

# Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) Evaluation

Evaluation Report – April 2022

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# Acknowledgements

## About the Future Skills Centre

The [Future Skills Centre \(FSC\)](#) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce.

As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead.

The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Ryerson University, Blueprint and the Conference Board of Canada, and is funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).

## 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.



Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Centre.

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

# Executive Summary

The Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) program is a skills development and work placement program developed by Ryerson University's Diversity Institute and TECHNATION. Its aim is to increase the digital competencies and professional skills of recent graduates with non-STEM backgrounds, with a particular focus on equity-seeking groups that are underrepresented in digital roles.

In spring of 2019, Ryerson University's Diversity Institute and TECHNATION received a grant from the **Future Skills Centre (FSC)** to deliver one of FSC's six inaugural pilot projects. The grant was used to develop a curriculum to support participants to build their digital competencies, and to test a variety of scalable delivery approaches to equip individuals across Canada with the skills to enter the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector.

Between September 2020 and June 2021, six ADaPT cohorts were delivered in Toronto, Calgary and Halifax. Given the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, ADaPT pivoted their original program plans to meet the project objectives. As FSC's evidence generation lead, Blueprint worked with the Diversity Institute and TECHNATION to conduct an evaluation of ADaPT from September 2020 to October 2021. This report summarizes the findings from that evaluation.

## Key findings

### ADaPT successfully reached its target population and achieved high completion rates:

Our survey data showed that the program was able to meet its target of recruiting **75%** of participants from equity-seeking groups,<sup>1</sup> with **92%** identifying as a member of one or more equity-seeking groups. According to our administrative data, **93%** of all consenting participants completed ADaPT.

### Participants found ADaPT to be valuable and reported high levels of satisfaction:

Among exit survey respondents, **91%** indicated that they were somewhat or very satisfied with the program overall. Participant interviewees shared that ADaPT helped to improve their confidence in their job search, improved their employment readiness and clarified their professional direction.

### Participant employment rates were high at the end of the program and continued to increase over time:

Most survey respondents reported being employed at program exit (**69%**), and this continued to rise over time. In addition to the increase in employment rates, the percentage of employed participants who reported having a job in a digital role increased across all locations, with **56%** reporting having a job in a digital role at exit, **71%** at three months and **78%** at nine months.

<sup>1</sup> Equity-seeking groups' refers to communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society because of barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination, and actively seek social justice and reparation. The equity-seeking groups targeted through the ADaPT program include Indigenous persons, racialized persons, newcomers, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, persons with a disability and women.

### **Participants who were employed reported improvements in job satisfaction:**

Survey findings showed that respondents who were employed at the start of ADaPT were more satisfied with their jobs by the end of the program. Participants felt they were better able to advance in their careers after ADaPT, and some felt less worried about losing their jobs.

### **Participants experienced ongoing challenges in the program:**

While satisfied overall, participants flagged some opportunities for improvement in future, such as closer alignment with prior technical knowledge, additional networking experiences, a less intensive program pace and curriculum and additional activities to practice digital skills in the online stream.

### **Participants highlighted several bright spots in the program:**

Participant interviewees shared that they appreciated ADaPT's practical career coaching supports, comprehensive skills training curriculum, dedicated staff guidance and instructors' deep subject-matter expertise.

### **The program was delivered as designed, while remaining responsive to participant needs and scaling challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic:**

The ADaPT delivery team was responsive to feedback and iterated on minor components of the model. As the ADaPT project team prepares to scale the program, they continue to identify solutions to improve program satisfaction and outcomes and use technology to address scaling challenges while remaining a high-touch program.

## **Implications**

The evaluation findings point to some implications that could inform the design and delivery of this program and similar ones:

### **Provide career coaching in tandem with skills training to support entry into digital industry.**

Our findings showed that providing access to practical career coaching supports, in addition to comprehensive technical and employability training, can help to equip participants with the skills required to achieve entry-level employment and make them feel more confident in their job search.

### **Invest in building employer partnerships to better provide work placement opportunities.**

Our survey findings showed that participants achieved the highest employment rates in Toronto, where the ADaPT design team had the most established employer networks, highlighting the importance of sustainable relationships with employers and a strong understanding of their interests and needs.

### **Explore opportunities to align curriculum with employer and participant needs.**

Our evaluation findings highlighted the importance of ensuring that the program curriculum is aligned with current industry needs, while remaining responsive to participant feedback.

## Next Steps

In 2021, the Diversity Institute received an additional grant from FSC through the [Scaling Up Skills Development](#) initiative. This additional funding is being used to foster greater engagement with specific target populations and to support the development of their digital and professional skills, while addressing the ongoing shortage of skilled talent within the technology sector. Blueprint is continuing to collaborate with the Diversity Institute and TECHNATION to generate evidence on the model's impact through a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT), and to support the expansion of the model. We expect to share the final results from these additional evidence generation activities in March 2024.

# Introduction

Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) is a skills development and work placement program developed by Ryerson University's Diversity Institute, with its delivery supported by TECHNATION. ADaPT aims to increase the digital competencies and professional skills of recent graduates with non-STEM backgrounds. It has a focus on equity-seeking groups that are underrepresented in digital roles.

This report summarizes the findings from the evaluation of the ADaPT program, with the objective of understanding the outcomes achieved by participants and the experiences of participants and program partners.

## Context

In spring of 2019, Ryerson University's Diversity Institute and TECHNATION received a grant from the **Future Skills Centre (FSC)** as one of FSC's six inaugural pilot projects. The grant was used to develop a curriculum to support participants to build their digital competencies, and to test a variety of scalable delivery approaches to equip individuals across Canada with the skills to enter the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. With a national membership of over 300 employers in the ICT sector, TECHNATION provided access to a network of employers in new locations, provided consultation on employers' desired skills and administered badges. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, the Diversity Institute pivoted their original program plans to meet their original project objectives, including delivering content online and removing the blended learning stream that would have provided training both synchronously and asynchronously. As a consortium partner of the FSC, Blueprint works with partners and stakeholders to generate evidence to help solve pressing future skills challenges. Blueprint worked with the Diversity Institute and TECHNATION to conduct an evaluation of the program from September 2020 to October 2021. This report shares the results of that evaluation.

In the spring of 2021, the Diversity Institute received an additional grant from FSC as part of an investment in [Scaling Up Skills Development](#). This additional funding was awarded based on ADaPT's strategic relevance to FSC's goals as well as high levels of demand for the service and satisfaction with the program. This additional funding is being used to serve more people from specific target populations, including mid-career displaced and transitioning workers and newcomers, and to support the development of their digital and professional skills, while addressing the ongoing shortage of skilled talent within the technology sector.

Blueprint is continuing to collaborate with the Diversity Institute and TECHNATION to generate evidence on the model's impact through a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT), and to support the expansion of the model. We expect to share the final results from these additional evidence generation activities in March 2024.

# Report structure

This report is organized as follows:

## **1** About ADaPT:

Overview of the program

## **2** Evaluation Approach:

Description of our approach to the evaluation

## **3** Findings from the Outcomes Evaluation:

What employment outcomes were achieved by participants

## **4** Findings from the Process Evaluation:

How participants, program partners and employers experienced the program and its implementation

## **5** Conclusions:

Summary of key findings and implications

## **6** Next Steps for the Project:

What the scaling phase of ADaPT will look like and what we hope to learn and share from this phase

## **7** Appendices:

Further details on the data collection and analytical approaches for this evaluation, and additional tables

# 1. About ADaPT

## Background

Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) is a skills development program developed by Ryerson University's Diversity Institute, with support from TECHNATION. The program aims to improve the digital and professional skills of recent graduates with non-STEM backgrounds to equip them for digital roles. ADaPT focuses on the following equity-seeking groups: Indigenous persons, racialized individuals, newcomers, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, persons with a disability and women.

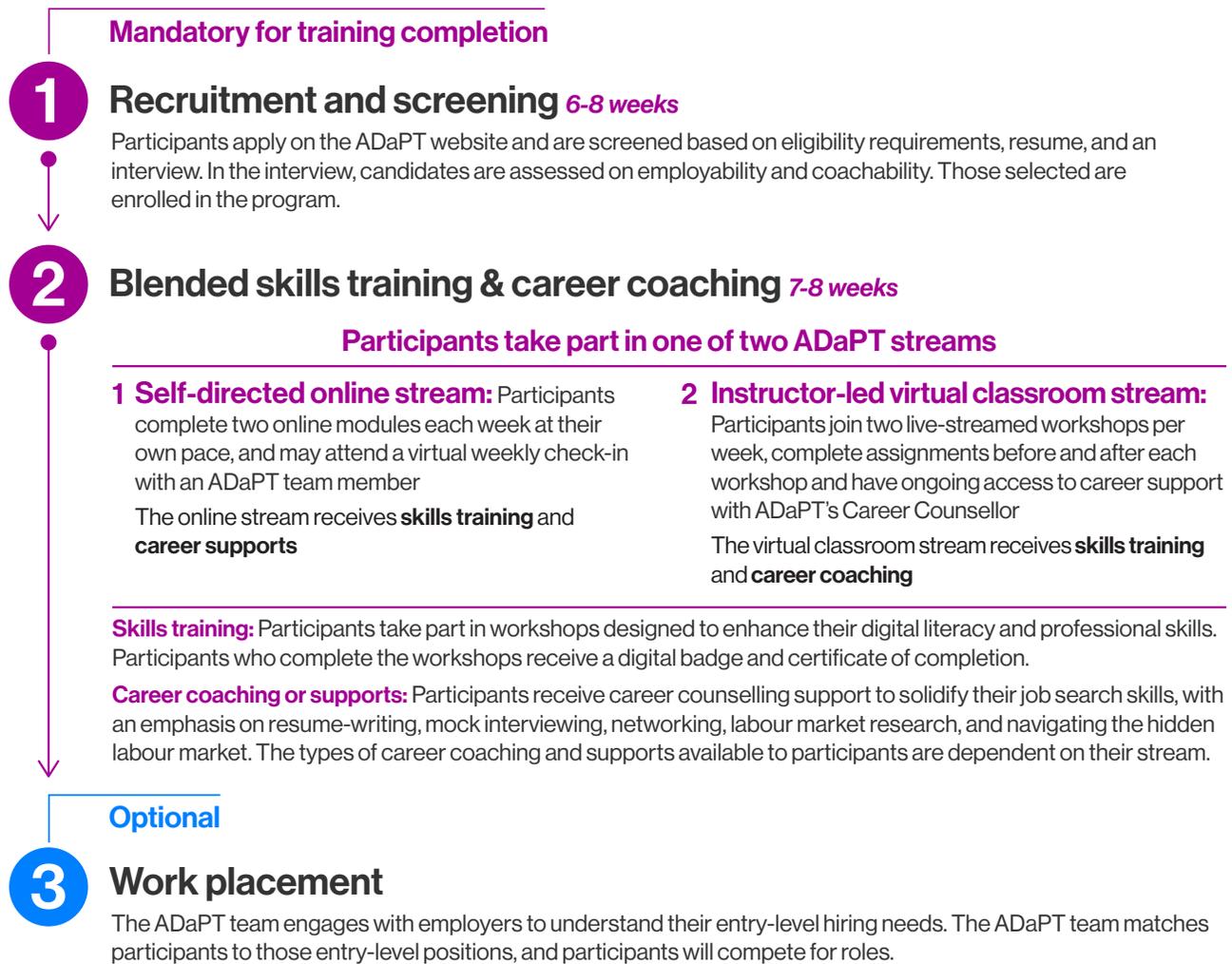
ADaPT was designed in response to the disconnect between the skill needs of employers and the skills of post-secondary graduates. Although demand for “hybrid” candidates who possess both digital and soft skills has grown, many employers in the technology sector find that recent graduates often lack either currency in the latest technologies or the soft skills to succeed.

To bridge the skills gap and create accessible pathways into the ICT sector or employment in digital roles, ADaPT provides recent graduates with access to professional and digital skills training workshops and ongoing career coaching and support. Since the overall aim of the ADaPT program is to support participants to access entry-level digital roles, one of the key goals of our evaluation was to measure changes in participant employment in digital roles (see Section 3: Findings from the Outcomes Evaluation).

# Program model

The ADaPT program is designed to support recent graduates from non-STEM backgrounds to build their digital and professional skills, and to create employment pathways into the ICT sector. The program model consists of three phases, summarized in Figure 1 below.

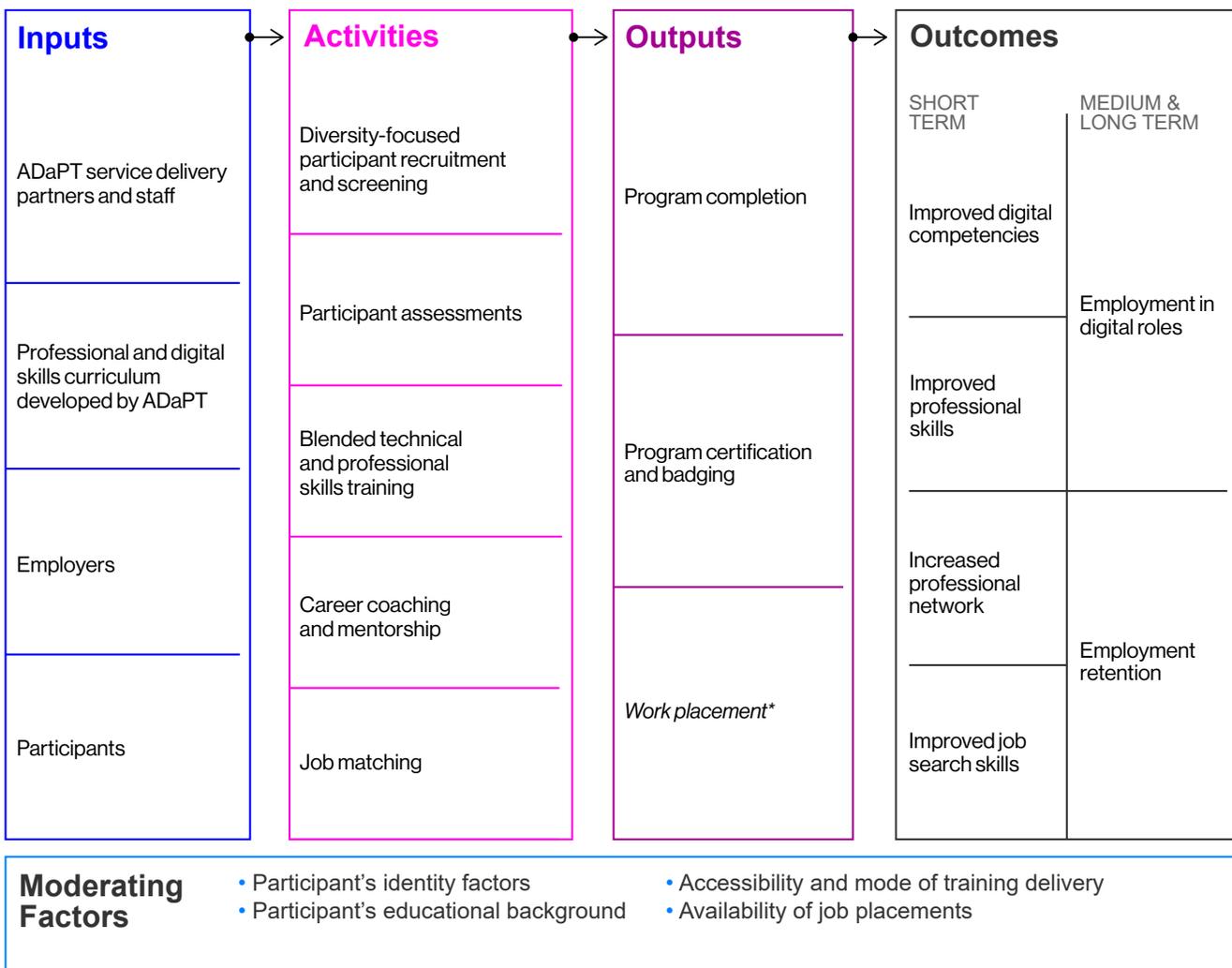
**Figure 1: Program Model**



After virtual classroom participants finish the ADaPT program, they continue to receive ongoing employment support and job search assistance from the ADaPT team, including notifications about employment opportunities. Online stream participants also receive support with job placements and have access to a bulletin board but do not receive employment support from the ADaPT team.

Figure 2 below presents the ADaPT program’s logic model, including the key program inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

**Figure 2: Program Logic Model**



\*Please note that work placements are neither guaranteed, nor a mandatory requirement for completion of the ADaPT program

For more information about the key definitions relevant to the ADaPT program, please refer to Box 3.

### **Box 1: Key Definitions**

The following is a list of definitions relevant to the ADaPT program:

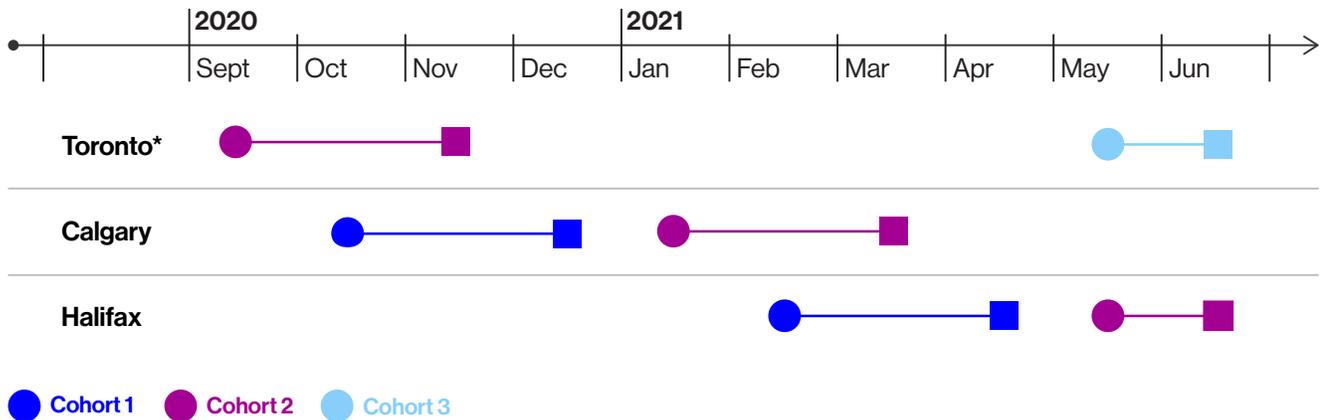
- **Digital skills:** Skills needed to use digital devices, communication applications and networks to access and manage information. Examples include data visualization, UX design, design thinking, data analysis, digital marketing and website development.
- **Professional skills:** Refers to core skills that are critical to succeed in the workplace. Examples include oral communication skills, presentation skills, writing skills and professional networking skills.
- **Digital roles:** Any roles that require general workforce digital skills, or that contribute directly to digital service design and delivery.
- **STEM subjects:** Any subjects that fall under one of the four disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Examples include Biochemistry, Civil Engineering, Biology, and Computer Science.

## Program implementation

Six ADaPT cohorts were delivered in Toronto, Calgary and Halifax between September 2020 and June 2021 and are included in this evaluation (see Figure 3).

As ADaPT program delivery expanded into two new locations during the evaluation period — Calgary and Halifax — the central ADaPT team at the Diversity Institute in Toronto worked with institutional partners at the new locations to support with program delivery, including St. Mary’s University Entrepreneurship Centre in Halifax, and the School for Advanced Digital Technology (SADT) at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary. The central ADaPT team continued to lead and oversee participant recruitment, screening and career coaching across all cohorts. In addition, TECHNATION provided referrals to new employers specific to the Halifax and Calgary regions and connected the ADaPT team to promotional activities to support with employer engagement.

**Figure 3: Program Timeline**



\*Please note that Toronto Cohort 1 happened between March and April 2020 but is not included in the evaluation due to delays in ethics approval.

## 2. Evaluation Approach

### Overview of approach

Based on insights from a discovery session with the ADaPT team, Blueprint designed an evaluation plan that reflected the program's evidence needs and goals, the program model's maturity and the capacity of the program team for data collection and evaluation. Our evaluation included the following components:

- **Outcomes evaluation** to assess the program's effectiveness in achieving participant outcomes related to employment, education and skills development.
- **Process evaluation** to collect data on participant satisfaction and partner implementation processes, with the goal of supporting ongoing program improvement.

Focusing on outcomes and process evaluations at this point supported FSC's goal of designing evidence generation approaches that reflect the stage and evaluation readiness of pilot projects.

To support continuous learning during the evaluation, Blueprint shared a learning report with the ADaPT team in April 2021, which summarized the preliminary evaluation findings for the initial two cohorts (Toronto Cohort 2 and Calgary Cohort 1). In addition, Blueprint shared data memos after each of the six program cohorts, summarizing participants' socio-demographic characteristics and their self-assessed skills measures at the start and end of each cohort.

Our outcomes evaluation was guided by our **Common Outcomes Framework**: a set of outcomes and participant socio-demographics that can be used to generate consistent, comparable evidence across projects. We are also currently pursuing longitudinal data collection. We are working with Statistics Canada to use their Social Data Linkage Environment to measure long-term participant employment and education outcomes for FSC project participants using administrative data. We anticipate that results from this long-term outcome monitoring will be available in early 2023.

The evaluation plan for ADaPT contains the following components:

- **Evaluation questions:** The questions to be answered by the evaluation
- **Measurement framework:** Data to be collected to answer those questions
- **Data collection strategy:** When and how the data is to be collected

## Evaluation questions

Our evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

### Outcomes evaluation

- 1. Program reach:** Who did the pilot reach, and was the recruitment process successful in achieving its diversity targets?
- 2. Program completion:** Did participants complete the program?
- 3. Skills development:** Did participants report improvements in the skills targeted by the program?
- 4. Employment and education outcomes:** What employment and education outcomes did participants achieve? How did these outcomes differ across different socio-demographic profiles?

### Process evaluation

- 5. Program satisfaction:** Are participants satisfied with the training received? What do they see as strengths and challenges? How did this vary across diverse populations?
- 6. Program adaptations:** Was the pilot implemented as intended and what adaptations were made to its implementation relative to the original design?
- 7. Program scaling:** What is needed to scale the pilot, in terms of resources, capacities and knowledge?

## Data collection and analysis

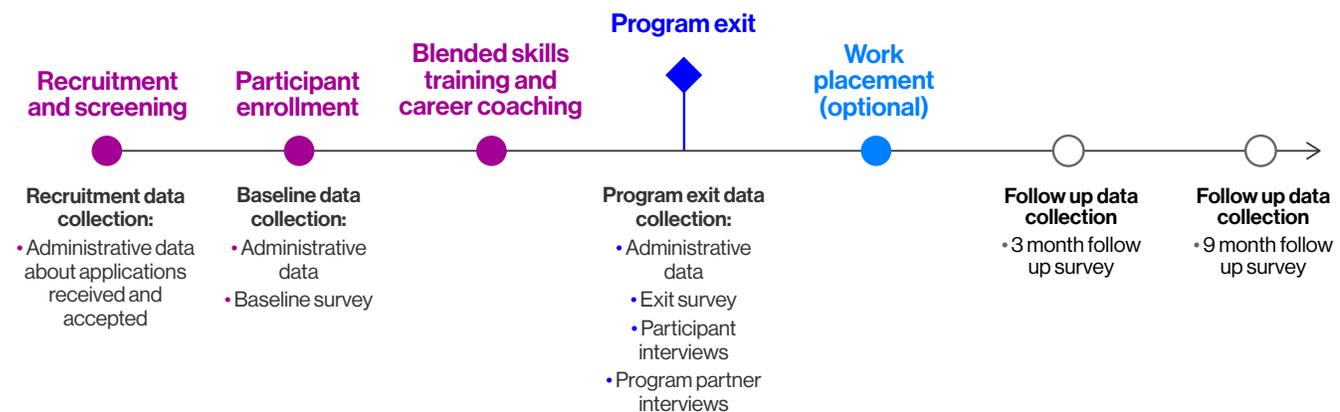
We used a **mixed-methods evaluation approach**, which uses both quantitative and qualitative data. Table 1 shows the data sources we used to collect each type of data, and Figure 4 illustrates the data collection timeline. Where possible, we leveraged data from all the sources below to interpret the findings and generate insights.

**Table 1: Data Sources and Sample Size**

Data Type	Data Sources	Halifax	Toronto	Calgary	Total
Quantitative data	<b>Participant Administrative Data</b> (# of consenting participants)	<b>78%</b> (57/73)	<b>92%</b> (94/102)	<b>93%</b> (80/86)	<b>89%</b> <b>(231/261)</b>
	<b>Participant Baseline Survey</b> (at program start)	<b>100%</b> (57/57)	<b>100%</b> (94/94)	<b>100%</b> (80/80)	<b>100%</b> <b>(231/231)</b>
	<b>Participant Exit Survey</b> (at program end)	<b>89%</b> (51/57)	<b>91%</b> (86/94)	<b>91%</b> (73/80)	<b>91%</b> <b>(210/231)</b>
	<b>Participant Three-Month Follow-Up Survey</b> (three months after program end)	<b>60%</b> (34/57)	<b>80%</b> (75/94)	<b>70%</b> (56/80)	<b>71%</b> <b>(165/231)</b>
	<b>Participant Nine-Month Follow-Up Survey</b> (nine months after program end)	NA	<b>79%</b> (34/43)*	<b>55%</b> (24/44)*	<b>67%</b> <b>(58/87)</b>
Qualitative data	<b>Participant Interviews</b> (at program end)	8	10	10	<b>28</b>
	<b>Program Partner Interviews</b> (at program end)	NA			<b>5</b>

\*Only Toronto Cohort 2 and Calgary Cohort 1 have completed the nine-month follow-up surveys.

**Figure 4: Data Collection Timeline**



### 3. Findings from the Outcomes Evaluation

Our outcomes evaluation used survey and administrative data to answer questions about program reach, program completion, skills gains and employment and education outcomes for participants.

#### Program reach

- **ADaPT reached its main target population of recent graduate job seekers:** The respondents' socio-demographic information from the baseline survey reveals that **64%** of participants graduated from their highest degree within a year or less prior to the program start date.
- **ADaPT met most of its diversity targets for specific equity-seeking groups but did not reach targets for women and Indigenous persons:** Based on the baseline survey, we found that **92%** of participants identified as being a member of one or more equity-seeking groups. This surpassed ADaPT's **target goal of 75%** of participants across all locations identifying as belonging to the following equity-seeking groups: Indigenous persons, racialized individuals, newcomers, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, persons with a disability or women.
  - The program was successful in recruiting **racialized individuals (58%)** and **newcomers (48%)** across all locations, surpassing its original target of **42%** of participants identifying as belonging to each of these groups. Additionally, ADaPT also slightly surpassed its **5%** recruitment target for **persons with a disability**, with **7%** of participants identifying as belonging to this group.
  - The program was not successful in meeting its recruitment target of **5%** for participants belonging to the **Indigenous persons** group, with only **1%** of participants across all locations self-identifying as Indigenous. While the program did not hit its recruitment target of **69%** for **women**, it came very close to doing so, with **63%** of participants self-identifying as women.

There were some key differences in cohort socio-demographic composition across the three locations. These included:

- **Calgary participants were older and had been graduated for longer:** Our findings from the baseline survey show that Calgary had a significantly higher percentage (**71%**) of participants reporting being older than 24, compared to Toronto (**35%**) and Halifax (**56%**). Similarly, **49%** of participants in Calgary graduated more than one year prior to program start date, compared to **30%** in both Toronto and Halifax. The socio-demographic difference of the Calgary participants may be linked to the partner organization being a technical college, as opposed to a university as in Toronto and Halifax.
- **Halifax participants were more likely to be newcomers and have obtained education above a bachelor's degree:** According to the baseline survey, more than half of participants in the Halifax cohort (**57%**) reported being newcomers to Canada, with **60%** of those newcomers having arrived in Canada in the last five years. On the baseline survey, **32%** of Halifax participants indicated that they obtained education above a bachelor's degree, compared to only **16%** of the participants in both the Toronto and Calgary cohort.

The ADaPT team has taken the differences in the socio-demographic profiles of participants in each location into consideration when planning for Phase 2 of program delivery. Due to the demonstrated ability of the ADaPT team and its partners to recruit newcomers and mid-career workers into their current program at specific locations, these two sub-populations were chosen to pilot the ADaPT program in Phase 2 to better understand the outcomes for these groups.

**Table 2: Socio-demographics**

Socio-demographics		Halifax	Toronto	Calgary	Total
No. Respondents		N=57	N=94	N=80	N=231
Gender	Female	56% (32/57)	74% (70/94)	54% (43/80)	63% (145/231)
	Male	44% (25/57)	26% (24/94)	44% (35/80)	36% (84/231)
	Other	0.0% (0/57)	0% (0/94)	3% (2/80)	1% (2/231)
Sexual orientation	Straight or heterosexual	86% (48/56)	84% (79/94)	81% (63/78)	83% (190/228)
	Other (non-straight) <sup>2</sup>	14% (8/56)	16% (15/94)	19% (15/78)	17% (38/228)
Age	20–24	44% (25/57)	66% (61/93)	29% (23/80)	47% (109/230)
	25–29	40% (23/57)	29% (27/93)	40% (32/80)	36% (82/230)
	30–34	12% (7/57)	4% (4/93)	18% (14/80)	11% (25/230)
	+35	4% (2/57)	1% (1/93)	14% (11/80)	6% (14/230)
	Average	26	24	28	26
Highest level of education	High school	9% (5/57)	4% (4/94)	0% (0/80)	4% (9/231)
	College level	2% (1/57)	1% (1/94)	16% (13/80)	6% (15/231)
	University below Bachelor's level	0% (0/57)	3% (3/94)	11% (9/80)	5% (12/231)
	Bachelor's level	58% (33/57)	76% (71/94)	56% (45/80)	65% (149/231)
	Above bachelor's level	32% (18/57)	16% (15/94)	16% (13/80)	20% (46/231)
Time since graduated highest degree	Less than 1 year	44% (25/57)	40% (38/94)	16% (13/80)	33% (76/231)
	1 year	26% (15/57)	30% (28/94)	35% (28/80)	31% (71/231)
	> 1 - 3 years	16% (9/57)	21% (20/94)	21% (17/80)	20% (46/231)
	> 3 - 5 years	11% (6/57)	5% (5/94)	6% (5/80)	7% (16/231)
	> 5 - 7 years	4% (2/57)	1% (1/94)	8% (6/80)	4% (9/231)
	7+	0% (0/57)	2% (2/94)	14% (11/80)	6% (13/231)
Racialized		51% (29/57)	74% (70/94)	43% (34/80)	58% (133/231)
Indigenous		0% (0/57)	1% (1/94)	3% (2/80)	1% (3/231)
Persons with disabilities		5% (3/57)	10% (9/94)	5% (4/80)	7% (16/231)
Newcomer	Overall	57% (30/53)	35% (28/81)	53% (38/72)	47% (96/206)
	0–5 years	60% (18/30)	21% (6/28)	42% (16/38)	42% (40/96)
	6–10 years	23% (7/30)	18% (5/28)	16% (6/38)	19% (18/96)
	11+ years	17% (5/30)	61% (17/28)	42% (16/38)	40% (38/96)
Employment	Currently employed when enrolled	54% (31/57)	61% (57/94)	56% (45/80)	58% (133/231)
	↳ Employment through ADaPT when enrolled	0% (0/31)	26% (15/57) <sup>3</sup>	0% (0/19)	14% (15/107)
	Currently unemployed when enrolled	46% (26/57)	39% (37/94)	44% (35/80)	42% (98/231)
	Date from last employment (average)	8.3 months	8.0 months	13.8 months	10 months

<sup>2</sup> Other (non-straight) consists of participants who identified their sexual orientation as gay or lesbian, bisexual or pansexual, or another self-identified identity.

<sup>3</sup> Baseline data from Toronto Cohort 2 regarding employment through ADaPT was updated using administrative data provided by ADaPT, as our evaluation team did not collect this information via the baseline survey for Toronto Cohort 2. According to program staff, several Toronto Cohort 2 participants received placements prior to program start through ADaPT.

## Participant program completion

- **ADaPT's overall completion rates were high:** Using the administrative data collected and shared by the Diversity Institute, we found that out of the 231 participants who consented to the evaluation, 214 (**93%**) completed the program.
- **Completion rates were similar across locations:** Due to the established nature of ADaPT in Toronto it was expected that the Toronto cohort completion rates would remain high, while the two new locations would have lower completion rates as they began to establish themselves in their respective markets. The high overall completion rates, as well as the similarity of completion rates across locations (see Table 3) could be attributed to the high-touch nature of the program and the intensive screening process in which participants discuss their ability to commit to the program in the interview. In addition, the screening process continued to be handled by the Toronto ADaPT team for all locations.
- **Completion rates were similar across streams:** The administrative data show that, contrary to our expectations, there was not much difference in completion rates between the Virtual Classroom and Online streams.
  - Since the Virtual Classroom is a higher touch stream — where participants have more face time and regular check-ins with staff members — we expected participants in this stream to feel more compelled to complete the program. Contrary to this, we found that both streams had similarly high completion rates.

**Table 3: Program Completion**

Cohort	Stream	Completed	Total Participants Consented	Program Completion Rate
Halifax 1	Online	12	13	<b>89% (24/27)</b>
	Virtual Classroom	12	14	
	Total	24	27	
Halifax 2	Online	13	15	<b>90% (27/30)</b>
	Virtual Classroom	14	15	
	Total	27	30	
Calgary 1	Online	21	22	<b>95% (42/44)</b>
	Virtual Classroom	21	22	
	Total	42	44	
Calgary 2	Online	14	15	<b>97% (35/36)</b>
	Virtual Classroom	21	21	
	Total	35	36	
Toronto 2	Online	13	16	<b>91% (39/43)</b>
	Virtual Classroom	26	27	
	Total	39	43	
Toronto 3	Online	20	23	<b>92% (47/51)</b>
	Virtual Classroom	27	28	
	Total	47	51	
<b>Program Total</b>		<b>214</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>93% (214/231)</b>

## Skill development

Participants were asked to evaluate their skills in the six areas that are targeted by the ADaPT program: Writing Communication Skills, Oral Communication Skills, Business Financials Skills, Career Planning and Development Skills, Basic Office Digital Skills, and Advanced Digital Skills.

These self-evaluations were collected at two time-points: (a) at program start, through a baseline survey, and (b) at the end of the program, through an exit survey. To measure participants' self-perceived skills, we used a Likert scale where participants selected how much they agree/disagree with the statement "I am good at [description of skill]."

We relied on this methodology to understand participant skill development outcomes of the program. Since ADaPT has a specific focus on helping participants develop skills that are useful for finding employment in digital roles, measuring participants' self-assessed proficiency in the six skills groups allowed us to evaluate whether the development of digital and professional skills is an outcome of the program. A discussion of the findings from this exercise is found below.

- **Participants exhibited improvements in their self-perceived skills:** Our analysis of survey data showed that across the Online and Virtual Classroom streams, there was an overall positive change in participants' self-assessed skills, with an average Likert score increase of **0.47**. Out of the six skills groups, the largest perceived gains were in Advanced Digital Skills, while the lowest perceived gains were in Oral Communication. Additionally, participants had the second largest perceived skills gains in the Career Planning and Development Skills group across both streams. Our analysis also showed that the changes in self-perceived skills are statistically significant across all skills groups except for Oral Communication, with most of the score differences having a p-value of  $<.001$ . Overall, this suggests that the training provided by ADaPT may help participants gain skills that are useful for finding employment in a digital role.
- **The Virtual Classroom streams saw greater skills gains than the Online streams across all skills groups:** Based on the survey data, participants in the Virtual Classroom streams experienced an overall perceived skills score change of **0.53**, while participants in the Online streams saw an overall perceived skills score change of **0.38**.
  - A possible reason for the differences in self-perceived skills gains between the two streams could be that participants in the Virtual Classroom streams have more opportunities to practice several skills with their fellow participants and as part of the ongoing career supports available to them, including Oral Communication skills. Based on interviews with participants in the Online streams, it appears that participants in this stream did not have access to as many activities and assignments related to digital skills as participants in the Virtual Classroom stream. Additionally, they also only had access to optional weekly virtual check-ins with an ADaPT team member, instead of ongoing career support from ADaPT's Career Counsellor. These two factors may have negatively affected the ability of participants in the Online streams to gain practical knowledge of a variety of skills, including Advanced Digital Skills and Career Planning and Development.

**Table 4: Skills Development**

Skill Group	Online			Virtual Classroom			Total		
	Average Likert Score		Change In Average Likert Score	Average Likert Score		Change In Average Likert Score	Average Likert Score		Change In Average Likert Score
	Baseline	Exit		Baseline	Exit		Baseline	Exit	
<b>Writing Communication Skills</b>	3.81	4.03	0.22	3.72	4.07	0.35	3.75	4.04	0.29
<b>Oral Communication Skills</b>	3.90	3.86	-0.04	3.85	4.04	0.19	3.86	3.94	0.08
<b>Business Financial Skills</b>	2.85	3.30	0.45	2.94	3.33	0.39	2.89	3.30	0.41
<b>Career Planning and Development Skills</b>	3.21	3.79	0.58	3.05	3.82	0.77	3.11	3.80	0.69
<b>Basic Office Digital Skills</b>	3.75	3.92	0.17	3.69	4.12	0.43	3.71	4.02	0.31
<b>Advanced Digital Skills</b>	2.21	3.13	0.92	2.20	3.28	1.08	2.19	3.20	1.01
<b>Summary</b>	3.29	3.67	0.38	3.22	3.77	0.55	3.25	3.72	0.47

**Box 2: Measuring Skills Development**

To measure participants' skills development, participants were asked to select how much they agree/ disagree with the statement "I am good at [description of skill]" on a Likert scale at program start and exit. Participants were asked to evaluate their skills in six skills groups, including: Writing Communication Skills, Oral Communication Skills, Business Financials Skills, Career Planning and Development Skills, Basic Office Digital Skills, and Advanced Digital Skills. Each response was assigned a value from the Likert scale below.

- **Strongly disagree = 1**
- **Disagree = 2**
- **Neither agree nor disagree = 3**
- **Agree = 4**
- **Strongly agree = 5**

The average score was calculated by adding the values for each skill statement and dividing by the number of responses to that skill statement. The change in the reported skill level was calculated by subtracting the exit average from the baseline average. The average Likert scores for the baseline and exit surveys are reported in Table 4, grouped by skill area. The table shows the scores both for the Online and Virtual Classroom streams separately, as well as for all participants grouped together, reported under the heading "Total."

## Participant employment and education outcomes

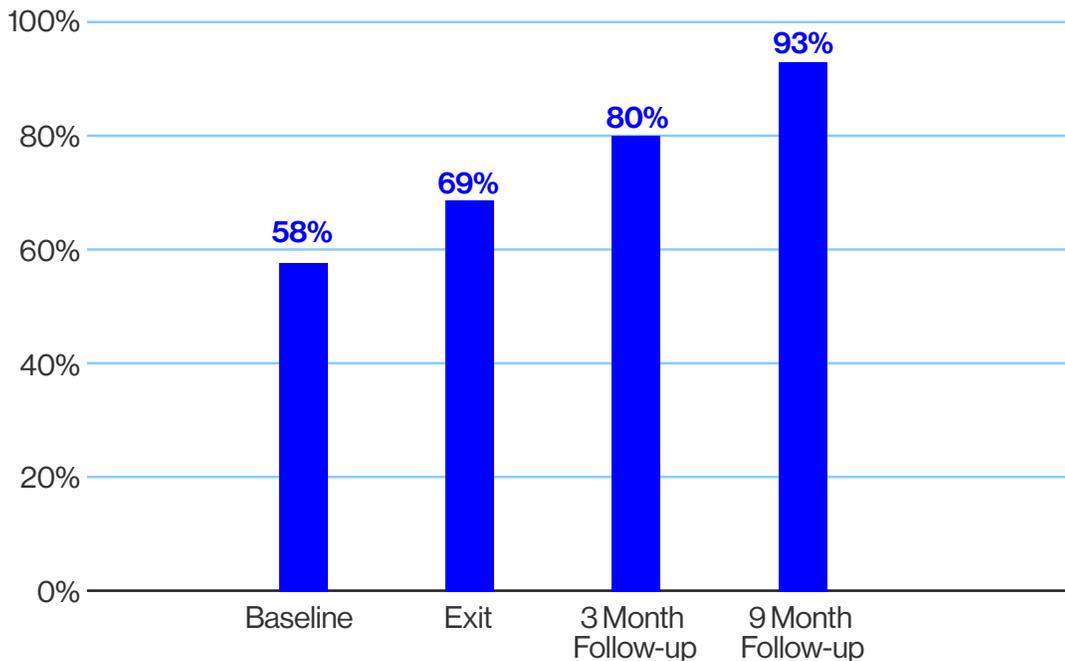
We analyzed participant outcome data collected at: (1) start of the program via a baseline survey; (2) program end via an exit survey; and (3) three- and nine-months following program exit via follow-up surveys. At the time of this report, not all cohorts have received their nine-month follow-up surveys. The key outcomes of interest include:

- **Employment outcomes:** Whether the respondent is employed
- **Digital roles outcomes:** Whether the respondent is employed in a digital role
- **Education outcomes:** Whether the respondent was enrolled in further education or training

### Employment outcomes

- **Employment rates increased across all program locations:** Our findings from the survey data revealed that ADaPT participants achieved an employment rate of **93%** nine months after the end of the program (see Figure 5), surpassing the program’s employment target of **80%**.
  - The employment rate across all locations was **58%** at baseline, meaning that the overall employment rate increased by **35 percentage points**.

**Figure 5: Overall Employment Outcomes**



## Employment outcomes by sub-groups

In examining employment outcomes, we also conducted subgroup analyses to understand whether participants in different locations or with specific socio-demographic characteristics achieved different outcomes.

- **The Toronto location had the highest increase in employed participants over time:** Analysis of the survey data revealed that the percentage of employed participants in Toronto increased from **61%** at baseline to **100%** nine months after the end of the program. The Toronto site saw a **39 percentage-point** increase in employment among participants from entry to nine-month follow-up.
  - This figure was **34 percentage-points** in Halifax and **27 percentage-points** in Calgary (see Table B1 in the Appendix B).
- One possible reason for the higher employment rates among participants in the Toronto cohorts derives from the ADaPT program's highly established employer network in Toronto, compared to Calgary and Halifax. In an interview with program staff from the Toronto location, members of the ADaPT team stated that their staff has been “strategic in nurturing existing relationships” with employers by “emphasizing the benefits they get out of hiring ADaPTers” — such as the lack of recruitment fees and assistance in applying wage subsidy programs to help pay the cost of new hires.
- **Among ADaPT's target populations, racialized individuals, women and newcomers exhibited the largest increase in employment rates:** Findings from the surveys show that these equity-seeking groups experienced the largest increase in employment rates between the baseline and three-month follow-up surveys (see Table 5).<sup>4</sup>
  - **Overall, racialized individuals' employment rate increased 28 percentage-points, women's employment rate increased 27 percentage-points and newcomers' employment rate increased 20 percentage-points between baseline and the three-month follow-up.** While Indigenous persons and persons with a disability also exhibited a large increase in their employment rate, our data show that the sample size for these groups across each survey was very small. As a result, employment rate findings for these two groups should be interpreted with caution, as they might not be representative of the outcomes achieved by Indigenous persons or persons with a disability in the ADaPT program.
- **Employment rates did not differ substantially between the virtual and online streams:** Data from the surveys reveal that employment rates for the Virtual Classroom stream were slightly higher over time than for the Online stream, though this difference is not substantial.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of this report writing, only Toronto Cohort 2 and Calgary Cohort 1 have completed the nine-month follow-up, making the sample size too small to draw conclusions about the employment rates of equity-seeking groups. Therefore, the employment rates of equity-seeking groups were only calculated up to the three-month follow-up survey.

**Table 5: Employment Outcomes by Subgroup**

Equity-Seeking Group	Baseline	Exit	Three- Month Follow-Up	Percentage Point Increase
Women/Other	58% (85/147)	71% (96/135)	85% (93/110)	27
Persons with a disability	56% (9/16)	64% (9/14)	78% (7/9)	22
LGBTQ2S+	74% (28/38)	77% (24/31)	88% (21/24)	14
Racialized persons	55% (73/133)	70% (82/118)	82% (75/91)	27
Newcomers	53% (51/96)	66% (58/87)	73% (45/62)	20
Indigenous persons	33% (1/3)	33% (1/3)	67% (2/3)	34

## Employment in Digital Roles

- **Across all three locations, the share of participants who reported being employed in a digital role increased over time (see Table 6):** Our survey findings show that **56%** of employed respondents reported having a job in a digital role at the end of the program, **71%** reported the same three months after the end of the program and **78%** after nine months.
- **The majority of those employed in digital roles believed that the program was useful in securing these jobs:** Data from the surveys also reveal that **63%** of employed participants in digital roles reported in the exit survey that they found ADaPT somewhat or very useful in finding their current job, **71%** reported the same three months after the end of the program, and **81%** after nine months.
  - During interviews, participants provided additional context for this finding, with several participants reporting that taking part in ADaPT helped them to solidify job search skills that were useful in securing a digital role, such as personal branding and networking skills. For example, one participant shared: “ADaPT helped me to showcase my digital skillsets and combine them with other skills. Now I can tell people that I’m a storyteller, I can sell myself better [to employers].”

**Table 6: Employment in a Digital Role<sup>5</sup>**

Location	Exit	Three-Month Follow-Up	Nine-Month Follow-Up
All	56% (80/144)	71% (94/132)	78% (42/54)
Halifax	53% (19/36)	63% (19/30)	N/A
Toronto	73% (46/63)	82% (50/61)	82% (28/34)
Calgary	33% (15/45)	61% (25/41)	70% (14/20)

<sup>5</sup> Information on employment in digital roles was not collected in the baseline survey.

## Job Satisfaction

- **Survey respondents who were employed during ADaPT reported improvements in job satisfaction:**

Data from the surveys show an increase in overall job satisfaction and perceived career advancement prospects across all locations. Participants in Toronto and Calgary cohorts also shared that they felt more secure in their jobs. The largest increase overall was in the career advancement measure, with an increase of **1.21** in the average Likert scores.

**Table 7: Job Satisfaction**

Location	Job Satisfaction	Baseline	Exit	Three-Month Follow-Up	Nine-Month Follow-Up	Overall Difference
All Locations	Overall, I am satisfied with my job	3.27	3.72	4.01	3.91	0.64
	In my current job, I think I will be able to advance in my career	2.72	3.38	3.85	3.93	1.21
	I worry about losing my job	3.27	3.93	3.29	3.32	0.05
Toronto	Overall, I am satisfied with my job	3.21	3.76	3.95	3.85	0.64
	In my current job, I think I will be able to advance in my career	2.71	3.40	3.80	3.94	1.23
	I worry about losing my job	3.11	3.03	3.30	3.38	0.27
Calgary	Overall, I am satisfied with my job	3.29	3.58	4.05	4.00	0.71
	In my current job, I think I will be able to advance in my career	2.67	3.24	3.85	3.90	1.23
	I worry about losing my job	3.27	3.47	3.29	3.45	0.18
Halifax	Overall, I am satisfied with my job	3.36	3.81	4.07	N/A	0.71
	In my current job, I think I will be able to advance in my career	2.81	3.50	3.93	N/A	1.12
	I worry about losing my job	3.58	3.64	3.27	N/A	-0.31

## Education outcomes

- **Few ADaPT participants pursued further training or education after the program:** Our survey findings reveal that **29%** of respondents reported being enrolled in further education upon completion of the program (see Table 8). However, the percentage of respondents who pursued further training or education after ADaPT decreased considerably over time to only **10%** nine months after the end of the program. The Toronto location saw the largest drop in the percentage of respondents who pursued further education between the end of the program (**35%**) and nine months after the end of the program (**9%**).
  - One possible explanation for the decrease in the percentage of respondents enrolled in further education beyond ADaPT is that as participants gained employment after the program — as shown by the increase in participants’ overall employment rate — they may no longer have felt the need for additional education to further their professional and technical skills and capabilities. This inverse correlation may reflect the promise of ADaPT in providing participants with the skills they need to secure employment.

**Table 8: Enrolment in Further Education and Training**

Education Outcomes	Halifax		Toronto		Calgary		Total
	Online	Virtual classroom	Online	Virtual classroom	Online	Virtual classroom	
Exit Survey	16% (4/25)	23% (6/26)	39% (13/33)	32% (17/53)	25% (8/32)	32% (13/41)	29% (61/210)
	20% (10/51)		35% (30/86)		29% (21/73)		
Three-Month Follow-Up	13% (2/16)	17% (3/18)	28% (8/29)	13% (6/46)	23% (5/22)	21% (7/34)	19% (31/165)
	15% (5/34)		19% (14/75)		21% (12/56)		
Nine-Month Follow-Up	NA	NA	17% (2/12)	5% (1/22)	22% (2/9)	7% (1/15)	10% (6/58)
	NA		9% (3/34)		13% (3/24)		

## 4. Findings from the Process Evaluation

This section of the report presents findings related to the experiences of participants and the program design team with ADaPT, focusing on the following evaluation questions:

- 1. Program satisfaction:** Are participants satisfied with the training received? What do they see as strengths and challenges? How did this vary across diverse populations?
- 2. Program adaptations:** Was the pilot implemented as intended and what adaptations were made to its implementation relative to the original design?
- 3. Program scaling:** What is needed to scale the pilot, in terms of resources, capacities and knowledge?

### Program experience of participants

This sub-section summarizes participants' satisfaction with the program and perceived program strengths and challenges. To understand participants' experience with ADaPT, we included several questions in the exit survey to capture different aspects of their program satisfaction. We also interviewed a selected sample of 28 participants about their experience with the program.

#### Program satisfaction

- **High program satisfaction rates and perceived usefulness:** A majority (**91%**) of the exit survey respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with the program overall. In addition, most respondents reported that they found ADaPT to be fairly or very useful for improving technical skills (**87%**), improving their professional skills (**87%**), and providing career coaching and support (**80%**).
- **Lower likelihood to recommend the program, particularly in Calgary:** Despite the high overall program satisfaction, a smaller proportion of respondents (**66%**) indicated that they would definitely recommend or had already recommended ADaPT to someone.
- This pattern was particularly evident in Calgary, where **55%** of participants reported that they would recommend the program, yet **86%** felt somewhat or very satisfied with programming. Over the past few years, Calgary has experienced a significant economic downturn, which has limited the employment opportunities available. It is possible that some Calgary participants joined ADaPT with the goal of finding employment, but their expectations did not align with their outcomes, leading to the lower likelihood to recommend the program. In addition, participants in the Calgary cohorts were more likely to be over the age of 25 and to have been out of school for longer compared to participants in the Halifax and Toronto cohorts. As a result, some Calgary participants might have already acquired some of the foundational professional and digital skills taught through ADaPT, which could have led to the lower likelihood to recommend the program.

**Table 9: Program Satisfaction**

Program Satisfaction		Halifax		Toronto		Calgary		Total
		Online	Virtual classroom	Online	Virtual classroom	Online	Virtual classroom	
Overall Satisfaction	Somewhat or very satisfied with program in general	92% (23/25)	88% (23/26)	94% (31/33)	96% (51/53)	84% (27/32)	88% (36/41)	91% (191/210)
		90% (46/51)		95% (82/86)		86% (63/73)		
	Would definitely recommend or have already recommended program to someone	68% (17/25)	65% (17/26)	82% (27/33)	72% (38/53)	56% (18/32)	54% (22/41)	66% (139/210)
		67% (34/51)		76% (65/86)		55% (40/73)		
Perceived Usefulness of Program	Find ADaPT fairly or very useful for improving professional skills	84% (21/25)	85% (22/26)	91% (30/33)	92% (49/53)	78% (25/32)	85% (35/41)	87% (182/210)
		84% (43/51)		92% (79/86)		82% (60/73)		
	Find ADaPT fairly or very useful for providing career coaching and support	76% (19/25)	85% (22/26)	82% (27/33)	92% (49/53)	69% (22/32)	71% (29/41)	80% (168/210)
		80% (41/51)		88% (76/86)		70% (51/73)		
	Find ADaPT fairly or very useful for improving technical digital skills	100% (25/25)	73% (19/26)	88% (29/33)	94% (50/53)	88% (28/32)	78% (32/41)	87% (183/210)
		86% (44/51)		92% (79/86)		82% (60/73)		

• **Improved confidence and sense of possibility in job search:** Several interviewees reported that their participation in ADaPT helped them feel more confident, energized and better prepared to apply to jobs. Many interviewees also felt that ADaPT helped them feel more comfortable presenting themselves during job interviews, and networking with other professionals. A few interviewees who were not employed at the start of ADaPT also indicated that job search activities such as connecting with professionals through LinkedIn or requesting informational interviews now felt “less intimidating” than they did before ADaPT.

“The ADaPT program has really built my confidence... I feel so much more confident in my skills, and so much more knowledgeable about career development strategies.”

-  
Participant

• **Increased employment readiness:** Several interviewees shared that ADaPT improved their oral communication and business writing skills, which has made them feel more confident leading discussions with colleagues and clients. Some interviewees reported the technical modules allowed them to better navigate digital workplace tools, such as Excel. One interviewee said the technical knowledge gained through ADaPT has enabled them to fulfill employer expectations and encouraged them to drive digital innovation within their organization.

“I regularly use what I learned in ADaPT... [Now], I feel more comfortable leading the digital transformation [at my job]”

-  
Participant

• **Greater clarity on professional direction:** Many interviewees mentioned that taking part in ADaPT helped them gain valuable insights about their strengths and transferrable skills and motivated them to plan the next steps in their career. A few interviewees reported that participating in ADaPT showed them that they possess the technical aptitude and passion for working in a digital role, while others noted that it opened their eyes to occupations outside of technology that they would be better suited to. Some interviewees also said that taking ADaPT proved to be a transformative turning point in their career, as their participation re-invigorated their enthusiasm for learning and encouraged them to seek further education.

“I feel like ADaPT has changed the whole trajectory in my career.”

-  
Participant

## Perceptions of program strengths

Participant interviewees provided feedback on what they identified as the key strengths of ADaPT:

- **Practical and targeted career development supports:**

Many interviewees mentioned that the career coaching available through ADaPT met or exceeded their expectations. In particular, several interviewees reported that the personalized feedback from job counsellors on their resumes and mock interviews helped them identify areas for improvement and better understand how to stand out to prospective employers. In addition, a few interviewees highlighted that the weekly networking sessions with employers equipped them with actionable job search tips and expanded their professional network.

- **Well-balanced skills training curriculum:** Several interviewees said that they appreciated having access to foundational modules to build their digital and professional skills. Although some participants expressed a desire to spend additional time on more challenging technical tools, such as CSS coding, a few recognized that both professional and digital skills training were important to present a well-rounded candidate profile to employers. Participant interviewees in the Calgary cohorts were most likely to report that the ADaPT curriculum was well-catered to their needs. This could be because many interviewees in Calgary cohorts had graduated over one year before participating in ADaPT, so having a high-level overview of in-demand skills to enter into a digital role might have been a valuable refresher for this group.

- **Ongoing staff support and guidance:** Several interviewees reported that they appreciated the encouragement and guidance provided by program staff. Despite the challenges some participants faced in their job search, interviewees noted that job counsellors helped to motivate them. Several interviewees also reported that they appreciated the passion and deep knowledge that some instructors brought to their teaching, as it made the sessions more engaging. In addition, many participants reported that they appreciated how approachable and responsive program staff were, with some sharing that they could rely on staff to promptly address their questions.

“I really liked the career development sessions with [job counsellor] because [they] really got us to practice interview skills in breakout rooms. [They]... gave some affirming comments on my performance and how I could improve, which was really helpful.”

-  
Participant

“The support was phenomenal, it was exceptional... I’m so grateful to all the facilitators.”

-  
Participant

“[ADaPT] has gone above and beyond, at least from my expectations. I was only expecting to gain knowledge and skills, but the way they have been really supportive, it’s really amazing.”

-  
Participant

- **Hands-on experiential learning:** Many participant interviewees reported that one of the most valuable features of the ADaPT program was being able to “learn by doing.” Interviewees indicated that having the opportunity to practice their learning through hands-on activities made them feel more empowered in their learning and increased their confidence using digital tools. This was particularly evident for participants in the Virtual Classroom streams, with a few participants highlighting that they appreciated that the Design Thinking and User Experience (UX) modules required them to implement what they were learning alongside the instructor.



“The aspect that really stood out to me was the hands-on experience. It was not only about teaching, but we also had... to do actual work while the instructor was teaching. I really loved that.”

-  
**Participant**

## Perceived challenges with program

In addition to identifying program strengths, participant interviewees also provided feedback about the difficulties they experienced during ADaPT and suggestions for improvement:

- Misalignment between participants' learning needs and programming content:** During interviews, some interviewees indicated that they began ADaPT with a technical background and would have appreciated the opportunity to skip modules that they felt were redundant. At the same time, other interviewees noted that they started ADaPT with limited digital knowledge and would have preferred to spend more time on the digital workshops. During program delivery, the ADaPT team sought to continuously identify strategies to address participants' learning needs, such as offering opportunities for participants to provide feedback after every workshop and connecting with employers to confirm the usefulness of the skills targeted in the curriculum. Our findings also suggest that there might be additional opportunities to tailor participant journeys through the program to better address their needs.
- Ongoing difficulties with program intensity and pacing:** Several participant interviewees said that they struggled with the rapid pace of the program and the volume of content covered. Participant interviewees who were employed during the program were most likely to report finding the program "intensive," which could be due to challenges balancing ADaPT with their commitments. In addition, participants in the Virtual Classroom streams frequently reported difficulties completing pre-class work, remaining focused during long sessions and meeting assignment deadlines. As a result, a few participants reported that they would have benefited from having a longer timeframe for the program, shorter weekly sessions and more frequent breaks. Participants reported that extending the program and shortening virtual classroom sessions would allow them to better absorb the content and feel more confident in their skillset at exit.
- Limited opportunities to network with peers:** Many interviewees in the Online streams reported difficulties connecting with peers and instructors. Interviewees reported that going through the material in the online stream often felt "isolating" since participants were working on their own schedule

"On some of these courses I was only kind of half paying attention because I kind of knew them already. If we could focus on the topics we really wanted to know, or were able to choose which modules to do, that would be really cool."

-  
Participant

"With all the courses in such a short time, it's a bit in and out. There's so much information to cover per module in just one week. But a little bit more time on certain topics, a little more time to take in the information would have been helpful".

-  
Participant

"It would've been nice to have more networking opportunities [for the online stream], but since we were all doing autonomous work on different schedules, it was harder for our stream".

-  
Participant

and only had the opportunity to connect once a week via check-ins. Many interviewees in this stream noted that it would be valuable to introduce more casual networking opportunities, such as coffee chats, or a digital group chat. In addition, a few participants in the Virtual Classroom streams said that it would be useful to spend additional time connecting with peers in class, and in sessions not tied to coursework. Participant interviewees who were recent or established newcomers were most likely to express a desire for additional networking events, which could be because newcomers typically lack access to professional networks needed to identify unadvertised job vacancies.

• **Gaps in applied learning for Online streams:**

Although interviewees in the Virtual Classroom streams reported high levels of satisfaction with the applied learning in ADaPT, those in the Online streams reported that they would have appreciated more interactive activities in digital workshops, particularly in coding modules. Interviewees in the initial online cohorts, including Toronto Cohort 2 and Calgary Cohort 1, were most likely to express a desire for additional hands-on assignments. It appears that fewer participants in cohorts after Calgary Cohort 2 experienced similar issues. At the start of this cohort, the ADaPT team replaced Data Analytics with R with Quantitative Methods and Analysis with Excel due to employer and participant feedback, which led to a greater emphasis on activity-based learning in the curriculum in later cohorts.

## Delivery partners' experience with the program

This sub-section summarizes findings from interviews we conducted with representatives from the ADaPT team. During the interviews, we asked for feedback about their experience delivering ADaPT, including adaptations they made to the original program design to meet emerging needs, successes, and challenges to program delivery and lessons learned to support future program scaling

## Program adaptations

Program partner interviewees indicated that the program was generally delivered as per the original design, although modifications were made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and participant feedback:

- **Addition of weekly-check-ins for Online streams:** With the pivot to digital delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ADaPT team struggled to maintain participant engagement and sought to boost networking opportunities in the Online streams. To ensure that participants in the Online streams could meet on a regular basis, the ADaPT team implemented a weekly check-in with ADaPT's Internship Coordinator. The weekly check-ins were guided by participant needs and questions, and included clarification of workshop content, discussion of job development skills and mental health topics. The ADaPT team saw these check-ins as a useful tool to encourage workshop completion, provide support to the online stream and gather program feedback.
- **Utilizing high-performing instructors across locations:** The ADaPT team collected continuous feedback on the performance of each instructor across all locations. Using this feedback, the ADaPT team made decisions on which instructors to invite to return for the next cohort and prompted returning instructors to improve workshop delivery based on participant feedback. In the Online streams, the ADaPT team also incorporated participant feedback to modules at the end of every cohort. For the Virtual Classroom streams, as instructors excelled in specific topics, ADaPT suggested that these instructors support with workshop delivery in locations outside of their base location. As instructors excelled in specific topics, ADaPT suggested that these instructors support with workshop delivery in locations outside of their base location. Leveraging a handful of the best instructors, the ADaPT team streamlined instructor recruitment and delivered workshops with high satisfaction across all locations.
- **Increased networking opportunities through gamification:** With the transition to digital delivery and the removal of face-to-face interaction, program staff acknowledged that participants had fewer opportunities to practice their networking skills with peers. To address this, the ADaPT team developed an optional networking game that awarded points for pursuing networking opportunities, such as participating in informational interviews and connecting with employers on LinkedIn. Program staff tracked these points by cohort, displayed them on a leaderboard and offered prizes to encourage participation.

## Program scalability

In May 2021, the ADaPT team began to work on further scaling the program to two new target populations: newcomers and displaced and transitioning mid-career workers. The ADaPT team will pilot the program with targeted cohorts for each of these populations.

To support ADaPT's strategic scaling goal, the evaluation team asked representatives from the ADaPT team to share suggestions for improving the program model moving forward, based on their experience with program delivery in Calgary, Halifax and Toronto between September 2020 and June 2021. Our interviews with the program team highlighted several key lessons for future scaling:

- **Ensure ADaPT remains a high-touch program:** During interviews, the ADaPT team stressed that one of the programs' key strengths lies in the staff's dedication to participant success. As new locations opened for delivery, ADaPT's partner institution at each location<sup>6</sup> hired a coordinator to assist with program delivery and manage processes specific to the partner institution, while recruitment, screening and career coaching remained centralized with the Toronto team. This allowed coordinators to focus on supporting participants and the Toronto team to use established processes and existing staff to manage administration. To expand the program to additional cohorts or target populations, recruiting and maintaining high-performing staff may be the biggest challenge. The ADaPT team has already started exploring the use of digital tools to assess if these can be comparable to human support provided in the program. One example of such a digital tool is InStage, an AI platform used to host mock interviews and provide feedback.<sup>7</sup>
- **Leverage partner expertise and employer networks in new locations:** The ADaPT team has an extensive employer network and brand recognition in the Toronto area due to its tenure delivering the program in this region. To expand into Calgary and Halifax, the ADaPT team harnessed their partnership with TECHNATION to provide referrals to new employers specific to these regions, leveraged the available wage subsidy programs with targeted LinkedIn ads and participated in promotional activities such as job fairs. The ADaPT team's connection with TECHNATION therefore helped them lay the foundation for a strong employer network in new locations. Leveraging partnerships with organizations or existing employer networks that have local representation is critical for continued participant success and connecting participants with local job opportunities.

<sup>6</sup> To support with program delivery, the central ADaPT team at the Diversity Institute partnered with the School for Advanced Digital Technology (SADT) in Calgary and St. Mary's University Entrepreneurship Centre in Halifax.

<sup>7</sup> During the summer of 2021, the ADaPT team tested using InStage with a small sample of participants in Toronto Cohort 3 and Halifax Cohort 2, instead of mock interviews with ADaPT's Career Counsellor. The evaluation team conducted an experiment to evaluate the effectiveness of the InStage AI platform in hosting mock interviews and providing feedback, compared to ADaPT's Career Counsellor. However, the sample size for this experiment was too small to provide conclusive results.

## 5. Conclusions

This section summarizes the key findings of our evaluation of ADaPT, and the implications for the design and delivery of similar programs that focus on bridging the gap between the skill needs of employers in the digital industry and the skills of recent graduates with non-STEM backgrounds.

### Key findings

#### **The program successfully reached its target population and achieved high completion rates:**

Our survey data show that the profiles of survey respondents across training cohorts and streams were mostly aligned with the socio-demographic characteristics of the ADaPT target population, i.e., recent graduate job seekers, with 64% of participants having graduated within a year or less prior to the program start. In addition, ADaPT was able to meet its target of recruiting 75% of participants from equity-seeking groups (including Indigenous peoples, racialized individuals, newcomers, persons with a disability, women and LGBTQ2S+), with 92% of participants identifying as a member of one or more equity-seeking groups. In addition, according to our administrative data, 93% of all consenting participants completed the ADaPT program.

#### **Participants found ADaPT to be valuable and reported high levels of satisfaction:**

The majority of exit survey respondents (91%) indicated that they were somewhat or very satisfied with the program overall, with most respondents sharing that the program was fairly or very useful for improving their professional skills (87%) and their technical skills (87%). In addition, participant interviewees shared that ADaPT helped to improve their confidence and sense of possibility in their job search, improved their employment readiness and clarified their professional direction.

#### **Participant employment rates were high at the end of the program and continued to increase over time:**

Most survey respondents reported being employed at program exit (69%), and this continued to rise over time, with 80% of respondents reporting being employed after three months of program completion, and 93% after nine months<sup>8</sup> (with some variation in the employment rate across training streams and cohorts). In addition to the increase in employment rates, the percentage of employed participants who reported having a job in a digital role increased across all locations, with 56% reporting having a job at exit, 71% at three months and 78% at nine months.

#### **Participants who were employed reported improvements in job satisfaction:**

Our survey findings show that respondents who were employed during ADaPT were more satisfied with their jobs at the end of the program compared to the start. Participants felt that they were better able to advance in their careers after ADaPT, and some felt less worried about losing their jobs.

#### **Participants experienced challenges with program intensity and volume of content in both streams, and networking opportunities and hands-on learning in the Online streams:**

Although participants were satisfied with the program overall, some participants noted that the intensive pace of the program and the large volume of content covered in a short period of time made it difficult to keep up with

<sup>8</sup> Please note that only two of the six ADaPT cohorts in this evaluation have completed the nine-month follow-up surveys, including Toronto Cohort 2 and Calgary Cohort 1. Follow-up survey data from the remaining four cohorts will be available in April 2022.

the work. Participant interviewees also mentioned that the program could have aligned closer with their prior technical knowledge and learning needs, and that they would have appreciated the opportunity to customize their program experience. Additionally, participants suggested that a wider range of networking opportunities overall and additional activities to practice digital skills in the Online stream would have also been helpful.

### **Participants appreciated the practical career development supports, comprehensive skills training curriculum and ongoing staff guidance in ADaPT:**

Several participant interviewees shared that they appreciated the encouragement and support provided by program staff, as well as the deep expertise instructors brought to the classroom. Participants also indicated that they were highly satisfied with the career coaching supports provided by ADaPT's Career Counsellor and program team, including personalized feedback on resumes and mock interviews, and the weekly networking sessions with employers. In addition, many participants shared that they appreciated the well-rounded program curriculum to build their digital and professional skills, and those in the Virtual Classroom streams highlighted that the hands-on experiential learning in ADaPT helped them to feel more empowered in their learning and boosted their confidence in their technical abilities.

### **The program was delivered as designed while remaining responsive to participant needs and challenges faced with scaling:**

Although the program was delivered as designed, the ADaPT delivery team iterated on minor components of the model to respond to participant and employer feedback, such as revising classroom activities that were not well received, pivoting content to match employer needs and providing varied supports to address challenges faced by participants. As the ADaPT team prepares to scale the program more broadly across Canada to populations of mid-career workers and newcomers, the team continues to identify creative solutions to improve program satisfaction and program outcomes and use technology to address challenges to scaling while remaining a high-touch program.

## **Implications**

ADaPT is a skills training program that aims to improve the digital and professional skills of recent graduates with non-STEM backgrounds to equip them for entry-level digital roles. The key findings from the evaluation of ADaPT point to a number of implications that could inform the design and implementation of other programs that focus on building the digital and professional skills of participants through high-touch skills training and career coaching. To support participant experiences and employment outcomes, program teams delivering similar interventions could consider the following:

### **Provide career coaching in tandem with skills training to support entry into digital industry**

Our evaluation findings demonstrate that providing access to practical career coaching supports, in addition to comprehensive technical and employability training, can help to equip participants with the foundational skills required to achieve entry-level employment and make them feel more confident in their job search. Programs that seek to support participants from diverse backgrounds to gain employment in digital occupations could consider incorporating practical career coaching supports in programming, including:

- Regular networking sessions with employers during the program to help participants gain actionable job

search advice, broaden participant networks and help them to better understand possible digital career paths

- One-on-one mock interviews with career counsellors to practice responding to common interview questions and address areas for improvement before connecting participants with employers
- Personalized feedback on resumes and mock interviews to help participants highlight their achievements and transferrable skills

### **Invest in building employer partnerships to provide meaningful work placement opportunities**

Our survey findings show that participants achieved the highest employment rates in Toronto, where the ADaPT design team had the most established employer network. This highlights the importance of cultivating sustainable relationships with employers and gaining a strong understanding of their interests and hiring needs to support participants' labour market outcomes. Similar programs could consider leveraging the following strategies from ADaPT to develop and maintain employer relationships across delivery sites:

- Identify employers' hiring needs and available roles through a comprehensive needs assessment before program delivery, to help career counsellors match participants to open roles
- Launch targeted marketing campaigns to emphasize the benefits to employers of hiring participants from the program, such as recruitment services and sponsorship opportunities
- Join in-person and remote job fairs to support with employer recruitment, particularly when seeking employers interested in hiring candidates from equity-seeking groups
- Partner with an external organization with established connections in the ICT sector, such as TECHNATION, to expand brand visibility across new locations

### **Explore opportunities to align curriculum with employer and participant needs**

Our evaluation findings highlighted the importance of ensuring that the program curriculum is aligned with current industry needs, while remaining responsive to participant feedback. Although some participant interviewees felt that the program content was not in line with their prior technical knowledge, many felt that the digital and professional skills curriculum was well-balanced and helped them to build a well-rounded candidate profile for employers. In addition, most survey respondents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program and felt that the ADaPT curriculum was helpful in improving their digital and professional skills. Programs that aim to bridge the gap between employers hiring digital talent and diverse job seekers would benefit from customizing their content to the particular challenges experienced by employers and job seekers. Based on the implementation of ADaPT, similar programs could consider:

- Introducing a feedback survey after every technical and employability skills workshop to gather data on participant satisfaction with workshop content and delivery, and piloting revisions based on emerging survey insights
- Consulting employers on a regular basis to understand changing in-demand skills in the digital industry, and revising the curriculum to incorporate skills most sought after by employers

## 6. Next Steps for the Project

With the additional grant from FSC for May 2021 to March 2024, the ADaPT team will seek to generate greater engagement with displaced and transitioning mid-career workers and newcomers and support the development of their digital and professional skills, while addressing the recurring shortage of skilled talent in the ICT sector.

The objectives of this phase include:

- **Expanding the reach of the ADaPT training model to additional participants** in two target population groups: newcomers and displaced and transitioning mid-career workers
- **Exploring opportunities for testing program improvement strategies**
- **Informing future scaling decisions by generating evidence in the original delivery context**, specifically assessing the impact of ADaPT through a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) and understanding implementation at its current delivery sites, which will influence future replication of the model in other contexts

We will continue to work with the ADaPT team to generate more evidence about the outcomes, impact and implementation of the program and to support its future scaling. Results from these additional evidence generation activities will be available in fall 2024.

## Appendix A

# Our Approach

## Quantitative data

### Participant administrative data

In order to gather quantitative data on the ADaPT program, the Blueprint team analyzed consenting participants' administrative data collected and shared with us by the ADaPT team. The administrative data included participants' program and course completion status.

### Participant surveys

We also collected and analyzed data from baseline, exit and follow-up surveys administered to consenting participants. These surveys included questions that measure the participant outcomes common to all FSC projects to support aggregate analysis in the future. We sent (a) baseline survey at program start; (b) exit survey at program end; and (c) follow-up surveys at three and nine months after program exit. At the time of this report, only Toronto Cohort 2 and Calgary Cohort 1 participants completed the nine-month follow-up surveys, so this report shows only nine-month follow-up findings from these cohorts.

## Qualitative data

To gather qualitative data on ADaPT, the Blueprint team conducted interviews with participants and program partners. Two of our team members conducted each interview by phone or on Zoom. Each interview lasted for approximately 45–60 minutes. We did not audio-record the interview but captured interviewees' responses either in paraphrased form or verbatim in interview notes. Guided by our evaluation questions, we coded the interview notes and conducted thematic analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes and generate high-level insights.

### Participant interviews

At program exit, Blueprint reached out to 38 participants to interview, and 28 participants agreed to take part: 14 from the Virtual Classroom stream and 14 from the Online stream. The evaluation team selected this sample to make sure it represented the key demographic groups of program participants, the locations in which the program is delivered and the training stream. Our evaluation team spoke with 16 women and 12 men. We interviewed 10 participants in Toronto cohorts, 10 participants in Calgary cohorts, and eight participants in Halifax cohorts. The majority of interviewees indicated that they were racialized (18 out of 28), and half of our interview sample shared that they were born in Canada (14 out of 28).

### Program partner interviews

The evaluation team also reached out to the core ADaPT team and representatives from each delivery location with an invite to participate in an interview throughout program implementation. A total of five interviews were scheduled over the course of the evaluation, between September 2020 and October 2021.

## Appendix B

# Employment Status Table

**Table B1: Employment Status**

Data Collection Tool		Halifax		Toronto		Calgary		Total
		Online	Virtual classroom	Online	Virtual classroom	Online	Virtual classroom	
Baseline Survey	Employed	57% (16/28)	52% (15/29)	67% (26/39)	56% (31/55)	65% (24/37)	49% (21/43)	58% (133/231)
		54% (31/57)		61% (57/94)		56% (45/80)		58% (133/231)
	Received job through ADaPT	0% (0/16)	0% (0/15)	15% (4/26)	35% (11/31)	0% (0/9)	0% (0/10)	14% (15/107)
		0.0% (0/31)		26% (15/57) <sup>9</sup>		0.0% (0/19)		14% (15/107)
Exit Survey	Employed	76% (19/25)	65% (17/26)	76% (25/33)	72% (38/53)	72% (23/32)	54% (22/41)	69% (144/210)
		63% (36/51)		73% (63/86)		62% (45/73)		69% (144/210)
	Digital role	63% (12/19)	41% (7/17)	68% (17/25)	76% (29/38)	26% (6/23)	41% (9/22)	56% (80/144)
		53% (19/36)		73% (46/63)		33% (15/45)		56% (80/144)
	Found ADaPT somewhat or very useful for finding current job	21% (4/19)	35% (6/17)	40% (10/25)	58% (22/38)	43% (10/23)	36% (8/22)	42% (60/144)
		28% (10/36)		51% (32/63)		40% (18/45)		42% (60/144)
Three - Month Follow-Up	Employed	88% (14/16)	89% (16/18)	86% (25/29)	78% (36/46)	82% (18/22)	68% (23/34)	80% (132/165)
		88% (30/34)		81% (61/75)		73% (41/56)		80% (132/165)
	Digital role	79% (11/14)	50% (8/16)	80% (20/25)	83% (30/36)	56% (10/18)	65% (15/23)	71% (94/132)
		63% (19/30)		82% (50/61)		61% (25/41)		71% (94/132)
	Found ADaPT somewhat or very useful for finding current job	43% (6/14)	63% (10/16)	60% (15/25)	78% (28/36)	56% (10/18)	74% (17/23)	65% (86/132)
		53% (16/30)		70% (43/61)		66% (27/41)		65% (86/132)

<sup>9</sup> Baseline data from Toronto Cohort 2 regarding employment through ADaPT was updated using administrative data provided by ADaPT, as our evaluation team did not collect this information via the baseline survey for Toronto Cohort 2. According to program staff, several Toronto Cohort 2 participants received placements prior to program start through ADaPT.

Data Collection Tool		Halifax		Toronto		Calgary		Total
		Online	Virtual classroom	Online	Virtual classroom	Online	Virtual classroom	
Nine - Month Follow-Up	Employed	N/A	N/A	<b>100%</b> (12/12)	<b>100%</b> (22/22)	<b>89%</b> (8/9)	<b>80%</b> (12/15)	<b>93%</b> <b>(54/58)</b>
		N/A		<b>100%</b> (34/34)		<b>83%</b> (20/24)		<b>93%</b> <b>(54/58)</b>
	Digital role	N/A	N/A	<b>92%</b> (11/12)	<b>77%</b> (17/22)	<b>63%</b> (5/8)	<b>75%</b> (9/12)	<b>78%</b> <b>(42/54)</b>
		N/A		<b>82%</b> (28/34)		<b>70%</b> (14/20)		<b>78%</b> <b>(42/54)</b>
	Found ADaPT somewhat or very useful for finding current job	N/A	N/A	<b>83%</b> (10/12)	<b>77%</b> (17/22)	<b>38%</b> (3/8)	<b>50%</b> (6/12)	<b>67%</b> <b>(36/54)</b>
		N/A		<b>79%</b> (27/34)		<b>45%</b> (9/20)		<b>67%</b> <b>(36/54)</b>

