



Project Insights Report

# Invest Talent: Building Metro Vancouver's Workforce Hub



**PARTNERS**

Invest Vancouver



**LOCATIONS**

British Columbia



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## ☰ Executive Summary

Metro Vancouver's high-growth sectors, including construction and skilled trades, technology and digital industries, healthcare and life sciences, face persistent talent shortages that existing workforce development systems are not designed to address. Invest Vancouver developed the [Invest Talent initiative](#) to test a different approach: starting from employer demand, coordinating across sectors, and connecting qualified jobseekers to specific opportunities through a neutral regional convener.

The 2025 pilot, evaluated by DARO Consulting, focused on two sector-specific employer hubs: MedTech and Cybersecurity. The MedTech hub produced a clear proof of concept, and a short, co-designed training intervention delivered to 114 jobseekers resulted in 30 fast-tracked applications within a month, with 87% of participants from equity-deserving groups.

The pilot demonstrates that demand-driven, intermediary-led workforce development can produce results quickly, reach underrepresented populations, and generate the kind of specific intelligence that jobseekers and workforce agencies can actually act on.

### KEY INSIGHTS

1

26% of MedTech training graduates were fast-tracked into final recruitment stages within one month, demonstrating that a brief, three-hour intervention can effectively connect jobseekers to high-growth careers.

2

Barriers to technical sector entry are often driven by an information gap rather than a skills gap. Helping jobseekers recognize their transferable skills is a low-cost, high-impact intervention.

3

A neutral intermediary is essential to building scalable talent pipelines. High-growth employers understand their hiring needs but lack the capacity to coordinate employers, training providers, and workforce agencies around shared opportunities.

## ▶ The Issue

The Metro Vancouver region's long-term economic growth and global competitiveness are threatened by an escalating talent crisis. High-growth, export-oriented sectors, including technology, clean tech, and life sciences, consistently identify talent availability, job readiness, and hiring friction as critical constraints.

The scale of the challenge is substantial as British Columbia anticipates more than one million job openings over the next decade, with an estimated 625,600 of those concentrated in Metro Vancouver. These projections reflect both demographic pressures and the pace at which skill requirements are shifting, particularly as employers integrate new technologies such as AI into core operations.

Traditional workforce development efforts are not equipped to handle the speed of innovation. Training programs tend to be supply-driven and designed around fixed funding cycles, which limits their ability to respond to changing employer needs in real time. The result is a fragmented ecosystem in which individual programs operate in isolation, without coordinated responses at a regional scale or a way to ensure equitable access to reskilling for workers from underrepresented groups.



## What We Investigated

The Invest Talent pilot was designed and implemented to test a demand-driven approach to regional workforce development rather than building training programs around available supply. DARO Consulting conducted an independent evaluation of the pilot focused on three main areas:

1. What conditions and structures enable effective collaboration between employers, training providers, workforce agencies, and community organizations to develop regional talent and attract investment?
2. What approaches to matching jobseekers to employer skill needs provide effective proof of concept in the short term, and what are the key ingredients for helping individuals successfully transition into new employment?
3. How can labour market information be generated, shared, and used to enable the initiative and support successful career transitions?

Activities unfolded across two sector-specific employer hubs: one focused on Cybersecurity and one on MedTech (medical device manufacturing). While the Cybersecurity hub did not complete a full training pipeline within the pilot timeframe, the MedTech hub served as the primary proof of concept, with Invest Vancouver coordinating anchor employer Kardium, training contributors Vancouver Community College and the Canadian Alliance for Skills and Training in Life Sciences, industry organization Life Sciences BC, and workforce and settlement agencies WorkBC, Mosaic, and YWCA to co-design and deliver a targeted training intervention for jobseekers interested in transitioning into the sector.

Two factors limited the scope of this evaluation. The pilot ran for less than eight months, making it difficult to assess longer-term employment outcomes. Technology procurement delays also meant that platform-generated data originally planned for collection was unavailable, and evaluation questions were adjusted accordingly.

## What We're Learning

### **Invest Vancouver proved that sector transition models can be both effective and inclusive**

The MedTech pilot showed that a short, targeted training intervention, built around specific employer needs and delivered to a pre-screened pool of jobseekers, can produce measurable results quickly. Invest Talent partnered with Kardium, a medical device manufacturer, to co-design an introductory session covering sector fundamentals and transferable skills. Of the 295 individuals who registered interest, 114 completed the training. Within a month, 30 of those participants had applied to Kardium and were all fast-tracked into final recruitment stages, a conversion rate of 26% from training completion to accelerated hiring.

### **Trusted community partnerships increased access for equity-deserving jobseekers**

The model also demonstrated strong reach among equity-deserving groups. Through partnerships with workforce and settlement agencies WorkBC, Mosaic, and YWCA, the initiative prioritized admission of underrepresented participants from the outset. Immigrants and newcomers represented 56% of those who registered interest — significantly higher than their share of the general Metro Vancouver population. Of the 122 admitted participants who provided demographic data, 87% self-identified as belonging to equity-deserving groups. This suggests that employer-led hubs can effectively open technical career paths to populations that conventional hiring pipelines often miss, when recruitment is coordinated through trusted community intermediaries.

### **The pilot showed that regional workforce efforts work better when one organization helps connect partners**

During the pilot, Invest Vancouver acted as an essential intermediary by mapping demand across sectors and coordinating logistics between training providers and workforce agencies. When working directly with WorkBC, a provincial workforce agency helping them understand MedTech talent needs and relevant transferable skills, the agency staff reported that this level of specificity — knowing which employer was hiring, for which roles, on what timeline, and what skills transferred — was qualitatively different from the broad sectoral information they typically receive. It changed how they worked with jobseekers. Employers made similar observations, noting that coordinating this kind of multi-partner collaboration internally would be prohibitively complex and costly, and that Invest Vancouver's existing relationships and regional expertise were what made it possible.

### **Building trust before building technology revealed insights the data could not**

The pilot was originally designed around an AI-powered platform to manage and track workforce data. When a technology review process determined the planned software was not ready to adequately protect participant data, the team pivoted to a simpler approach: direct conversations with employers. Once trust was established, employers shared insights that job postings and economic reports could not reveal, including upcoming hiring plans, recruitment challenges, and transferable skills from unrelated industries. By focusing on relationships first, the team moved faster, spent less, and generated more actionable intelligence than a technology platform would have. The approach also created a stronger foundation for any future digital solution since instead of building software based on assumptions, the team observed how information actually flowed between employers, workforce agencies, and training providers, helping define what future technology would truly need to do.

## Short, role-specific training successfully transitioned non-traditional candidates into technical sectors

The Invest Talent pilot used a three-hour workshop to introduce jobseekers from unrelated industries like retail and service to medical device manufacturing. By explaining daily work environments and showing how existing skills transfer, the session reduced the perceived distance between jobseekers and a sector they had not considered reachable. One participant with no science background had assumed years of additional education would be required, and received a job offer within weeks of attending. Workforce agency staff reported the session changed their perception of who could realistically be referred to these roles. Quantitative feedback reflected this: 91.3% of participants rated the training useful for their professional advancement. This suggests that a significant part of what keeps people out of technical sectors is not a skills gap but an information gap. People don't apply because they don't know the work is accessible to them, and employers don't see them as candidates because there is no mechanism to make that connection visible. Brief, well-designed interventions that bridge that gap may be among the most cost-effective tools available for connecting underrepresented jobseekers to high-growth employment.

### ★ Why It Matters

The Invest Talent pilot showed that employer-led workforce hubs can effectively connect underrepresented jobseekers to high-growth industries. By bringing together employers, training providers, and workforce agencies, the pilot demonstrated that even small, targeted interventions can quickly lead to successful transitions and employment opportunities. The model has potential for scaling and replication for greater impact, as it could be adapted in regions across Canada, similar to international workforce initiatives that coordinate employers and training systems around shared labour market needs.

One of the key findings of the pilot was the need for intermediaries that can coordinate the system. Employer engagement, partnership management, labour market translation, and cross-sector coordination to build effective talent pipelines requires dedicated funding for organizations that can coordinate employers, training providers, and community partners. Canada has historically underinvested in this intermediary function, despite employers often lacking the time, incentives, and regional perspective needed to build system-level talent pipelines on their own.



#### State of Skills: Quality of Work

As Canada navigates continuing labour shortages in critical areas of the economy, policymakers and employers are looking for more effective approaches to recruit and retain workers

[Read Thematic Report](#)

This work highlights what is often missing from workforce development efforts: the relationships and coordination infrastructure that make training and skills efforts successful. Community agencies like Mosaic and YWCA were the reason the project was so successful in recruiting equity-deserving groups. Invest Vancouver as the intermediary was the mechanism that translated employer demand into action. Treating these functions as strategic investments is critical for replicating this model, and smoothing transitions for key groups, like youth and newcomers into growing sectors.

## ► What's Next

Building on this success, the Future Skills Centre is supporting Invest Talent to formally expand their Cybersecurity hub. This next phase will bring together employers to co-design targeted training for real hiring demand, financed through a blended model combining public investment and employer cost-sharing.

The MedTech hub also remains an active area of interest. Employer partners have expressed appetite for longer, more in-depth training pathways, though this will require broader investment from a wider range of funders and continued evidence of the model's return on investment.

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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