

Project Insights Report

Path To Customer Success



PARTNERS

The Career Foundation Ontario



LOCATIONS

Ontario



INVESTMENT

\$1,749,904



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CONTRIBUTORS

Ghazala Knight,
Policy Analyst

Executive Summary

The Path to Customer Success (Path2CS) project based in Toronto, Ontario aimed to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on diverse women. The project focused on the intersection of women who balance the primary responsibility of caregiving and domestic work; are predominantly Indigenous- and Black-identified; and were working in the retail sector when the pandemic hit. The project aimed to leverage the professional skills of this group of women for upskilling into the IT sector via training, holistic support and connections. The goal of Path2CS was to foster career resilience and enhance employability in technology-based roles.

Path2CS trained 120 diverse women as certified remote workers in customer success and data analytics. The training program utilized a gender-based lens that addressed the realities of working from home while balancing both family and domestic responsibilities.

Tailored interventions and comprehensive support services were integral to the project's success. Many of the participating women were coping with increased family care burdens, children's educational responsibilities and meeting the financial needs of the home. A good understanding of the participants' barriers supported Path2CS's ability to address employer expectations in negotiating flexible and remote work policies that focus on results-based productivity versus the traditional 9–5 workday.

KEY INSIGHTS

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Retention and capacity hurdles highlighted the need for deeper employer integration. Many SMEs struggled with understanding and developing customer success roles, impacting project outcomes. Moving forward, incorporating employers more actively in training design will help align needs and boost success.

- 2 The project successfully engaged 120 diverse women in training as certified remote workers, and 81% of participants secured employment upon completion.
- 3 Holistic support drives career resilience. Path2SC's wraparound services, from mental health supports to access to emergency transportation costs, daycare support and technical hardware allowances empowered participants to navigate disruptions and achieve long-term success in their careers.

► The Issue

Workers in customer-facing retail roles are increasingly feeling the impacts of accelerated automation. This trend disproportionately impacts women from equity-deserving groups, many of whom are in the retail workforce. The social distancing guidelines of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this trend. Women were disproportionately impacted by the additional care and educational responsibilities during the long-lasting lockdowns. During the pandemic, many women lost their jobs or left the labour market to care for children and others. Others were forced to juggle full-time care with full-time remote work.



🔧 What We Investigated

This project created P2CS, an opportunity for women from equity-deserving groups to take a 12-week training in customer success and data analytics in a remote work context while also having access to a suite of wraparound supports to address barriers to success. The project aimed to transition women from relatively unstable work to more stable jobs with potential for career progression.

The project developed three sector-focused micro-credentials, engaging end users in the design process and conducting knowledge mobilization activities to enhance awareness and access to career development information. Path2CS also successfully engaged participants in discussions on bias in recruitment, career advancement strategies and the importance of upskilling for career growth.

The program included ongoing evaluation; feedback from an industry advisory council; and strategic partnerships with organizations such as Tata Consultancy Services Ltd., First Work, Canadian Professional Sales Association, Lighthouse Labs and Riipen Inc.

What We're Learning

A total of 120 women participated in Path2CS, where they were equipped with both soft and hard skills to transition into the technology sector. Of the participants, 70% identified as racialized, 62% were 30–49 years old and 49% were highly educated (obtained a university degree or PhD, Masters or university above bachelor level).

The program's results are encouraging

Path2SC achieved an 87% graduation rate across cohorts. Of those who responded to the post-program survey, 81% secured employment post-program and 83% maintained employment one year later. Participant satisfaction was high among participants and employers who responded to the post-program survey. A large majority expressed satisfaction with the program, highlighting the program's ability to meet their needs and expectations. Unfortunately, similar to other training and skills interventions, it proved difficult for project coordinators to obtain post-program feedback from participants on their employment status, which limits our understanding of the longer-term impacts of the intervention.

Wraparound supports bolster success

Path2SC was designed intentionally with wraparound supports that fostered career resiliency to face future disruption. The project provided participants with customized referrals to women-focused services and mental health services. It also directly supported participants with emergency transportation costs, daycare support and technical hardware allowances as needed. In addition to these social service-focused supports, partnerships with professionals, employers and sector-specific associations facilitated mentorship, networking and enhanced training outcomes.

Challenges included participant retention and employer capacity

Project partners noted several challenges in implementation, including participant retention and that many small- and medium-sized employers with whom the project engaged did not fully understand the role of customer success within a business or have the capacity to develop that role within their current structure. In the future, the project team would opt to integrate employers into the design of the training more thoroughly to ensure a common understanding of needs.

★ Why It Matters

The world of work is in the midst of a massive, rapidly evolving transition characterized by increasing automation and the proliferation of artificial intelligence. Research from the [Institute for Work & Health](#) predicts a more profound impact on women.

Programs that promote women's attachment to the labour market should integrate a good understanding of the barriers that participating women face, including Indigenous women and Black women who face discrimination and have experienced increasing levels of anxiety and depression. Many projects serving equity-deserving women have pointed to the need to provide support for family care, mental health and financial security alongside employment and career advancement opportunities. Programs must also integrate these lived realities into how programs are designed, for example, allowing for remote access and flexibility in delivery.



State of Skills: Unleashing AI into the skills development ecosystem

To reap the benefits that AI has to offer, its adoption and deployment should be a collaborative and inclusive process that recognizes and addresses genuine concerns individuals have about AI and technology more broadly.

[Read Thematic Report](#)

► What's Next

The Career Foundation continues to [provide training](#) and career services to job seekers across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, and virtually across Canada.

Have questions about our work? Do you need access to a report in English or French? Please contact communications@fsc-ccf.ca.

How to Cite This Report

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