AI adoption in three key industries. Using updated data, economic analysis, and case studies, the project will generate actionable insights for policymakers, business leaders, and worker representatives. Deliverables will include a sector report and knowledge mobilization materials, informing better policies, workforce programs, and educational pathways to ensure Canadians equally share in AI's economic benefits.

SME Adaptability

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employ the vast majority of Canada's workforce, yet they face outsized challenges in adapting to rapid change, especially when it comes to building the skilled workforce needed to integrate technology and boost productivity.

Partner: Invest Vancouver (Metro Vancouver Regional District)
Project Name: *Regional Talent Accelerator*
Location: British Columbia
The Regional Talent Accelerator project will employ an AI-powered, demand-driven workforce development approach to address skills gaps in Metro Vancouver's innovation sectors. Led by Invest Vancouver, it will engage 60+ employers, train 120 participants (50% from equity-deserving groups), and deliver work-integrated learning. The initiative will also test the effectiveness of real-time employer engagement, AI-guided career navigation, and inclusive recruitment strategies. Outcomes will be evaluated to generate evidence on scalable, equitable approaches to workforce development, informing broader adoption across regions and sectors.

Inclusive Economy

As labour and skills disruptions persist across the country, diversifying workforces is not just an equity goal, it has become an essential strategy for driving resilience, innovation and sustainable growth across industries.

Partner: Odette School of Business
Project Name: *Advancing Fair Chance Opportunities for Justice-Involved Individuals: A Strategic Intervention with Employers*
Location: Canada-wide, Ontario, Nova Scotia
Canada faces a labor shortage, while nearly 4 million Canadians with criminal records encounter employment barriers despite legal protections. Indigenous and Black individuals are disproportionately affected due to systemic discrimination. This project will survey and interview employers across six key industries—healthcare, finance, construction, manufacturing, customer service, and food services—to assess hiring trends and barriers. Employers will receive education on fair chance hiring, and research findings will be shared via symposiums and online platforms. The research fills a critical knowledge gap on employment opportunities for individuals with criminal records.

Partner: The Re-Seasoning Coalition
Project Name: *Stoking the Flame: Exploring Equity, Inclusion, and the Black Experience in Foodservice*
Location: Ontario, Quebec, Canada-wide
Canada's foodservice industry faces systemic barriers to equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation , particularly for Black employees and customers. This project will examine social-emotional and structural barriers preventing inclusive leadership in restaurants. Using qualitative interviews, surveys, and comparative analysis, the study will assess operator challenges, consumer sentiment, and industry progress since 2021. Findings will equip foodservice operators with actionable strategies to implement inclusive policies, support Black career advancement, and improve industry practices. The research will engage policymakers, industry leaders, and community stakeholders to drive sustainable change, fostering a more equitable foodservice industry that aligns with evolving consumer expectations.

Partner: Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA)
Project Name: *An Implementation Framework for Newcomer Employment Programs: Driving Labour Market Inclusion for Refugee Youth in Nova Scotia*
Location: Nova Scotia
Refugee youth face significant employment barriers, including language proficiency, lower education levels, and racial discrimination. The Immigrant Youth Employability Project (IYEP) and Immigrant Youth Career Exploration Project (IYCEP), developed by ISANS, have successfully helped refugee youth enter the workforce since 2017. This project will evaluate these programs, engaging youth and stakeholders to develop a scalable implementation framework for skills-based employment programs. The framework will address recruitment, stakeholder engagement, program design, and evaluation, providing systemic solutions for refugee youth employment. Findings will be shared with settlement providers, employers, and policymakers to strengthen programming and improve labour market outcomes for racialized newcomer youth.

Partner: Pacifica Treatment Centre Society
Project Name: *Substance Use and Employability Study*
Location: British Columbia
Funding for career development programs supporting substance use clients has declined, leaving frontline staff untrained in integrating employment into recovery. This project will map employability services across BC, assess gaps, and determine whether current practices help or hinder labour market attachment. Through roundtables, surveys, and environmental scans, the research will inform training programs for service providers, create resource maps, and deliver policy recommendations to improve employment outcomes for individuals in early recovery. Findings will support policymakers, funders, and community agencies in developing more holistic, client-centered employment strategies.

Partner: (A.C.C.E.S.) Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services
Project Name: *Health English Language Pro: Leveraging A Physician-Driven Response to Medical Communication Skills Development for Newcomer Physicians*

Location: Canada-wide

Newcomer Physicians face challenges integrating into Canada's healthcare workforce. The Health English Language Pro (HELP) program connects Volunteer Physicians with Newcomer Physicians to improve medical communication, employability skills, and workforce navigation. Endorsed by the College of Family Physicians and Ontario Medical Association, HELP includes both structured training and wraparound supports in order to improve labour market transitions for newcomer physicians. This initiative explicitly aims to test a peer-led, physician-driven training and support model for medical professionals and to evaluate the impacts on licensure, employment, and retention outcomes.

Partner: ProEdge Consulting Group LTD
Project Name: *Advancing Workplace Inclusion for Black Immigrants in Northwest Territories*
Location: Northwest Territories, Yukon, Canada-wide

Black immigrant youth in the Northwest Territories (NWT) face systemic barriers in credential recognition, employment, and workplace integration, leading to underemployment and skill underutilization. This project will engage Black immigrant youth using surveys, photovoice, and focus groups to explore their experiences and identify barriers and potential solutions. A review of national credential recognition frameworks and workplace inclusion practices will inform policy recommendations to improve employment outcomes. Findings will be shared through reports, toolkits, webinars, and policy dialogues to drive systemic change. The project will equip policymakers, employers, and community organizations with strategies to create a more equitable and inclusive labor market.

Partner: Portage College
Project Name: *Unlocking Potential: Researching Foundational Learning Pathways for Indigenous and Northern Workforce Integration*
Location: Alberta

Northern Indigenous communities face systemic barriers to culturally relevant foundational learning, affecting education and workforce participation. This project will assess learning pathways in literacy, numeracy, and work-based skills to identify barriers, enablers, and best practices. Through data analysis, participant engagement, and case studies, findings will inform policy and program improvements to enhance scalability and cultural relevance. The project will generate evidence-based recommendations for educators, employers, policymakers, and Indigenous communities to strengthen equity, inclusion, and workforce integration. Insights will help educational institutions design better programs, support tailored learning opportunities, and inform funding priorities for inclusive economic development in Northern and Indigenous communities.

Partner: Coastal Research, Education, and Advocacy Network (CREAN)
Project Name: *Essential Services vs Essential Time Off*
Location: British Columbia

Indigenous employees in Victoria's labor market face systemic barriers due to lack of recognition and accommodation for cultural holidays and ceremonies, leading to burnout, low retention, and limited leadership opportunities. This research will engage 300 employers and

120 Indigenous employees through surveys, focus groups, and consultations on how best to develop culturally safe workplace policies. The research will explore inclusive onboarding, flexible time-off policies, and workplace cultural safety. Findings will inform employers, policymakers, and municipal inclusion goals, informing greater Indigenous representation, retention, and leadership opportunities in workplaces while strengthening community inclusion.

Partner: Eeyou Istchee College of Science and Technology
Project Name: *Professional Practice Certificate: Propel One's Career Forward with Essential Workplace Skills*
Location: Quebec
Indigenous communities in James Bay, Quebec, lack accessible post-secondary education, leaving employers struggling to find skilled workers. Eeyou Istchee College of Science and Technology (EICST) will address this gap by delivering a six-month Certificate in Professional Practice program in Chisasibi. Developed with regional employers, the in-person program will train 70 employees in digital literacy, communication, client relations, teamwork, and project coordination. Wraparound services, including tutoring, psychotherapy, and mentorship from an Elder and life coach, will support participants. The project will test how culturally grounded, employer-driven training impacts workforce attachment and personal well-being, generating a model for replication in other remote Indigenous communities.

Sustainable Jobs

The transition to a decarbonized, net-zero economy will have significant and varied impacts across Canada and significant job losses resulting in certain industries will be more than offset by new opportunities in emerging sectors. The skill sets required for jobs will change and require coordinated skills development in the coming years.

Partner: British Columbia Construction Association (BCCA)
Project Name: *Future Builders*
Location: British Columbia
British Columbia faces a skilled labor shortage in construction, particularly in green energy careers, with equity-deserving groups underrepresented in the industry. This project will train 40 individuals—20 each in Kamloops and Prince George—through an 8-week program that provides employability skills, green energy skills training, and case management support. Training will include tailored workshops, hands-on experience through ACE Community College's mobile Green workshop, and collaboration with industry stakeholders to align training with workforce needs. In addition to delivering training, the project will evaluate how short-term, community-based green construction programs influence employment outcomes and sector entry for underrepresented groups, with findings informing future workforce strategies.

Partner: Iron & Earth
Project Name: *Building on Impact: Breaking Energy Workforce Barriers*

Location: Canada-wide, Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan

Canada's green economy transition faces workforce barriers, particularly for Indigenous and Black youth, newcomers, and marginalized groups. Iron & Earth will address these challenges through a three-part approach: Community Talks in Surrey, engaging marginalized voices in policy discussions; Renewable Skills Initiative, delivering solar energy training in an Indigenous community with elder-led knowledge sharing; and the Climate Career Portal in Toronto, providing mentorship and job opportunities. The project will evaluate each component to understand what supports most effectively advance equity-deserving individuals into green careers, offering insights on strategies to advance inclusive workforce development and climate resilience across Canada.

Partner: Labour Education Centre
Project Name: *Workers' Perspectives on Alberta's Coal Workers Transition Program*
Location: Alberta

As Canada transitions away from high-carbon industries, just transition workforce programs are critical to supporting affected workers and communities. This project will evaluate Alberta's Coal Worker Transition program, which provided financial and employment assistance following the province's coal plant closures. Led by the Labour Education Centre (LEC), in collaboration with Lynks and United Steelworkers Local 1595, the research will assess the program's effectiveness, worker experiences, and areas for improvement. Using surveys, social media outreach, and direct engagement, findings will be widely shared to inform future transition policies and support workers impacted by industrial closures in Canada and beyond.

Partner: Canadian Apprenticeship Forum
Project Name: *The Demand for Green Skills and the Impact on the Supply and Demand for Apprentices and Certified Journeypersons in the Canadian Economy*
Location: Canada-wide

Canada lacks a holistic understanding of how green skills demand impacts apprenticeship needs in the skilled trades. This project will analyze supply and demand trends, linking National Occupational Classification codes with green skills and assessing trade registration trends, completion rates, and workforce gaps. The research will identify the trades most affected by decarbonization and projected shortfalls of certified journeypersons. A final report will inform employers, unions, educators, and policymakers to help train apprentices for a greener economy. Insights will also guide the environmental sector in promoting relevant trades to diverse groups, strengthening Canada's skilled workforce.

Partner: Canada Green Building Council
Project Name: *Decarbonization Pathways for the Green Building Workforce*
Location: Canada-wide

Canada's building sector accounts for 13% of national greenhouse gas emissions, and decarbonizing it will require new skills in construction and energy management. The Canada Green Building Council (CAGBC) will develop an updated green building workforce report, analyzing employment trends, GDP impact, and decarbonization pathways. The report will

model three scenarios: current growth, moderate decarbonization, and significant decarbonization, assessing the workforce implications for each scenario. It will also examine the engagement of underrepresented groups in the sector and strategies for inclusion. Findings will help policymakers and industry leaders understand workforce needs, support training investments, and position Canada's building trades for a low-carbon economy.

Partner: The Pollution Probe Foundation
Project Name: *Amped Up - Upskilling Canada's heavy duty vehicle mechanics to support the transition to electric school buses*
Location: Ontario, Quebec, Canada-wide
Heavy-duty vehicles produce 24% of Canada's transportation emissions, despite being only 2% of on-road vehicles. Electric school buses are among the easiest heavy duty vehicles to electrify, but heavy-duty diesel mechanics need upskilling to maintain and repair these vehicles. Pollution Probe will conduct research to assess existing upskilling initiatives, review international best practices, and interview relevant experts on effective training models. Findings will inform policy recommendations for federal and provincial governments to support targeted workforce training in support of electric school bus adoption.

Partner: Mining Association of BC
Project Name: *Mining Skills Innovation Research Project*
Location: British Columbia
Canada's mining sector will require up to 256,000 new workers over the next decade to support critical minerals development, essential for green technologies and net-zero goals. However, skills shortages and training gaps threaten industry growth, particularly in British Columbia, where demand is rising. This research will analyze labor market trends, identify key skill and training needs, and develop a workforce accelerator framework to address occupational gaps. Findings will inform training strategies, workforce inclusion efforts, and innovative learning approaches, ensuring Indigenous, rural, and underrepresented workers can access opportunities. The research will equip the mining sector with actionable strategies for long-term workforce sustainability.

Designing Solutions

Designing Solutions is a six-month Future Skills Centre program that helps organizations tackling complex workforce challenges turn promising ideas into stakeholder-validated, pilot-ready project designs. Through a guided sprint, participants access coaching, tools, and peer learning to strengthen and test solutions for real-world implementation.

Partner: Kitikmeot Heritage Society
Project Name: Designing a Pathway for Cultural Sector Workforce Revival in the North
Location: Nunavut
With fewer than 500 fluent Inuinnaqtun speakers remaining, the next generation of Inuinnait leaders is unprepared to take on cultural stewardship roles due to historical disruptions and trauma. This project proposes a Community Elder Training Program to address this gap. Through consultations and intentional design through the Designing Solutions Program, the Kitikmeot Heritage Society will refine the concept, engage community partners, and develop an innovative approach to mentoring and certifying future knowledge keepers—reclaiming cultural continuity through workforce development.

Partner: Literacy Link South Central
Project Name: Skills + Employment Preparation = Meaningful Work
Location: Ontario
Job seekers with complex needs in the London region face a disjointed system between literacy training and employment services. This project will design a new approach to integrate these services – supporting smoother transitions to employment. Through the Designing Solutions program, the team will consult with job seekers, service providers, and community organizations to co-design and test innovative referral and pathway models that break down systemic silos and improve outcomes for marginalized clients.

Partner: Université de Sherbrooke

Project Name: Améliorer l'accompagnement des entrepreneurs en situation de handicap : une approche adaptée

Location: Quebec

Entrepreneurs living with disabilities encounter persistent structural and psychological barriers that limit their access to entrepreneurship support. Through the Designing Solutions program, Université de Sherbrooke will lead broad consultations with disability advocates, mentors, and entrepreneurs to shape a model that includes adaptive mentorship, psychosocial supports, and digital accessibility.

Partner: Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities (M.O.S.A.I.C.)

Project Name: Connecting Refugees with Lower English Fluency to Employment

Location: British Columbia

Refugees with limited English fluency are often excluded from traditional employment programs. This project will design a new approach to refugee support that integrates language learning with employer engagement and job placement. Through the Designing Solutions program, M.O.S.A.I.C. will consult with refugee communities, employers, and service partners to co-design a program that is responsive to the lived realities of lower-English newcomers. Unlike traditional services, this model will focus on systematic employer engagement, cohort-based job matching, and wraparound support.

Partner: The Regional Municipality of Waterloo

Project Name: Pathways to Self-Employment

Location: Ontario

Ontario Works participants and other low-income residents often face barriers to traditional employment and need accessible routes to entrepreneurship. This project aims to design a self-employment pathway tailored to their realities. Through the Designing Solutions program, the project team will lead consultations with potential participants, community partners, and educators to refine program elements such as mentorship, training, and seed funding. These insights will guide the creation of an innovative, pilot-ready approach to inclusive microenterprise development.

Partner: The ASE Community Foundation for Black Canadians with Disabilities

Project Name: The Black Neuro Inclusive Youth Workforce Transition Model Development

Location: Alberta, Ontario, Canada-wide

Black neurodiverse youth face intersecting systemic barriers in realizing their education and employment goals. This project aims to create a culturally grounded workforce support model that addresses both racial and neurological inclusion. With the support of the Designing Solutions Program, ASE will engage youth, families, service providers, and employers in a

collaborative design process. These consultations will help refine the model's design and lay the foundation for a bold, intersectional approach to inclusive employment innovation.

Partner: Kuponya Innovations Inc.
Project Name: Pathways to Resilient Housing and Workforce Empowerment in Northern Canada
Location: Canada-wide

Northern Indigenous communities face severe housing shortages and limited access to skilled trades. Kuponya's "house-in-a-box" concept offers an integrated solution through local housing assembly and workforce training. Through the Designing Solutions Program, Kuponya will consult with Indigenous organizations, educational partners, and local leaders to shape a training program for Indigenous individuals to build skills in home assembly, maintenance, and repair, reducing dependency on external labor. This process will support the creation of an innovative, self-sustaining approach that aligns housing and workforce development in the North.

Partner: Reclaim Community Collaborative Design Organization Inc.
Project Name: Empowering Citizen Developers: Creating a Career Pathway for Community-led Development
Location: Canada-wide

Community-led housing offers a powerful alternative to mainstream development, but aspiring citizen developers lack structured pathways into the field. This project will design an approach to formalizing Citizen Development as a profession. Reclaim will lead consultations with housing advocates, community organizers, and policy experts to refine an educational model and credentialing framework. The resulting approach will offer an innovative, scalable way to grow the next generation of grassroots housing leaders.

Partner: Youth Employment Services Foundation
Project Name: From Youth Protection to Youth Empowerment: Crafting Solutions for Youth Employability and Well-Being
Location: Quebec

Youth transitioning out of Quebec's protection system face structural barriers to employment and housing stability. This project seeks to co-design an employment support model tailored to their needs. Through the Designing Solutions Program, Youth Employment Services Foundation will conduct deep engagement with youth, community organizations, and policymakers to shape a program that is trauma-informed, flexible, and youth-led. The process will lead to an innovative intervention ready for piloting, focused on long-term economic mobility and well-being.

Partner: Zero Emissions Innovation Centre (ZEIC)
Project Name: Creating Real, Tangible Pathways into BC's Clean Economy
Location: British Columbia

Jobseekers are often unclear on how to access emerging green jobs, despite growing opportunities in the clean economy. This project will design an interactive, accessible tool to bridge that gap. Through the Designing Solutions program, ZEIC will consult with industry experts, training providers, and jobseekers to refine the tool's structure and usability. These consultations will shape an innovative career navigation platform that enables diverse workers to enter and thrive in sustainable careers.