



Project Insights Report

Career Development Professional Centre

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Executive Summary

The Career Development Professional Centre (CDPC), led by the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF), is testing the effectiveness of a national body to unify Canada's career development sector by providing foundational training, fostering professionalization, and encouraging collaboration among Career Development Professionals (CDPs). The report details the successful implementation of the training program, the launch of the National Career Development Certification (NCDC), and the creation of networking opportunities through "ChatCDP" interactive sessions. Findings suggest that the foundational training is the most valued component of the Centre and is fostering professionalization among participants, but greater investment is needed to increase its reach and scope to address the current underinvestment and fractured sector.

KEY INSIGHTS

-  Participants praised foundational training for its relevance and quality – 94% were satisfied with what they learned and found it applicable to their work, and 96% would recommend it to colleagues.
-  The National Career Development Certification (NCDC) enhances the professional identity and credibility of CDPs across Canada, with higher than anticipated interest in the pilot, highlighting its importance.
-  98% of alumni agreed they had learned valuable skills a year later, and 90% continued applying reflective and continuous learning practices in their work.

The Issue

Many career development professionals (CDPs) lack access to training and upskilling opportunities, which restricts their ability to stay current with evolving workforce demands and best practices in career development. This gap is further exacerbated by the absence of a national certification.

Any existing certifications are not yet endorsed by all governments, reducing their perceived value in the job market. Without proper certification, CDPs struggle to gain recognition and credibility in their field. CDPs operate in diverse settings, including non-profits, educational institutions, and private organizations, with varying roles, credentials, and resources. This fragmentation weakens professional identity and limits opportunities for networking and collective growth. Employment services are governed provincially and territorially, leading to up to 13 different approaches to career services. While this allows for locally responsive services, it complicates capacity building, advocacy, data gathering, and the coordination of initiatives, making it challenging to create a unified commitment to evidence-based service delivery.

WHAT WE'RE INVESTIGATING

The Career Development Professional Centre (CDPC) was established to address the critical issues faced by Career Development Professionals (CDPs) in Canada. To date, the CDPC has six core components:

- Building a new era foundational training: an affordable, accessible, four-day training course that establishes common language and baseline competencies for CDPs.
- Social learning community: a dynamic hub for CDPs to share insights and connect through topic specific groups, discussion forums, and community announcements.
- Resource library: provides access to peer-reviewed literature to help inform CDPs of relevant and timely research and mobilize emerging evidence.
- Events calendar: an inventory of pan-Canadian and international training events and opportunities.
- National certification: the Centre helps maintain standards and

supports the launch of Canada's National Career Development

Certification (NCDC) by convening interest holders, establishing the National Certification Advisory Committee (NCAC), and securing partnerships with the Nova Scotia Career Development Association (NSCDA) to administer the program.

- Advocacy: the Centre's leadership team leverages relationships with government bodies and stakeholders to produce policy briefings and raise awareness of the sector.

The evaluation of these efforts examined the implementation, uptake, user experience, effectiveness, and sustainability of the six core components.

During the first phase, evaluation data was collected from April to October 2023. The first phase focused on launching the Building a new era foundational training, social learning community and resource library. The training was delivered through three online modules and one in-person module. The social learning community and resource library are housed together on the CDPC's online platform. Evaluation of this phase was done through surveys with 452 training participants and 957 platform users, interviews with 14 stakeholders, and administrative data on platform usage and engagement. Additional follow-up surveys and interviews explored participants' application of learning and barriers to engagement. This approach provided insights into user experiences, satisfaction, and outcomes, while identifying opportunities for continuous improvement in training delivery and platform functionality.

The second phase of implementation and evaluation included data collected from November 2023 to November 2024, using a mixed-methods approach that included administrative data, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. This phase of the evaluation sought to determine whether the CDPC helped to strengthen CDPs professionalism in relation to scope of practice, connection to a professional community, building a sense of professional identity and adopting informed practice.



What We Investigated

The first phase of evaluation from April to October 2023 found that the CDPC was effectively enhancing CDP capacity and fostering professional identity. Training participants reported significant gains in confidence and knowledge, with mastery improvements of 40% to 50% in key areas such as career development processes and trauma-informed practice. In-person training was particularly valued for building connections, while the social learning community supported ongoing collaboration. Challenges included limited platform engagement, with users citing time constraints and lack of clarity on platform benefits. Early feedback highlighted the need for streamlined platform navigation and clearer communication about available resources.

The second phase of evaluation from November 2023 to November 2024 covered insights from 10 cohorts of foundational training, the implementation of the National Career Development Certification, as well as ongoing efforts to support the online community and resources.

In 2024, foundational training was adapted from hybrid to a fully in-person or facilitated online format. It engaged a wide range of CDPs, with a priority on those who would otherwise not access training, including Indigenous CDPs and those in remote communities. The Centre delivered 10 cohorts of foundational training across five provinces and territories (an additional 13 cohorts were completed by the end of October 2024); 191 CDPs attended training and the majority completed it. Most participants faced no challenges to participation. The majority of respondents recommended the foundational training, were satisfied with the knowledge gained, found it relevant to their work, and felt they were more aware of the importance of research about career development after completing the training. Respondents valued facilitators' open, flexible approach. Nearly all felt they presented learning objectives clearly and felt they adequately explained approaches and concepts, answered questions, and provided support throughout the course. Training shows signs of longer-term impact on CDPs. Half or more participants indicated improvements in 10 out of 12 areas of practice. Alumni reported benefits one year later, with most past participants agreeing that they learned valuable skills and said they used the skills they learned in their daily work.

Additionally, most felt more connected to the sector, read about best practices and/or new evidence in the sector after participating, and they expanded their professional networks (and nearly all attributed this to the training).

On the online community and resources. While the CDPC prioritized training over building its online community in 2024, it did increase opportunities for CDPs to connect through 'ChatCDP,' which were online networking sessions that provided CDPs with opportunities to exchange knowledge and overcome isolation. There were 117 ChatCDP registrations for the 11 sessions, with six general 'drop-in' sessions and five sessions to discuss topics such as mental health, ethics, and AI. All who responded to the post-ChatCDP survey were satisfied with the events they attended. Most noted gaining new knowledge that will inform their practice and said they learned about relevant resources, felt an opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences, and felt more connected to their fellow CDPs.

Twenty-seven summaries have been posted to the Resource Library since our last report. All who used the Resource Library were satisfied with the quality of content. In 2024, the CDPC conducted a mapping study with 285 managers and employers in the sector, with plans to develop a curated repository of key professional supports targeted to the broad range of needs identified by managers.

On National Career Development Certification (NCDC): After years of sector-wide dialogue, convening stakeholders, and developing a competency-based approach to certification, the Centre established the National Certification Advisory Committee; secured a partnership with Nova Scotia Career Development Association to create a dedicated Career Certification team to administer the program; and piloted the certification exam. The National Career Development Certification (NCDC) program officially launched for the sector at large in December 2024. The Centre continues to support certification by hosting and maintaining the profession's Pan-Canadian Competency Framework for Career

Development Professionals, National Competency Profile, Code of Ethics, and 'Taking Charge' self-assessment on its website and working closely with the National Certification Advisory Committee, Nova Scotia Career Development Association, and interest holders across Canada.

✓ What We're Learning

The Centre is effectively enhancing CDP capacity and fostering professional identity. Training participants reported significant gains in confidence and knowledge, with mastery improvements of 40% to 50% in key areas such as career development processes and trauma-informed practice. In-person training was particularly valued for building connections, while the Social Learning Community supported ongoing collaboration. One challenge, however, was participants' limited platform engagement; users cited time constraints and lack of clarity on platform benefits. Early feedback highlights the need for streamlined platform navigation and clearer communication about available resources.

★ Why It Matters

Career development is a vital yet underutilized lever for addressing Canada's workforce challenges. The CDPC addresses this gap by equipping CDPs with the skills, tools, and connections needed to support workers in a rapidly changing labor market. By fostering a unified, professionalized career development sector, the CDPC contributes to more effective career services, benefiting both workers and employers. Its scalable model has the potential to inform broader efforts to enhance workforce development systems across Canada. Advisory members and interest holders in the project agree that federal funding is essential for the CDPC's sustainability in 2026 and beyond. The Government of Canada invests substantially in public career and employment services. The CDPC is demonstrating its potential to optimize the Government's return on this investment. Interest holders recognize the need to continue building the business case for the CDPC through targeted advocacy and engagement with federal, provincial, and territorial governments. They will communicate an evidence-based, data-driven explanation of the needs and barriers to CDP capacity-building in Canada as well as how the CDPC is a cost-effective response.



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**

Looking ahead, the CDPC plans to:

- Make foundational training available to an estimated 500 CDPs, ensuring that practitioners in need can continue to access training across the country. This funding is critical to reach CDPs who would otherwise have no training in career development and to sustain momentum and impact.
- Further invest in user experience upgrades to its online platforms. These enhancements aim to improve accessibility, engagement, and satisfaction among users, ensuring that their interactions with the CDPC's digital tools are seamless and effective.
- Develop case studies and policy briefs to highlight the CDPC's impacts and illustrate how it aligns with federal priorities: cost-effective approaches to building the capacity of a CDP workforce ready to help Canadians confidently navigate the labour market.

A final report on this project is expected in early 2026.

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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<https://fsc-ccf.ca/projects/career-development-centre/>

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