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# The Career Development Profession in Canada and the Emergence of Online/Multi-Modal Practice Delivery

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# Acknowledgements

## About the Authors

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## How to Cite this Report

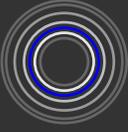
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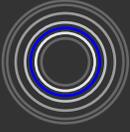
## About Blueprint

[Blueprint](#) was founded on the simple idea that evidence is a powerful tool for change. We work with policymakers and practitioners to create and use evidence to solve complex policy and program challenges. Our vision is a social policy ecosystem where evidence is used to improve lives, build better systems and policies and drive social change. Our team brings together a multidisciplinary group of professionals with diverse capabilities in policy research, data analysis, design, evaluation, implementation and knowledge mobilization. As a consortium partner of the Future Skills Centre, Blueprint works with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively generate and use evidence to help solve pressing future skills challenges.

## About The Future Skills Centre

[The Future Skills Centre](#) is a forward-looking organization that prototypes, tests and measures new and innovative approaches to skills development and training. It is passionate about building a resilient learning nation, backed by an agile and responsive skills ecosystem that equips everyone with the skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing economy and share in Canada's prosperity.

As a Pan-Canadian organization, FSC works with partners across the country to understand how global trends affect the economy, and to identify what skills working-age adults need to thrive within an ever-evolving environment. FSC is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program and was founded as a partnership between Ryerson University, Blueprint and the Conference Board of Canada.



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## Executive Summary

[Career development practitioners](#)<sup>1</sup> (CDPs) in Canada,<sup>1</sup> like all other workers, are navigating a turbulent and unpredictable context. Yet, they are being required to make sense of a turbulent labour market, typically without adequate training, while at the same time providing appropriate support to Canadians. Furthermore, COVID-19-related restrictions have made the integration of technology into the delivery of career development services no longer an option: the adoption of suitable technologies, however, implies fundamental change to practice.

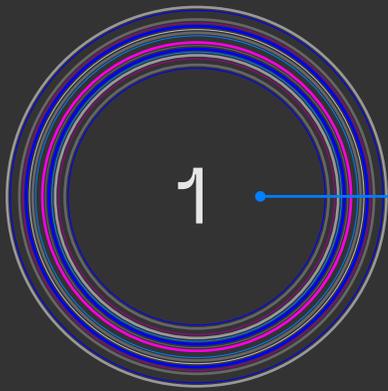
As part of the [Future Skills Centre's \(FSC\) Responsive Career Pathways initiative](#), this paper addresses fundamental issues related to career development support and the integration of online practice. It is based on a thorough literature review of relevant international academic and grey literature, author participation in Responsive Career Pathways roundtables, and discussions with two key employees of Canada's main career development professional associations/bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> Hyperlinked terms throughout the paper connect to the Glossary.

## I Key Themes

- Around the world, career development support is characterized both by *ambiguity and indeterminateness*. Service provision in Canada is no exception.
- A radical re-think about the nature of [career development](#) in Canada is needed, including an examination of the nature of profession and professionalism, and organized around: a funded workforce development strategy; a national quality standard; an overarching group for existing membership bodies; an understanding of the development needs of the sector, including online practice; and a training and learning model that could pilot training delivery.
- Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the careers field was slow to integrate the use of ICT; however, pandemic restrictions have forced career services into the use of ICT to facilitate connection with their clients. This is a momentous shift for career practice in Canada and for the role of CDPs.
- There is a dire need for thoughtful reconceptualization of service models that can use the best of technology alongside face-to-face delivery.
- Key challenges for service provision include inadequate access to ICT resources, tools and infrastructure; lack of access among the workforce to skills and competencies; poor access to quality information; and insufficient integration of ICT into service delivery models.
- New interventions must be developed to increase understanding of effective multi-modal service delivery, and to foster the competencies required for CDPs to design and deliver these services.



1



Introduction



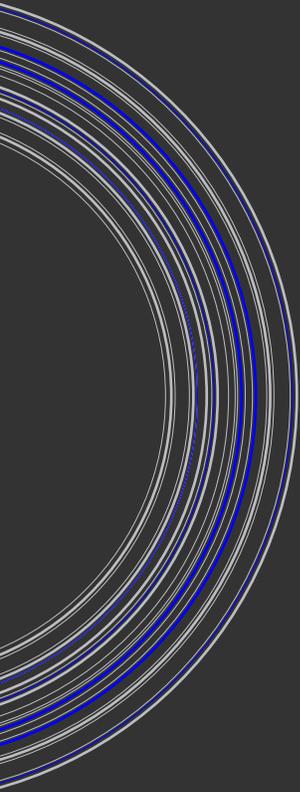
## Introduction

A shift has been occurring in the nature of career development practice, from the model of support for one-off labour market transitions at key points that was typical for decades, to adopting more of a life-course perspective. This shift marks a fundamental change in emphasis from a focus on matching a client to a correct fit labour market opportunity, to facilitating clients developing career-relevant skills and becoming more autonomous, reflective learners, less dependent on external interventions and support (Barnes et al., 2020; OECD 2004a, 2004b).

This radical change to career practice has been a response to increasingly volatile international labour markets that have resulted in less predictable, less linear and more complex career trajectories (Barnes et al., 2020). This has been exacerbated by the havoc to economies caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the end of which, at the time of writing, is difficult to predict. The fundamental, deep-rooted structural changes to the ways in which labour markets operate call for an urgent response to creating responsive career pathways in Canada. This will require high quality career development support for Canadians who are now weaving their way around labour market opportunities across the entirety of their lifetimes (Cedefop et al., 2020; Mann et al., 2020; Russek et al., 2021).

This paper contributes to the Responsive Career Pathways by sharing research and insights in two domains: the career development profession and the integration of online practice. This paper comprises one contribution to this initiative, which address two key domains: the career development profession and the integration of online practice.

This paper is based on a thorough literature review of relevant international academic and grey literature. The authors also participated in five roundtables, involving a wide range of key stakeholders, engaged in professional discussions with two key employees of Canada's main career development professional associations/bodies and exchanged ideas with other researchers involved in the Responsive Career Pathways initiative. The cumulative knowledge and understanding derived from the combination of these activities forms the basis of this research paper.



The fundamental, deep-rooted structural changes to the ways in which labour markets operate call for an urgent response to creating responsive career pathways in Canada. This will require high quality career development support for Canadians who are now weaving their way around labour market opportunities across the entirety of their lifetimes.

## I Questions Framing the Study

Two separate, but interconnected, sets of questions are addressed in this paper. One relates to the career development profession and the other relates to the integration of suitable technological practices into career practice, both within and by, the career development profession. The questions that frame the paper are:

### Career development profession:

How should we understand and enhance the career development profession as we shift toward a more responsive career pathways system?

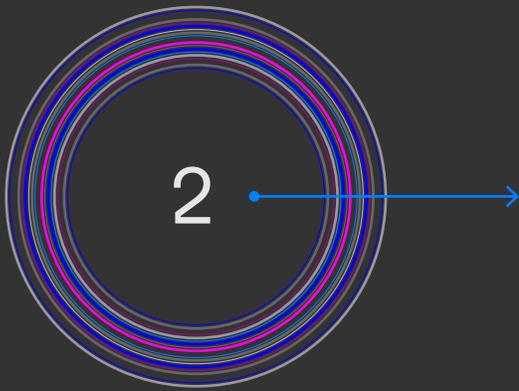
### Online service delivery:

What do we already know about best practices in the delivery of high-quality career services online, and what questions remain to be answered?

In terms of Canada's future economic prosperity, these questions are inseparable. Career development practitioners (CDPs), like all other workers, are navigating a turbulent and unpredictable context. Yet, they are simultaneously being required to make sense of a turbulent labour market, typically without adequate training, while at the same time providing appropriate support to Canadians. Even before the pandemic, [end users](#) were making additional demands on CDPs, related to mental health and well-being (Redekopp & Huston, 2019). Consequently, the career development workforce is under increased and increasingly severe pressures, while at the same time requiring urgent attention itself.

In addition to these layers of complexity, the pandemic has placed new demands on ways of working with clients requiring career development support. Government-mandated lockdowns in response to the pandemic have made the integration of technology into the delivery of career development services no longer an option. However, the adoption of suitable technologies, in a smart and effective manner, implies fundamental change to practice.





How Should We  
Think About the  
Career Development  
Profession?



## How Should We Think About the Career Development Profession?

This section focuses on the first question of how we should think about the career development profession as we shift toward a more responsive career pathways system. Initially, it reviews the vexed question of the inconsistency of terminology, alongside the numerous job titles across the field of career development that together illustrate the degree of fragmentation of service delivery.

There are a multitude of terms used interchangeably in the field — [career guidance](#), career education and guidance, career development, career counselling, career coaching, work coaching, vocational counselling, vocational guidance, employment counselling, lifelong guidance — and their relative desirability continues to be debated internationally. However, consensus about the precise term that should be embraced remains elusive. **Irrespective of the precise terms used, a significant key feature of the process of career support is to ensure that each individual client achieves their full potential, with a strong social justice element therefore being implicit.**

In addition to (or perhaps because of) variations in nomenclature, there are a multitude of job titles, reflecting considerable fragmentation of the sector. In the Canadian context, results from a recent survey (CERIC, 2019) illustrate three main sub-divisions within the industry: the post-secondary education sector; the private sector; and the charitable and non-profit sector. For the education sector, there are further sub-divisions between college and higher education. Moreover, various job titles are listed. For example, for the charitable and non-profit sector, job titles include: career counselling/coaching; employment advising/job coaching; program planning/delivery; teaching/training; other. The differentiation of job role titles is reflected in research from the UK that identified no fewer than 103 job titles (Neary et al., 2014).

Research from the European Union (Barnes et al., 2020) also highlights the ways in which organizational models shape not only job profiles, but also activities in the field. What emerges as crucial is whether career support is regarded as a specialized service delivered by a separate organization, or whether it is combined with other roles in an organization. One powerful example relates to Public [Employment Services](#) (PES):

**For example, in the PES, variations exist in the entry requirements, competency profiles, and job profiles, as well as in the degree of the flexibility and autonomy of services across countries. The service models within which counsellors must operate determine generic job profiles for employment counsellors. Moreover, the diversification of the job profiles depends largely on the operational PES structure, priority tasks, and active labour market programmes used in the country. (Barnes et al., 2020, p.42)**

The amount of variation in the field is regarded as a problem in Canada: an overview of the picture around career development services in Canada reveals a sector that is fragmented, and fragmentation can lead to confusion for potential consumers of the service. “There is very little consistency in job titles, particularly among English-language practitioners. This creates confusion for the public, who must discern what services are being offered where, and compromises the professional identity and coherence of the career development sector” (Bezanson et al., 2014, p.546).

A recent CERIC (2019) survey revealed that 43.3% of career development respondents felt that career services were held in low esteem, indicating that the public “don’t know, understand or appreciate” services. Perhaps related to this finding about low esteem are data from the same survey on levels of dissatisfaction among Canadian CDPs with current duties: 49.4% of respondents reported a heavy workload affecting their ability to deliver career development and 40.1% felt that they had insufficient time to spend with their clients. **Even though perceived low esteem of services and dissatisfaction on the part of those delivering services appear to be challenges, evaluation data relating to the impact of services on clients are encouraging.**

The findings on impact resonate with the growing evidence related to the benefits of the process of career development support. The formation of the Canadian Research Working Group on Evidence-Based Practice in Career Development (CRWG) appears to be one response to criticism that there is little concrete evidence that career interventions actually work (Magnusson & Roest, 2004). The CRWG, positioned as “a leader in advancing the evidence base for career development services” (Bezanson et al., 2014, p.541), was formed as a partnership among six universities and the Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF), and attracted federal government investment in evidence-based research (Bezanson et al., 2014). The Group developed an evaluation framework that has been tested and it continues to collaborate on refining and applying the framework. While arguing that evaluation needs to become part of routine practice, it is acknowledged that this remains marginalized in training programs (Bezanson et al., 2014). The CCDF is still very active in this area of research and development, and has a management software resource called PRIME that supports quality services and a robust evaluation of the impact of these services. It is described as “a data/client management software that supports quality career/employment services and a more robust evaluation of the impact of services” (CCDF, n.d).

Internationally, much evidence now exists on the value and effectiveness of career support in enabling individuals to make education, learning and career decisions, and successful transitions into and through the labour market (for example, Barnes, et al., 2020; Hooley & Dodd, 2015; Whiston et al., 2017; Whiston, 2020). To date, there has been an emphasis on, and pressure to, produce quantitative evidence of economic outcomes. A recent example from the UK examines the productivity and economic benefits of a career organization in the north of England, concluding that there were demonstrable fiscal benefits to the Treasury and the wider economy. Moreover, the service paid for itself in less than two months (Hughes & Hogg, 2018). Roberts (2013), however, sounds a cautionary note about this policy pre-occupation:

**Career guidance cannot be justified in terms of economic outcomes. It has been, and will continue to be, provided in response to effective demand, not proof of effectiveness. The profession must have itself judged against realistic criteria. Irrespective of longer-term outcomes, individuals want to know what next steps are available to them at given career junctures, and the longer-term implications of taking each possible next step. (p.250)**

An increasing emphasis, driven at least in part by a recognition on the part of the career community itself, is being placed on the development of softer measures of outcomes of career support (e.g., distance travelled) that would better serve both clients and service providers (see for example, Barnes & Wright, 2019).

## I Evolution of the Field of Career Development

The emergence of the field of career development in Canada was based on “an ideology of humanitarianism and social justice” (Norman et al., 2014, p.29) and can be traced back to 1850, with employment services established to help the unemployed taking prominence (Norman et al., 2014). Ontario and Québec are recorded as the first two provinces to establish government employment offices. It was not until the 1940s, however, that guidance counselling became a formal part of the education system. Associations for guidance counselling began to emerge at the provincial level around the same time, and began lobbying both federal and provincial governments to assume a greater responsibility for unemployment. A significant increase in career counselling provision took place from 1950 to 1999, in response to peaks in unemployment. Offices were to provide career and employment counselling for young people, with the first Youth Employment Service (YES) being opened in Toronto, Ontario, in 1968. This period also saw increased pressure for staff delivering these services to hold relevant qualifications.

Subsequent developments in the establishment of the field included the formation of various associations with different histories and different purposes. [CERIC](#), for example, is a charitable organization that advances education and research in career counselling and career development, to increase the economic and social well-being of Canadians. Among other activities, it edits the Canadian Journal of Career Development, conducts online surveys for the profession, organizes conferences and funds research and knowledge-generation projects.

One other important organization is the [CCDF](#), which is a not-for-profit organization that is a national and international leader in the field of career development. CCDF works with organizations and governments to articulate core priorities and develop strategic solutions, supports the delivery of quality career services and promotes evidence-based policy and practice. CCDF initiated the development of the current Canadian Standards and Guidelines for career development practitioners, published in the 1990s, and is also spearheading (through a contract from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)) their updating to a new national competency framework.

## I What is Meant by “Profession”?

The term “profession” has different meanings for different people, with this meaning shifting over time and across cultures. In some countries, the term has recently fallen into something approaching colloquial usage, being used to describe, or refer to, a whole range of occupational groups and/or jobs that cover the full spectrum of status, pay and privilege. Colloquial usage of the term sits alongside usage in relation to more established professions, for example, in medicine, law and accountancy.

Over time, the defining characteristics of a profession have become increasingly refined and complex in the literature, distinguishing professions from jobs more distinctly, with the term being applied to specific occupational groups with specialized education and training, typically acquired through qualification at degree or postgraduate degree level (Calway & Murphy 2011; Lester, 2009). Professional claims to the authority to practice in specific fields of expertise have thus been based on mandatory entry

qualifications, typically maintained through the support of government (O'Reilly, 2018). Traditional professions in Canada have achieved autonomy and the authority to practice through a combination of highly structured, mandatory higher-level education/training, combined with procedures for strict self-regulation (Adams, 2010). Regulation thus emerges as a significant criterion for defining a profession and is relevant for understanding the Canadian context of the career development profession.

More recently, the more traditional approach to the definition of profession has been challenged as elitist, protectionist, exclusive and largely irrelevant for public service delivery in contemporary societies (see for example Evans, 2008; Evetts, 2011). Because many professions now share certain features with other occupational groups (Evetts, 2014), the concept of profession as distinct from these other occupational groups has become less and less clear (Evetts, 2013).

**The emergence of an accounting logic (Broadbent et al., 1997), where cost and quantitative performance indicators pressurize employees to quantify their impact and justify their professionalism in relation to organizational requirements, has become common, particularly in the public sector. However, this risks undermining one of the key purposes of career support: social justice, and trying to ensure that each individual reaches their full potential. An accounting logic jeopardizes the ability of career practitioners to engage in meaningful work with those who are socially disadvantaged.**

In Canada, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was argued that the increased volatility of labour markets had led to a transformation of career development, theory, policy and practice, which, in turn, resulted in the professionalization of the sector: "One of the strongest, inside-out transformations has been the professionalization of the sector" (Bezanson et al., 2014, p. 532). The same authors, under the auspices of the CCDF, argued that: "The sector has the tools, supports, and structures needed to continue to grow as a profession."

**Unpicking the strands of contradictory and conflicting values and beliefs about the nature of profession and the attendant implications is likely to be at the centre of how we should think about the Canadian career development workforce in the shift toward a more responsive career pathways system.**

## I Professional Associations, Certifications and Regulations

According to OECD international reports on career development (2004a, 2004b), the following areas were found to be inconsistent at best and non-existent at worst: membership in professional associations; standards for practice; licensing and certification of practitioners; a clear and enforced code of ethics; and clear and consistent professional training routes for qualification. For Canada, the linked OECD Country Note (2002) estimated that between 40–50 professional associations were in existence, resulting in considerable diversity:

**A key trend in the career development field in Canada in recent years has been a move away from models of professional delivery within bureaucratic frameworks which contained their own quality assurance processes, towards more diversified models of delivery, involving many different kinds of practitioners in a growing variety of settings. (p.20)**

This has led to “a need for clarity about the role of career development professionals within the new more diversified service-delivery models” (OECD, 2002, p. 20).

Professional associations, certification and regulation all play key roles in establishing and maintaining the trust and expertise of their professionals. The next sections outline these aspects in relation to Canadian career development. They are largely inconsistent or lacking, although some efforts are being made to address these shortfalls.

## I Professional associations

Internationally, the career development profession is largely unregulated (O'Reilly, 2018). In the absence of external, government regulatory procedures, it is left to professional bodies and associations to uphold the values of their profession, often through the development, implementation and monitoring of standards designed to form the basis of various forms of certification (Hooley et al., 2016; Leicht & Fennell, 2001). Professional associations are also often relied upon to provide continuing professional development (CPD) for members, as well as facilitate networking opportunities.

**Canada does not have a single national association for career development** (Van Norman et al., 2014). At the provincial level, career development associations exist in eight provinces, with others in prospect. Provinces with certification or licensing in place have a responsibility to manage these processes, with no fewer than 37 provincial, national and international associations reported through which CDPs were either certified or pursuing certification (Bezanson et al., 2014). The [Canadian Council for Career Development](#) is a grass-roots group, initiated and self-funded by career development associations and related partner groups and stakeholders from across Canada. It serves as a pan-Canadian collaboration for discussion and action across career development sectors. Due to its self-funded nature, the potential for its leverage is limited to volunteer efforts, which limits the ability for mass organization and mobilization. **This effort does, however, illustrate the desire for a pan-Canadian voice.**

A particular challenge for professional associations in influencing the conduct of their members is that many CDPs work in organizations. These organizations will typically exert primacy in relation to the standards of performance of its employees, which may conflict with those of professional associations (Evetts, 2013). This poses a particular challenge for ensuring conformity to any association's code of ethical conduct. Professional associations, in such cases, will have little or no authority to impose their own standards of performance or even monitor adherence. A recent development in career profession associations was the creation of the International Career Development National Peak Body, founded by associations in Australia (CICA), New Zealand (CDANZ), Canada (CCDF), South Africa (SACDA) and the UK (CDI). This network held its first international seminar in July, 2021, on the topic of professionalizing the sector. However, CDPs continue to be defined by their organizational context, their roles and conduct, rather than any professional association.

Professional associations potentially play a key role in managing the systems and procedures guiding professional practice (O'Reilly, 2018). A government review of the career profession in the UK (Department for Education, 2010) even argued for a strong, unified professional body that could restate the case for the importance of careers guidance for economic prosperity and societal cohesion. However, associations are too often left alone in their efforts to establish trust and maintain the expertise of the profession they represent.

## I Certification

A CERIC (2019) survey of Canadian CDPs details the different levels and types of certifications held by the career development workforce, which ranges from “some high school” to the doctoral level. This provides a clear indication of the lack of consistency regarding entry level certification to this sector. On the one hand, this could be regarded as a strength if the predominant view is that generalists may better serve the diverse population of career development clients. On the other hand, the lack of rigorous and consistent standards for recruitment could undermine the formation of a strong professional identity and be a major barrier to the professionalization of the sector. Recent research from the UK exploring the views of career development practitioners found pre-entry certification was seen as pivotal to establishing a sense of professional identity (Gough, 2017) and CPD was highly valued in maintaining this identity (Neary, 2014, 2016).

Furthermore, there is an expectation that professions will protect the public from harm by their members: standards that define professional practice requirements for qualifications, training and professional development are thus crucial, and highlight the critical nature of adherence to ethical standards by members of professions. The original Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development were developed in the 1990s in order to help address these various needs. The Standards set out to: define career development as a legitimate specialization; provide a foundation for designing practitioner training; provide quality assurance to the public; recognize the diverse skill sets of practitioners; and create a common voice and vocabulary for career development (CCDF). The Standards also responded to Canadian CDPs rating access to professional training as their highest priority, with managers giving it their second highest (Bezanson et al., 2014).

A major contribution to the standardization of certification for career development practitioners in Canada was underway at the time of writing, led by the CCDF. Revitalization of the Standards and Guidelines was undertaken in partnership, through extensive consultations across the career community. This represents a complete review and re-articulation of the Standards and Guidelines to create a Pan-Canadian Career Development Professional Competency Framework. The CCDF has made clear that their mandate is limited to leading the collaboration and creation of these competencies and accompanying national certification. A national body will be needed to take responsibility for the ongoing management and implementation.

Career development theory and practice over the last century has evolved from a focus on matching individuals to the best fit jobs into new approaches that reflect changes in societies and labour markets (Arthur & McMahon, 2019). The challenge for career development practitioners, however, remains keeping themselves sufficiently abreast of the new theory and research that continues to emerge, so that they can integrate new thinking and strategies into their practice. Pan-European research into the academic training of the career workforce carried out by the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (Schiersmann et al., 2012) recognized the need to develop skills and competences in initial training, and placed great emphasis on developing professionalism as a fundamental competence that translates readily to lifelong CPD.

The CERIC (2019) survey is not encouraging in this regard. It revealed that 29.9% of career development practitioners in Canada typically spend less than one hour per month on CPD, with 38% spending between one and three hours. This is unlikely to be sufficient for the level of updating necessary. Professional competencies need constant investment and updating: “If practitioners (and the organisations employing them) are to succeed in business terms, innovation and adding value are vital” (Mulvey, 2013, p. 275). Investing in CPD makes sense even though it presents a cost in real terms at a time when costs are under close scrutiny; its importance in maintaining professional practice to acceptable levels of expertise is well established (Mulvey, 2013). Developments in [micro-credentialing](#) may offer a viable strategy for Canada going forward.

## I Regulation

Professions are able to regulate entry because they possess legislative power, vested in credible and legitimate bodies, allowing them to manage their own certification, control entry and specify standards of practice. In return, professional bodies are responsible for self-management and regulation (Gough, 2017; Gough & Neary, 2020). Examples of regulated professions include medicine, law and teaching; such comparisons make it evident that career development lacks regulation, with entry to the profession ambiguous (O’Reilly et al., 2020).

**In Canada there is one notable exception. Québec is the only province in Canada to regulate the title and various professional activities of vocational and guidance counsellors** (Cournoyer, 2014). Indeed, it is one of the few examples worldwide. The profession of vocational and guidance counsellors has been practiced in Québec for over 70 years. Professional counsellors constantly support youth and adults in their efforts toward educational and professional (re)insertion, rehabilitation and career (re)development in the sectors of education, employability, community, health and social services and private and institutional practice.

The Ordre des conseillers et des conseillères d’orientation du Québec (OCCOQ) supervises entry into the profession and the competency of its members, and works with higher education institutions to provide courses in vocational counselling at different levels.<sup>2</sup> As of 2004, there was an estimated 2,500 vocational and guidance counsellors in the province, spread across various sectors. Counsellors perform a variety of tasks, including assessing psychological functioning, personal resources and local conditions; working on identity issues and developing and maintaining active coping strategies; and helping to restore social and professional independence (Government of Québec, 2009). Additional responsibilities have been added over time, such as providing information and support to those with particular needs.

Other than in Québec, “specialized training in career development is rare and haphazard, achieved through either pre-service or on-the-job training” (Bezanson et al., 2014, p. 546). Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Ontario currently have voluntary certification in place (Bezanson et al., 2014), yet a survey indicated that practitioners had an appetite for more professional recognition, in the form of certification and licensing processes. (Bezanson, et al., 2014).

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that career counselling services are distinct from employment services, delivered by Public Employment Services, who are not regulated by the OCCOQ.

**Two contrasting approaches to formal regulation can, therefore, be identified within the Canada career development community.** The first is led by the [Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association](#) (CCPA), which includes [career counsellors](#), and which confirms that credentialing, licensing, registration and certification are provincial responsibilities in Canada. To be certified, a Canadian Certified Counsellor must recognize the standards of professional practice, adhere to the formal code of ethics and engage in continuing education. Certification also results in disciplinary procedures if necessary. Only counsellors who are certified by CCPA are permitted to use the trademarked title Canadian Certified Counsellor and/or the acronym CCC. The second approach is that taken by the CCDF, which has been leading a collaborative project since September, 2018 that, to date, has co-created (with over 1,000 CDPs) a: competency framework that reflects the expertise of career development practitioners; a competency profile that describes the knowledge and skills commonly required of these practitioners, across a range of diverse contexts; and an industry standard that defines the level of competence required in the knowledge and skills described by the competency profile and reflecting workplace conditions. All these documents have been completed and will be available online in the near future (Project Update, Executive Director, CCDF).

In addition to the competency framework, CCDF are leading the development of a competency-based certification program for career development practitioners which will measure an individual's knowledge and skills against the industry standard. CCDF also has a proposal currently under review with ESDC. If approved, national certification will be launched in 2022.

The situation across Canada illustrates how the power and status of the career development profession “ebbs and flows” (Gough & Neary, 2020, p.6), with the consequence that sometimes there is a need to re-professionalize the field. The understanding of what it means to be a professional has moved beyond qualifications and shifted to encompass being “initiated into a role, embracing a vision both of the world and oneself in order to practice this role, being saturated in the culture, which implies a separation and a transformation of identity” (Dubar & Tripier, 2003, p.101). The re-formation of professional identity, promoted through continuing professional development, offers one powerful potential source of support for Canadian career development practitioners to upskill and re-skill in required areas.

## I Professional Identity

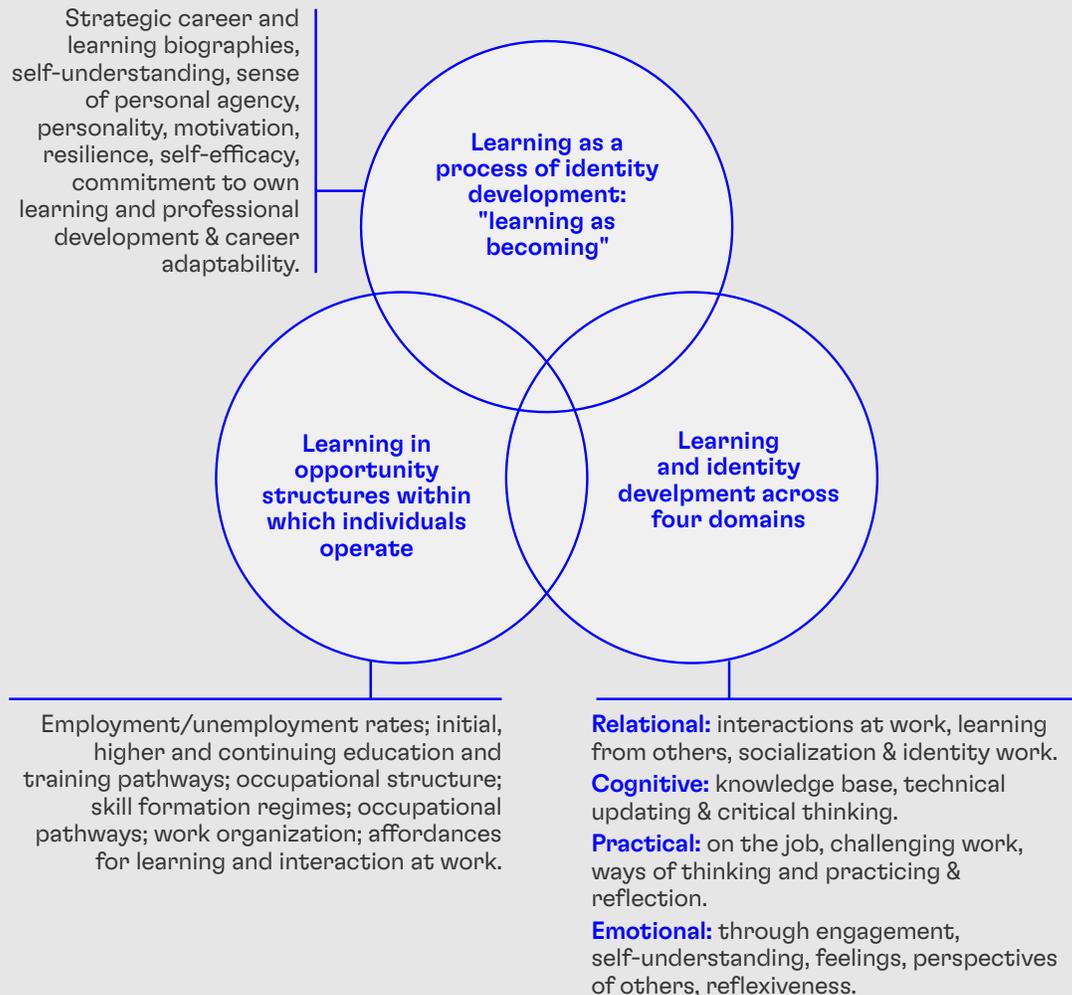
It is apparent that many contra-indications currently exist regarding the professional status of career development practitioners in Canada. They are not necessarily able to claim universal levels of trust amongst clients and/or the general public for the services they deliver; levels of qualifications and expertise vary widely across jurisdictional boundaries (though as discussed above, publication of the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development is pending and their implementation is in progress). It is also hard to argue that service providers' contributions to clients cannot be duplicated by those who are not members of the career profession. Regulatory mechanisms to hold individual members of the profession to account for the quality of services delivered are broadly absent. Barnes et al. (2020) neatly sum up these issues, not just for Canada, but internationally:

**Professionalism, which is a concept with which most career practitioners identify, demands that certain standards are maintained, including practice that is based on expert knowledge and understanding. It is, however, often a challenge for career development practitioners to keep their knowledge updated by integrating new theory, together with findings from cutting edge research upon which theory is based, into their practice. Indeed, it is sometimes a challenge to convince career practitioners and their managers of the relevance of theory to their practice and to the wider debate relating to quality of services and impact. (p.44)**

In short, career professionals are still some ways from having established and maintained an understanding of their special expertise or a sufficiently high level of trust. The development of a strong sense of professional identity (Bimrose & Brown, 2019; Bimrose et al., 2019; Gough, 2017; Gough & Neary, 2020; Neary, 2014; O'Reilly, 2018) could be pivotal for identifying constructive ways forward.

Jenkins (2004) argues that professional identity is developed as an aspect of social identity; professional identities are meanings attached to an individual by the self and others. Research undertaken in the PES across the European Union (2014–2018) focused on learning as a driver of identity development at work and explored how identities at work develop and change over time, with the support of technology (Artiles et al., 2018; Bimrose & Brown, 2019). A model of occupational identity formation (Brown, 1997) provided a framework for designing and implementing online learning support for PES practitioners. Further developments contributed to an understanding of the process of professional identity development for career and employment practitioners, as represented in Figure 1 (Brown & Bimrose, 2015; 2018). It was found that learning at work can be effectively supported when such learning is understood in three ways: as a process of identity development; as a process of development in four interrelated domains; and as taking place in the context of particular opportunity structures. Figure 1 foregrounds these three representations of key factors influencing learning and identity development at work.

**Figure 1: Key Factors Influencing Learning and Identity Development at Work**



- **Learning as a process of identity development:** "learning as becoming" is outlined in the strategic career and learning biographies of individuals. Key influences on learning include: the personal characteristics underpinning learning and development; learning through self-understanding; a commitment to own learning and professional development; and career adaptability (Brown & Bimrose, 2015).
- **Learning as occurring across four domains of development:** relational, cognitive, practical and emotional. Learning may involve development in one or more domains and development in each domain can be achieved in a number of different ways. Development can be represented thematically, though its extent under particular themes can vary greatly between individual cases (Brown & Bimrose, 2018).
- **Learning as occurring in the context of opportunity structures** within which individuals operate. These structures may also play a key role in access to work which is rich in learning and development opportunities (Brown & Bimrose, 2018).

This model of workplace learning provides a framework for conceptualizing the process of professional identity formation, which may have relevance in understanding the best ways of supporting the career development profession in Canada going forward. The model could, for example, inform thinking in the development of training support for CDPs in Canada, ensuring that this support reflects the three different types of variables influencing learning and identity development at work. Whilst cognitive and practical aspects of training are often adequately foregrounded in skills training, relational and emotional aspects are often side-lined. All of these components of effective learning are pivotal for behavioural and attitudinal change to occur and could be integrated into, for example, online training designed to support workforce development.

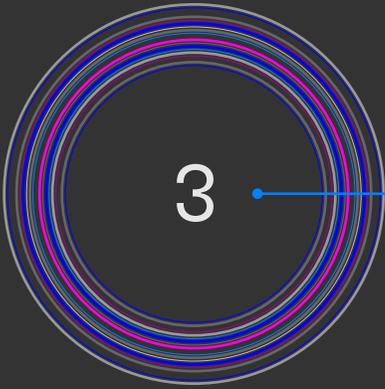
This theory of professional identity transformation was used in the European context (Bimrose & Brown, 2019; Bimrose et al., 2018) to broaden thinking about the enhancement of career development interventions. To focus on the support needs of career practitioners delivering these interventions, the guiding research question was: “how can processes of dialogue centred around careers and identities in an online learning program underpin the development and revision of the practitioners’ own identities?” (Bimrose et al., 2019, p.7). Results from this research highlighted that online participants valued being given a space in which to co-construct a debate about their future prospects, by switching discussion between issues of context, skills and identities. **Learning in communities is an important aspect of professional identity transformation (Brown & Bimrose, 2015) and once online participants were given the space for discussion, they transformed it into a place where they could engage about the issues of professional practice most pressing for them.** The online course demonstrated the importance of peer learning support, perhaps the richest source of learning (Bimrose & Brown, 2019). This has been evident for some time in face-to-face learning situations, but this research study demonstrated that the same effect can be achieved virtually with colleagues who are located in different countries and who share group-based professional identities that transcend organizational contexts and national boundaries (Bayerl et al., 2018). Facilitation played an important role in online discussions and it became evident from the research that if ICT platforms are to become places for learning and reflection in the support of identity development of career development practitioners, then facilitation will have a major role.

## I The Career Development Profession in the Context of Responsive Career Pathways

From the research investigation informing this paper, confirmed by the discussions that took place during the five roundtables, it is evident that the Canadian career development profession, like many others around the world, is characterized both by *ambiguity and indeterminateness* (Bimrose et al., 2006). Even defining the career sector is, in itself, something of a challenge, with this definitional ambiguity reflected in operational ambiguity and leaving the ongoing dialogue about the nature of career development support across different jurisdictional contexts either conflicting or largely unresolved.

Furthermore, enabling clients of career development services to navigate responsive career pathways in a post-COVID-19 world requires them to construct personal meaning in what is increasingly an even more indeterminate, unstable world. Unsurprisingly, these clients are often uncertain about the nature of the career development support they require, because their needs are open-ended in nature, especially if this support is to be responsive to volatile environments. **One important consequence of this ambiguity and indeterminateness is that the quality of the career development services delivered should be judged on the basis of the client's choice of pathway or direction, rather than their achievement of a specified goal.**

**In summary, current circumstances indicate the need for a radical re-think of how we think about the career development profession in Canada, as we shift toward a more responsive career pathways system.** The roles, functions, affinities, identities and status of CDPs are critical components of this re-conceptualization. So too are the methods for delivering these services, which must include high quality online service delivery.



3



Online Delivery



## Online Delivery

Technological developments and changes in delivery mechanisms have had a major impact on the ways that career development services operate. They can potentially promote social inclusion by creating better access to quality education, offering new opportunities for skills development and improving access to free and low-cost information, knowledge and data (OECD, 2018). Integrating Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to maximize the impact of service delivery is becoming increasingly important and is continuing to change how and where career development practitioners work. This section focuses on the rising use of technology in career support, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the wake of lockdowns and distancing measures, demand for flexible service delivery became a necessity, one the career development workforce was ill-prepared to deal with. This has been, and continues to be, a momentous shift for career practice in Canada and one that has significant ramifications for the role and practice of CDPs.

The following discussion presents a brief history of ICT and the field of [career guidance services](#) followed by a review of the impact of COVID-19 on practice. A call is made for the transformation of services to integrate multiple modalities of delivery. Challenges to developing quality integrated services are reviewed, followed by an overview of emerging and best practice, including ways in which support for both clients and practitioners should be operationalized and delivered. The section concludes by exploring what needs to be considered to advance quality integrated services for career development.

### I Current State

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the careers field in Canada (and numerous other jurisdictions internationally) was slow to integrate the use of ICT to facilitate purposeful learning and communication within the delivery of career services. Due to pandemic requirements that restricted in-person service delivery, career services were forced into the use of ICT to facilitate connection and services with their clients. Given the limited research that exists on the use of ICT as a facilitator and enabler of career services, it is reasonable to surmise that career agencies were left to create and innovate solutions with the technology they already had, or could easily access, and that was permitted under the terms of the information storage requirements.

## I ICT and the Career Field

For several decades the career field has utilized ICT in substantive ways, for example: in managing information, administering career assessments, disseminating career and [labour market information](#) (LMI) and marketing and sharing information through social media. The earliest use of technology in the field involved the development of computer-assisted guidance systems (CACGS). CACGS were developed to support the delivery of career guidance using trait and factor theories designed to match individuals to appropriate occupations based on aptitudes and interests (Amundson et al., 2014). CACGS became a staple in the systematic delivery of career guidance from the late 1970s until well into the late 1990s. They suited the dominant approach toward occupational selection due to the accuracy and speed of their algorithm for generating occupational matches between the data the user input and the LMI stored within the system.

As web-based technologies emerged, the internet offered a mechanism that allowed for broader information sharing with access to tools and information related to career exploration and job search (Gore & Leuwerke, 2000). This democratization of technology access ushered in an era of wider authorship for the creation and dissemination of career information that also resulted in questions of quality control and ethical implications for the field to consider (Watts, 2000). While websites continued to be rapidly published, providing public access to careers information, the field at large was endeavouring to make sense of the current and future role for technology. Discussion emerged in the field to locate the potential use and role of technology alongside face-to-face delivery, and there have been many attempts to define how ICT was, and could be, used in careers delivery (for example, Hooley et al., 2010; Jencius & Rainey, 2009; Osiceanu, 2016). Although these definitions include tools that enable synchronous and asynchronous communication, most of the discourse on the use of ICT has focused on information dissemination. Only a few articles encourage the use of ICT as a means of communication and as a space for materials and intervention delivery within career services (Bimrose et al., 2015; Djadali & Malone, 2004).

A review of the research related to the use of ICT and career services reveals that it is primarily focused on: the development of practitioner competencies in ICT (Barnes et al., 2010; Bimrose et al., 2010; Gough, 2017; Kettunen, 2017; Kettunen & Sampson, 2019; Sampson et al., 2020); practitioner perceptions of ICT and social media (Cedefop, 2018; Hooley et al., 2010; Kettunen et al., 2015); the use of career websites, online resources and assessments (Gati & Asulin-Peretz, 2011; Howieson & Semple, 2013; Milot-Lapointe et al., 2018); and ethical considerations (Boer, 2001; Sampson, 2002; Sampson, 2005; Sampson, & Bloom, 2001).

Three main purposes have been identified for the use of ICT within career services: for accessing resources; as a medium for communication; and for the development of materials (Barnes et al., 2010). The integration of ICT into careers work was also defined as a function of delivering information, automating interactions and providing channels of communication (Hooley et al., 2010). More recently, research across the European Union (Barnes et al., 2020) identified four ways in which ICT is currently being used in the delivery of career services: for information, communication, collaboration and transformation.

The field continues to evolve its usage of technology with developments in computer hardware, software and internet advancements and there is evidence that some jurisdictions are experimenting more fully

with innovative applications of ICT, such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden (Barnes, et al., 2020). However, Canada has been slow to articulate and demonstrate the integration of ICT for innovative career service delivery. In comparison to the related fields of educational technology and online counselling, the careers field has been slower, overall, in embracing the use of Web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies for designing and delivering human-interactive career learning interventions (Bimrose & Barnes, 2010; Bright, 2015; Goss & Hooley, 2015; Jencius & Rainey, 2009). There has been long-standing debate and tension in the careers field regarding the use and integration of technology as a service delivery channel, which is evident by the slow rate of ICT integration (Bimrose, 2017; Bimrose et al., 2011; Boer, 2001).

While there is a discernible trend regarding the (slow) integration of ICT into careers service delivery, the extent and impact on service delivery remains largely unknown (Barnes, et al., 2020). Evidence is lacking about where and how ICT technology is being used in practical applications for communication and intervention delivery. Studies show very few attempts to evaluate interventions that integrate the use of ICT as a form of structured communication for career learning. The intervention studies that do exist can generally be categorized as examining: purpose-built, self-directed online guidance interventions without the presence of a practitioner (Severy, 2008; de Raff et al., 2012); the use of online career interventions in tandem with face-to-face group delivery (Nota et al., 2016); and face-to-face and online career interventions (Amundson et al., 2018; Pordelan et al., 2018). There exists, therefore, great potential for improvement and innovation to increase the efficacy and sustainability of career services.

## I Impact of the COVID-19 Practice Pivot

With the onset of COVID-19 in Canada, career practitioners were forced to adjust delivery models as service centres were closed due to health and safety restrictions. With limited research to guide best practices for remote/online delivery, most career services accommodated the need for remote delivery by communicating with clients using virtual web meetings and telephone services, with some increase in email usage (Cedefop, 2020). While it can be argued that this represented an innovative use of technology that widened access, this pivot to replicating face-to-face delivery through primarily synchronous online delivery is only a first step in reconceiving how multiple modes of communication can be integrated in the career service delivery structure.

In a joint international survey that probed changes to career guidance policy and practice in response to the pandemic (Cedefop, 2020), respondents noted how the shift to online delivery is likely to lead to an increased demand for online delivery. As the COVID-19 health emergency begins to be controlled, career service operations are slowly returning to the provision of face-to-face services, with the careers field poised to learn from the pandemic pivot by considering new delivery modalities that will result in a longer term widening of access to services geographically and psychologically. Providing opportunities to integrate synchronous and asynchronous channels blending written and verbal exchanges offers an opportunity to expand the design and delivery of learning processes. This can offer clients new ways to reflect and make meaning of their career development process.

## I Integrating Multi-Modal Service Delivery for Service Transformation and Sustainability

Even though the careers field has radically changed its relationship to the use of technology during the pandemic, there is a dire need for thoughtful reconceptualization of service models that can use the best of technology alongside face-to-face delivery. With the ability to combine a mix of synchronous and asynchronous information and communication modalities, research and experimentation with new models for the design and delivery of career interventions is needed. Looking forward, it would be beneficial to reconceive how career services uses and integrates multiple modes of learning and service delivery to create optimal conditions for different users of the system. Rather than positioning service delivery as a binary of face-to-face or online, there is an opportunity to examine and create multi-modal service delivery options. Numerous terms have been used in the attempt to give shape to technology-enabled service delivery, such as web-based guidance, e-guidance and Internet guidance (see for example, Barnes et al., 2010). The COVID-19 pivot points to the ability for career guidance to occur in multiple, simultaneous forms. Rather than focusing on naming the distinctions of service, the emerging context provides an opportunity to consider an integrated approach to delivery that uses different blends and modes of communication to deliver services.

Challenges to Developing Quality Integrated Services Before exploring the implications of the specific challenges for integrating ICT, it is critical to situate this discussion within the context of implications for policy. Much of career service delivery in Canada is linked to government funded initiatives. As such, the policies that guide funding and service delivery requirements will have a significant impact on the growth of the integration of ICT within career services.

Despite a degree of understanding regarding the importance of transforming career services and widening access for individuals through technology integration, there has been little to no changes at a macro policy level to facilitate that transformation. The roundtables we participated in reinforced the existence of fragmentation and lack of coordination within the careers sector, including limited ability to communicate and share across sectors and jurisdictions. This fragmentation is likely to repeat as career agencies endeavour to integrate ICT service delivery within their operations. Despite funding agencies making requests that service providers provide “virtual” service channels in the public employment services (for example, Nova Scotia and British Columbia, February 2018), there is an absence of research, advice or guidance from a governmental level that will help shape and provide quality/evaluator measures.

To increase and integrate ICT as a strong and legitimate service channel is costly. To date, based on all efforts related to the RCP research, no funding or political prioritization has been identified that supports this development. It would be an overwhelming amount of work for each career services agency to research, design, implement, test and evaluate ICT applications without clear frameworks or effective research to guide the process. Efforts to engage policy-makers regarding the need for, and challenges to, developing a multi-modal and responsive career system are essential.

Further, the speed of technological development and potentially relevant technologies for service delivery may require a re-examination of policies related to data storage. Currently, in Canada, career agencies are

tremendously limited in the interactive technologies they can use in service delivery due to data storage. Many of the lower cost tools that could be useful for delivery store user-data outside of Canada. It may be important for policy-makers to reconsider the ability for clients to provide informed consent to engage with technology tools where data is stored outside of Canada to widen the market options.

Ultimately, there needs to be some effort to set guidelines and frameworks for the use of ICT within career services and to develop a plan for financing the technology, design and development necessary for ICT service delivery to flourish.

## I Key Challenges for Service Delivery

A recent investigation, spanning 16 countries, identified four challenges in the implementation of ICT within career services (Kettunen & Sampson, 2018). These include: inadequate access to ICT; inadequate skills and competencies; inadequate access to information; and inadequate integration. These findings shed light on the complexity of integrating technology into career service delivery and will shape the discussion about the foundational components that need to be addressed for Canada to expand the effective and quality use of multi-modal career services within a responsive career system.

### I Infrastructure: Inadequate access to ICT

The first challenge, shared by many countries, is inadequate access to ICT resources and tools, as well as the infrastructure to house and deploy resources effectively. To ensure Canadians have broad access to career services requires jurisdictional guidelines and strategies to ensure predictable, consistent access to ICT, which is inextricably linked to funding. In essence, this challenge requires articulating what governing bodies will take responsibility for and how finances will be allocated to ensure foundational access for all users.

There are numerous considerations that need to be addressed to ensure a sufficiently robust ICT infrastructure system. Firstly, affordable broadband Internet must be available across all communities in Canada. Even though the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has declared Internet access a basic necessity (at a minimum speed of 50 megabytes per second for downloads and 10 Mbps for uploads), the digital divide is still significant in Canada, with one million Canadians not having access to high-speed Internet (Salzman, 2016). This exclusion can further isolate individuals who may be marginalized from the labour market. Notably, an estimated 75% of Indigenous communities in Canada lack Internet access that meets CRTC's standard (CRTC, 2018).

Additionally, ensuring that individuals not only have access to, but are able to use, electronic devices is another crucial consideration related to expanding the ICT infrastructure. For career services to provide additional service channels, it will be imperative that service models consider how to increase the competence and capacity of users to make the service truly accessible.

Beyond the national conversation of technology infrastructure, career organizations themselves will need to build up expertise and resources to support expanded use of technology in the delivery of career services. With many career agencies delivering federally and provincially funded public employment services, financial considerations for expanding technical infrastructure and resourcing staffing levels to establish and maintain systems will need to be addressed.

## I Workforce development: Inadequate access to skills and competencies

Career practitioners' willingness to accept and adapt to the challenges that technology presents for practice is essential for the adoption and quality delivery of multi-modal service. Prior to the pandemic, the ICT skills required by practitioners and managers were "broadly underdeveloped" (Hughes & Gratton, 2009, p.7) and it was recognized that careers practice was lagging behind in the area of delivering career services utilizing technology-enabled spaces (Barnes et al., 2010). While the need for practitioners to increase their confidence and competence is well documented (Barnes et al., 2010; Bimrose et al., 2010; Osborne et al., 2011), many practitioners were not convinced of its relevance and so were not increasing their competence and skills (Kettunen et al., 2013).

The unexpected pivot to remote delivery in the context of COVID-19 thrust the demand for technology and practice skills into the spotlight. Cedefop et al.'s (2020) career guidance pandemic survey, with respondents from 93 nations, indicated that a significant portion of services were able to adapt most guidance activities to new conditions, and notes that telephone, video meetings and email were the most frequently used communication channels. Social media was reported to have high usage, largely for information dissemination and marketing purposes. Overall, 82% of the practitioners reflected positive attitudes toward the use of technology in career practice, while 78% also identified increased demand for support, including training for online practice and the development of materials and resources to use in practice. This positive feeling toward the use of technology, coupled with the recognition of the need for training and learning support, suggests that it is an important moment to consider and address the workforce development needs of practitioners to ensure sustainable delivery of multi-modal services as a permanent and important growth in the sector.

To ensure that multi-modal career services can develop and support sustainable and responsive career pathways, there is an urgent need to consider what is required for workforce development and to create training and learning mechanisms to increase the overall understanding and competencies of practitioners and managers in the field regarding the effective integration of technology-enabled practice. While practitioners have navigated the pivot to online delivery, this requires rethinking familiar face-to-face delivery methods and adapting core skills in nuanced ways to leverage the different modes of communication. The integration of multiple modes of communication occurring synchronously and asynchronously results in new forms of practicing that require different attending and communication skills (Goddard, 2021).

There have been narrow efforts to articulate the types of competencies and skills that are required when delivering services through technology-enabled spaces, such as the ICT skills map (Barnes, 2008) and the identification of training and support needs for the career development sector (Moore & Czerwinska, 2019). The development of an ICT career practitioner course in Finland (Kettunen et al., 2020) represents something of a breakthrough, though a challenge with research into it is that it is difficult to cross-reference the model of delivery and how it impacted the skills identified for delivery. It may be assumed that some skills required for delivery may be consistent across modalities and delivery models; whereas some skills may be specialized within specific models. For example, delivering a video-based, interactive session requires very different skills from answering instant chats coming in from a website. As the field continues to expand and adopt various models of delivery, attention will need to focus on understanding the different skill sets within the use of ICT.

A further challenge related to workforce development is that existing career sector competency frameworks do not fully articulate the scope of knowledge and practice skills required for the integration of technology with career service delivery. Sampling three national sources (Canada, Australia, UK) of existing standards revealed that the competencies are often reduced to digital literacy with a focus on keeping up-to-date with technology, using technology to disseminate information and supporting clients to access and use technology. While this is an important aspect of the work, it offers an insufficient perspective on the skills required for technology-enabled practice.

Career practitioner pre-training offered through community colleges across Canada provides little focus on the integration of ICT within career practice. An examination of 11 career practitioner training programs across Canada identified only two instances of technology being integrated into the pre-training curriculum. In the description of its program, George Brown College includes the following learning outcome: “Integrate emergent technologies into the full spectrum of Career Development processes and applications to maximize service delivery to clients navigating changing labour market requirements” ([George Brown College](#)). However, there are currently no courses dedicated to this learning focus. Conestoga College offers a course titled “Technology and Career Development.” This course, however, is focused on the selection and integration of technologies and does not appear to include career practice skills to deliver services through technology. The dearth of attention to technology and the practice skills required to effectively deliver career services across a wide-range of technology spaces suggests that the field has significant shifts to make to ensure that practitioners can gain training and support to practice effectively.

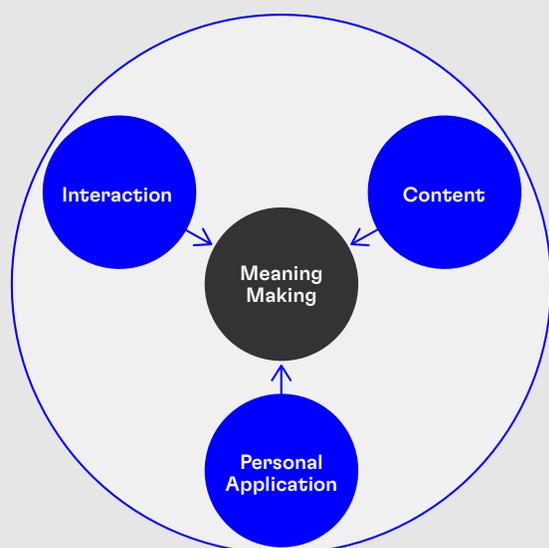
Going forward, addressing these multiple challenges will require research efforts to identify the required current and emerging skills for multi-modal practice. It will also require urgent consideration regarding professional development for practitioners that have been thrust into new service delivery models with little to no training and support. Investing in practitioners to help them become confident and competent is essential to successful service delivery.

## I Developing materials: Inadequate access to information

The advent of online learning offered the ability for a learner to engage in studies at a time and space that was convenient for them. Early online learning was primarily delivered through asynchronous channels, given low bandwidth and the high cost of video-based meeting platforms. Over this early period, the questionable quality of materials was often noted (Gore & Leuwerke, 2008; Sampson & Bloom, 2001). It is important, as the career field turns to an expanded use of technology, that relevant insights from technology-enabled learning are considered in the delivery of multi-modal career services. Consistent, localized career-related content and materials, designed to fit the latest technologies, are an essential component of modernized career services (Cedefop et al., 2020; Kettunen & Sampson, 2018). When thinking specifically about the need for content and materials in the delivery of career services, it may be helpful to locate the role content plays in designing and delivering services.

The pedagogy model (Goddard, 2010), below, situates the role that content plays in the delivery of career services.

**Figure 2: Career Learning Pedagogy**



Seen from this perspective, content (information) is one of three central components of designing and delivering effective multi-modal practice. This model assumes that content, in a practice relationship, is mediated through the interactions between a client and practitioner and through application activities that enable a client to apply the content and its personal meaning to their career life context.

Often career content is designed through the lens of a user self-help model; the cautionary consideration going forward is to also consider the content that is required to support interventions and service encounters between

clients and practitioners. Career development is a psychoeducational service that combines extensive career learning topics with the challenge of helping clients apply this information in personally relevant ways. With greater emphasis on the development of learning content, practitioner time can be freed from the delivery of content to that of facilitator and co-creator of a career development process with their clients (Goddard, 2021). In the design of training support, the model of learning outlined in Figure 1 provides a framework that ensures, for example, relational and emotional aspects of learning are accommodated to ensure a successful outcome.

## I Systemic service delivery: Inadequate integration

To achieve a modern and responsive career pathways system, attention needs to be placed on the development of systemic service delivery models with purposeful integration of ICT, alongside LMI now delivered via technology. The Labour Market Information Council (LMiC) of Canada provides an interesting example of recent investment into the development of a high-quality, reliable, up-to-date source of LMI, which is crucial for the provision of high-quality career development support. Part of the management structure includes a career guidance stakeholder committee that advises the Council on the efficacy of LMI required for career interventions. However, it seems as though this website does not (at least, not yet) address the challenges of integrating high quality LMI into career development practice in ways that are meaningful to clients' personal circumstances, using technology. In a broader systems framework, the integration of ICT includes the systems and supports required for information dissemination, management information systems and direct client service delivery. For the purposes of this paper, the challenge of integration will focus on ICT related to client service delivery.

Research in the UK examined factors that impact the integration of ICT into career organizations. Main drivers include: the extent to which the impact of ICT in practice has been evaluated; timelines available for implementation; organizational implications of integrating ICT in practice; vision for the future landscape; and workforce development issues (Bimrose et al., 2011). In some regards, the pandemic may have lessened the impact of the main driver for the integration of technology-enabled career services due to the practice pivot to remote, online delivery. However, as a new normal slowly begins to emerge, career organizations will be faced with the need to evaluate how they will embrace multi-modal service models to provide modernized and sustainable services. This needs to be considered within the context of ensuring equal access for underrepresented communities. As organizational leaders work to establish their visions and begin to tend to their workforce development issues, there are no models in the field to help guide their design process. Nor are there tangible tools to help plan the sustainable integration of multi-modal services such as projecting timelines, costs and organizational implications. Also absent from research is a strong framework for evaluating quality multi-modal services. Kettunen and Sampson (2018) argue that career organizations require more formal mechanisms to support ICT integration and that one approach to providing these would be through the development of a common conceptual framework for modelling services.

## I What We Know: Emerging Practices and Understandings

The use of ICT as a service delivery channel has been consistently increasing over the past few years. However, there are few documented studies that point specifically to best practices. Instead, to address the emerging practices, it is critical to stitch together insights from readings across published studies, practical field experience and summative research pointing to promising service delivery approaches. The practices presented in this section will also point to ways that FSC may contribute to the continued integration of ICT and multiple delivery modalities.

## I Context

The nature of career practice has shifted fundamentally. The emerging orientation implies that career services are required to combine both educational strategies and personal meaning-making strategies. When viewed from this perspective, the nature of careers work requires purposeful design to ensure resources, materials and spaces to learn and interact are created to foster meaning-making (Goddard, 2010). Within this perspective, best practices will focus on those areas that support the use of ICT to foster engagement between practitioners and clients. Below is a summary of practice considerations that are pointing toward emergent best practices.

## I Practitioner and client attitudes and abilities impact efficacy

Prior to the pandemic practice pivot, the integration of ICT as a structured channel and space for engagement and delivery of career interventions was often contested as controversial and seen as a poor substitute for face-to-face services (Boer, 2001; Bimrose, 2017). There appeared to be a self-fulfilling prophecy in action whereby practitioners had a moderate to negative attitude and orientation toward the integration of ICT that led to limited integration with the use of ICT in Canada. This resulted in ICT-enabled services being relegated to pockets of innovative exploration.

Studies related to career practitioners' attitudes toward the integration of ICT as a service channel are not readily available. However, research has been conducted on practitioners' attitudes toward the use of social media in career services which provides insights into the impact of practitioner attitudes on the overall integration of ICT into careers practice. Kettunen (2017) found that practitioners' conceptions of the use of social media in career practice existed on a continuum of attitudes: unnecessary, dispensable, a possibility, desirable, and indispensable. It seems reasonable to assert that these attitudes could equally reflect practitioners' attitudes toward ICT in practice prior to the pandemic. The Cedefop et al. (2020) report, looking at pandemic responses, shows a shifting attitude among respondents related to ICT. Over 80% reported that they agreed/strongly agreed that they possessed a positive attitude toward the use of technology for guidance. This appears to be a significant improvement from prior to the pandemic, suggesting that the forced necessity to integrate technology into career service delivery helped some practitioners conceive of the benefits this could bring to their practice. However, this still leaves 20% of the Cedefop respondents with less optimistic attitudes toward the use of ICT in career services. Consultation with an association leader in Canada indicated that she is seeing practitioners leave the field due to an unwillingness to embrace technology in practice. This is a theme that needs to be better understood.

The shift to online practice requires the development of new competencies; however, these new competencies have not been clearly defined. A new training program for career practitioners in Norway is built around the following themes (Bakke et al., 2018):

- digital skills and digital [career management](#)
- the use of technology in career guidance

- the changing role of career practitioners
- models and theories of blended guidance
- online and integrated practice
- evaluating the effectiveness of integrated guidance
- the role of technology in education and the labour market

These themes offer a reasonable starting point for the conversation, although ethical practice would be an essential addition. It may also be useful to think about the competencies required from a design and practice perspective, accepting that it is unreasonable to expect that all career practitioners will up-skill and become effective and efficient in both design and practice. This points to another evolving change for the profession: integrating greater technical and learning design capacity into professional teams.

Within the Cedefop et al. (2020) survey, respondents reported an increased need for professional development support (that is, training in online practice, materials and resources). After internet connectivity charges, one other study also found that the greatest barrier for career practitioners to utilize digital technology was a lack of skills, knowledge and training (Moore & Czerwinska, 2019). As discussed earlier in this paper, the current state of the career services profession requires a focus on professional development. The increasing demand to integrate ICT as a service delivery channel will only increase the need to address this barrier.

Clients' attitudes and abilities also impact engagement and efficacy with technology-enabled career services. A recent online intervention study (Goddard, 2021) noted that the majority of clients participating reported low technical abilities and required some basic instruction at the outset to comfortably navigate the online space. The practitioners in this research intervention spent time early on orienting the clients to the intervention and the design of the technology to increase confidence, with some participants noting that they increased their computer skills from this engagement. Anticipating that the target clients would have lower technical skills, the intervention was designed to ensure that all of the materials and resources a client would access were available through a single log-in, intuitively organized on one technical platform. The research participants noted that both the support from their facilitators and the organization of the intervention increased their confidence and engagement with the intervention. Interestingly, those clients who came into the intervention with a neutral or positive attitude toward using technology were able to fully engage with the synchronous and asynchronous elements of the intervention while forming a strong bond with their practitioners. Those clients who came into the intervention with a negative orientation toward the use of technology engaged far less and felt more distanced from their practitioner. These findings are consistent with EU research that examined 25 case studies of ICT usage in career services. It found that portals that did not require advanced IT skills and were characterized by their user-friendliness were largely taken-up by end-users (Cedefop, 2018).

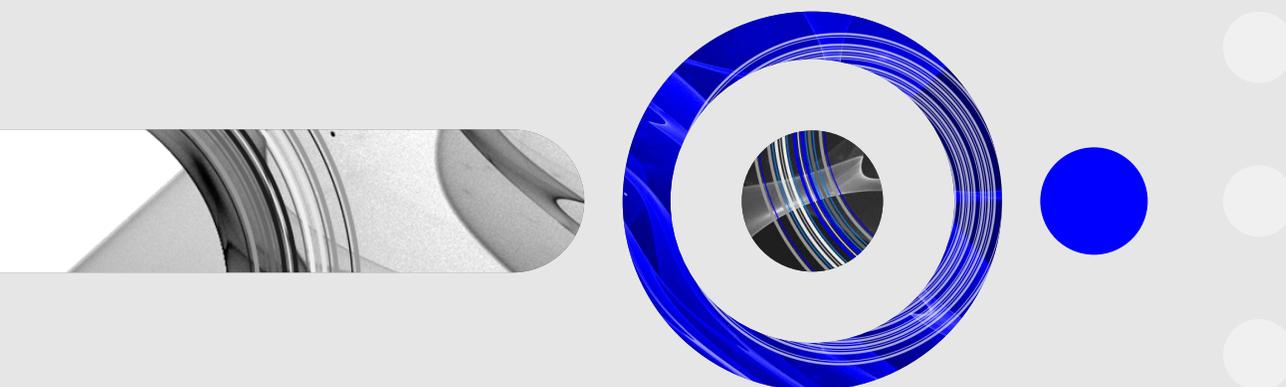
While it is not surprising that attitudes and abilities influenced engagement, the relationship and the relative value placed on the intervention, it does highlight the importance of exploring these perspectives with clients as a support strategy for engaging in online career services. From a practitioner perspective, this represents the need to take on new roles by providing technical support and/or helping participants learn to use technology before and during the delivery of the intervention (Evans, 2009).

## I Relationship between design and practice needs rethinking

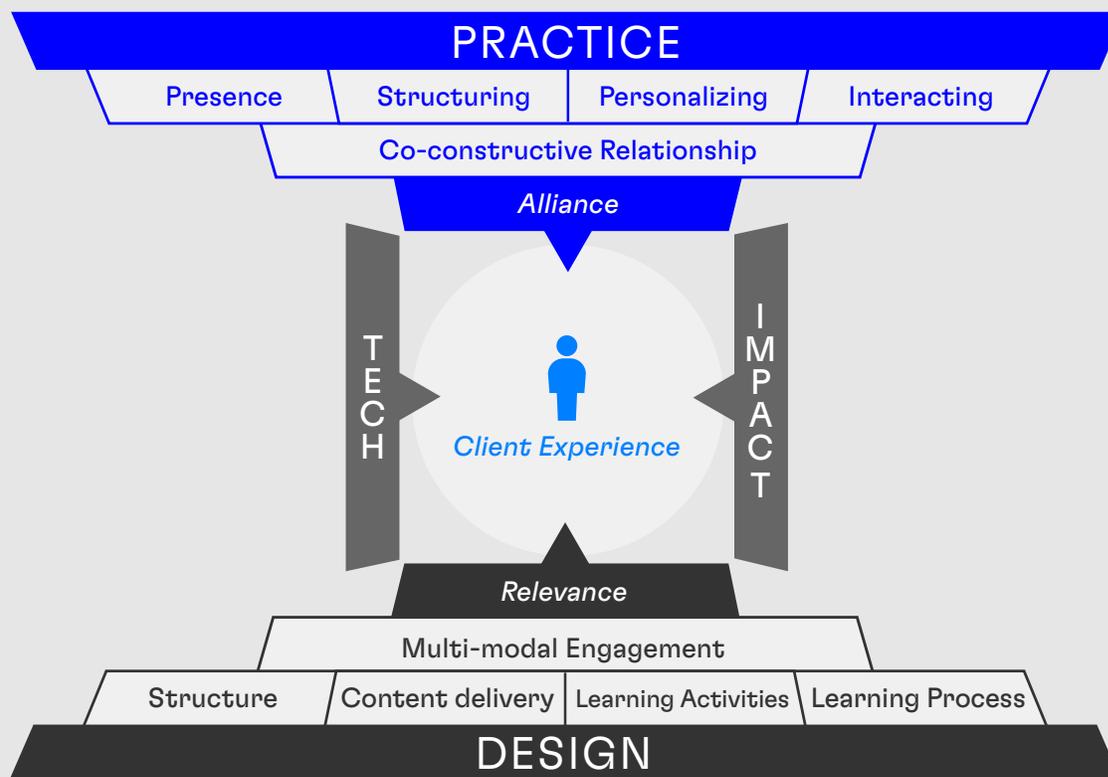
The shift to adopting multiple modes of communication and engagement within career service delivery requires rethinking the relationship between design and practice. Locating content online for clients and engaging with them using various forms of synchronous and asynchronous communication requires a greater level of purposefulness and planning when compared to face-to-face delivery. This relocation of practice requires a career practitioner to acquire design thinking and often requires the application of instructional design principles (Lalande & DeBoer, 2006; Osborn, 2009; Bimrose et al., 2015). The relevance of design can be considered from macro and micro perspectives. At the macro-level there is a need to consider the overall design of a career delivery system and the effective integration of technology to expand access and increase usefulness of career services. Design thinking is equally important when developing specific interventions that foreground the importance of building a model of service that places the client-practitioner relationship at the centre (Watts, 2001) and that fosters connection and presence.

Integrating a multi-modal approach to delivering career services radically shifts the nature of a practitioner's practice. Not only are there technical skills to learn but practitioners must learn how to embrace new forms of communication, make design decisions within their practice to determine the most effective and efficient way to interact with their clients and learn to do this at a distance and in a way that fosters a strong working alliance and an engaging, productive relationship. As noted above, few examples exist that are beginning the process of articulating what the competencies for this delivery approach encompass.

A recent study (Goddard, 2021) explored, from both a client and practitioner perspective, how design and practice activities impacted engagement, disengagement and perceived effectiveness of an online career intervention. From this research a grounded theory was developed to represent a way of considering the relationship between design and practice when moving toward multi-modal interventions.



**Figure 3: The Relational Intra-Action Model of Online Career Learning**



This model offers a potential starting point for the process of understanding the importance of and the inextricable link between design and practice for the integration of ICT as a career service channel. This model is discussed below, with considerations for a responsive career pathways system.

## I Design factors are important

Purposeful, user-centred design is the foundation that supports the opportunity for effective practice to flourish. Design thinking needs to be applied to the technical set-up and pathways through which a client will learn content, interact with their practitioner and apply the learning. The model recognizes that the design needs to be highly relevant to the client. Ensuring clients receive career services relevant to their needs would of course be expected throughout a responsive career pathways system. The significance of relevance in a multi-modal context is the recognition that working at a distance and through multiple communication channels requires the observation of different cues to recognize and assess engagement. It is essential that interventions are not designed with a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, a responsive ICT career service would have a range of content and materials that could be organized as needed for specific clients, allowing the creation of highly customized interventions. The benefit of a system configured in such a way is that it allows for high quality assessments and constructivist meaning-making activities with clients rather than focusing on the dissemination of information.

This model (Figure 3) identifies four key design factors that positively impacted participants to engage with the intervention and achieve desired outcomes: structure, content delivery, learning processes and learning activities.

- **Structure** refers to the components of an intervention that facilitate access into, and through, the intervention. Central to both design and practice is a detailed intake that not only allows for assessment and determination of relevance; it also serves as a critical opportunity for the establishment of the working alliance. Thus, a best practice emerging is the importance of a practitioner conducting the intake for their client, rather than an intake worker doing so before referring a client to a practitioner. Another important aspect of structure is the process of engaging with and through the content and recognizing the importance and value of design consistency related to the look and feel and length of the learning module.
- **Content delivery** refers to the ways in which information was designed and made available for clients to engage with. The content in this intervention included the use of text, graphics, images and videos. The content was conveyed through meaning-oriented strategies (Lengelle et al., 2018) that included metaphors and easy to consume modules of learning. This design was seen as easy to consume and understand, with clients engaging with the content in their own time. This engagement created a base for the interaction between clients and practitioners. Another important component in content consumption is the use of visual cues to act as wayfinding through the content. Clients engaging in career services are often experiencing stress and anxiety: minimizing technical and navigational confusion and providing wayfinding within the content design is important to develop trust with the client.
- **Learning processes** are the various strategies used within an intervention to foster engagement and learning. The model refers to three key learning processes: reflecting and thinking; constructing meaning from past experiences; and revisiting learning. These reflective learning processes are primarily achieved through asynchronous written communication. This provides clients an opportunity to access a learning/reflection process that differs substantially from a synchronous face-to-face encounter. Using asynchronous communication as part of the learning process fosters a deep level of reflection and the ability for both the client and practitioner to read, reflect and engage in the meaning-making together.
- **Learning activities** are the tangible materials and tasks that a client engages with to foster their career learning. The learning activities were developed from a constructivist perspective and clients found the following activities to be highly contributory to their engagement and outcomes: story-telling, writing, generating personal examples and video visualization. The varying learning processes and activities enabled clients to tap into differing knowledge domains to bring a holistic approach to their service.

These four design factors provide insight into the necessary considerations for developing technology-enabled interventions. They also align with findings that identify important components of career interventions, including counsellor support, workbooks/written exercises and a psychoeducational approach to interventions (Whiston et al., 2017).

## I Practice strategies must be diversified

As emphasized throughout this paper, the integration of technology-enabled interventions requires the acquisition of new practice competencies and the ability to adapt existing practices. With the recent practice pivot due to COVID-19, practitioners have taken to web meetings as a primary means of connecting with their clients (Cedefop et al., 2020). From field discussions, now months from the pivot, career organizations are realizing there are different ways to practice online and are seeking support to help their practitioners use different mediums and to grow their practice skills. The model (Figure 3) offers insights to different and important practice strategies for multi-modal delivery.

What emerged as central to an effective practice was the development of a working alliance. This is unsurprising, due to the recognized value and importance of a working alliance in the helping professions (Elad-Strenger & Littman-Ovadia, 2012; Heppner et al., 1998). Of particular importance is that the familiar ways of developing a working alliance shift when moving to an online delivery space. The working alliance strengthens online when clients experience genuine communication with real emotion, acknowledgement of their efforts by practitioners and encouragement to keep moving forward. As the working alliance strengthened, four additional practice strategies emerged as beneficial in multi-modal delivery. These included: creating presence; structuring the experience; personalizing the career learning; and interacting.

When practicing across multiple modalities, creating connection differs from face-to-face practice. The lack of physical presence requires conscious and purposeful effort to develop social presence to convey the perception of really being there in online communication (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Yen & Tu, 2011). Factors that supported the development of social presence included visibility (actions that reveal one to the other such as photos, video cameras and sharing of personal stories), and responding and maintaining ongoing contact (keeping up an ongoing flow of communication exchanges, with the practitioner responding to any message coming from the client). Through these actions clients expressed feeling “seen” by their practitioner.

The practice strategy of structuring is the process of tailoring the experience for each client. It begins with a contracting process to agree to the activities and the flow of engagement and establishes commitments for working together. As the career work continues together, the practitioner will actively step in and clarify and support the client to apply the learning to their personal situation and will provide regular summaries to create flow and act as punctuation within the intervention.

Personalizing reflects the choices practitioners made regarding the communication channels they used with clients at any given point, the depth and focus of their responses, and additional/supplemental materials they curated for clients. This practice revealed that when quality materials are available for clients in a technology-enabled space, practitioners were able to personalize the engagement and spend more time in practice and meaning-making processes with clients. This points to a very interesting and promising redefinition of the practitioner role.

Interacting refers to the processes for sustaining engagement through ongoing interactions. It captures specific practice/helping skills that practitioners demonstrate in their communication (often in writing) that directly creates connection with clients. Active listening was evident online as practitioners

demonstrated efforts to listen for understanding in the way they asked questions or provided feedback, with a curious orientation. A regular practice was the sharing of observations whereby practitioners would often refer to past communications and share an observation of growth or change from a client's emergent thinking. Elaborating on client thinking offered an opportunity for clients to deepen their own sense of self and the actions they would take through a reflective process. Weaving and threading represented the active and purposeful role a practitioner took on to ensure that regardless of the communication mechanism (written exchanges, phone calls, submitted activities), the unfolding narrative was brought together in a cohesive whole.

In summary, emerging practices have been explored that can help point to areas for expanding research. There is great potential to expand reach and effectiveness of a responsive career pathways service with the systematic and purposeful inclusion of multi-modal services. However, there is much to explore and define that is related both to best practices and the competencies required by career practitioners.

## I Planning and Integrating Multiple Service Delivery Channels

Intentionally developing and systematically integrating multi-modal service channels for career services offers the opportunity to widen access, offer more diverse services in one location, respond more flexibly to client needs and create the opportunity to blend self-help with practitioner-delivered services. Most jurisdictions in the Cedefop et al. (2020) study were developing multi-channel strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic and it is reasonable to assume that client demand for access to digital services will continue. Integrating multiple service delivery channels provides the user of services with the ability to access and engage with career services from their preferred location and at a time that is most suited to them. Multi-modal service delivery facilitates a power shift in practice whereby the client has far greater control over how and when to engage in services.

Integrating new technologies within career services provides new opportunities to service clients and may offer long term economies of scale. However, the financial investment needed to develop a strong integrated system will be significant when considering the questions that need to be answered and the solutions that need to be developed:

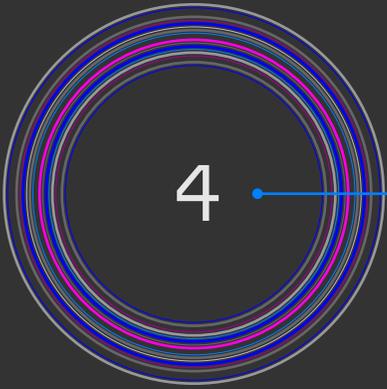
- How will delivery policies be impacted by expanding service access?  
What new policies may be required?
- How should the digital career learning services be designed? Using what technologies?
- How can career theories be central in the design of a service?
- What is the role of the career practitioner and what skills and competencies will be required?
- How can multiple channels operate symbiotically?
- How will quality be defined and evaluated?

Currently career organizations vary in their conceptualization of and support for the integration of ICT as a service venue within career services (Bimrose et al., 2011). Looking toward a more responsive career pathways system will require consideration of service models that can be used across jurisdictions. Internationally, some countries are establishing national solutions that will be implemented across their respective countries. Norway is one such example that is investing heavily in its career system and is developing a national online career guidance service (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). To accomplish the design and ultimate establishment of a service that integrates high-quality online self-help resources with online career learning/counselling, Norway has brought together career practitioners, academics and policy-makers to develop a framework for this system with a prime focus of ensuring that the service is designed for quality career learning to occur (Bakke et al., 2018). This focus shifts from the notion of populating a website with information and activities and acknowledges the important role that practitioners hold with their responsibility to mediate information and support clients to make meaning and take action.

This framework encourages the development of online materials from the perspective of learning rather than that of information dissemination. A pan Canadian study (de Raff et al., 2012) examined the impact of providing career exploration and LMI to post-secondary graduates via custom-built online delivery versus simply providing links to the career exploration and labour market sites. The self-directed online version was designed using the career learning pedagogy (Goddard, 2010) and this group of study participants showed significant improvement in their career clarity and job search activities compared with the control group, who only received informational links without the context, explanation and activities that were provided in the online version. Interestingly, when the online participants were asked how their experience could be enhanced, having access to a career practitioner through their experience to facilitate the learning was the most frequent request. Norway's aspirational service model and this study reinforce the potential and value of providing learning-oriented content and resources combined with intentionally chosen communication tools such as live chat, direct messages/emails and web meetings (Osborn, 2012).

The integration of ICT as a service space is inevitable, based on the practice pivot from the COVID-19 pandemic and the general user demand for virtual services across life domains. What is critical is that attention is given to the possible service delivery models that can transform the nature of career services, freeing it from office-bound face-to-face services. There exists a great possibility to integrate ICT into career services to expand ways of learning/practicing with clients that bring greater reflection and awareness to the context of the career decisions they are making. In a responsive career pathways system, ensuring that users have varied and multiple channels to access services across their life span is essential.

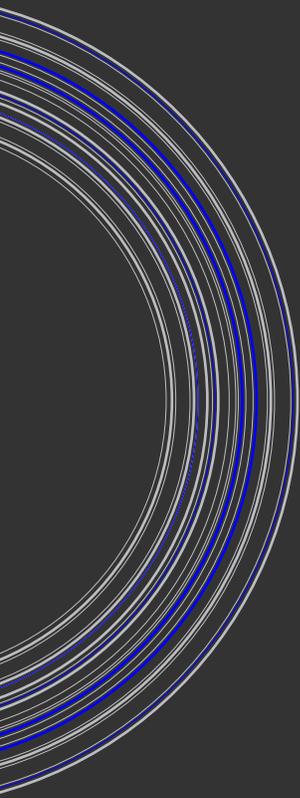
Moving forward, once strong models are developed, it will be important to raise awareness about the nature and benefits of online services to address likely misconceptions by both practitioners and clients. Lack of awareness can hinder adoption and successful integration of ICT services in the career system. Ensuring buy-in from all stakeholders along with common quality indicators and ongoing evaluation will be necessary to both develop and test models of delivery that could be utilized across jurisdictions and career sectors (Cedefop, 2018).



4



Summary



Specialized training in career guidance in Canada is rare and haphazard, achieved through either pre-service or on-the-job training. An indicator of the profession's lack of status and esteem is the lack of a coherent, structured and properly funded workforce development strategy for practitioners.



## Summary

### I Gaps, Challenges and Areas for Further Research

This section presents implications of the research, with a particular focus on identifying ideas and options for enhancing the profession, with online services an integral component. It highlights questions related to potential future enhancements of the profession, in particular capacity-building through supported learning, together with ways forward for FSC to consider.

Specialized training in career guidance in Canada is rare and haphazard, achieved through either pre-service or on-the-job training. An indicator of the profession's lack of status and esteem is the lack of a coherent, structured and properly funded workforce development strategy for practitioners. Upskilling of practitioners on an ongoing basis is essential, especially in the area of technology integration. Learning should be promoted at national, regional, local and sectoral levels, perhaps through a formally recognized national centre of excellence which could help service providers to learn from, and share, examples of good practice. This could be strengthened by the development of a Register of Professionals, which would record/monitor education and training/CPD.

Examples of good and excellent career development practices clearly exist, so providers need support, help and encouragement to disseminate this good practice systematically and effectively throughout the system. Any funding organization that is making arrangements for the delivery of career development should ensure that the provider meets a relevant, nationally approved quality standard (currently lacking) and government should support the development, establishment and maintenance of such a standard.

The career development profession is making progress toward higher levels of accountability through the creation of mechanisms for self-regulation. This includes the development of a Pan-Canadian Career Development Professional Competency Framework and a National certification process that includes an examination and practice evaluation. This brings together an evaluation model that integrates quality assurance, ethics, and accountability. An overarching group for existing membership bodies and organizations (for example, a Career Development Professional Alliance or expansion of the Canadian Council for Career Development), could be established as a single authoritative voice. Government should demonstrate its active support and encouragement for this process.

Key informants throughout the process of this research study have shared insights regarding the challenges of attraction, retention and career pathways for practitioners. However, there is little documented comprehensive evidence to guide future-forward planning. Therefore, it is imperative to establish a thorough understanding of the immediate and longer-term learning/development needs of the sector, factoring in online practice. Comprehensive empirical data of workforce demographics and their future needs would provide an evidence-base for the development of future initiatives.

There is inadequate access to ICT for career organizations and an insufficient technical infrastructure to ensure access to digital resources for all Canadians. Equally important is the need for a common conceptual model for the effective integration of ICT into the ecosystem of career services. Research should be undertaken to develop and validate a conceptual model that would help the sector to design

services and evaluate delivery technologies that are fit for purpose. Any undertaking to address this gap will need to be coupled with funding mechanism(s) to enhance operational requirements.

To ensure that technology can widen geographic, social and psychological access within career development services, new interventions need to be developed, tested and researched to increase present knowledge and understanding about effective multi-modal service delivery, as well as the competencies required for career practitioners to design and deliver these services. This research should target the development, delivery and impact of new interventions to inform design, practice and quality metrics for evaluation. Alongside this, a reach into the existing career services community to locate innovative practices that have occurred during the pandemic could offer insights related to pan-Canadian service and practice models.

The need to strengthen the career development workforce in Canada has been emphasized in this research paper and was raised many times within the roundtables. There was already an understanding that many skills were under-developed prior to the pandemic and the sudden thrust to practice online has only exacerbated the skill development needs. A research project to develop a training and learning model, with deep field consultation, that could pilot training delivery with career practitioners and their managers could inform what is required to build a stronger professional learning and development culture. The aim should be to design a project that creates a foundation for a national training program, with a vision for funding and management sustainability. Micro-credentialing could be a productive avenue of inquiry for further research/investigation to deliver on this aim.

## I Opportunities: Promising Models and Innovative Ideas

Many of the following ideas place much of the responsibility for change on the individual career practitioners themselves. However, in order to be fully effective, they will need to be supported by all parts of the career development ecosystem. Government assistance in facilitating the process will be critical.

- If CDPs are to have a pivotal role in securing maximum impact of services at national, provincial and territorial levels, they need **a robust voice**. Involvement of key stakeholders in public administration, social partners and civil society continues to be both ad hoc and weak. The five roundtable discussions conducted as part of the Blueprint research process were a powerful illustration of one mechanism for creating and supporting a robust voice. What remains is the challenge of harnessing the creativity and energy of CDPs.
- While there are pre-training career development programs that exist at over 11 colleges in English-speaking Canada, it is far more difficult to locate recognized, quality professional training opportunities for career practitioners. Federally and provincially/territorially funded mechanisms (such as a **national training/learning centre or a centre of excellence**) that foster cooperation and coordination for national learning, networking and research relevant to the enhancement of the profession are needed.
- Career development policies need to have **statutory underpinnings** to facilitate connection to other national strategies. Québec is the only province that has succeeded in regulating the profession, through the use of legislation. Canada is fortunate in having such an example in-country, as a model from which to learn.

- Models of delivery currently exemplify mixed funding mechanisms, involving combinations of public and private sector. This variability risks excluding some populations and marginalizing others. It also contributes to the deep segmentation of the sector. This poses a particular challenge for definitions of quality criteria. When thinking about a responsive career system, considering where and how to **achieve cohesive career development delivery across an individual's learning and working life is critical** to creating consistency, quality and accountability.
- Long-term, adequate **investment in technical infrastructure and workforce development for ICT is essential to maximize the impact of ICT** in career development support. For example, career development services should be equipped, and able, to support the development of the expertise needed. This relates not only to practitioners, but also to end users, who need to be confident and competent in accessing LMI relevant to their situation, widen their job searches and be able to create their own online profile. Increasing the ICT competence of professionals is crucial for maximizing the impact of technology on clients.
- **Open, integrated and comprehensive strategies for ICT**, together with the supporting infrastructure necessary for the development and implementation of coherent and comprehensive digital services is needed.
- **The professionalization of the Canadian career development workforce is crucial.** Key stakeholders who are focused on increasing the professionalism of career development practitioners need to take part in discussions to advance this goal. A number of organizational levels could be considered (such as membership-benefit or designation-granting associations, or certifying or professional regulatory bodies).<sup>3</sup>
- Robust, appropriate and embedded **mechanisms for monitoring the inputs and outcomes of career development** at the national level, with broad representation from key stakeholders, are needed. There is also a need for guidance on how to implement new ways to measure career development services and activities across different contexts to support the delivery of services and promote innovations. PRIME is a Canadian innovation designed by CCDF to address these gaps, though support in its successful implementation is required.
- To assure high-quality career development services, the **common professional standards, currently under development, should include a requirement for a minimum entry-level qualification** for careers professionals and a commitment to CPD that should be monitored by an impartial body. Career development practitioners should self-declare the nature and amount of CPD they have undertaken each year, with a random sample providing evidence to assure quality. A register, established for this purpose, is one possible way forward.

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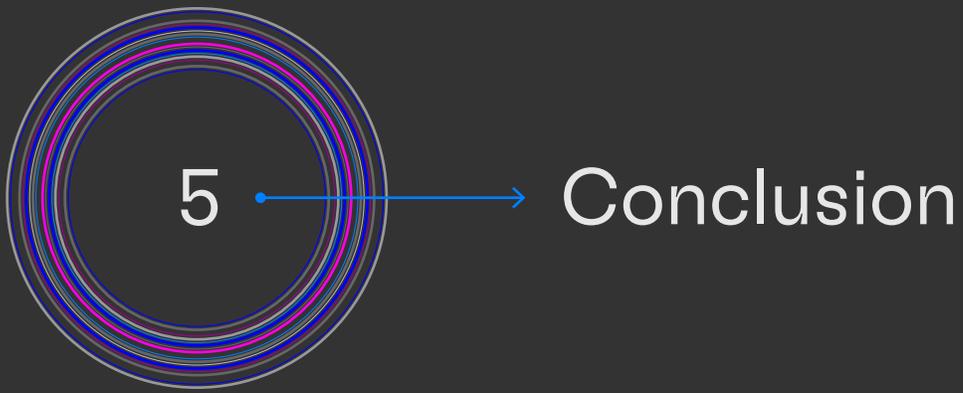
<sup>3</sup> **Member-benefit professional associations** focus primarily on benefiting their individual members through access to physical resources, like journals and conferences. They also offer resources like peer support, networking and resume building. **Designation-granting associations** are organizations that offer a certification for members to show their dedication to the field. **Designation-granting organizations** usually issue a certification after a candidate completes professional learning hours, demonstrates their knowledge of work products, passes an exam or completes a combination of these items. Members who earn these certifications usually need to renew them every few years by earning continuing education hours. **Certifying bodies** are organizations that issue credentials to their members once they meet set requirements. Unlike designation-granting associations, the main purpose of certifying bodies is to issue and track certifications. Applicants may need to have some education or professional experience as a prerequisite. Many certification organizations also require applicants to pass an exam and renew the credential based on guidelines. **Professional regulatory bodies** develop and maintain expectations of the industry. They follow F/P/T guidelines in order to best serve the public. These bodies often establish and uphold licensing and certification requirements for specific occupations. This type of professional organization can exclude members if they don't follow the established guidelines.

In addition to updating core knowledge and skills, CPD also helps careers professionals keep pace with the dynamic contexts in which they work, and to develop knowledge and skills in new areas of economic and political priority. Learning should be carefully designed and delivered (via a national delivery mechanism such as a centre of excellence or a training institute) to foster and maintain a strong sense of professional identity among the community of practice, to uplift status and self-esteem among professionals and to improve the quality of services delivered to clients.

## I Implications for FSC's Responsive Career Pathways Initiative

The following points emerge from the research and provide strategies for the FCS to consider in support of building responsive career pathways in Canada:

- Uplifting the professional status and quality of services delivered by the career development sector needs to be a priority. The FSC could explore with provinces and territories how to give career development services **a fresh policy impetus**, with an emphasis on diversity and widening access.
- There is opportunity for the FSC to support **effective arrangements for communication, exchange and consultation among all relevant stakeholders**, to promote coordination and cooperation at all levels in the provision of career development services.
- The FSC could help foster **procedures to encourage and support mutual learning from career development networks and fora**, in consultation and cooperation with provinces and territories. The aims would include: improving the quality of career development services; exploiting the potential of ICT for use in online services; exploring new funding mechanisms; and embedding professionalism and professionalization.
- **A culture of continuous, lifelong learning in career guidance services is needed.** The FSC could contribute to the growth of such a culture by supporting programs around special training, mentoring, peer counselling, group sharing of expertise and clinical supervision. Progress toward this culture should be monitored (for example, via a Register of Professionals).
- To support more effective use of ICT in career development services, long-term professional integration and client empowerment in the use of digital technologies is needed at the national level. Alongside this, greater investment in technical infrastructures and workforce development will be required. In consultation with key stakeholders, there is an opportunity for FSC to support the investment and development of online, multi-modal services that will expand understanding of best-practices.
- Monitoring the outcomes and impact of career development services needs to be improved (for example, through PRIME and/or new measures of soft outcomes). Encouraging the adoption of minimum monitoring standards is necessary. To support this dialogue, the FSC could facilitate and promote effective exchange, consultation and communication arrangements among relevant stakeholders.

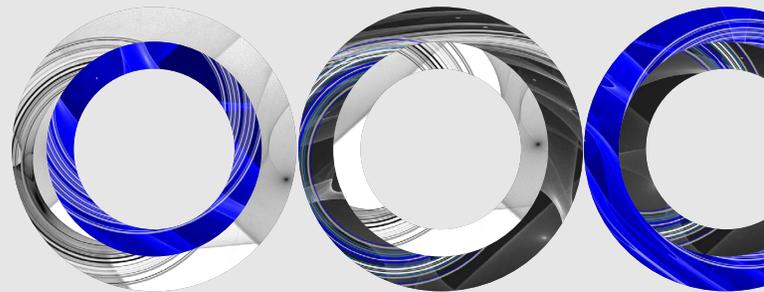




## Conclusion

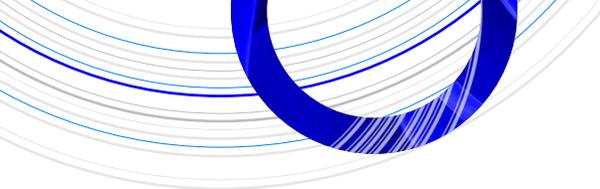
This paper has addressed fundamental issues in the career development workforce and the integration of online practice, and considered how we should understand and enhance the career development profession, and what we know about best practices in the delivery of high-quality career services online.

In terms of Canada's future economic prosperity, these questions are inseparable. CDPs are being required to make sense of a turbulent labour market, typically without adequate training, while at the same time providing appropriate support to Canadians. The career development workforce is under increased and increasingly severe pressures, while at the same time requiring urgent attention itself. The pandemic has placed new demands on ways of working that have made the integration of technology into the delivery of career development services no longer an option. However, the adoption of suitable technologies, in a smart and effective manner, implies fundamental change to practice.



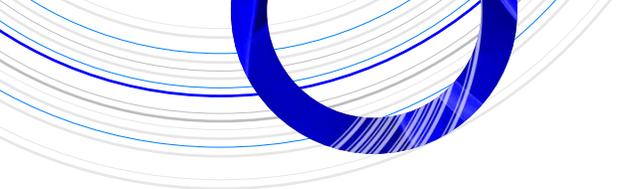
## I Key Themes

- Around the world, career development support is characterized both by ambiguity and indeterminateness. Service provision in Canada is no exception.
- A radical re-think about the nature of career development in Canada is needed, including an examination of the nature of profession and professionalism, and organized around: a funded workforce development strategy; a national quality standard; an overarching group for existing membership bodies; an understanding of the development needs of the sector, including online practice; and a training and learning model that could pilot training delivery.
- Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the careers field was slow to integrate the use of ICT; however, pandemic restrictions have forced career services into the use of ICT to facilitate connection with their clients. This is a momentous shift for career practice in Canada and for the role of CDPs.
- There is a dire need for thoughtful reconceptualization of service models that can use the best of technology alongside face-to-face delivery.
- Key challenges for service provision include inadequate access to ICT resources, tools and infrastructure; lack of access among the workforce to skills and competencies; poor access to quality information; and insufficient integration of ICT into service delivery models.
- New interventions must be developed to increase understanding of effective multi-modal service delivery, and to foster the competencies required for CDPs to design and deliver these services.



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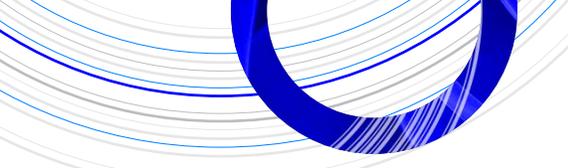
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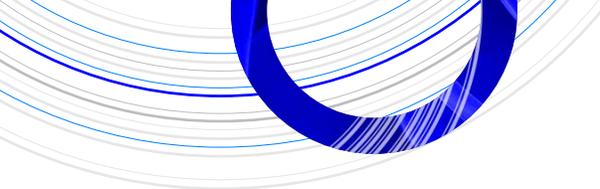
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