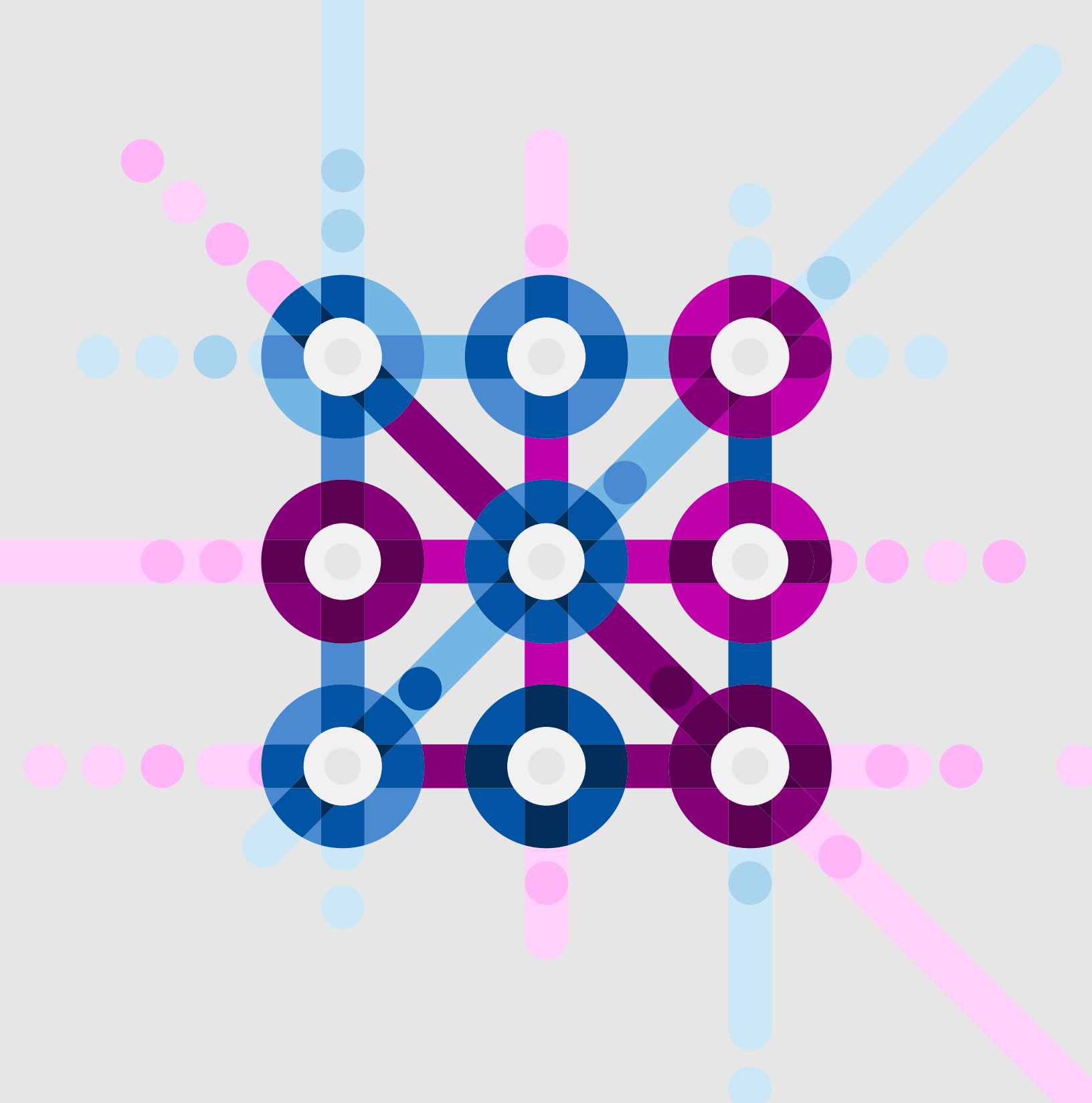




Results for Canada

Design Report

September 2026

Blueprint

Acknowledgements

About the Future Skills Centre

[FSC](#) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and Signal49 Research, and are funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).

About Blueprint

[Blueprint](#) helps leaders use data and evidence to tackle complex public policy challenges across Canada.

We partner with government, community, philanthropic, and industry leaders to strengthen public systems and deliver better outcomes. Our team brings together policy analysts, evaluators, economists, data scientists, and implementation experts — people who know how to turn insight into action. Our work is grounded in deep subject-matter expertise, rigorous methods, and a real-world understanding of how systems operate and evolve. More than just an advisor, we're also partners in change. We provide key support at every stage of the policy and program lifecycle: from early strategy and design to implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

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.

The *Results for Canada: Design Report* is funded by the Government of Canada's [Future Skills Program](#).



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Introduction

Results for Canada is a **Blueprint** initiative funded by the **Future Skills Centre (FSC)** and delivered in partnership with **Statistics Canada (StatCan)**. It builds on a multi-year collaboration between Blueprint, FSC, StatCan, and **Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)**. Launched in 2025, the initiative aims to make rigorous, long-term outcomes measurement accessible to community-based social service organizations across Canada using linked administrative data¹ to track the outcomes of skills development programs.



¹ Linked administrative data combine a program's participant records with information already collected by governments, such as tax, employment, and education records. This allows researchers to track participant outcomes over time without relying on surveys.

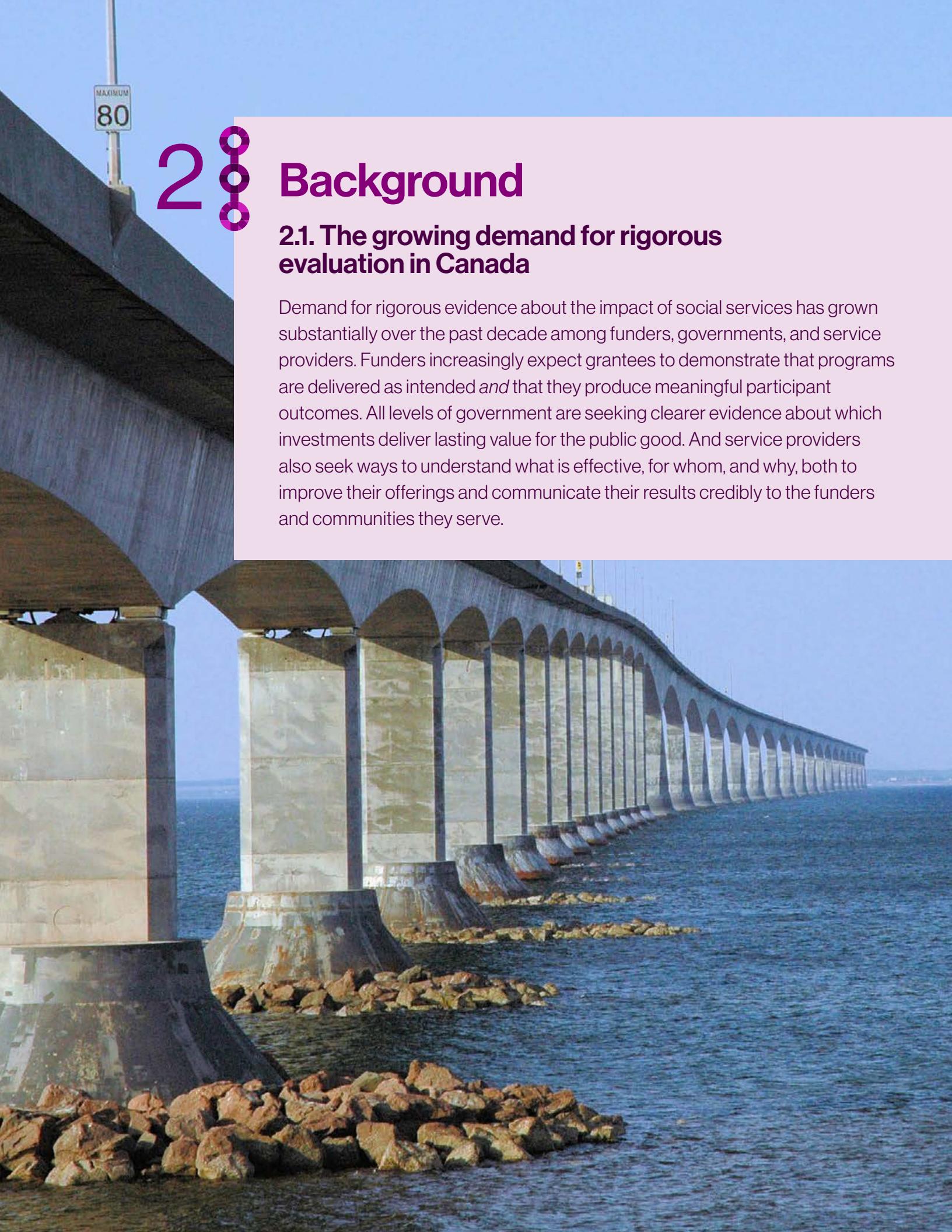
Results for Canada responds to a persistent gap in how we measure the impact of Canadian social services. Most evaluations in the sector rely on surveys that capture the earliest stages of participant trajectories only. Such evaluations are vulnerable to low response rates and sample bias. Linkage to administrative data, on the other hand, addresses these limitations directly; it lets us consistently observe key outcomes for years after a program ends. However, linkage via StatCan's Social Data Linkage Environment (SDLE) is rarely carried out to evaluate nonprofit social service programs, largely due to expertise, time, and cost requirements.

Results for Canada aims to close that gap. Through a series of pilot engagements with nonprofit partners, Blueprint is developing and refining a repeatable approach to SDLE-based linkage—one that nonprofits can use to generate credible, long-term evidence about their programs. The initiative explores opportunities to streamline how nonprofits use the SDLE through proposals, data preparation, linkage, and analysis. The ultimate aim is to reduce barriers to entry for organizations and lay the groundwork for broader sector access.

1.1. About this report

This *Design Report* describes the *Results for Canada* model: its rationale, design choices, prototype pilot engagements, and next stages of work. It includes the following sections:

- **Background (pp. 6–11)** describes the project context, the limitations of current approaches to evaluating Canadian social services, and how data linkage can create stronger, long-term outcomes measurement.
- **The *Results for Canada* model (pp. 12–18)** summarizes the initiative's design and development, linkage process mechanics, guiding principles for our work to improve accessibility, implementation strategy, and intended outcomes.
- **Pilot engagements (pp. 19–22)** introduces our first two partner organizations—WoodGreen Community Services and NPower Canada—and describes how each engagement is prototyping different stages of the model.
- **What's next? (pp. 23–24)** outlines the planned progression of the current pilots, the launch of subsequent engagements, and the synthesis of pilot lessons into sector-facing resources.



MAXIMUM
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Background

2.1. The growing demand for rigorous evaluation in Canada

Demand for rigorous evidence about the impact of social services has grown substantially over the past decade among funders, governments, and service providers. Funders increasingly expect grantees to demonstrate that programs are delivered as intended *and* that they produce meaningful participant outcomes. All levels of government are seeking clearer evidence about which investments deliver lasting value for the public good. And service providers also seek ways to understand what is effective, for whom, and why, both to improve their offerings and communicate their results credibly to the funders and communities they serve.

Evaluation methods, however, have not kept pace with demand. Most evaluations in the social services sector still rely on participant surveys administered during or shortly after program engagement. These surveys are familiar,

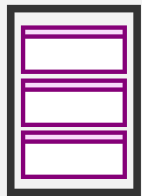
accessible, and can flexibly capture a range of outcomes and experiences beyond administrative data. However, they have significant limitations in terms of rigorously demonstrating long-term program impact:



Survey administration is resource-intensive, requiring distribution, outreach, and repeated follow-ups.



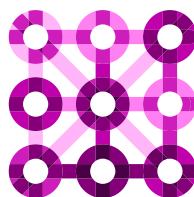
Response rates are often low, and the participants who do respond may differ systematically from those who do not, introducing bias into the results.



Participant recall can be unreliable for the detailed information (e.g., earnings, employment dates, program use, etc.) that matters most for outcomes measurement.



Critically, surveys typically capture the period immediately following program participation, when employment, earnings, and other outcome trajectories are often emerging and uncertain.



“When evaluations capture only the first years after a program, they risk generating premature conclusions.”

This short-term measurement window significantly limits the evidence we can draw from evaluations. International evidence on skills and employment programs shows that meaningful impacts often take years to materialize. A recent [10-year follow-up of sector-focused training programs](#) in the U.S. found that short-duration training generated real earnings gains. However, these impacts took years to appear — and would have been missed entirely by short-term evaluations. Many participants need time to complete training, secure stable work, and progress in their careers before program effects

manifest in their earnings or employment. When evaluations capture only the first years after a program, they risk generating premature conclusions.

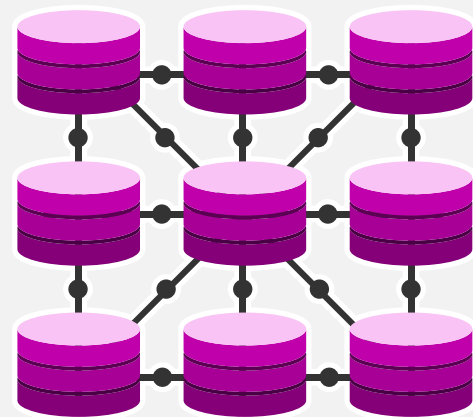
Without stronger long-term evidence, funders and providers lack the clarity needed to identify which approaches deliver lasting benefits, for which participants, and at what economic return for government and funders. This evidence gap has real consequences: it constrains the ability of the sector to learn, improve, and identify effective programs and direct resources toward them.

2.2. The promise of data linkage

Data linkage offers a direct response to these limitations. Linkage works by securely connecting a program's participant records to large-scale administrative datasets that governments already maintain, such as tax filings and records on employment, education, and immigration. Once linked, these data allow researchers to follow participants over many years, observing a range of outcomes — earnings, employment status, postsecondary enrolment, migration, and use of public supports, such as healthcare — without relying on participant surveys.

The advantages of linked administrative data over survey-based methods are substantial:

- Administrative data cover nearly the entire population, are collected consistently every year, and are not subject to recall error or non-response bias.
- Researchers can observe outcomes long after program participation ends, capturing the slower-to-materialize impacts that short-term evaluations miss.



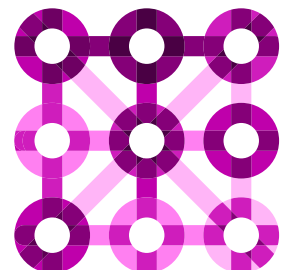
- When paired with rigorous comparison-group designs, linked data can also provide credible evidence about a program's causal effect at a much lower cost than collecting new data from participants. It can also provide causal evidence without the need to randomly assign individuals to receive services (while this is a rigorous way to understand program impacts, it is often infeasible in real-world program settings).

Linkage is frequently used to evaluate social programs, and at scale, in other jurisdictions, including [New Zealand](#), the [United Kingdom](#), and [Australia](#). Within Canada, it has been used by federal and provincial governments, such as through Canada's periodic [evaluations of Labour Market Development Agreements](#), as well as by academic researchers. StatCan operates the Social Data Linkage Environment (SDLE) — a secure, privacy-protected platform that connects records

from multiple administrative sources for research and statistical purposes. Under the *Statistics Act*, StatCan is the only organization authorized to acquire and link these datasets at a national scale, and the SDLE meets Canada's highest privacy, security, and confidentiality standards. Personal identifiers are separated from analytical data during linkage, and researchers access only anonymized, linked datasets within secure Research Data Centres (RDCs).



“This approach can move linkage from a bespoke undertaking, available only to the most resourced organizations, to a standard, repeatable tool.”



2.3. The accessibility gap

Despite the SDLE's infrastructure, it is rarely used to evaluate social service programs delivered by Canadian nonprofits. The technical foundations for linkage are in place. The value of the resulting evidence is well-established. But the sector that delivers the bulk of frontline social services in Canada is largely unable to use this rich source of relevant data.

This gap exists largely due to practical constraints of expertise, time, and cost. Preparing a linkage application for SDLE requires specialized methodological and data expertise: framing research questions in ways that linkage can answer, selecting appropriate comparison-group strategies, identifying the right administrative datasets, and structuring program data so that they can be linked reliably. The application process itself is detailed and iterative, requiring sustained engagement with StatCan to address technical considerations. And once an application is approved, conducting

the analysis requires analysts who have the time and technical expertise to work on the data within StatCan's RDC environment.² Each of these stages requires resources that are rarely available within nonprofits operating under tight programmatic budgets.

This accessibility gap has serious practical consequences for our social sector. The organizations closest to the communities served—and often best positioned to ask the most useful evaluation questions—face structural barriers that make access to the most powerful evidence-generation infrastructure in Canada uncommon. Long-term outcomes of nonprofit-delivered programs remain difficult to measure; comparisons across programs and across the sector are limited; and the evidence base that would allow funders and providers to direct resources toward effective services remains thinner than it needs to be.



“Promisingly, closing this accessibility gap does not require building new infrastructure.”

² StatCan's RDCs are a secure network of research facilities located at universities and research institutions across Canada, as well as through remote access infrastructure. They allow approved researchers to access detailed, confidential microdata that cannot be released publicly.

2.4. The opportunity

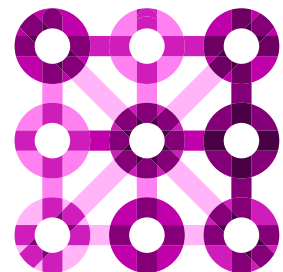
Promisingly, closing this accessibility gap does not require building new infrastructure. Through the FSC-funded [Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio](#), Blueprint and StatCan developed an end-to-end process for linking nonprofit program data to administrative records while meeting all of StatCan's confidentiality and security requirements. This work demonstrated a practical pathway for producing rigorous, long-term evidence about skills development programs.

Results for Canada builds on this pathway by testing and adapting it across a broader range of nonprofits and programs. While many social services share features with FSC-funded projects, more established programs may have different funding, delivery, and data arrangements. Testing the pathway in these contexts will help determine how widely it will be applied.

The initiative also aims to reduce the effort required from each organization. Resource-intensive components, including methodological design, proposal development, analytical protocols, and comparison-group strategies, can be developed once and adapted across partners. Working with multiple partners in parallel can also create economies of scale, build a shared base of practical knowledge, and generate insights that feed back into the model itself, strengthening it over time.

Ultimately, this approach can move linkage from a bespoke undertaking, available only to the most resourced organizations, to a standard, repeatable tool that supports evidence generation across the nonprofit sector.

“Results for Canada is designed to lower those barriers—not by simplifying StatCan’s process, but by changing how the work surrounding it is organized.”



A large, detailed model of a suspension bridge, likely the Mackinac Island Bridge, spans a body of water. The bridge features a complex steel truss structure and is supported by two large piers. In the background, a city skyline with various buildings is visible, suggesting an urban setting. The foreground shows a grassy area with some trees and a small body of water.

3

The *Results for Canada* model

This section describes how the model was developed and how the linkage process works in practice. It outlines the principles guiding our efforts to improve accessibility, implementation strategy, and expected outcomes.

3.1. Design and development process

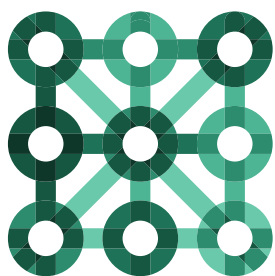
Results for Canada aims to create an efficient, repeatable approach to linking data from nonprofit-delivered social services with administrative records held by StatCan. Our long-term goal is to establish a pathway with StatCan through which a wider range of social service organizations can routinely access outcomes measurement using the SDLE.

The model builds on a multi-year collaboration among Blueprint, StatCan, FSC, and ESDC. Beginning in 2021, we developed and operationalized an end-to-end pathway for linking participant data from FSC-funded programs to the SDLE. This work focused on measuring long-term labour market outcomes for participants in the [Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio](#). It required sustained engagement with StatCan to refine the consent, intake, data preparation, linkage, and analytical protocols needed for applications using nonprofit program data to meet federal confidentiality, privacy, and security requirements.

This collaboration produced a working proof of concept. The pathway prepares a nonprofit's program data, moves it through StatCan's intake and linkage processes, and makes anonymized,

linked data available for analysis in a secure RDC. Testing the pathway with multiple Scaling Up programs demonstrated its viability, but it also showed that the process can be lengthy and requires specialized expertise to prepare and analyze data within StatCan's environment and navigate its systems and requirements. These lessons provided the foundation for *Results for Canada*.

Our earlier work also identified opportunities to make the process more efficient and accessible. Proposal development, comparison-group design, and data preparation were particularly time-intensive and technically complex—making them difficult for nonprofits to navigate independently. However, much can be adapted across organizations—including proposal structures, analytical protocols, comparison-group strategies, and data preparation templates—instead of recreated for each partner. *Results for Canada* therefore extends the tested pathway to new partners while also progressively developing shared resources that aim to make future linkages more efficient.



“Much can be adapted across organizations—including proposal structures, analytical protocols, comparison-group strategies, and data preparation templates—instead of recreated for each partner.”

3.2. The data linkage process

At the centre of *Results for Canada* is the SDLE linkage process itself. We provide a great deal of support around this process, but first, understanding what linkage involves is essential to understanding what *Results for Canada* is designed to enable.

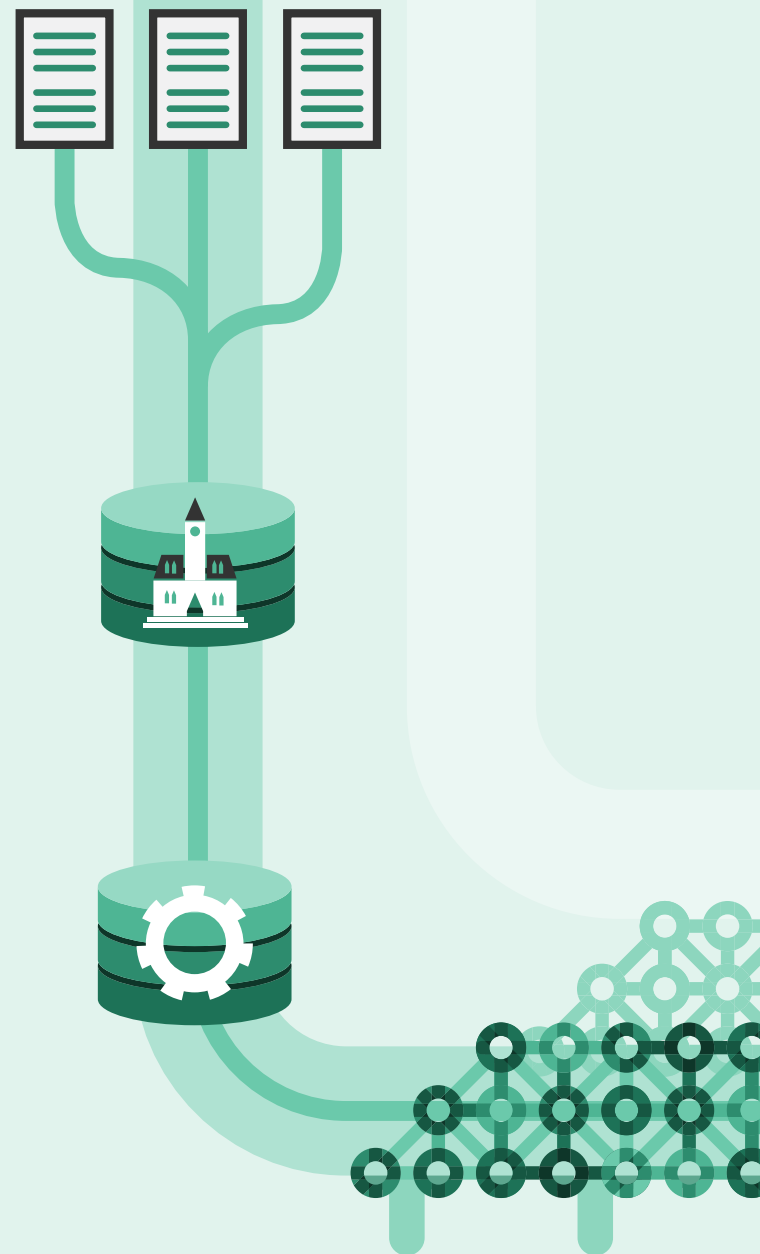
3.2.1. Program data collection and governance

The process begins by gathering a nonprofit partner's program data: the administrative records the organization already collects about the participants it serves. These data typically include a minimum set of identifiers: name, date of birth, and contact information. They can also include program participation details (which services participants accessed, when, and for how long) and any outcomes data collected directly.

Crucially, nonprofits must have data governance structures to allow use of these data. They must receive authorization from participants to use their data for evaluation. They must also have appropriate data-sharing agreements with all other organizations working with the data.

3.2.2. Data preparation

Next, Blueprint works with each partner to prepare program data for linkage. We do so by assessing data quality, organizing records into consistent formats, and isolating the minimum identifying information, noted above, that StatCan requires to perform the linkage.





3.2.3. Linkage proposal development

In parallel with data preparation, Blueprint develops a linkage proposal for StatCan. The proposal specifies the research questions, program participants, StatCan datasets to be linked, and planned analytical approach. It also describes how de-identified records held by StatCan may be used to construct a comparison group of similar people who did not participate in the program.

StatCan reviews the proposal against its linkage criteria. If approved, StatCan performs the linkage itself within the SDLE. Personal identifiers are separated from analytical data using StatCan's linkable data file system; they are then encrypted and removed during linkage. This creates a de-identified analytical dataset.

Designated researchers also complete a rigorous, StatCan-approved vetting process. Afterward, they can access the dataset for analytical purposes. This ensures that data are securely exposed to trained individuals only (such as Blueprint staff), who never see personal identifiers in the analysis process.

3.2.4. Linked data analysis

The result of this linkage is a dataset that combines a nonprofit program's detailed participation records with longitudinal administrative information on outcomes — such as earnings, employment, education, and immigration-related characteristics — for years before and after the intervention.

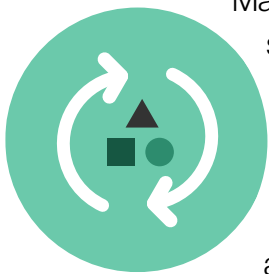
Designated analysts carry out data analysis through RDCs according to the plan laid out in the linkage proposal. StatCan vets outputs from this analysis before release from the RDC to ensure they pose no risk of identifying individual participants. Once released, the aggregate findings can be incorporated into analytical and evaluation reports and made accessible to a broader range of organizations.

3.3. Improving linkage accessibility

The linkage process described is technically and methodologically demanding. As outlined in **Section 2. Background**, the combination of expertise, time, and direct costs required to navigate it places SDLE linkage out of reach for most nonprofits operating under typical resource constraints.

Results for Canada is designed to lower those barriers—not by simplifying StatCan's process, but by changing how the work surrounding it is organized. Several design choices shape how the model incorporates accessibility:

Reusable structures across engagements.



Many of the most resource-intensive stages of linkage, such as proposal development, comparison-group design, analytical specification, and data preparation, involve work that can be partially generalized across organizations pursuing similar evidence about their programs.

Blueprint is developing reusable structures for each stage through our current pilots, with the expectation that subsequent engagements will be able to draw on them rather than building from scratch.

Accessible and expert support.

Rather than expecting partner organizations to develop linkage expertise internally, the *Results for Canada* model makes that expertise available when needed. Blueprint works with partners to lead the methodological design, proposal development, data preparation, and analysis. This *capacity-lending* model complements Blueprint's *capacity-building* work through its [Practitioner Data](#) and [Building Data Capacity](#) initiatives. Because data linkage is highly specialized, resource-intensive, and needed only occasionally, external support is often more practical and cost-effective than maintaining the required expertise in-house.



Shared learning and economies of scale.

Running multiple pilot engagements in parallel reduces per-partner fixed costs for linkage. It allows lessons from one engagement to inform others in real time.



Iterative approach.

Results for Canada will continually iterate and refine proposal templates, data preparation toolkits, and analytical approaches through pilot cohorts. By grouping several organizations within a single StatCan project, a cohort can use one overarching proposal and move participating organizations through linkage together, substantially reducing administrative effort and costs. Lessons from each cohort will inform a progressively refined set of publicly available resources designed to lower access barriers and support linkage at greater scale.



Together, these choices shift linkage from a bespoke undertaking that each organization must build from scratch to a supported pathway they can use with substantially less internal investment.

3.4. Implementation strategy

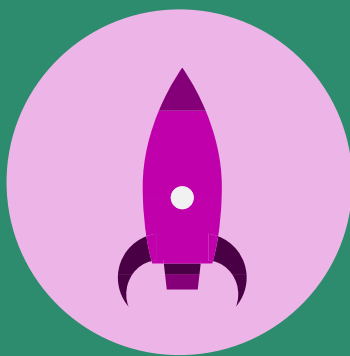
Blueprint is implementing *Results for Canada* through a phased pilot. To start, we are partnering with two well-established nonprofits with strong interests in using linked data to understand their services as well as the data infrastructure to make linkage feasible. We intentionally selected partners meeting three high baseline readiness criteria (listed in **section 4.**); doing so allows the model to be prototyped under conditions where the linkage process has a high probability of producing useful results. This ensures lessons generated by the pilots are about the model rather than basic data *readiness* (i.e., it allows us to test proof of concept under the most favourable conditions so implementation challenges do not impede early progress or learnings).

Following our initial pilots, Blueprint plans to expand to additional partner organizations, broadening the range of program types and organizational contexts in which we can test the model. As the pilot base grows, the focus will shift toward synthesizing what has been learned into resources that can support broader sector adoption. These will include practical guidelines for organizations preparing for linkage, templates for the most reusable elements of the linkage application process, and analytical protocols that can be adapted across partners.

Implementation strategy



proof of
concept



initial
pilots



additional
organizations



cohort
learning

3.5. Intended outcomes

Results for Canada is designed to generate short-, medium-, and longer-term outcomes.



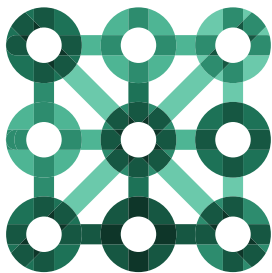
In the **short term**, it aims to deliver actionable evidence to pilot partners about long-term program outcomes—evidence that they can use to refine service delivery, communicate impact to funders, and inform strategic direction. In parallel, each pilot will also generate practical lessons about the linkage process itself. Such lessons feed directly into the development of resources that will support broader sector access.



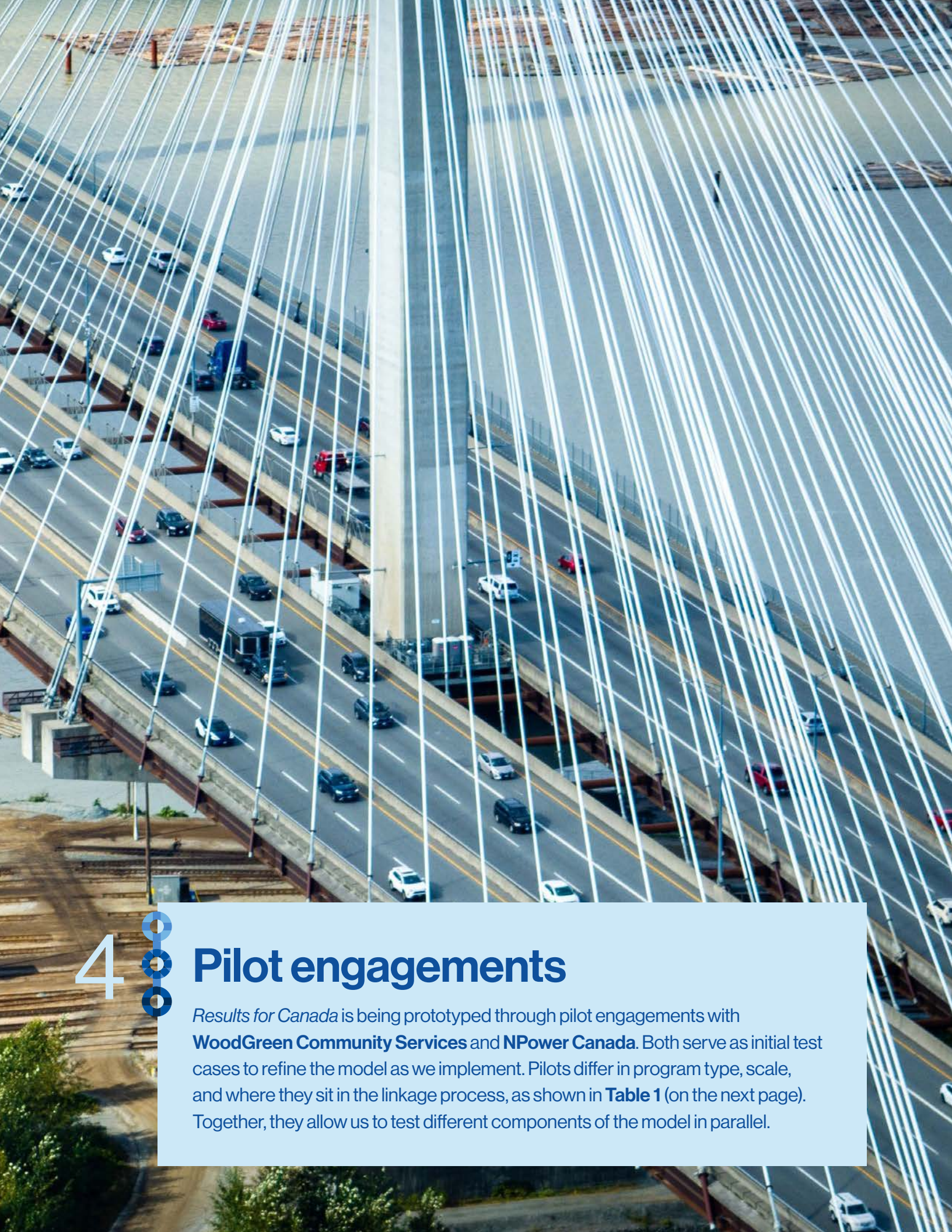
In the **medium term**, *Results for Canada* aims to make data linkage a substantially more accessible tool for the Canadian social services sector. It will do so by reducing the expertise, time, and costs required for nonprofits to pursue SDLE-based linkage and expanding the range of programs for which credible long-term outcomes evidence is available. Stronger long-term evidence in turn supports better-informed funding decisions, more effective program design, and a richer base of comparative information across the sector.



In the **long term**, the initiative aims to contribute to a broader shift in how the impacts of Canadian social services are measured. By demonstrating that nonprofit-originated linkage is feasible and scalable, *Results for Canada* aims to lay the groundwork for a more standardized, efficient, and equitable evidence infrastructure—one in which the organizations closest to the communities served are full participants in generating the evidence that shapes how social services are designed, funded, and improved.



“The organizations closest to the communities served are full participants in generating the evidence that shapes how social services are designed, funded, and improved.”



4



Pilot engagements

Results for Canada is being prototyped through pilot engagements with **WoodGreen Community Services** and **NPower Canada**. Both serve as initial test cases to refine the model as we implement. Pilots differ in program type, scale, and where they sit in the linkage process, as shown in **Table 1** (on the next page). Together, they allow us to test different components of the model in parallel.

We selected our partner organizations based on three readiness criteria:

1. **Strategic alignment:**

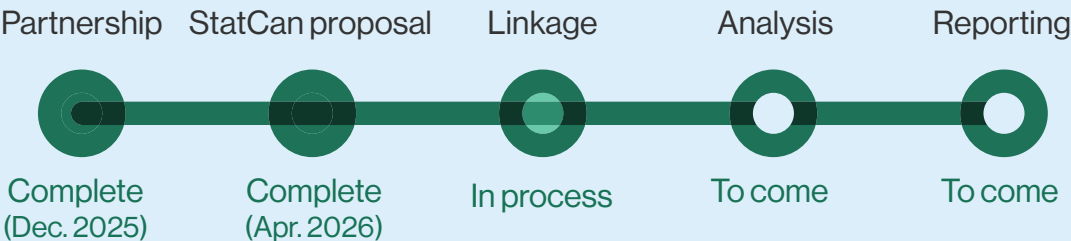
Organizations are committed to using data to understand the effectiveness of their programs and are facing key strategic questions that can be supported with linked data.
2. **Data maturity:**

Staff have the capacity and internal infrastructure to capture and manage high-quality data and prepare it for linkage, as well as clear and effective governance to ensure linkage is possible.
3. **Data coverage:**

Organizations have a large volume of relevant participant records over a multi-year time frame, which ensures that an analysis plan is feasible given StatCan's sample size requirements and timing of data availability. For the purposes of this initiative, WoodGreen has over 114,000 and NPower has over 8,600 participant records available to be linked, indicating sufficient data coverage.

Table 1 | Pilot partner status

WoodGreen



NPower Canada





4.1. WoodGreen Community Services



4.1.1. Partner profile

[WoodGreen Community Services](#) is a large multi-service organization based in Toronto, serving roughly 37,000 residents each year through integrated programs spanning housing, employment, financial empowerment, healthcare, childcare, newcomer services, seniors' services, and youth supports. Its long track record of data collection and its well-structured internal data systems made it a strong fit for our first *Results for Canada* engagement.

4.1.2. Pilot goals

Our engagement focuses on estimating the long-term effects of WoodGreen's programming on three target outcomes: education, employment, and earnings. We will examine outcomes across the populations WoodGreen serves, with particular attention to youth, seniors, and newcomers to Canada, as well as the participants of WoodGreen's [Homeward Bound program](#). We will also examine how results vary by program type and participation in different components. The engagement includes a cost-benefit analysis, combining program effect estimates with cost data to characterize the return on WoodGreen's services to government, participants, and the public.

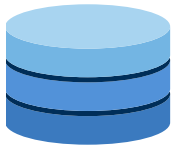
4.1.3. Pilot status

StatCan is currently finalizing the linkage of WoodGreen's data. Afterward, Blueprint staff will conduct the planned analysis using the RDC system. Findings, along with process learnings from the engagement, are expected in late 2026.



npower canada

4.2. NPower Canada



8,600
records

4.2.1. Partner profile

[NPower Canada](#) is a workforce development nonprofit headquartered in the Greater Toronto Area. It delivers a dual-client model that provides free technical and professional skills training to participants from equity-deserving groups and connects them with employers in the technology sector. NPower's program data covers roughly 8,600 records spanning 2015 to 2024, with cohort sizes growing sharply over that period — providing the volume of data required for meaningful comparisons across program streams and demographics.

4.2.2. Pilot goals

Our engagement focuses on estimating the labour market effects of NPower's programming, including employment, earnings, job tenure (particularly with employers with whom participants were placed through NPower), industry of work, education, and entrepreneurship. It also focuses on characterizing who is participating. We will examine how results vary across NPower's multiple program streams and participant demographics and will also include a cost-benefit component, combining program effect estimates with NPower's delivery cost data.

4.2.3. Pilot status

Blueprint and NPower are working through the proposal development stage with StatCan, with the proposal currently being finalized for submission. The proposal process has been significantly accelerated based on learnings from the WoodGreen engagement. Learnings have so far included a standard approach for assessing data readiness for linkage, replicating relevant analytical documentation for StatCan, and developing a standard data-sharing agreement template. Linked data and findings are expected in late 2026.

The background of the slide is a composite image. The top half shows a city skyline at sunset, with buildings and trees reflected in a body of water. The bottom half shows a large, multi-arched concrete bridge spanning a river, also with its reflection in the water. The bridge has several large, rounded arches and a walkway on top.

5

What's next?

Results for Canada is at an early stage: the model is still being prototyped, with consolidation of learnings into resources for the broader sector still ahead. The following steps support us in testing and refining the model, then disseminating learnings and resources to improve accessibility and achieve larger project ambitions.

5.1. Completing the first wave of pilots

Blueprint's immediate priority is completing our current engagements. For WoodGreen, this involves accessing and analyzing the data in an RDC and reporting on what we find. For NPower Canada, this involves completing the StatCan proposal process, moving the engagement into linkage, then analyzing and reporting on the same trajectory.

5.3. Exploring additional pilots

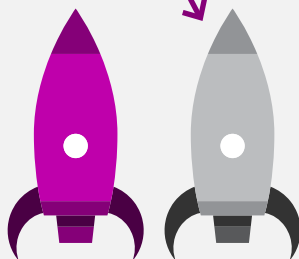
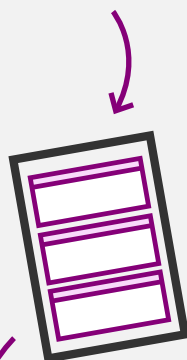
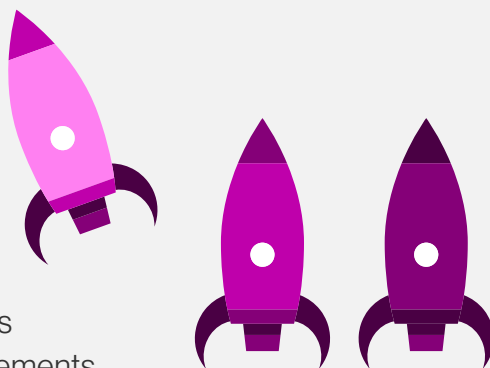
Beyond the initial wave, Blueprint will explore options for additional pilot engagements with nonprofit partners. Partner selection for subsequent waves will continue to apply the three readiness criteria, while deliberately broadening the range of program types and organizational contexts represented. We will also explore a cohort model among smaller nonprofits to pool resources and build efficiency into the linkage process.

5.2. Reporting findings and recommendations from initial pilots

In December 2026, Blueprint will generate a *Final Report* based on pilot findings. This report will highlight both high-level substantive findings from the analysis and key process findings regarding opportunities and challenges in building accessibility into the linkage process. We will provide preliminary recommendations for building linkable data at nonprofits and for an infrastructure to improve access to linkage. This will represent our first draft of the *Results for Canada* toolkit.

5.4. Refining and developing sector-facing resources

As the pilot base grows, Blueprint will continue to consolidate what we learn into resources that support broader sector adoption. We expect these resources to include practical guidance for nonprofit organizations preparing for linkage; reusable templates for the most generalizable elements of the linkage application process; analytical protocols that can be adapted across partners; and shared cost models for engagements that involve multiple organizations.





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