In Motion & Momentum+
Final Report

Executive Summary

A readiness-first approach for people facing complex barriers to employment

In Motion & Momentum+ (IM&M+) is a career development program for people facing complex barriers to employment who may not be ready to move directly into work, education, or training. The program helps participants build foundational career readiness and management skills, including hope, confidence, self-awareness, well-being, goal setting, and direction, so they are better prepared to take meaningful next steps.

The Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF) first developed IM&M+ for the Government of New Brunswick in 2016 for people receiving income assistance. Since then, the program has expanded across Canada and has been delivered by public employment and social service organizations in eight provinces.

Blueprint evaluated IM&M+ as part of FSC's Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio. This *Final Report* presents findings from a randomized controlled trial (RCT) conducted from 2022 to 2025. It examines if IM&M+ was delivered as intended and reached its target population. It analyzes participants' experiences and IM&M+'s impacts on employability, education and training, job search, employment, earnings, and social assistance receipt. It also explores the program's potential longer-term financial benefits.



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Why IM&M+ is needed

Many people facing complex barriers to employment need more than job search assistance or occupational skills training. They may face multiple personal, practical, and systemic barriers at the same time and first need to rebuild hope and confidence, develop greater self-awareness and direction, strengthen career management and employability skills, and address barriers affecting their ability to participate in the labour market.

However, early pre-employment foundational support is often missing from the public employment system. IM&M+ is designed to fill this gap. It is intended as an early step in a broader employability pathway rather than as a standalone job-placement program. Its theory of change posits that strengthening foundational career readiness and employability outcomes can better prepare participants to pursue employment, education, training, and other supports.

The IM&M+ program

IM&M+ is a group-based program delivered over 10 weeks through three modules: In Motion, Momentum, and Momentum+. It uses a person-centred, strengths-based, solution-focused approach. Participants explore their strengths, interests, and values; develop a vision for their preferred future; set goals and action plans; practice foundational employability skills; and take action toward work, education, training, and life goals. A participant-led community project provides an opportunity to practice communication, collaboration, adaptability, and problem-solving skills while building connections to community. Participants can also receive wraparound supports, including help with transportation, childcare, food, finances, technology, and referrals to other services.

The program uses a "launch-when-ready" approach. Participants move on when they feel prepared to take their next steps rather than being required to complete all three modules.

About the evaluation

Eligible participants who consented to the research were randomly assigned to one of two groups: the IM&M+ group or a comparison group that continued to have access to the employment and community services normally available to them.

Of the 907 applicants assessed as suitable for IM&M+, 761 consented to participate in the study and were randomly assigned: 393 to the program group and 368 to the comparison group. Participants completed surveys at intake and program exit and again three and 12 months later. Program records and facilitator surveys provided additional information on implementation, completion, and participant experiences.[1]



1 As is common in longitudinal studies, survey response rates declined over time. The primary impact analysis uses participants with complete data for relevant outcomes. We also estimated outcomes for participants with missing survey responses. Where the results differ between these analyses, findings should be interpreted with greater caution. Planned linkage to Statistics Canada administrative data will provide stronger longer-term evidence for the full consenting sample.



Key findings

IM&M+ was delivered as intended and reached people facing substantial barriers to employment.

All cohorts included in the impact analysis participated in IM&M+ as it was intended to be delivered. In other words, they met the program fidelity requirements.

Participants faced substantial labour market barriers when they entered. Eighty percent were unemployed and 8% had never worked. Among those who were unemployed, 47% had been unemployed for at least six months and 22% had been out of work for more than five years. Forty-nine percent were receiving social assistance.

The program also served a diverse participant population: 61% were women+, 43% were racialized, 42% reported a disability, 30% were immigrants, and 13% were Indigenous. Participants also had a wide range of educational backgrounds, from no secondary credential (21%) to post-secondary education (PSE) (48%).

IM&M+ is a launch-when-ready model, meaning that completion of all modules is not required.

Most participants completed a substantial portion of the program and reported positive experiences. Seventy-six percent completed In Motion, 64% completed Momentum, and 58% completed Momentum+. Among survey respondents, 81% were satisfied or very satisfied and 88% found it useful for their employment goals.

IM&M+ delivered strong gains in the key foundational outcomes it was designed to strengthen.

The RCT's immediate and strongest results appear for outcomes most closely aligned with IM&M+'s core program—the outcomes IM&M+ is designed to affect most directly.

At program exit, IM&M+ participants demonstrated statistically significant gains in employment hope, emotional intelligence, self-rated mental health, and healthy behaviours relative to the comparison group. These results align with IM&M+'s intent to build the readiness people need to set their career direction and succeed in education, training, and employment.



IM&M+ also affected how and when participants approached their next steps toward employment, education, and training.

Among participants actively looking for work, those offered IM&M+ were more likely to set job search goals at 12 months. They were also more likely to feel that they were making progress and more confident in their ability to find employment. At three months and 12 months, the program also increased education and training enrolment among participants who had been unemployed for at least six months.

At the same time, unemployed IM&M+ participants were less likely than comparison group members to be actively looking for work at three and 12 months.

This pattern is consistent with IM&M+'s focus on addressing the critical employability dimensions that may need to be strengthened before people who are distant from the labour market are ready to pursue work or training. IM&M+ was designed to address repeat client cycles in public employment services—where funding and policy mandates may push people into training and job searches quickly without first building the readiness and support needed to sustain progress. IM&M+ is intended to interrupt this cycling into service by helping participants build a stronger foundation for moving into employment, education, or training.

Employment hope was strongly connected to later employment.

Participants with greater employment hope when they left the program were more likely to be employed three and 12 months later.

This is an important finding: IM&M+ significantly increased employment hope. The program's theory of change identifies greater hope as one of the foundations for moving toward employment. While this analysis cannot establish that greater employment hope itself caused participants to become employed—as finding or nearing employment could also increase hope—the results show a strong connection between an outcome IM&M+ improves and the later employment outcome it seeks to influence. This provides meaningful support for the program's theory of change.

Employment outcomes were stronger for IM&M+ participants by 12 months.

Employment increased in the program group and comparison group. Among those with complete survey data, employment increased by 30 percentage points from intake to 12 months among IM&M+ participants versus 19 percentage points among comparison group members.

After adjusting for participants' baseline characteristics, the evaluation estimated that being offered IM&M+ increased the likelihood of employment at 12 months by approximately 12 percentage points. The p-value for this estimate was 0.062, just above the conventional threshold for statistical significance.

The size and direction of the estimate provide promising evidence that IM&M+ may help participants move into employment by 12 months. The timing of the finding is also consistent with the program's approach: IM&M+ is designed to strengthen foundational employability outcomes first, with employment expected to follow as participants take later steps.

However, the result is not conclusive and is sensitive to how missing survey responses are treated. The analysis estimating outcomes for participants with missing survey data did not find an employment impact. Longer-term administrative data will be important for determining whether a positive employment impact is observed across the full study sample.

Earnings also moved in a positive direction, although the evidence remains uncertain.

Average annual earnings increased by $11,250 from intake among IM&M+ participants and by $6,887 among comparison group members. After adjusting for participants' baseline characteristics, the estimated impact of IM&M+ on annual earnings 12 months later was approximately $4,363. The direction of this estimate is consistent with our employment findings.

However, the evaluation cannot conclude that IM&M+ caused the increase in earnings. The estimate was not statistically significant (p = 0.133). The positive difference was not evident in the analysis estimating outcomes for participants with missing survey responses. Longer-term administrative data are needed to determine whether the program had a positive impact on earnings.

It is too early to determine whether IM&M+ reduces reliance on social assistance.

Social assistance receipt declined over time in both the program and comparison group, but the evaluation did not identify a clear impact attributable to IM&M+ within the 12-month follow-up.

This outcome is further downstream in the program's theory of change. Approximately half of participants were receiving social assistance at intake. A 12-month follow-up may therefore be too short a period to determine whether improvements in employability and employment lead to reduced social assistance receipt.

Longer-term administrative data will allow us to examine whether employment and earnings gains persist and whether changes in social assistance use emerge over time.

IM&M+ could produce substantial longer-term financial benefits if estimated earnings gains are sustained.

When considered through a cost-benefit analysis lens, the increased earnings experienced by participants translate directly into net social and fiscal benefits.

To estimate long-term benefits, we consider a 10-year time horizon and three scenarios, in which the observed earnings effect either remains constant, decreases, or increases over this time. Through these scenarios, we estimate IM&M+ could produce a net social benefit per participant of $15,088 to $34,642 over 10 years. Further, $1,784 to $9,419 of this benefit would accrue directly to government in the form of increased tax revenues, indicating that the intervention would pay for itself from a fiscal perspective. These benefits translate to IM&M+ producing between $2.78 and $6.39 in net social benefits per dollar invested—including between $0.33 and $1.74 in net fiscal benefits per dollar invested—beyond already covering the direct costs of the intervention.

Implications for policy and practice

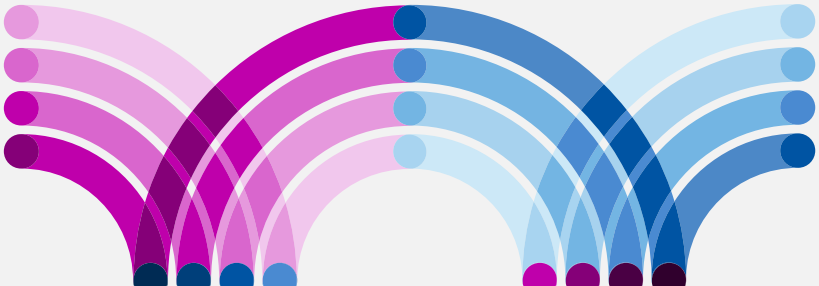
The findings provide strong evidence that IM&M+ can strengthen many of the foundational career readiness and employability outcomes it was designed to address among people facing substantial barriers to employment. They also provide promising evidence that these improvements may translate into stronger employment outcomes over time. Three implications follow.

First, IM&M+ can fill an important gap earlier in the employment service pathway. Employment services often focus on job search, development, or skills. IM&M+ serves a different purpose: helping people build hope, direction, self-awareness, well-being, career management skills, and other pre-employment foundations they may need before or alongside those steps. The RCT provides strong evidence that the program can improve most of these outcomes.

Second, progress after IM&M+ may take different forms; the pathways participants choose after the program matter. IM&M+ is designed to help participants identify appropriate next steps and launch when ready rather than treating immediate job search or placement as the only measure of progress. Consistent with this approach, the program increased education and training enrolment among participants who had been unemployed for at least six months. It showed stronger employment outcomes relative to the comparison group at 12 months.

CCDF developed IM&M+ in part to address what it describes as a "spin cycle," in which some people repeatedly move through short-term employment, training, and services without first building the readiness and supports needed to sustain progress. The evaluation does not establish that IM&M+ leads to more sustainable employment. However, the pattern of findings is consistent with IM&M+'s emphasis on building a stronger foundation for longer-term progress. Connections to employment services, education and training, practical supports, and other services after IM&M+ may be important in helping participants build on their readiness gains.

Third, longer-term evidence is needed to confirm IM&M+'s labour-market impacts and understand changes in social assistance receipt. The 12-month employment and earnings findings are encouraging but sensitive to how missing survey data are treated. More time is needed to determine whether the program affects social assistance receipt. Planned linkage to Statistics Canada data will capture outcomes for the full sample of consenting participants (including those who did not complete follow-up surveys) and track their outcomes over a longer period. This will provide stronger evidence of IM&M+'s impact on employment, earnings, and social assistance receipt at 12 months and beyond.



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