



Project Insights Report

# Reboot Plus Expansion



**PARTNERS**

Douglas College  
PEERs Employment and Education Resources  
Blueprint ADE



**LOCATIONS**

Alberta  
British Columbia  
Newfoundland and Labrador  
Ontario



**INVESTMENT**

\$5,277,482



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## Executive Summary

Reboot Plus is designed to re-engage and improve outcomes for youth (aged 17–24) at risk of not finishing high school or unsure of their academic and career trajectories. Via 16 weeks of classroom-based and off-site activities at college sites, Reboot Plus engages youth in career development and pathway planning support, raises awareness of this demographic among employers, and arranges for youth to meet with professionals and employers in their fields of interest.

Program staff liaise with local school boards to recruit participants; enlist boards of trade and chambers of commerce to recruit professionals; and provide instruction to youth, along with wraparound support and ongoing, post-program assistance. The curriculum takes a holistic, flexible, low-pressure approach, incorporating principles of diversity, equity and inclusion; experiential learning; Universal Design for Learning; and the Hope-Centred Model of Career Development. It also introduces youth to several career theories to accommodate diverse learning styles.

After operating the program for several years in BC, Douglas College received Future Skills Centre funding in 2022 to bring the model to three new provinces, through partnerships with Bow Valley College in Alberta, Humber College and Fanshawe College in Ontario, and the College of the North Atlantic in Newfoundland and Labrador. Expanding the geographic reach and size of the populations served would test the scalability and portability of the model and expand the support to vulnerable youth.

This interim report presents findings from the Reboot Plus Expansion, led by Douglas College and PEERs Employment and Education Resources Inc.

Respondents from the expansion period were highly satisfied with the program, and most respondents thought the program was useful. They reported that the program gave them clarity about their futures and careers, and was useful in building self-awareness and confidence and encouraging the completion of high school. Participants in Cycles 1, 2 and 4 saw an overall increase in their self-rated skills at program completion. The highest level of statistical confidence was for general self-efficacy and job clarity, and statistical confidence was slightly less for interpersonal communication competence. Most employers and professionals who completed the post-program survey agreed they were more willing to join similar initiatives, support youth in entering the workforce and introduce youth to colleagues, and they saw the importance of helping young people start their careers. However, fewer felt motivated to review their company's hiring and onboarding policies for youth.

Future research and program refinements will be key to ensuring long-term success. This includes improving survey response rates to overcome challenges in generalizing findings and accessing additional drop-out data to gain a better understanding of retention. Examining longer-term participant employment outcomes through government databases may also provide a clearer picture of career trajectories post-program. Professional engagement efforts could benefit from further qualitative insights into how organizations integrate program learnings into their hiring and onboarding strategies.

#### KEY INSIGHTS

- 1** As of January 2025, the Reboot Plus Expansion had reached 291 participants across five colleges in four provinces. It also generated insights about how to successfully scale programs to new settings.
- 2** Participants demonstrated improvement in general self-efficacy (56%) and job clarity (66%), suggesting a stronger sense of direction post-program.
- 3** Employers reported greater awareness of the target demographic as a talent pool, with high willingness to participate in similar initiatives (92%). Most employers (87%) expressed increased motivation to support youth workforce entry.

## ▶ The Issue

In 2023, approximately 11% of youth in Canada (aged 15–29) were not in employment, education or training—a group often called “NEET youth” (not in employment, education or training) or “opportunity youth.” Because of their lack of work and education experience, these young adults face increased risks of long-term economic difficulties and labour market barriers. Youth without high-school diplomas are particularly at risk of becoming NEET; 37% of Canadian youth without high-school diplomas were NEET in 2018–2019. Moreover, NEET youth often come from disadvantaged, racialized communities with limited resources and local opportunities. Many of these individuals want to work, but without accessible support options, they frequently find themselves NEET for long periods.

To address these challenges, Douglas College and the Burnaby School District in British Columbia partnered in 2015 to design “Education Reboot.” Education Reboot combined a flexible delivery approach with in-class curricula to offer a bridge to postsecondary education for youth who were not on track to complete high school. The program ran from 2015–2018 while expanding its goals, length and number of school district partners and students reached.

In 2020, the Future Skills Centre provided innovation stream funding to expand Education Reboot into its second generation, “Reboot Plus.” This version was delivered in three 16-week, semester-style “cycles” through a partnership between Douglas College, the Burnaby and Surrey school districts, PEERs Employment and Education Resources, and the Boards of Trade in Burnaby and Surrey, BC. Reboot Plus engaged youth in career development and pathway planning support, raised awareness of this youth demographic among employers, and provided opportunities for youth to meet with and discuss career pathways with employers and professionals in their fields of interest.

Given the model’s potential to meet Canada’s skills needs and its feasibility to scale, the program became one of 10 interventions to form Future Skills Centre and Blueprint’s Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio. In 2022, partners received funding for a third generation—the “Reboot Plus Expansion”—which brought the model to new school districts in BC and to three new provinces in partnerships with Bow Valley College (AB), Humber College (ON), Fanshawe College (ON) and the College of the North Atlantic (NL). Expanding the geographic reach and size of the populations served would test the model’s scalability and portability and expand support availability to vulnerable youth.

Blueprint is leading this research to generate real-time, evidence-based insights about how programs like Reboot Plus can improve outcomes for youth facing barriers and inform future skills development policy. By evaluating implementation, participant experiences and early outcomes, we aim to help identify what’s working, where challenges lie and how to strengthen program delivery as Reboot Plus scales. This work ensures that decision-makers, funders and service providers have credible, actionable evidence to guide investments in inclusive, youth-focused employment and education programs—supporting stronger public systems and improving opportunities for equity-deserving young people in Canada’s evolving labour market.



## What We Investigated

The [Reboot Plus Expansion](#) is assessing program scalability to new contexts and identifying key factors for successful implementation. The goal is to apply a co-design approach to expand the program's reach and translate the values and ethos of the program to other sites.

As of the time of data collection for this report, four cycles of Reboot Plus Expansion were delivered. Cycle 5 was approaching its end and Cycle 6 was planned to commence in winter 2025. A “cycle” refers to multi-week programming delivered in a school term (either the winter or fall). Data collection activities for our reports will end in June 2026.

This interim report answers the following questions:

- Program uptake: Is the program reaching its target group?
- Program experiences: Are participants satisfied with their experience in the program?
- Early outcomes: What early outcomes are youth achieving following participation in the program?
- Employer awareness: Did employers become more aware of this youth population as potential job candidates?

Douglas College and Blueprint shared data-collection activities. For this report, we at Blueprint gathered quantitative data, including administrative and survey data, to answer our questions. We include longitudinal analysis of surveys to assess changes in participant skill levels from the start to the end of the program. A paired t-test was used to assess differences, and Cohen's d was used to measure their strength. Unlike the last report, this update does not include participant and staff/partner interviews, but we do summarize qualitative findings from the previous report.

## ✔ What We're Learning

As of January 2025, the Reboot Plus Expansion reached 291 participants across five colleges in four provinces, targeting youth at risk of not graduating high school, needing transition support, and/or facing various challenges leading to educational and career disengagement. Data show promising findings, as follows:

### **The program effectively engages target youth**

The program successfully reached youth struggling with traditional education systems and facing financial difficulties and school instability. Recruitment strategies—which leveraged school-board referrals and community outreach—proved effective in attracting a diverse and high-need participant base. High satisfaction rates among participants indicate that the program is meeting a need for career development support.

### **The holistic, flexible learning model drives positive outcomes**

The program's low-pressure, supportive approach allows participants to build confidence and agency over their futures. Facilitators play a crucial role and were rated highly for their knowledge, organization and ability to adapt materials to individual needs. The structured yet flexible approach allowed for incremental skill-building, addressing both personal and career-development barriers.

### **Skills and education show positive gains**

Participants demonstrated improvement in general self-efficacy (56%) and job clarity (66%), suggesting a stronger sense of direction post-program. Interpersonal communication competence improvements were less pronounced, indicating an area for curriculum refinement.

### **Employer engagement and awareness increased as a result of the program**

Employers reported greater awareness of the target demographic as a talent pool, with high willingness to participate in similar initiatives (92%). Most employers (87%) expressed increased motivation to support youth workforce entry. While employer awareness is growing, additional work is needed to translate awareness into concrete changes in youth hiring and retention (60% were prompted to review internal hiring practices).

### **Future research and program refinements will be key to ensuring long-term success**

We hope to improve survey response rates (59% for the baseline and 35% for the exit) to overcome challenges in generalizing findings across all participants. We also hope to access drop-out data for certain cycles to gain a better understanding of participant retention challenges. Examining longer-term participant employment outcomes through government databases may also provide a clearer picture of career trajectories post-program. Employer engagement efforts could benefit from further qualitative insights into how organizations integrate program learnings into their hiring and onboarding strategies.

## ★ Why It Matters

There is increasing pressure on Canada's public systems to better support youth who face systemic barriers to education and employment. The Reboot Plus Expansion tackles one of the country's most persistent labour market challenges: ensuring young people at risk of leaving high school or disconnected from work and learning pathways have meaningful opportunities to build skills, confidence and clarity about their futures. Programs like this are essential to improving social and economic outcomes for individuals while addressing long-standing labour market inequities.

At its core, Reboot Plus serves a demographic often overlooked by traditional employment and education services—youth not in employment, education or training. These young people—particularly those from racialized, Indigenous, gender-diverse and disabled communities—face compounding barriers: disrupted schooling, financial hardship, mental health challenges and discrimination. By offering an inclusive, trauma-informed and low-pressure model—grounded in Universal Design for Learning, Hope-Centred Career Development and experiential education—Reboot Plus provides a tangible bridge to postsecondary environments and the workforce.

From a labour market lens, the program's emphasis on general self-efficacy, interpersonal communication skills and job clarity is especially critical. These social-emotional and transferable skills are consistently cited by employers as essential for success in today's economy, yet are sometimes missing from conventional employment training. By improving these foundational skills, Reboot Plus not only helps youth navigate immediate challenges but also equips them with tools for long-term workforce resilience.

Importantly, the initiative also works to shift employer perceptions. Through structured informational interviews and engagement opportunities, Reboot Plus educates employers and professionals about the untapped potential within non-traditional youth talent pools. These interactions may foster more inclusive hiring practices and begin to chip away at systemic barriers that have historically excluded marginalized youth from quality employment opportunities.

From a systems perspective, this work offers critical lessons for scaling social programs. The project's integration within the Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio enables continuous, embedded evaluation, providing real-time insights into implementation, participant outcomes and organizational learnings. Our evidence-informed approach supports iterative program improvement and ensures that scaling decisions are based on practical, on-the-ground realities, not assumptions.



**State of Skills:  
Enhancing Career Prospects and  
Well-Being for Canadian Youth**

Focus on early career guidance programs to introduce youth to a range of career paths, empowering them to make informed decisions with a strong emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility.

[Read Thematic Report](#)

Moreover, Reboot Plus highlights how careful attention to fidelity, partnership infrastructure and local context affects program outcomes. Lessons about what enables or hinders program reach, satisfaction and skill gains offer transferable insights for other employment and education interventions aiming to serve equity-deserving populations.

As Canadian policymakers and funders increasingly demand evidence of program effectiveness and return on investment, evaluations like this one demonstrate the value of investing in youth-focused, skills-building models that prioritize equity, well-being and long-term employability.

## ► What's Next

The final report for Reboot Plus, coming in late 2025, will incorporate additional follow-up surveys and qualitative data to deepen insights into Reboot Plus program effectiveness and sustainability. Along with the data discussed in this update, the final report will include a nine-month follow-up survey for Cycles 3 and 4; exit, three-month follow-up and employer surveys for Cycle 5; and baseline, exit and employer surveys for Cycle 6. It will incorporate administrative data from all cycles and qualitative data from all participant and staff/partner interviews. This report will explore program costs (based on Cycles 2–6) and demand and provide a more thorough analysis of experience and outcomes. We will use cost/time worksheets from Cycles 2–6 to explore costs of running the program, and Statistics Canada and other government data holdings to estimate program demand. We will also analyze variations in participant experience and outcomes across delivery sites and socio-demographic groups.

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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