



Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT)

Final Report

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluating [Advanced Digital and Professional Training \(ADaPT\)](#). ADaPT is a training program that helps people build digital and professional skills. The **Diversity Institute (DI)** at Toronto Metropolitan University developed the program in partnership with **TECHNATION**, with support from the [Future Skills Centre \(FSC\)](#).

Blueprint conducted this evaluation as part of the [Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio](#), funded by FSC. The portfolio generates evidence about the effectiveness and scalability of promising skills interventions. Working with DI and TECHNATION, Blueprint designed and carried out the RCT to examine how ADaPT affects participants' skills and employment outcomes in digital roles.

Our previous [Interim Reports](#) described the RCT design, participant characteristics, implementation, and early findings. This *Final Report* builds on that work. It uses the full RCT dataset to estimate impacts on skills, digital-role entry, and job quality up to nine months after participation as the program expanded across regions and delivery partners.



ADaPT's labour market context

Canada's labour market has shifted toward digitally enabled work. Employers increasingly seek workers who combine digital competencies (e.g., data tools, platforms, and workflows) with professional skills (e.g., communication, adaptability, and problem-solving). However, many post-secondary graduates have limited chances to build and apply these skills in practical settings or show employers that they have them.

- Graduates from non-STEM fields often earn less early in their careers than graduates from STEM fields, especially those who studied arts, humanities, or social sciences.¹
- Racialized workers, newcomers, women+,² members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and persons with disabilities often have less access to professional networks, work-integrated learning opportunities, and employer connections.
- Rates of youth who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) are increasing, especially among immigrant graduates.

¹ To Statistics Canada, STEM includes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Non-STEM includes areas such as business, humanities, health, arts, social sciences, and education.

² "Women+" is an inclusive term used to signify inclusion of women, transgender women, non-binary individuals, and other forms of gender expression.

- Many microcredential programs focus either on intensive technical training or on people who do not have post-secondary education. As a result, graduates looking for digital jobs that do not require advanced technical skills have fewer training options.

The ADaPT program

ADaPT launched in 2014. It is a nine-week program that includes more than 70 hours of training. It was originally designed for non-STEM university graduates and students in their final semester of study. Its goal was to help participants build the digital and professional skills needed for digital jobs. The program includes:

- Training in digital skills, such as HTML/CSS, data analysis, user experience (UX), search engine optimization (SEO), analytics, Excel, and R.
- Training in professional skills, such as writing, presentations, networking, and career planning.
- Career coaching and job-search support.
- Employer engagement and placement opportunities that help prepare participants for work and match training with employer needs.

Over time, and to meet demand and the needs of different populations and job seekers in Canada, ADaPT expanded to serve a wider range of participants. This included older graduates, STEM graduates, college graduates, and internationally educated newcomers. The program also increased its focus on equity-deserving groups that face barriers in the labour market.

Over the past decade, ADaPT has grown from a pilot program in Toronto to a national program delivered in multiple locations across Canada. With support from FSC, the program expanded delivery through partnerships with Saint Mary's University in Halifax, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and Mount Royal University in Calgary, and Simon Fraser University in British Columbia.

As ADaPT expanded, DI and TECHNATION continued to work with employers to understand changing workforce needs. This led to updates to the curriculum and the creation of new program streams designed for specific groups of participants. After the COVID-19 pandemic, ADaPT moved from a mix of in-person and online delivery to a fully online format. As noted in the next section, the RCT was delivered online as well, with the original intention to deliver in person.

“ADaPT built entry-level digital skills and broader professional skills needed for digitally enabled jobs.”





“Participants in the ADaPT live stream were approximately 12 percentage points more likely to be working in a digital role than participants in the comparison group.”

About the evaluation

This evaluation looks at whether ADaPT helped participants build skills and secure paying jobs in digital fields. It also looks at whether those results were different for participants in the live and self-directed versions of the program (explained below) and across different participant groups.

To answer these questions, we conducted a randomized controlled trial (RCT). In an RCT, participants are randomly assigned to different groups so researchers can compare outcomes. Participants were assigned to one of three groups:

- A “live” ADaPT stream that included two instructor-led sessions each week and one-on-one career counselling.
- A “self-directed” ADaPT stream that included asynchronous, online learning modules and synchronous weekly meetings but did not include live instruction or unlimited career counselling.
- A comparison group that did not receive access to ADaPT and instead received six months of access to LinkedIn Learning.

This approach allowed us to compare outcomes for participants who received ADaPT with outcomes for participants who only received LinkedIn Learning access. It also allowed us to compare results between the live and self-directed versions of ADaPT to see if one was more effective than the other.

The evaluation used administrative data from 1,500 eligible applicants and survey data from 971 participants who agreed to take part in the RCT and completed a baseline survey. Participants completed surveys before the program began, when they finished the program, and again three and nine months later.



Key findings

ADaPT reached the people it was designed to serve and showed positive early results. Its live-instruction stream improved participants' digital and career-planning skills and increased their chances of working in digital roles.

Most participants were highly educated but unemployed, underemployed, or working in jobs that did not fully use their skills. Most also identified as belonging to at least one equity-deserving group. Participants completed the program at high rates, reported positive experiences, and said they improved skills in several areas targeted by the program.

Participants in the live stream were more likely to move into digital roles. The program may also have improved how they viewed the quality of their jobs.

ADaPT did not increase overall employment, earnings, or employment benefits compared with the comparison group. However, these outcomes improved for participants in all groups. This is likely because many were already likely to find work in the short term. These findings are not surprising. ADaPT primarily serves PSE graduates, who tend to do well in the labour market. The sample included participants with varying employment statuses at the time they joined the study, including some who were already employed. We would expect many participants to see improvements in employment outcomes over nine months, even without participating in ADaPT.



The program reached its target demographic and had high rates of completion and satisfaction.

- ADaPT served young people with high levels of education who were unemployed or underemployed. Many were working in jobs that did not fully use their skills. The vast majority identified as belonging to at least one equity-deserving group. Although participants had strong educational backgrounds, many entered the program without a job or were working in low-paying jobs with limited benefits and job security.
- Most completed the program (80%); 77% said they were satisfied with ADaPT; and 81% said they would recommend it to others. Participants said the program helped them build digital, professional, and career-related skills.
- Satisfaction was consistently higher among participants in the live stream, especially for career-related supports. Participant feedback highlighted the value of instructor access, real-time feedback, interaction with other participants, and career coaching.

ADaPT improved skills linked to stronger employment outcomes.

- Compared to participants in the comparison group, ADaPT participants self-reported improvements in five skill areas: career planning, digital office, digital design, business financial, and written communication skills (but no self-reported improvements in verbal communication skills). The largest improvements were in digital design and career planning. Results were similar across both program streams and demographic groups.
- Participants with stronger career-planning skills were more likely to be employed nine months later. Participants with stronger digital design and digital office skills were more likely to be working in digital roles. Business and financial skills were negatively associated with employment in digital roles. These findings show that skills and labour market outcomes were related, but do not demonstrate that the skills alone caused those outcomes.

Participants in the live version of ADaPT were more likely to find work in digital roles.

- Nine months after completing the program, participants in the ADaPT live stream were approximately 12 percentage points more likely to be working in a digital role than participants in the comparison group. We did not find a similar result for participants in the self-directed stream compared to the comparison group.

Employment and job quality improved for participants in all groups, but ADaPT did not produce larger improvements than the comparison group.

- Within nine months, participants across all three groups (live, self-directed, and comparison) were more likely to have permanent full-time jobs, higher earnings, and access to employment benefits. Participants in the ADaPT groups did not improve more than participants in the comparison group. This suggests that factors outside the program were more likely responsible for these improvements. Factors may include broader labour market conditions and participants' high levels of education.
- In particular, the live stream may have improved job satisfaction and participants' views about their opportunities for career advancement. However, the evidence for these outcomes was less certain than for other outcomes, so they should be interpreted cautiously.

Impacts differed for some participant groups.

- Young participants and participants without a bachelor's degree saw stronger improvements in some measures of job quality and employment in digital roles, especially in the live stream.

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Implications for policy and practice

1. Short training programs aligned with employer needs can build job-relevant skills and support transitions into digital roles.

ADaPT's nine-week program showed that short-duration training — when aligned with employer needs — can help build skills for specific, in-demand roles. In this case, ADaPT built entry-level digital skills and broader professional skills needed for digitally enabled jobs.

2. Live online instruction and personalized support can help translate skills into outcomes. Participants in both program streams improved their skills, but those in the live stream, who engaged in synchronous learning and one-on-one counselling, showed stronger evidence of transitions into digital roles. These participants were also more satisfied with the career-related content and career coaching as a wraparound support.

3. Participants with credentials below a bachelor's degree benefited most. College graduates and students still in PSE experienced stronger gains in skills, job satisfaction, education-job fit, and — within the live stream — employment in digital roles. These findings suggest that programs like ADaPT may be especially valuable for these groups.

4. Longer-term data are needed to understand labour market effects over time. Nine months is likely too short to observe full effects on earnings, career progression, and employment stability. Planned linkage to Statistics Canada administrative data will enable a more complete assessment of impact.

5. Digital skills programs must stay responsive to evolving entry-level labour market needs. Competition for entry-level professional roles is increasing and AI is reshaping workplace expectations. Programs like ADaPT will need to continuously adapt their curricula, integrate AI-related skills, and explore work-integrated learning opportunities to ensure graduates remain competitive and aligned with employers' evolving needs.

6. Earlier access to digital skills training can strengthen labour market readiness and improve post-graduation outcomes. Findings suggest value in engaging students before graduation to build digital and professional skills proactively and strengthen labour market readiness. The results point to the importance of a balanced approach that combines preventative pre-graduation interventions with responsive post-graduation supports.



Looking ahead

Future evaluation activities will focus on deepening the assessment of ADaPT's longer-term labour market outcomes through linkage with administrative tax data, subject to data availability and timing. Extending the analysis of linked data beyond the current follow-up period to up to five years after programming would allow for a more complete understanding of employment and earnings trajectories following participation.

As data availability is clarified, next steps will include determining the appropriate scope of analysis and reporting. Longer-term findings, where feasible, would provide valuable input to ongoing program refinement and future decisions about program targeting and scaling.



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