Status update

Leveraging Government Data Initiative: Benchmarking Model

April 2025

Blueprint

About the Future Skills Centre

The [Future Skills Centre](#) (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 FSC was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), Blueprint and the Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).

About Blueprint

[Blueprint](#) was founded on the simple idea that evidence is a powerful tool for change. We work with policymakers and practitioners to create and use evidence to solve complex policy and program challenges. Our vision is a social policy ecosystem where evidence is used to improve lives, build better systems and policies and drive social change.

Our team brings together a multidisciplinary group of professionals with diverse capabilities in policy research, data analysis, design, evaluation, implementation and knowledge mobilization.

At the FSC, Blueprint works with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively generate and use evidence to help solve pressing future skills challenges.
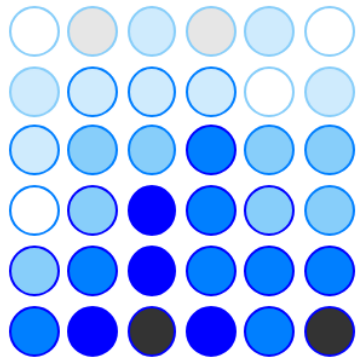
Building data capacity of the skills ecosystem

Unlocking the power of data to better meet the changing needs of Canadians.

Unlocking the power of data is foundational to a future-state skills ecosystem where publicly funded services are navigable, supportive, targeted, integrated and transparent. Through our experience with frontline practitioners, community leaders and government, we've identified three challenges that slow our progress:

1. **Community data capacity gaps.** Service providers collect data to meet reporting requirements, but these data rarely enable rapid learning, continuous improvement and impact measurement. *Service providers struggle to know if they are maximizing impact.*
2. **Friction within data-linking.** Opportunities to combine administrative data (e.g., tax records) with program data, like Statistics Canada's Social Data Linking Environment, could provide seamless ways to track long-term outcomes—but they are under-utilized. *Long-term outcomes from skills training remain difficult to track.*
3. **Under-leveraged datasets.** Governments collect large volumes of data that are not used due to constraints in time, technology and skills. *The ecosystem is missing insights about service effectiveness.*

Building data capacity

In response, we launched the Building Data Capacity portfolio to show how we can *put data to work* for Canadians. We are doing so via two workstreams:

Leveraging Government Data (LGD)

We are testing the use of government data holdings to understand needs and service demand, support continuous learning and improve outcomes.

- Using StatCan data to measure long-term outcomes of Canadians participating in our Scaling Up Skills Development programs; and
- Developing a benchmarking model that leverages the Labour Market Program Data Platform (LMPDP) to identify outcomes benchmarks for employment and training programs.

Practitioner Data Initiative (PDI)

We are providing funding, tools, advice and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations to help them better collect, manage and use data.

- Providing funding, advice, technical assistance and tools to 15 non-profits to help build their capacity to collect, manage and use data; and
- Producing evidence on initiative outcomes to support scaling and build a sustainable path to help more organizations develop data capacity.

Context

About the Leveraging Government Data: Benchmarking Model

To understand the impact of workforce development programs, interventions need to be measured using rigorous methods. A randomized controlled trial (RCT) is considered the 'gold standard' of doing so, but it requires time, resources and expertise and cannot be feasibly utilized on an ongoing basis. Benchmarking outcomes offers an alternative approach. By systematically comparing the performance of programs against a 'benchmark,' organizations can monitor the effectiveness of their models without needing complex research designs.

Blueprint is developing a novel benchmarking model to help funders and service delivery organizations forecast the performance of new interventions and enhance them over time. Our model aims to use existing microdata—describing the characteristics and outcomes of historical labour market interventions—to generate predictions that are both precise and generalizable to new programs.

Currently, our model uses data from projects in the FSC-funded Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio. Our aim is to complement this with data from ESDC's Labour Market Program Data Platform (LMPDP), which will greatly enhance the model's relevance and utility. Ultimately, the model is designed to offer guidance to practitioners, tailored to their specific target audiences, program features and contexts.

The project to date

Blueprint released a design report for the benchmarking model in June, 2024. The report outlines the goals and design of the model across five areas:

1. Context: outlining the benefits and drawbacks of RCTs, quasi-experimental methods, and existing benchmarking models; and how our model improves on these designs.
2. Learning Agenda: the research questions we aim to answer with the model.
3. The Benchmarking Model: explains the model itself including its objectives, structure, and current and future data sources.
4. Example Case Study: provides an example of a practical application of the model/
5. What's Next?: outlines upcoming phases in model development and associated reporting.

Since the release of the design report, we have focused on two key areas of model development:

- **Integrating FSC pilot data:** We have continued to integrate data from FSC pilots in the Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio as the data is collected, and using it to refine the prototype model.

- **Exploring administrative sources:** We have also pursued leveraging large-scale administrative data sources, particularly ESDC's Labour Market Program Data Platform (LMPDP), which would significantly improve the accuracy, flexibility, and overall utility of the model.

Current status

Integrating FSC pilot data

As of March 2025, we have integrated 8,398 records across 11 programs in the Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio.

This data provides a strong basis for the prototype model, by covering both a diverse range of programs and of participants in those programs. However, while we will continue to use this data to improve the model as additional data on participant outcomes becomes available, this set of projects is no longer recruiting new participants and therefore can no longer expand the data set used to train the model.

Currently, this presents some limitations to the generalizability of the model. While the FSC data sets can support the accomplishment of some of our research goals, the practical objective of using the benchmarking model to predict the outcomes of future programs and pilots requires a larger, more comprehensive data set. To this end, leveraging ESDC's LMPDP to improve the model is a critical step to meeting the opportunity it presents.

Exploring administrative data sets

Blueprint initiated conversations with ESDC in July 2023 regarding leveraging the LMPDP to support the benchmarking model. Since the LMPDP contains well over 100 times as many records as our Scaling Up Skills Development dataset, using it to improve the predictions of the benchmarking model would significantly expand both the model's precision and generalizability.

While some progress has been made regarding LMPDP access for this purpose, as of the timing of this update Blueprint has not been granted LMPDP access.

What's next?

Blueprint is continuing to refine the model by both integrating remaining FSC pilot data, and exploring access to the LMPDP to improve both the breadth and accuracy of our predictions.

Our upcoming *Final Report* will describe the model's initial performance and outputs across a range of contexts, supporting a stronger understanding of where its predictions can be used and at what level of confidence. The content of the *Final Report* will depend upon whether LMPDP access can be obtained beforehand:

- **With LMPDP access:** The final report will contain a more in-depth analysis of the benchmarking models' predictive capacity across different contexts, under the assumption that with the breadth of data provided by the LMPDP it can create robust and generalizable predictions.

- **Without LMPDP access:** The final report will focus more on the proof-of-concept model we can generate using the Scaling Up Skills Development data, which illustrates the model's long-term capabilities but likely represents too small a sample size for robust prediction.

The *Final Report* will also include a roadmap for ongoing development and dissemination of the model, focusing on use cases that sustainably support a range of stakeholders in better planning, iterating and measuring skills programming.

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