Leveraging Government Data: Benchmarking Model

Status Update 2

September 2026

Blueprint

Acknowledgements

About the Future Skills Centre (FSC)

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 groups, 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. We bring 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 FSC, Blueprint works with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively generate and use evidence to help solve pressing future skills challenges.

Leveraging Government Data: Status Update 2 is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

Future Skills Centre | Centre des Compétences futures

Funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program | Canada

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

Table of contents

Acknowledgements **2**

Preface: Building data capacity **4**

Leveraging Government Data (LGD) 4

The Practitioner Data Initiative (PDI) 4

About the Leveraging Government Data: Benchmarking Model **5**

Project overview and partnerships 5

Project rationale and objectives 5

Previous project phases 6

Current project phase 6

LMPDP data access and preparation 6

Benchmarking model development 7

Potential applications 7

Internal technical report for ESDC 7

What's next? **7**

Preface: Building data capacity

Unlocking the power of data to better meet the changing needs of Canadians.

Unlocking the power of data is foundational to a future-state skills ecosystem where publicly funded services are navigable, supportive, targeted, integrated, and transparent. Through our experience with frontline practitioners, community leaders, and government, Blueprint has identified three challenges that slow our progress:

1. **Community data capacity gaps.** Service providers collect data to meet reporting requirements, but these data rarely enable rapid learning, continuous improvement, and impact measurement. *Service providers struggle to know if they are maximizing impact.*
2. **Friction within data-linking.** Opportunities to combine administrative data (such as tax records) with program data, like Statistics Canada's Social Data Linking Environment, could provide seamless ways to track long-term outcomes, but they are under-utilized. *Long-term outcomes from skills training remain difficult to track.*
3. **Under-leveraged datasets.** Governments collect large volumes of data that are not used due to constraints in time, technology, and skills. *The ecosystem is missing insights about service effectiveness.*

In response, we launched the Building Data Capacity portfolio to show how we can *put data to work* for Canadians. We are doing so via two workstreams:

Leveraging Government Data (LGD)

We are testing the use of government data holdings to understand needs and service demand, support continuous learning, and improve outcomes. Specifically, we are:

- using Statistics Canada data to measure long-term outcomes of Canadians participating in our Scaling Up Skills Development programs;
- facilitating access to Statistics Canada data more broadly across the nonprofit sector through our *Results for Canada* initiative; and
- developing a benchmarking model that leverages the Labour Market Program Data Platform (LMPDP) to identify outcomes benchmarks for employment and training programs.

The Practitioner Data Initiative (PDI)

We are providing funding, tools, advice, and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations to help them better collect, manage, and use data. The *Practitioner Data Initiative*:

- provides funding, advice, technical assistance, and tools to 15 nonprofits to help build their capacity to collect, manage, and use data; and
- produces evidence on initiative outcomes to support scaling and build a sustainable path to help more organizations develop data capacity.

About the Leveraging Government Data: Benchmarking Model

Project overview and partnerships

Blueprint is developing the Leveraging Government Data: Benchmarking Model with funding from the Future Skills Centre (FSC). As the project evolved, Blueprint established a direct partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) that provides secure access to the Labour Market Program Data Platform (LMPDP): a large administrative dataset covering labour market programming and participant outcomes.

This partnership has significantly expanded what the project can achieve. Access to the LMPDP allows us to develop and test the benchmarking model using a much larger, more diverse source of historical program and outcomes data than was available through the original FSC-funded pilots. This lets us strengthen the model and explore applications that could ultimately make it a more useful tool for funders, policymakers, and service delivery organizations.

Analytical outputs developed using the LMPDP are subject to ESDC review and approval before broader dissemination, as described in this update.

Project rationale and objectives

To understand the impact of workforce development programs, interventions must be measured using rigorous methods. A **randomized controlled trial (RCT)** is considered the 'gold standard' of doing so, but it requires time, resources, and expertise, and cannot be feasibly used on an ongoing basis.

For these reasons, it is much more common to conduct **outcome evaluations**. Examining outcomes is simpler, less resource-intensive, and can provide useful evidence about how programs are working. However, outcome evaluations alone cannot measure **impact**.

Benchmarking outcomes offers an alternative approach, situated on the spectrum between examining outcomes and a rigorous experimental study. By systematically comparing the performance of programs against a 'benchmark,' organizations can get a sense of what results can reasonably be expected of their programming without needing complex research designs.

Blueprint is developing **a novel benchmarking model** to help funders and service delivery organizations forecast the performance of new interventions and enhance them over time. Our model aims to use existing microdata, describing the characteristics and outcomes of historical labour market interventions, to generate predictions that are both precise and generalizable to new programs.

Previous project phases

Blueprint released a *Design Report* for the benchmarking model in June 2024. The report outlined the goals and design of the model across five areas:

1. **Context** described the benefits and drawbacks of RCTs, quasi-experimental methods, and existing benchmarking models, and how our model improves on these designs.
2. **Learning agenda** listed the research questions we aim to answer through our project.
3. **The Benchmarking Model** explained the model itself, including its objectives, structure, and current and future data sources.
4. **Example case study** provided an example of a practical application of the model.
5. **What's next?** summarized upcoming phases in model development and reporting.

After publication, Blueprint continued using data from FSC-funded pilots from the Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio to test our core concept and establish an initial modelling workflow. That work helped clarify the data requirements, candidate outcomes, and practical use cases for a broader benchmarking model and demonstrated the limitations of relying on a comparatively small and fixed portfolio of projects. We also pursued access to ESDC's LMPDP, following conversations initiated in July 2023. Since the LMPDP contains well over 100 times as many records as our scaling dataset, using it to improve the predictions of the benchmarking model would significantly expand both the model's precision and generalizability.

These updates were covered in Blueprint's *Status Update* (April 2025), which indicated that by March 2025, we had integrated **8,398 records** across **11 scaling programs**.

Current project phase

In September 2025, Blueprint entered into an agreement with ESDC permitting access to the LMPDP for developing the benchmarking model, commencing the second and current phase of the project.

This phase involves building and testing models using ESDC's LMPDP dataset. Through this work, Blueprint has substantially refined the model and generated a set of predictive benchmarks to support the evaluation and design of labour market programming.

LMPDP data access and preparation

Once Blueprint obtained secure access to the LMPDP, we prepared a linked analysis dataset using a sample of its administrative microdata and information from multiple entities. We also integrated external data to capture local labour market conditions and program costs.

This preparation allowed our models to capture diverse variables, including intervention type, intensity, demographics, economic history, and labour-market context. It allows us to examine outcomes related to employment, income, and social assistance use for a representative sample of jobseekers using LMDA-funded programming.

Accessing these data addresses the central limitation identified in the first phase of work: the need for a larger, more diverse source of historical program and outcomes data. The LMPDP provides the breadth required to test predictions across participant groups, intervention types, and economic contexts.

Benchmarking model development

Blueprint tested the predictive accuracy of a range of model specifications using LMPDP data. We ultimately selected a Bayesian regression model, estimating average net income over the five years following participation as the best balance between predictive strength and practical applicability.

Potential applications

Following model selection, we generated a range of predicted outcome distributions aligned with illustrative model uses. These include:

- benchmarking observed program results,
- constructing a naïve comparison scenario,
- flagging intervention outcomes that are surprising relative to predictions,
- comparing alternative program designs,
- informing portfolio-level expectations, and
- testing the sensitivity of predictions to different labour-market conditions.

Internal technical report for ESDC

Following the requirements of our data-access contract, Blueprint delivered an internal technical report to ESDC in July 2026. It describes the data and benchmarking approach, model selection process, model specification and assessment, and example applications. Blueprint and ESDC met in the same month to discuss the report, and ESDC provided detailed and constructive feedback shortly afterward. Blueprint is currently incorporating this feedback into a *Final Report*.

What's next?

Blueprint continues to work with LMPDP data stewards and ESDC's evaluation team to refine the model, respond to technical feedback, and brief senior leadership on the findings and potential applications. Because analytical outputs developed using the LMPDP are subject to ESDC review and approval, detailed findings cannot yet be shared more broadly. Once this process is complete, we expect to share the analysis and model development with FSC and other relevant stakeholders.

The final project phase will focus on translating the technical work into a practical tool and roadmap for future use. The *Final Report*, planned for December 2026, will describe the model's development, performance, and potential applications, and identify opportunities for ongoing refinement and dissemination. The goal is to ensure the model can support funders, policymakers, and service delivery organizations in setting realistic expectations, interpreting program outcomes, informing program design, and strengthening learning across the skills ecosystem.

Blueprint