

Project Insights Report

# Youth Jobs and Employment Career Pathing



## PARTNERS

Diversity Institute



## LOCATIONS

Ontario



## INVESTMENT

\$500,000



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## ☰ Executive Summary

Building on Future Skills Centre-funded projects like [Study Buddy](#) and other projects on K–12, the Diversity Institute identified significant gaps in access to relevant career information for youth and their parents, teachers and guidance counsellors. Many youth, especially those from equity-deserving groups, are not aware of what career options they have and do not know what skills they need to achieve them. To address these gaps, the Diversity Institute designed and tested the Future Skills & Careers platform with the Peel District School Board (PDSB). The aim was to provide access to information about labour market trends and career opportunities for Black and diverse youth and their families and teachers to complement existing tools such as [myBlueprint](#). By providing tailored resources, detailed career information and labour market trends, the platform sought to empower youth with opportunities to explore emerging fields, improve career readiness and overcome challenges, and ultimately achieve long-term success.

Content for the platform was co-developed with youth enrolled in digital skills and entrepreneurship training. The platform was tested from May 16 to June 26, 2024, with two high-school classrooms. Forty-seven students reviewed the website, and 31 students completed the survey. This resulted in a response rate of 66%.

The results showed that many users had a positive experience navigating the website. Most agreed that the platform provided relevant career information. Similarly, most users felt confident in finding information on the website. Some users found the platform's language to be too complex, although most still found the language easy to understand. User feedback on subpages was very positive. The results will inform future updates to the website to ensure it meets the needs of its target users, and ultimately to support students in exploring and planning their future careers.

#### KEY INSIGHTS

- 1 Eighty percent of users agreed that the platform provided relevant career information; 83.8% of users agreed or strongly agreed that the website's purpose was clear; and 73.4% found the language easy to understand.
- 2 Respondents praised the website's quizzes for helping guide students' career exploration, and they recommended incorporating more interactive activities that align with students' skills and strengths.
- 3 Seventy percent of users agreed or strongly agreed that the website helped them understand the different career paths available, and less than 7% of users disagreed.

## ► The Issue

A complex mix of socioeconomic, cultural, social capital and educational factors shape career choices for youth in Canada. For Black and racialized youth, systemic barriers often limit career options and their ability to see a better future for themselves. Challenges include lack of family capital, limited role models, insufficient career guidance and minimal support from the educational system. These barriers, rooted in socioeconomic, cultural and educational disparities, are further compounded by race and gender biases, all of which significantly limit career opportunities for these youth.



## What We Investigated

To address these barriers and gaps in support for youth, especially Black and racialized youth, the Diversity Institute developed the [Future Skills & Careers platform](#) in collaboration with youth and the PDSB. The platform was designed to address the challenges these youth face by offering critical resources like mentorship, diverse professional profiles, digital skills training and career development tools. The website's tools are designed to help youth see the different career options available to them and to make decisions about the paths to reach them.

A pilot project was conducted in partnership with the PDSB to develop and test the platform's ability to supplement existing curricula and tools to enhance support for inclusive career pathfinding. The goals of the pilot focused on the following:

1. Resource consolidation: This project developed an informative website that centralized valuable insights on labour market trends, career pathways and educational opportunities. This platform served as a one-stop resource, integrating existing materials to guide students and their support networks in making informed career choices.
2. User-centred design and evaluation: This project prototyped the website, which was developed with user engagement at its core. It also tested and evaluated feedback from diverse users, including students, parents, teachers and counsellors. This ensured the platform met the needs of its audience while remaining user-friendly and effective.

3. Operational integration: This project defined the functional requirements to make the platform operational and ensured seamless integration with other career and educational platforms such as Pathways, MyStarttr and Magnet. This enhanced the user experience and expanded the resources available to those seeking guidance in career planning.

Unlike [myBlueprint](#), which focuses mainly on self-assessment, the Future Skills & Careers platform provides detailed labour market data, professional development insights and guidance on career pathways. It helps students explore emerging fields, such as digital entrepreneurship and technology, thereby giving them pathways to equip themselves with skills needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving economy.

We conducted a survey with PDSB to evaluate the Future Skills & Careers platform on the following:

- accessibility;
- ease of navigation;
- clarity of purpose;
- content relevance and visual relevance;
- effectiveness (by examining user experience);
- usefulness, relevance and helpfulness of resources provided.

Two high-school classrooms were invited to test the platform and provide feedback through an online survey. The survey was open from May 16 to June 26, 2024. Forty-seven students responded, and 31 completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 66%. User feedback was analyzed descriptively and was supplemented by feedback from key informants including PDSB teachers, counsellors and administrators.

## **What We're Learning**

The evaluation revealed that many users had a positive experience navigating the website. Specifically, 32.3% strongly agreed and 35.5% agreed that the website is easy to navigate; a small portion (3.2%) disagreed and 29% remained neutral. Similarly, most users felt confident in finding information on the website, with 19.4% strongly agreeing and 45.2% agreeing, although 9.7% of users did not find information easily and 25.8% were neutral. User feedback on subpages, including “Get started,” “Opportunities” and “Guidance,” was overwhelmingly positive. About 90% of respondents found each of those subpages to be somewhat or very useful.

Areas for improvement include simplifying the platform’s navigation, updating content on emerging career fields and expanding interactive features such as quizzes and career planning tools. The “Prepare” and “Trends” pages received more mixed feedback and would benefit from updated labour market data and more detailed career advice. An additional opportunity for improvement focuses on the complexity of the language. While 73.4% of users found the platform’s language easy to understand, a few (3.3%) suggested that simplifying the language could further enhance comprehension, and 23.3% remained neutral. Regarding visual relevance, nearly two-thirds (63.4%) agreed that the images were suitable for the content, although 6.7% disagreed and 30% were neutral. By addressing these gaps, the platform can better support students in exploring and planning their future careers.

## ★ Why It Matters

Many youth lack the social capital and resources needed to navigate career options. This can lead to youth taking or remaining in lower-paying jobs due to insufficient educational and skills requirements. It is a particularly acute problem facing youth from equity-deserving groups, including Black and racialized youth, and is deeply connected to socioeconomic status.

These barriers undermine students' confidence and discourage them from pursuing ambitious career goals, creating a cycle of limited opportunities. For women, particularly in men-dominated fields like STEM, these biases are compounded by gender stereotypes.

As the findings from this pilot evaluation show, the Future Skills & Careers platform is an effective tool to help youth explore careers, access mentorship and envision different futures for themselves. Moreover, the model could be leveraged for use across sectors for youth from specific equity-deserving groups.



### **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

The results will inform future updates to the website, ensuring it meets the needs of its target users, including Black and diverse youth, educators and career counsellors. Further work will be undertaken to promote the platform and explore its utility in other contexts.

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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