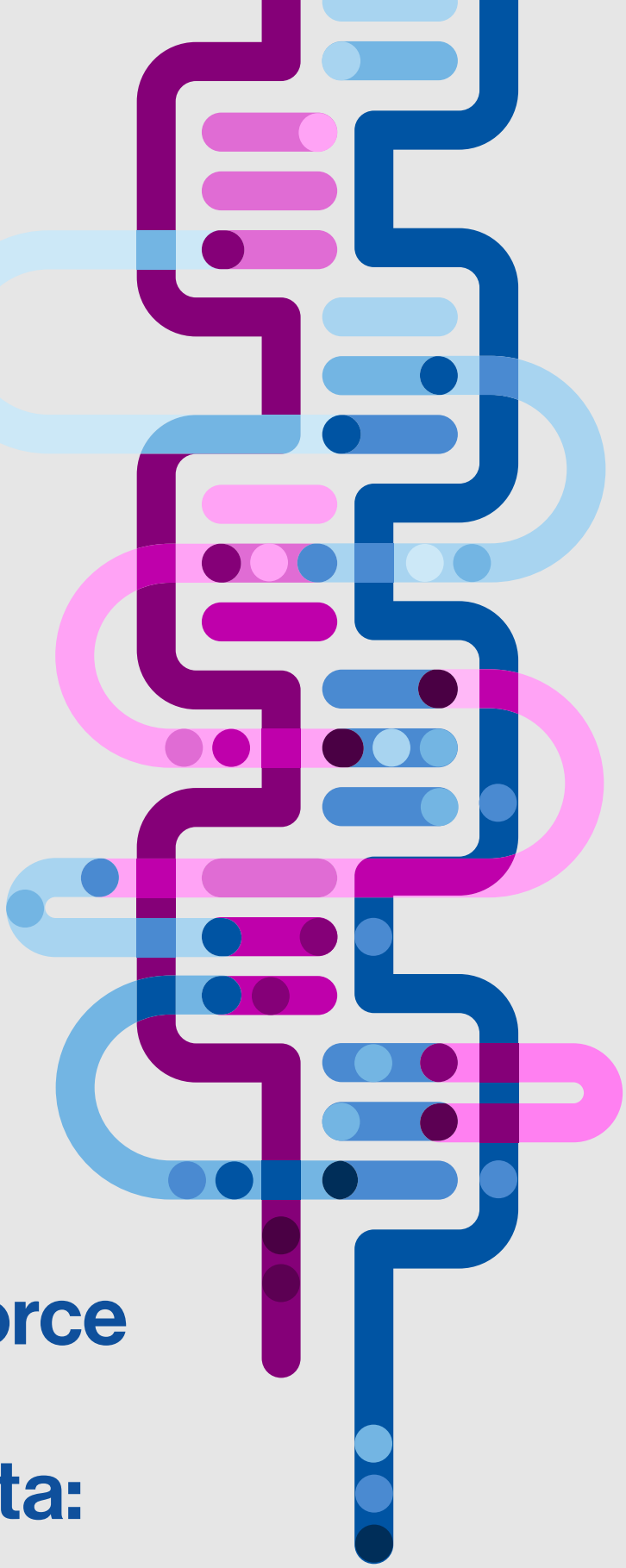


Understanding Immigrant Workforce Programs with Administrative Data:

Evidence from Three Pilots

October 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 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.

Understanding Immigrant Workforce Programs with Administrative Data is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

Future Skills Centre | Centre des Compétences futures | Blueprint | 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

Introduction 4

In this brief. 6

Context. 8

The four employment supports included in this analysis 11

IRCC-funded employment-related services. 14

Facilitating Access to Skilled Talent (FAST) 14

Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) 15

The Energy to Digital Growth Education and Upskilling Project (EDGE UP) 15

Approach 16

Data sources. 17

Study sample 17

Analytic approach. 17

Outcome measures 18

Understanding program participants 19

Understanding participant outcomes 23

IRCC employment services participant outcomes 25

FAST participant outcomes 28

ADaPT participant outcomes 33

EDGE UP participant outcomes 34

Discussion and implications 36

Closing 39

Appendix A: Data limitations 40

Appendix B: Predictive analysis of participation in FSC programming. 41

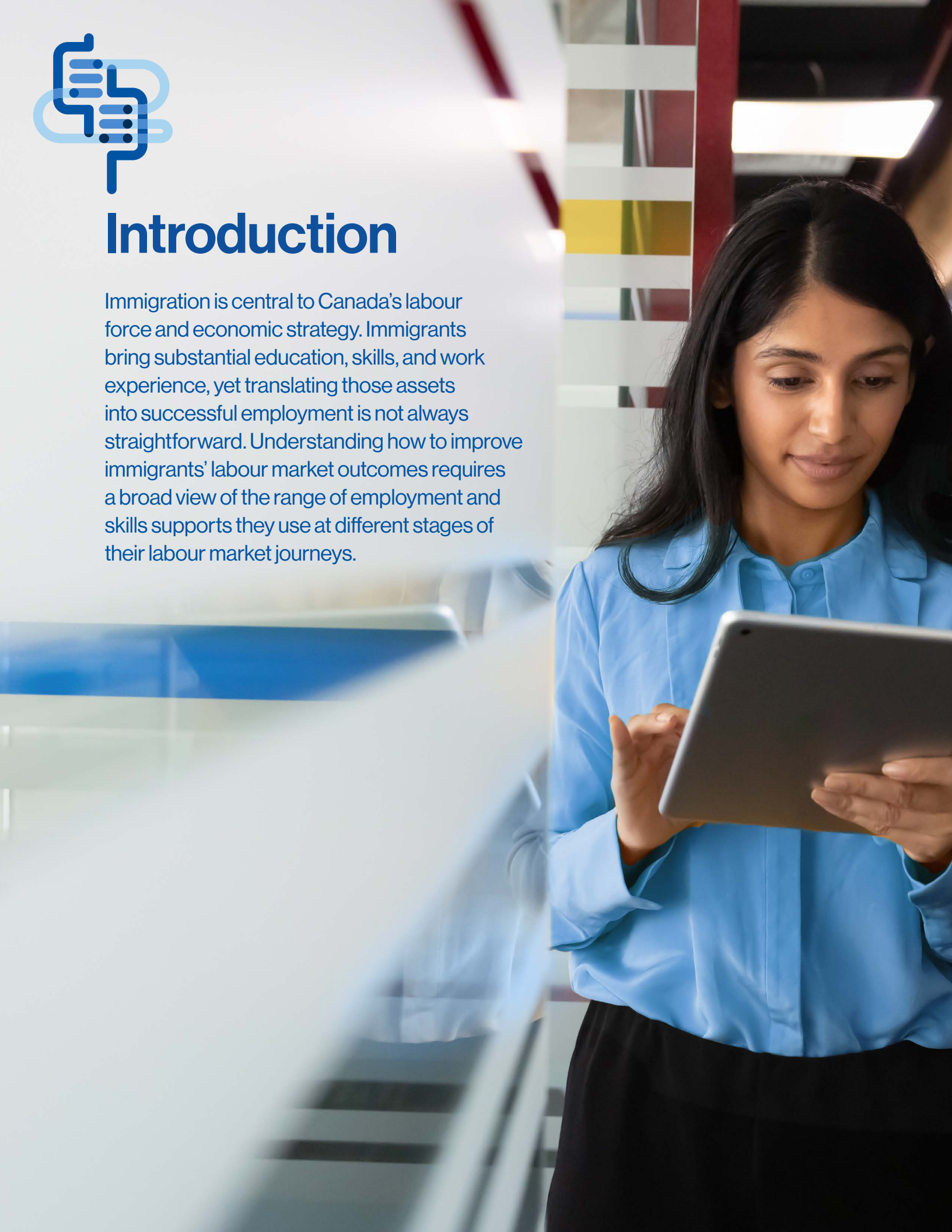
Appendix C: Methodology for assessing program effectiveness 43

Appendix D: Employment and earnings outcomes for IRCC comparison samples . 45

Endnotes 46

Introduction

Immigration is central to Canada's labour force and economic strategy. Immigrants bring substantial education, skills, and work experience, yet translating those assets into successful employment is not always straightforward. Understanding how to improve immigrants' labour market outcomes requires a broad view of the range of employment and skills supports they use at different stages of their labour market journeys.

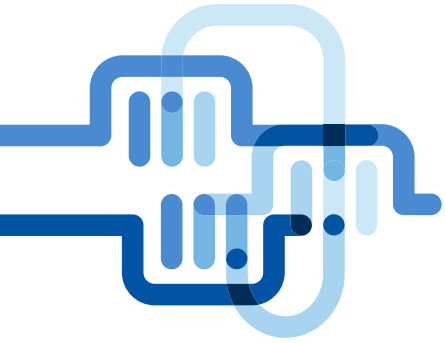


Those journeys can extend across different parts of the workforce development system and different career stages. Immigrants may access settlement supports as they enter the Canadian labour market, specialized programs to help translate international skills and experience into local employment, and broader workforce programs as they develop new skills or advance or change careers. Immigrant workforce development thus extends beyond newcomer-specific services and the initial settlement period.

However, our ability to understand these pathways is constrained by how data are often collected and analyzed. As Myers and Schmidt (2026) highlight, data and evaluations are generally organized around individual programs and funding streams.[i] This makes it difficult to see which supports immigrants access across the broader system, how participants differ across programs, and how their labour market outcomes compare. Mainstream workforce programs also serve many immigrants without examining their experiences or outcomes separately from other jobseekers.

Linked administrative data offer one way to bridge these gaps. Connecting program participation records with immigration, service-use, and longitudinal tax data can provide a more complete picture of who different programs reach. Doing so can also reveal participants' circumstances before entering programs, their engagement with other publicly funded supports, and their subsequent employment and earnings. Where the data are sufficiently rich, linkage can also support more credible comparisons between participants with similar observed characteristics across programs.

This brief demonstrates the potential of linked administrative data for generating evidence to inform policy and program design. It does so by answering questions individual program datasets cannot. It explores three FSC-funded pilots—Facilitating Access to Skilled Talent (FAST), Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT), and the Energy to Digital Growth Education & Upskilling Project (EDGE UP)—alongside Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)-funded employment-related settlement services (hereafter referred to as IRCC employment services). The programs serve immigrants at different stages of their labour market journeys and represent different approaches to workforce development. Together, they provide useful test cases for examining what linked administrative data can reveal about immigrant participation—and outcomes—across different parts of the workforce development system.



"Immigrant workforce development extends beyond newcomer-specific services and the initial settlement period."

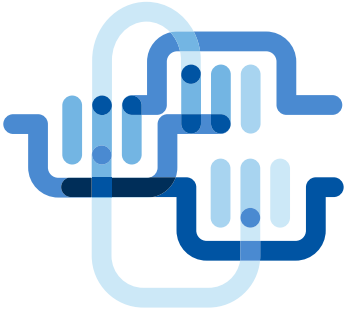
In this brief

This brief focuses on three questions:

- **Who participates in different workforce development programs?** Canada's workforce development landscape includes hundreds of programs with different objectives, service models, eligibility criteria, and intended populations. Understanding who programs serve is important for interpreting their outcomes. To answer this question, we compare participants' demographic characteristics, immigration histories, education, prior service use, and pre-program labour market experiences across IRCC employment services and the three FSC-funded pilots. Understanding who programs reach can help identify gaps in access and interpret program outcomes considering participants' starting circumstances.
- **What employment and earnings outcomes do participants experience?** We examine participants' employment and earnings before participation and in the tax year after they participated. Following outcomes beyond the programs themselves provides a fuller picture of participants' labour market trajectories. It can help identify where programs seem to support progress and where further investigation or improvement may be warranted.
- **What can we learn about the effectiveness of different programs and services?** We use comparative analyses to assess whether FSC participation is associated with stronger employment and earnings outcomes than those experienced by similar immigrants receiving IRCC employment services. We also examined differences in outcomes across types of IRCC employment services.

Our purpose is not only to generate evidence about these specific programs. It is also to demonstrate what becomes possible when program participation records are linked with immigration, service-use, and longitudinal labour market data. In summary, these analyses can give policymakers a broader and clearer view of who different workforce programs reach, how participants' needs and circumstances differ, what outcomes they experience, and where different supports may play complementary roles.

"Linked administrative data can provide a more complete picture of who different programs reach."



This brief contains the following sections:

- **Context (pp. 8–10).** Describes immigrants' role in Canada's labour market, the workforce development supports available to them, and key gaps in the evidence base.
- **The four employment supports included in this analysis (pp. 11–15).** Introduces the employment and workforce development programs examined in this brief and the different roles they play in supporting immigrants' labour market transitions.
- **Approach (pp. 16–18).** Describes the linked administrative data, study sample, outcome measures, and descriptive and comparative analyses.
- **Understanding program participants (pp. 19–22).** Examines who the four programs serve and how participants differ in their immigration, demographic, education, and pre-program labour market characteristics.
- **Understanding participant outcomes (pp. 23–35).** Examines employment and earnings before and after program participation. Where a credible comparison group could be constructed, we compare outcomes for FSC program participants with those of similar immigrants receiving IRCC employment services[1] to assess program effectiveness.
- **Discussion and implications (pp. 36–39).** Considers what the findings suggest for assessing immigrant workforce programs, understanding how different supports may work together, and strengthening the evidence base through linked administrative data.



1 The available data support credible comparisons for FAST but not for ADaPT or EDGE UP.



Context

Canada relies heavily on immigrants' skills, but their labour market outcomes remain uneven.

Immigration is central to Canada's labour force growth and economic strategy. Immigrants represented 28.9% of Canada's labour force in 2023 and 23% of the population in 2021.[ii] They are also highly educated: 55.3% of recent immigrants[2] and 39.8% of established immigrants held at least a bachelor's degree in 2021,[3] compared with 32.6% of Canadian-born adults aged 25–34 and 24.8% of those aged 35–64.[iii]

2 Defined by the study as immigrants who had been permanent residents of Canada for 10 years or fewer.

3 Defined by the study as immigrants who had been permanent residents of Canada for more than 10 years.

Yet these qualifications do not consistently translate into commensurate employment. Immigrants experience higher unemployment than Canadian-born individuals, with recent immigrants facing the greatest challenges.[iv] For those employed, overqualification is a persistent concern: in 2024 and 2025, 25.2% of core-age immigrants with a post-secondary diploma or degree reported being overqualified for their jobs compared with 19.1% of their Canadian-born counterparts.[v,vi] These gaps reflect interconnected barriers,[vii] including challenges with foreign credential recognition,[viii] lack of language proficiency, lack of Canadian work experience and professional networks, and discriminatory employer practices.[ix]

These persistent gaps highlight the importance of understanding not only the barriers immigrants face, but also the employment and skills supports available to help them navigate the labour market.

Immigrants use both newcomer-specific and mainstream workforce development programs.

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments fund a range of programs that support immigrants at different points in their labour market journeys. A principal federal mechanism is IRCC's Settlement Program, which funds pre- and post-arrival services. Its employment-related services help immigrants prepare for and enter the Canadian labour market through counselling, job-search assistance, networking, mentorship, work placements, and support with credential recognition and licensure.[x]

But the supports immigrants use extend beyond settlement services. Immigrants also participate in the broader workforce development programs available to other jobseekers and workers. These include career counselling, employment planning, skills training, work-integrated learning, bridge training, and wage subsidies. Such programs support needs that are not unique to immigration, such as developing new skills, advancing in a career, responding to displacement, and transitioning to a different occupation or sector. Because many programs are not restricted by immigration status, they can continue to support immigrants after they become established or become Canadian citizens.

Understanding immigrant workforce development therefore requires investigating newcomer-specific as well as broader workforce development programs.

Evidence on immigrant participation and outcomes across programs remains fragmented.

Existing research tends to focus on newcomer-specific settlement and employment services,[xi] or it evaluates individual workforce programs in isolation.[xii] Myers and Schmidt (2026), for example, identify important gaps in evidence about post-migration employment pathways, service use, and the relationship between supports and labour market outcomes.[xiii]

This leaves several important questions unanswered. Policymakers have limited evidence about which immigrants participate in various workforce programs, how they differ across programs, whether they draw on multiple supports, and how their employment and earnings evolve. Evaluations of mainstream workforce programs rarely report findings specifically for immigrants, making it difficult to assess how well these programs serve them.

Evidence on effectiveness is also uneven. Many evaluations are descriptive or lack credible comparison groups. This makes it difficult to distinguish outcomes associated with program participation from those reflecting participants' characteristics, starting circumstances, and broader labour market conditions. Although governments collect extensive administrative data, these data remain underused for understanding immigrant participation and outcomes across programs. Myers and Schmidt (2026) also call for more systematic use of administrative data to understand service use and labour market outcomes.[xiv]

Linked administrative data can provide a richer understanding of program reach and effectiveness.

Linking program records with immigration, service use, and tax data can fill important gaps in individual program datasets. It can reveal participants' immigration histories and prior labour market circumstances, identify participation across programs that are usually analyzed separately, and follow employment and earnings over longer periods. Much of this information would be difficult or impractical for individual programs to collect themselves.

Linked data can also support more meaningful comparisons among participants with similar observable characteristics. This can help policymakers interpret outcomes in light of who programs serve rather than by making simple comparisons across very different populations.

Together, these capabilities can give policymakers a richer view of how workforce programs reach and support immigrants. They can also strengthen available evidence to inform program design, investment, and future evaluation.



"Understanding immigrant workforce development therefore requires investigating newcomer-specific as well as broader workforce development programs."

The four employment supports included in this analysis

This analysis examines four publicly funded employment supports. Each plays a different role in immigrants' labour market journeys; together, they illustrate the range of workforce programs immigrants use.



These four supports differ in their objectives, target populations, and the labour market transitions they support. **IRCC employment services** provide broad employment support to eligible newcomers. **FAST** is an occupational bridging program designed specifically for skilled newcomers. While **ADaPT** and **EDGE UP** were not designed specifically for immigrants, immigrants represented a substantial share of their participants. **ADaPT** supports post-secondary students and recent graduates entering digitally oriented work. **EDGE UP** helps experienced oil and gas workers transition into digital careers.

These differences are important for our analysis. The four supports are not equivalent interventions serving comparable populations, and their outcomes should not be interpreted as if they were. Instead, they provide useful cases for demonstrating how linked administrative data can reveal differences in who programs reach and in participants' starting circumstances, and support more meaningful comparisons of outcomes.

To describe program differences consistently, we use Blueprint's workforce development framework. This distinguishes programs according to the primary labour market transition they are intended to support. As shown in **Table 1** (on the next page):

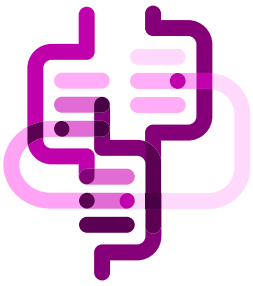
- **Entering programs** help people prepare for and secure a foothold in the labour market or enter a particular field. **IRCC** employment services and **ADaPT** primarily support entry.
- **Advancing programs** help employed workers deepen their skills and progress within their occupation or sector. **ADaPT** has some secondary objectives related to advancing.
- **Bridging programs** help immigrants transfer the skills and experiences they acquired abroad into comparable employment in Canada. **FAST** supports bridging.
- **Crossing programs** help experienced workers apply transferable skills and acquire new ones to move into different occupations or sectors. **EDGE UP** supports crossing.

These distinctions matter: the programs serve different populations and pursue different outcomes. Their results should be understood in relation to the labour market transitions they support.

Table 1 | Roles and primary intent of the employment supports included in this analysis

Employment support	Primary intent	Role in the workforce system	Participant focus
IRCC-funded employment services	Entering	Help newcomers prepare for, find, and enter employment through short-term targeted assistance or longer-term, more intensive support	Designed for eligible newcomers
FAST	Bridging	Helps skilled newcomers transfer their international skills and experience into relevant employment in Canada by addressing occupation-specific gaps in knowledge and credentials	Designed specifically for skilled newcomers[4]
ADaPT	Entering/ Advancing	Helps non-STEM post-secondary graduates develop the digital and professional skills needed to enter digitally oriented roles and to translate post-secondary credentials into decent jobs	Not immigrant-specific, but immigrants represented at least 50% of all participants from 2019 to 2021
EDGE UP	Crossing	Helps experienced oil and gas professionals apply transferable skills and acquire new technical skills to transition into IT and digital careers	Not immigrant-specific, but immigrants represented 38% of all participants from 2019 to 2021

Note. The categories describe each program's primary intent. Programs may also contribute to other outcomes—for example, entering programs may support subsequent advancement and bridging and crossing programs may include preparation for entering a new workplace or field.



"The programs provide useful cases for demonstrating how linked administrative data can reveal differences in who programs reach and participants' starting circumstances and support more meaningful outcomes comparisons."

4 Eligibility for IRCC settlement services is time-limited for economic-class immigrants and their accompanying family members. As of April 1, 2026, they are eligible for up to six years after becoming permanent residents; as of April 1, 2027, this period will be reduced to five years.

IRCC-funded employment-related services

These services are part of the broader Settlement Program, which funds pre- and post-arrival supports for eligible newcomers across Canada (outside Quebec) to help them enter the Canadian labour market. In the administrative data used for this analysis, IRCC classifies services as either:

- **short-term**, which includes job search assistance services, résumé screening and matching services, and networking opportunities at job fairs and various types of information sessions;[xv] or
- **long-term**, which includes individual employment counselling, employment-related mentorships, services to help clients prepare for credential recognition or licensure, and work placements (including paid or unpaid internships), and other direct work experience opportunities. These services generally provide more intensive or sustained support, including opportunities to connect with employers and gain Canadian work experience.

Newcomers may receive multiple employment-related services and complementary settlement supports. For this analysis, we excluded immigrants who received essential skills training only from the employment-services group. We included those who received essential skills training alongside another qualifying employment service.[5]

FAST Facilitating Access to Skilled Talent (FAST)

FAST is an online, self-paced occupational bridging program led by the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC). It helps skilled newcomers understand Canadian workplace expectations and occupational requirements, assess their competencies, and navigate pathways into employment related to their skills and experience.

During the period examined, FAST offered streams in IT and data services, biotechnology and life sciences, skilled trades, accounting, and culinary arts. Participants received workplace-culture preparation, occupation-specific competency assessments, information about Canadian industry standards, referrals to relevant credentials and certifications, labour market information, e-mentoring, and career-navigation resources.

FAST is designed to complement other settlement and employment supports rather than provide a complete pathway. Settlement organizations identify and refer eligible participants and provide additional services alongside FAST.

5 Immigrants who received essential-skills training but no long- or short-term employment-related services were excluded because the analysis focused on FSC services that directly support employment preparation, job search, and connection to employers. Including participants who received only essential-skills training would have introduced a distinct type of intervention and a population with different needs, into the comparison group. Participants who received essential-skills training alongside another qualifying employment service were included.

Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT)

ADaPT is a training program led by the Diversity Institute and TECHNATION. The version examined here targeted non-STEM post-secondary graduates and final-semester students and was designed to build the digital and professional skills needed to enter digitally oriented roles.[6] Although ADaPT was not designed specifically for immigrants, immigrants represented approximately 50% of all ADaPT participants during the analysis timeframe.

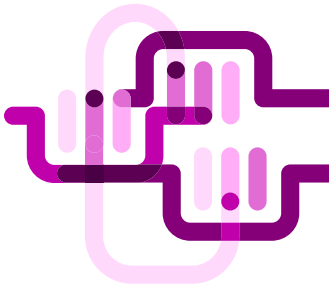
Participants completed over 70 hours of online training over nine weeks, covering digital skills (such as data analysis, digital tools, and web technologies) as well as professional skills, including communication, networking, and career-development skills. The program also provided career coaching, employer connections, recruitment opportunities, and, in some cases, subsidized work placements.

The Energy to Digital Growth Education and Upskilling Project (EDGE UP)

EDGE UP was a sector-based workforce development program led by Calgary Economic Development and the Information and Communications Technology Council. Launched in 2020, it was designed to help displaced oil and gas professionals apply their transferable skills and acquire new technical skills to transition into IT and digital careers. Although not immigrant-specific, immigrants represented nearly 40% of all EDGE UP participants during the analysis timeframe.

The program combined career transition support with three to four months of technical training in areas such as data analytics, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and software development. Participants also received career coaching, job search support, employer connections, and opportunities for work-integrated learning.

"Each plays a different role in immigrants' labour market journeys."



6 The program has since expanded to serve a broader range of participants. See Blueprint's report, *Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT): Final Report*, for more information: Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT).

Approach

This brief links participant records from the three FSC-funded pilots to Statistics Canada's Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB), which includes information on participation in IRCC employment services. This linkage lets us examine who the programs served, participants' use of different employment supports, and their employment and earnings before and after participation. Where a credible comparison group could be constructed, we also used comparative analysis to assess program effectiveness.



Data sources

Our analysis links administrative data from two sources:

- **FSC administrative data**, containing participant records, including start and end dates, from FAST, EDGE UP, and ADaPT.
- **The Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB)**, containing administrative data on immigrants admitted to Canada since 1952. Data include characteristics at admission, such as immigration category, education, intended occupation, and official language. The IMDB also incorporates other linked administrative data used in this analysis, including:
  - **IRCC Settlement Program administrative data** (iCARE), containing information on immigrants' participation in employment-related settlement services; and
  - **Annual tax data from the T1 Family File** (T1FF), providing information on employment, earnings, industry, and province of residence before and after program participation.

Study sample

Our analysis focused on immigrants who participated in services delivered through IRCC's Settlement Program and those who participated in one of the three FSC-funded pilots between 2019 and 2021. This timeframe allowed us to measure employment and earnings outcomes one year after completion using available tax data for all four programs.

Analytic approach

The analysis had three components:

1. We examined the characteristics of immigrants participating in each program, including demographics, immigration history, educational attainment at landing, prior labour market experience in Canada, and previous use of employment-related services. This allowed us to examine how characteristics differed across programs and services.
2. We analyzed pre- and post-program labour market outcomes for each program to examine the extent to which outcomes improve for participants in each program.
3. We assessed the effectiveness of the FSC programs by conducting comparative analyses of employment and earnings outcomes between participants in the FSC programs and similar immigrants who did not participate in them. We used recipients of IRCC employment services as the starting point because, like FSC participants, they also sought support to prepare for or find employment. This makes them a more relevant comparison than immigrants more broadly. We then used propensity score analysis to construct weights that balanced the comparison group to the FSC group based on observed characteristics, including demographic and immigration data, education, intended occupation, prior employment service use, and pre-program employment and earnings. As discussed in this brief, the available linked data supported credible comparison groups for FAST, but not for ADaPT or EDGE UP.

See **Appendix C** for more detail on our methodology and **Appendix A** for information on data limitations.

Outcome measures

We measured labour market outcomes using annual tax data in the IMDB. We examined three outcomes in the tax year following the year the program ended:

1. **Employment:** Participants were considered employed if they earned at least $5,850 during the follow-up year. This threshold indicates a minimum level of labour market attachment, but not necessarily sustained or full-time employment.
2. **Annual earnings among employed participants:** This measure captures annual employment earnings among individuals who met the $5,850 employment threshold.
3. **Annual earnings across the full sample (effectiveness analysis only):** For the effectiveness analysis, we also examined earnings across the entire sample, assigning earnings of zero to individuals with no earnings. This allowed us to capture an overall effect on earnings that reflects both whether participants were employed and how much employed participants earned.

"Linked data let us examine who programs served, participants' use of different employment supports, and their employment and earnings before and after participation."



Understanding program participants

We used linked administrative data to examine the demographic, immigration, education, and pre-program labour market characteristics of participants in the three FSC-funded pilots and IRCC employment services. **Table 2** (see p. 21) shows that the programs served markedly different immigrant populations, reflecting their distinct purposes and target groups.[7]



7 A predictive analysis examining which characteristics were associated with participation in each program produced broadly consistent results (see **Appendix B**).

The programs served immigrants at different stages of their settlement journeys.

Participants in IRCC employment services and FAST typically arrived in Canada recently (with average landing years of **2018** and **2019**, respectively). EDGE UP participants had been in Canada considerably longer, with an average landing year of **2006**. ADaPT participants fell between these groups, with an average landing year of **2013**.

Nearly two-thirds (**65%**) of EDGE UP participants had been in Canada for more than 10 years versus just **2%** of IRCC employment services and **1%** of FAST participants. ADaPT also served a substantial proportion of longer-tenured immigrants, with **38%** having been in Canada for over 10 years.

Each program served distinct immigrant populations with different immigration pathways.

FAST participants were more likely to be born in Southeast Asia (**44%**), while EDGE UP served a relatively larger proportion born in Europe (**18%**) and Eastern Asia (**15%**). ADaPT participants were younger, on average, and much less likely to be married or in common-law relationships (**28%** versus approximately **75%** of participants in the other programs).

Nearly all FAST (**96%**), EDGE UP (**95%**), and ADaPT (**92%**) participants immigrated through the economic class, compared with **69%** of IRCC participants. Refugees composed **31%** of the IRCC group but only **4–8%** of participants in the FSC-funded pilots.

Programs generally served highly educated immigrants preparing for skilled employment, though at different stages of their lives and careers.

Nearly all FAST participants (**98%**) had a bachelor's degree or higher at landing, as did **86%** of EDGE UP and **73%** of IRCC participants. The proportion was lower among ADaPT participants, at **56%**, with **44%** reporting secondary education or less at landing.

These differences partly reflect participants' age when they arrived in Canada. ADaPT participants were much younger at landing (**22** on average, compared with **32** for EDGE UP, **34** for IRCC participants, and **35** for FAST) and had less opportunity to complete PSE before immigrating. This is particularly important for interpreting the ADaPT results, since it mainly targeted recent graduates and final-semester students, and many would have pursued or completed PSE in Canada after landing.

Participants had considerably different labour market circumstances before program entry.

Most EDGE UP (**75%**) and ADaPT **(71%**) participants were employed in the year before participating versus **31%** of those receiving IRCC employment services and **22%** of FAST participants.

EDGE UP participants reported substantially higher employment earnings in the year before receiving services (with average annual earnings of approximately **$62,000**). This likely reflects their longer residence in Canada and the wages of professional occupations in the oil and gas sector. In contrast, IRCC employment services, FAST, and ADaPT participants reported considerably lower average pre-program earnings (at approximately **$14,000**, **$15,000**, and **$23,000**, respectively).

These differences underscore why workforce programs should not be compared as though they were interchangeable.

Even among programs that play similar roles, differences in participants' characteristics and starting circumstances can influence subsequent employment and earnings. They need to be accounted for when assessing effectiveness.

Table 2 | Averages and proportions of participant characteristics, by program

Variables	IRCC employment services	FAST	EDGE UP	ADaPT
IRCC administrative data				
Average age when employment services began (years)	37	36	47	29
Average age at landing (years)	34	35	32	22
Average year of landing	2018	2019	2006	2013
Years since landing				
≤ 5 years	91%	97%	14%	52%
6–10 years	7%	2%	21%	11%
>10 years	2%	1%	65%	38%
Birth area				
Africa	49%	36%	26%	33%
Eastern Asia	7%	6%	15%	12%
Europe	4%	6%	18%	3%
Oceania and other Asia	8%	4%	5%	18%
South and Central America	6%	5%	20%	8%
Southeast Asia	26%	44%	16%	25%
Marital status				
Married or common law	74%	80%	77%	28%
Single	26%	20%	23%	72%

Variables	IRCC employment services	FAST	EDGE UP	ADaPT
Family status				
Principal applicant (+ small categories)	75%	71%	86%	96%
Spouse/common law	25%	29%	14%	4%
Ever held a student or work visa	17%	17%	21%	39%
Knowledge of official language				
English + missing	80%	99%	77%	70%
Not English (including French)	20%	1%	23%	30%
Educational attainment at landing				
Secondary or less	27%	2%	14%	44%
Bachelor's degree	50%	60%	49%	39%
Any graduate education	23%	38%	37%	17%
Immigration category				
Economic	69%	96%	95%	92%
Refugee	31%	4%	5%	8%
In the express program				
Arrived before program	11%	2%	82%	46%
No	61%	34%	9%	29%
Yes	28%	64%	8%	25%
Received IRCC employment services before arriving in Canada	9%	25%	5%	5%
Received IRCC employment services in Canada the year before treatment services	13%	9%	3%	1%
Tax files (pre-program)				
Employed one year before services	31%	22%	75%	71%
Average annual earnings one year before receiving services, full sample ($0 included)	$14,107	$15,442	$62,064	$22,658

Source: IMDB



Understanding participant outcomes

This section examines employment and earnings outcomes for participants in the four programs. We examine how participants' outcomes differed before and after participation. Where the available data supported a credible comparison group, we also use comparative analysis to assess program effectiveness.

Pre-post results show how participants' outcomes evolved but cannot establish how much of those changes can be attributed to the programs. Comparative analyses provide a stronger basis for assessing effectiveness by comparing outcomes among participants with similar observed characteristics. As described in the **Approach** section, the available data supported credible comparisons for FAST, but not for ADaPT or EDGE UP.

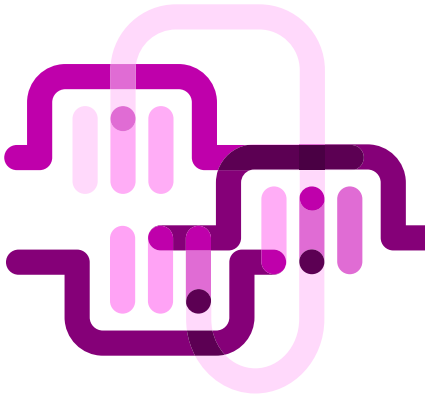
See **Appendix C** for additional methodological details.

IRCC employment services participant outcomes

Because IRCC employment services encompass a range of different supports, understanding which services participants received provides important context for interpreting their outcomes.[8]

IRCC participants accessed a mix of short- and long-term employment supports.

Table 3 (on the next page) breaks down the services that participants in our analysis received (participants could receive multiple services). **Seventy percent** received at least one **short-term** service and **39%** received at least one long-term service. The most common short-term supports were networking (**31%**), résumé/CV screening (**27%**), and job matching (**15%**). Among long-term services, individual employment counselling was most common (**21%**).



"IRCC participants accessed a mix of short- and long-term employment supports … Employment increased from 30.4% before services to 70.7% one year after."

8 We analyzed employment and earnings outcomes for the sample of IRCC employment service participants used as the starting point for the FAST comparative analysis presented later in this section. See **Appendix C** sfor more information. We also constructed additional IRCC samples for planned comparisons with EDGE UP and ADaPT. The employment and earnings results for the IRCC samples developed for EDGE UP and ADaPT are presented in **Appendix D** and show a broadly consistent pattern.

Table 3 | Services received by participants of IRCC employment services

Service type	%
Long-term service	
Any long-term service	39%
Individual employment counselling	21%
Mentoring	7%
Networking opportunities	6%
Preparation for licensure/certification	5%
Temporary work placement	5%
Resume screening and matching	5%
Short-term service	
Any short-term service	70%
Networking	31%
Resume/CV screening	27%
Matching system	15%

Source. IMDB

Note. The IRCC sample used here is the sample developed as the starting point for the FAST-only comparison (presented later in this brief). See **Appendix C** for more information.

Employment and earnings increased substantially following participation.

As shown in **Table 4**, employment increased from **30.4%** before services to **70.7%** one year after—a gain of **40.3 percentage points**. Average annual employment earnings increased substantially from approximately **$29,900** before services to **$46,900** one year after—an increase of **$17,000**, or **57%**. However, increases cannot be attributed to services alone; changes in participants' circumstances, other supports, and broader labour market conditions may have contributed.

Table 4 | Pre- and post-program employment rates for IRCC employment services participants

Outcome	Before services	One year after services	Change
Employment rate	30.4%	70.7%	+40.3 percentage points
Average annual earnings	$29,900	$46,900	+$17,000

Source. IMDB

Note. The IRCC sample used here is the sample developed as the starting point for the FAST-only comparison (presented later in this brief). See **Appendix C** for more information.

Outcomes varied by service type and year.

After accounting for observed characteristics, those who received long-term employment-related services had annual earnings approximately **$2,100** higher than those receiving short-term services (as shown in **Table 5**). Compared with participants whose services ended in **2019**, adjusted annual earnings were approximately **$4,000** higher for the 2020 cohort and **$7,500** higher for the **2021** cohort.

Program outcomes cannot be interpreted in isolation from the labour market contexts in which services are delivered. Stronger outcomes for the **2021** cohort coincided with strong labour demand and widespread labour shortages during the post-pandemic recovery. Similarly, higher earnings among long-term service users do not prove that long-term services caused better outcomes, since participants who received different types of services may have differed in ways not captured in the analysis.

Table 5 | Adjusted differences in annual employment earnings by type of IRCC employment service

Service type	**Earnings**
Short-term service (Ref. category)	–
Long-term service	$2,099*
Year services ended	**Earnings**
Service end year = 2019 (Ref. category)	–
Service end year = 2020	$3,959*
Service end year = 2021	$7,500*

Source. IMDB

Note. The IRCC sample used here is the sample developed as the starting point for the FAST-only comparison (presented later in this brief). See **Appendix C** for more information. The reference group is the category against which the other categories are compared.

* $p < .001$

FAST participant outcomes

Assessing outcomes pre- and post-program

Below, we examine outcomes for participants who received FAST alone and those who also accessed IRCC employment services. This distinction is important; FAST was designed to complement, rather than replace, existing settlement services. It allows us to explore whether *adding* FAST to existing settlement supports is associated with stronger outcomes.

FAST participants experienced substantial employment and earnings gains. Those who also accessed IRCC employment services experienced even larger gains.

As shown in **Table 6**, among FAST-only participants, employment increased from **26%** before participation to **84%** one year after, while average annual earnings increased from **$28,000** to **$51,600**. Participants who also received IRCC employment services started with lower employment and earnings but reached similar levels one year after FAST. Their employment increased from **18%** to **86%**, and earnings from **$19,600** to **$48,400**. As a result, the FAST+IRCC group experienced larger pre-post gains on both measures.

Table 6 | Employment rate and annual earnings before and one year after FAST participation

Participant group / outcome	Before services	One year after services	Change
FAST only			
Employment rate	26%	84%	+58 percentage points
Average annual earnings	$28,000	$51,600	+$23,600
FAST + IRCC employment services			
Employment rate	18%	86%	+68 percentage points
Average annual earnings	$19,600	$48,400	+$28,900

Source. FSC program administrative data and IMDB

Note. Employment is defined as annual employment earnings of at least $5,850. Average annual employment earnings are calculated among participants earning at least $5,850. Figures may not sum exactly due to rounding.

These changes are substantial but do not tell us how much of the improvement is associated with FAST. Participants' characteristics and circumstances, other services, and broader labour market conditions may have influenced their outcomes. A credible comparison group is needed to estimate how FAST participants fared relative to similar immigrants who did not participate.

Assessing program effectiveness

We compared FAST participants with similar immigrants who sought IRCC employment services. Recipients of IRCC employment services provide a useful starting point for comparison. Like FAST participants, they sought support to prepare for, find, or improve their employment.

We created two IRCC comparison groups: a group comparable to those who participated in FAST-only and a group comparable to those who participated in FAST *and* IRCC services. We statistically adjusted each comparison group to be more like FAST participants on observed characteristics, including immigration history, prior employment-service use, pre-program earnings, and industry. Because each comparison group was weighted separately to resemble the corresponding FAST participant group, the mix of IRCC services they received differed after weighting.



"ADaPT participants experienced substantial gains in employment and earnings following participation."

As shown in **Table 7**, among the IRCC group matched to FAST-only participants, **69%** received a long-term and **51%** a short-term service, with individual employment counselling particularly common (**41%**). The group matched to FAST+IRCC participants was more likely to receive short-term (**72%**) than long-term services (**50%**). Understanding this mix provides context for interpreting comparisons and may offer clues about combinations of supports that could be useful for skilled newcomers.

Table 7 | IRCC employment services received by FAST comparison groups

IRCC employment service	Comparison group for FAST-only participants	Comparison group for FAST + IRCC participants
Long-term service		
Any long-term service	69%	50%
Individual employment counselling	41%	24%
Preparation for licensure/ certification	6%	6%
Mentoring	17%	15%
Networking opportunities	9%	5%
Temporary work placement	5%	5%
Résumé screening and matching	11%	6%
Short-term service		
Any short-term service	51%	72%
Matching system	13%	17%
Networking	24%	31%
Résumé/CV screening	22%	28%

In the following sections, our effect estimates are based on regression analysis. **Box 1** explains the effect estimates, standard errors, and p-values presented in this section.

Box 1 | Regression model outputs

The **effect estimate** shows the estimated difference in outcomes between the participant group and the comparison group, after accounting for observed differences between them. A positive estimate means the participant group had a higher outcome; a negative estimate means it had a lower outcome.

The **standard error** shows how much the results vary. Larger standard errors mean the effect must be larger for us to trust the result.

The **p-value** indicates how compatible the observed result is with the possibility that the program has no effect on outcomes. Smaller values provide stronger evidence against there being no effect.

FAST-only participants had outcomes comparable to similar IRCC employment service participants.

After accounting for observed differences, one year after participation, FAST-only participants had employment and earnings outcomes broadly comparable to those of similar immigrants receiving IRCC employment services. As shown in **Table 8** (below), the employment difference was small and imprecise (**–1.0 percentage point**, $p = 0.544$). While average annual earnings were approximately **$610** higher across the full sample ($p = 0.668$) and **$1,400** higher among those earning at least **$5,850** ($p = 0.330$), these effect estimates were imprecise.

Participants who combined FAST with IRCC employment services had stronger outcomes than similar IRCC-only participants.

A second comparison more directly examines the question of whether FAST may provide additional value alongside existing settlement employment supports. We compared FAST participants who also received IRCC employment services with similar immigrants who received IRCC employment services but did *not* participate in FAST. One year after participation, the adjusted employment rate for the FAST+IRCC group was an estimated **4.3 percentage points** higher than for the IRCC comparison group. The estimate points to a positive effect, although the estimate was associated with considerable uncertainty (**p = 0.049**).

Earnings results provide stronger evidence of a difference. Average annual earnings across the full group were an estimated **$4,920** higher for FAST+IRCC participants (p = 0.012). Among individuals earning at least **$5,850**, the estimated difference was **$3,360**, although there was greater uncertainty around this estimate (p = 0.095).

Table 8 | Adjusted differences in employment and earnings for the FAST participants compared to similar IRCC employment services participants

Participant group/outcome	N	Adjusted difference	Standard error	p value
FAST only				
Employment rate (i.e., earn ≥ $5,850)	60,000	−1.0 pp	1.6 pp	0.544
Average annual earnings if ≥ $5,850	42,510	+$1,400	$1,437	0.330
Average annual earnings including $0	60,000	+$610	$1,425	0.668
FAST + IRCC employment services				
Employment rate (i.e., earn ≥ $5,850)	47,360	+4.3 pp	2.2 pp	0.049
Average annual earnings if ≥ $5,850	32,680	+$3,360	$2,011	0.095
Average annual earnings including $0	47,360	+$4,920	$1,961	0.012

Source. IMDB and FSC program administrative data.

Note: Estimates account for observed differences in immigration characteristics, prior employment-service use, pre-program labour market circumstances, province and service year. See **Appendix C** for the full specification.

The findings suggest that immigrants who combined FAST with IRCC employment services had stronger labour market outcomes than similar recipients of IRCC services alone. The analysis cannot establish that receiving both services caused these differences, since participants may have differed in unobserved ways, such as their motivation, employment readiness, or networks. However, the findings are consistent with the notion that FAST's occupation-specific supports complement broader settlement employment services.

ADaPT participant outcomes

ADaPT participants experienced substantial gains in employment and earnings following participation.

Table 9 shows that the proportion of ADaPT participants employed increased from **70%** before participation to **93%** one year later—a gain of **22 percentage points**. Average employment earnings increased from approximately **$24,900** to **$49,700**—an increase of **$24,800**.

Table 9 | Employment rate and annual earnings before and one year after ADaPT participation

Outcome	Before services	One year after services	Change
Employment rate	70%	93%	+22 percentage points
Average annual earnings among employed participants only	$24,900	$49,700	+$24,800

Source. FSC program administrative data and IMDB

Note. Employment is defined as annual employment earnings of at least $5,850. Average annual employment earnings are calculated among participants earning at least $5,850. Figures may not sum exactly due to rounding.

The high pre-program employment rate is consistent with ADaPT's focus on final-semester students and recent PSE graduates, many of whom may already have been working while completing their studies or transitioning from school into the labour market. Employment increased to **93%** one year after participation. While this is a strong outcome, it is unsurprising given most participants would have earned a Canadian post-secondary credential by this point, and PSE graduates generally have stronger labour market outcomes. Without a comparable group of Canadian PSE graduates, however, we cannot determine how much of this outcome is associated with ADaPT.

Additional education data are needed to compare ADaPT outcomes.

We could not conduct a comparative analysis for ADaPT because the linked data lacked information needed to construct a credible comparison group. Since ADaPT predominantly serves Canadian post-secondary students and recent graduates, we would need to identify IRCC employment service participants who also earned a Canadian PSE credential. Linked Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS) data could allow us to determine whether a sufficiently large, comparable group could be constructed; however, these linked data were not available to us at the time of this analysis.

EDGE UP participant outcomes

As participants transitioned from oil and gas into IT, employment remained high and earnings declined.

As noted, EDGE UP served displaced oil and gas professionals transitioning into IT occupations in Calgary. Immigrant participants were generally well established in Canada: **65%** had lived in the country for over 10 years. Many entered EDGE UP with substantial Canadian work experience and established careers in the oil and gas sector. This is reflected in their relatively strong, pre-program labour market position. **Table 10** shows that employment was **75%** before participation and increased to **79%** one year after. Average annual earnings declined from approximately **$80,000** to **$66,600**.

Table 10 | Employment rate and annual earnings before and one year after EDGE UP participation

Outcome	Before services	One year after services	Change
Employment rate	75%	79%	+4 percentage points
Average annual earnings among employed participants only	$80,000	$66,600	-$13,400

Source. FSC program administrative data and IMDB

Note. Employment is defined as annual employment earnings of at least $5,850. Average annual employment earnings are calculated among participants earning at least $5,850. Figures may not sum exactly due to rounding.

The earnings decline should be interpreted in the context of a mid-career transition from relatively high-paying oil and gas roles into a new field, where participants may initially have earned less. Without a credible comparison group, however, we cannot know how participants would have fared had they not participated in EDGE UP. Nor do these data show whether participants successfully transitioned into IT or how their earnings evolved over a longer period.

More detailed employment data are needed to compare EDGE UP outcomes.

We could not construct a credible comparison group for EDGE UP because the available data did not allow us to identify similar workers who were displaced from the oil and gas sector. This distinction is important because EDGE UP targeted displaced oil and gas workers, whose employment and earnings trajectories may differ from those of workers in other sectors. Many participants worked in professional occupations that spanned multiple industries (such as natural and applied sciences), so occupation alone was insufficient to identify comparable workers. Records of Employment could potentially provide information on former employers and help identify workers displaced from the oil and gas sector; however, we did not have access to these data for this analysis.

Discussion and implications

Findings show the value of looking across settlement and broader workforce development programs to understand immigrants' labour market journeys. They demonstrate how linked administrative data provide a more connected view of who programs serve, how outcomes differ, and where different supports may work together. The findings point to four broader implications for immigrant employment policy and programming.



Immigrants access different types of programs at different stages of their labour market journeys.

Immigrant workforce development extends beyond initial settlement. IRCC employment services and FAST primarily served recent immigrants while ADaPT and EDGE UP included those who had been in Canada much longer. For example, nearly two-thirds of immigrant EDGE UP participants had been in Canada for over 10 years.

These differences also illustrate that immigrants are not a single workforce development population, but rather they face a range of labour market challenges. Some are newcomers establishing themselves in Canada or seeking work that better uses their skills and experience. Others are more established workers facing career advancement, changing skill requirements, displacement, or sectoral transitions—the same challenges that often lead Canadian-born workers to seek support.

Understanding immigrant workforce development therefore requires looking beyond newcomer-specific services. Mainstream programs can play an important role, but their relevance depends on whether they are well-matched to the needs and labour market transitions of the immigrants they serve. Linked data can identify who accesses these programs and where they are in their journeys. Program-level and qualitative evidence can help assess whether services respond effectively to those needs.

Program intent and participants' starting circumstances shape how outcomes should be interpreted.

The programs in this brief support different labour market transitions. They also serve participants with different starting circumstances. IRCC employment services primarily support labour market entry; FAST focuses on occupational bridging; ADaPT primarily supports entry into digitally oriented work; and EDGE UP supports experienced workers transitioning into a new sector. For example, 75% of EDGE UP participants were employed before participation compared with 22% of FAST participants. Pre-program earnings varied substantially across programs.

The same outcomes can have different implications across programs. Rising employment and earnings may be particularly meaningful for participants entering or establishing themselves in the labour market and less indicative of success for more established participants. In EDGE UP, for example, employment was already high before the program and remained high afterward, while earnings declined as participants transitioned from relatively high-paying oil and gas careers into a new field.

Program intent and participants' starting circumstances are therefore important for determining which outcomes are most relevant and interpreting employment and earnings outcomes. The same results can mean different things depending on the labour market transition a program is designed to support. For bridging and mid-career transition programs, for example, short-term employment and earnings outcomes may tell only part of the story, particularly where the objective is to move into work that better uses participants' skills or to transition into a new field.

Measures of occupation and industry, skill use, job quality, and longer-term earnings may provide important additional evidence of whether these transitions were successful. This also means that for EDGE UP, the decline in earnings observed one year after participation cannot on its own tell us whether participants ultimately made successful transitions into new careers.

Looking across programs can reveal potentially important relationships between different supports.

Linked data can also reveal participation across programs that are typically analyzed separately. FAST participants who also received IRCC employment services had stronger employment and earnings outcomes than comparable participants who received IRCC services alone. The analysis cannot establish that receiving both services caused the stronger outcomes, nor does it show whether the services were coordinated or delivered in a particular sequence. But the finding raises an important question: do broad employment preparation and specialized occupational support play complementary roles for some newcomers?

Further research could examine which combinations of support are most useful, for whom and under what circumstances. Linked data can help identify promising patterns and populations for deeper investigation. Experimental, quasi-experimental, and qualitative research can provide stronger evidence about whether and why particular combinations work.

Linked administrative data can strengthen the evidence available for workforce development policy and program design.

This analysis shows several ways linked data add value beyond individual program records. Linking program, immigration, service-use and tax data provided a richer picture of participants' backgrounds and prior labour market circumstances. It identified participation across programs, tracked subsequent employment and earnings, and supported more credible comparisons among participants with similar observed characteristics. These capabilities can help policymakers answer practical questions about who programs reach, whether the populations served align with program intent, and how participant circumstances shape observed outcomes.

Where credible comparison groups can be constructed, linked data can also support assessments of program effectiveness. This evidence can complement randomized controlled trials and other evaluations. While trials provide rigorous evidence about interventions in particular contexts, administrative data can provide a broader view across programs, populations, places, and time.

There is considerable scope to extend this approach. Linking a wider range of settlement, employment, and skills program data could provide a more complete picture of the supports immigrants use and their patterns of participation. Education, training, and occupational data could help assess whether participants move into work that reflects their skills and experience. Additional years of tax data could provide a longer-term view of employment and earnings.

Linked data are one part of the evidence base. They cannot capture every dimension of participants' experiences or eliminate unobserved differences between groups. Their distinctive contribution is to provide a broader view across programs and over time that can complement rigorous program evaluation, qualitative research, and other evidence.

Closing

Immigrants use different parts of the workforce development system at different stages of their labour market journeys. Linked administrative data can provide a more connected view of who programs reach, the supports immigrants use, and the outcomes they experience. Where credible comparison groups can be constructed, linked data can also support assessments of program effectiveness, complementing evidence from randomized controlled trials and other evaluations. Together, these forms of evidence can help identify where programs appear promising, how different supports may complement one another, and where further investigation and investment are warranted.

Appendix A:

Data limitations

- The data do not represent every participant. Not all program records could be linked to immigration and tax data. Tax-based outcomes were available only for individuals with tax records.
- Our analysis cannot establish causality. Balancing weights and regression adjustment were used to account for observed differences between program and comparison groups. But unobserved differences (such as motivation, employment readiness, or professional networks) may have influenced the results. This is particularly important because many recent immigrants had limited Canadian earnings histories, and available earnings may reflect short-term work that does not capture their longer-term potential. Findings should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.
- Outcome timing varies relative to program completion. Employment and earnings were measured in the tax year following the year services ended rather than during the 12 months following each participant's completion date. The time between program completion and the outcome period therefore differs across participants. For those completing near year-end, outcomes reflect their first year after the program; for those completing early in the year, they reflect a later period. This may obscure shorter-term changes and mean that outcomes are measured at different stages of participants' post-program trajectories.
- Concurrent participation does not necessarily indicate integrated delivery. FAST and IRCC services were classified as 'received together' when IRCC service occurred within three months of the FAST service period. The data do not indicate how closely the services were coordinated, their sequence, or their intensity.
- The analysis covers a limited, unusual period. It includes services beginning between 2019 and 2021 and outcomes available through the 2022 tax year. Much of this period overlapped with the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected program delivery and labour market conditions. The findings do not capture later cohorts or subsequent program changes and may not generalize to more typical conditions.

Appendix B:

Predictive analysis of participation in FSC programming

Table B1 | Results from logistic regression models predicting participation in FSC programming instead of IRCC employment services

	FAST			EDGE UP			ADaPT		
Regressor	**Slope**	**p-value**		**Slope**	**p-value**		**Slope**	**p-value**	
Intercept	-4.415	0.001	***	-6.132	0.000	***	-2.321	0.000	***
Age at landing	0.012	0.009	**	-0.082	0.000	***	-0.196	0.000	***
Birth area									
Africa (reference)									
Eastern Asia	-0.208	0.208		-0.449	0.295		-0.592	0.100	
Europe	0.146	0.388		1.081	0.004	**	-1.580	0.002	**
Oceania and other Asia	-0.556	0.007	**	-0.195	0.728		0.198	0.504	
South and Central America	-0.185	0.302		0.971	0.005	**	-0.488	0.218	
Southeast Asia	0.009	0.917		-0.641	0.056		-0.565	0.033	*
Immigration category									
Economic class + small categories (reference)									
Refugee	-1.242	0.000	***	-0.751	0.109		-1.866	0.000	***
Knowledge of official languages									
English + missing (reference)									
Not English (including French)	-1.462	0.000	***	0.049	0.881		-0.138	0.621	
Express program									
Not in express program (reference)									
Arrived before express program began	-1.732	0.000	***	-0.250	0.616		-0.305	0.404	
In express program	0.588	0.000	***	-0.145	0.785		0.638	0.039	*

Regressor	FAST			EDGE UP			ADaPT		
	Slope	p-value		Slope	p-value		Slope	p-value	
Gender									
Female	-0.514	0.000	***	-1.927	0.000	***	0.003	0.986	
Family status									
Primary applicant + small groups (reference)									
Spouse / common law	0.040	0.715		0.798	0.033	*	-0.817	0.087	
Ever a non-permanent resident	0.414	0.000	***	0.613	0.052		1.605	0.000	***
Highest education before immigrating									
Bachelor's degree + small groups (reference)									
Secondary or less	-1.335	0.000	***	-1.413	0.001	***	-0.721	0.007	**
Any post-graduate	-0.044	0.620		0.503	0.061		0.245	0.417	
Intended occupation skill category									
Student + small groups (reference)									
Professional	0.510	0.000	***	2.269	0.000	***	0.437	0.260	
Skilled and technical	0.293	0.030	*	1.411	0.001	**	0.760	0.023	*
Earnings the year before services									
No tax return or $0 earnings (reference)									
$1-$19,999	-0.443	0.000	***	-0.254	0.427		1.640	0.000	***
$20,000-$49,999	-0.648	0.000	***	0.620	0.063		1.876	0.000	***
$50,000-$99,999	-0.774	0.006	**	0.371	0.431		1.485	0.003	**
IRCC services 1 year before	-0.148	0.225		-1.506	0.038	*	-2.351	0.002	**
Years in Canada when services began									
5 years or less (reference)									
6–10 years	0.631	0.033	*	3.148	0.000	***	1.024	0.018	*
Over 10 years	1.388	0.027	*	5.567	0.000	***	3.028	0.000	***

Source. IMDB and FSC pilot program data

Note. Immigrants who entered one of the FSC programs and IRCC services were considered to be in FSC. IRCC services group includes people who did not enter any FSC program.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Appendix C:

Methodology for assessing program effectiveness

The comparative analysis was designed to assess the effectiveness of the FSC-funded programs by comparing participants' employment and earnings outcomes with those of similar immigrants who received IRCC employment services. IRCC service participants provided a useful starting point for comparison because, like FSC participants, they had sought support to prepare for or find new or better employment.

The analysis sought to make the FSC and IRCC groups as comparable as possible on characteristics observed in the linked data. This helps reduce the possibility that differences in outcomes simply reflect differences in who participated in the programs rather than the programs themselves. However, as discussed in sections on ADaPT and EDGE UP outcomes, we did not always have the data we needed to construct credible comparison groups. Moreover, as with any non-experimental analysis, the groups may still differ in ways that are not observable.

Constructing comparison groups

Separate comparison groups were constructed for each FSC participant group. FAST participants who also received IRCC employment services were analyzed separately from those who received FAST without concurrent IRCC employment services. This allowed us to examine both FAST relative to IRCC employment services and the combination of FAST and IRCC services relative to IRCC services alone.

Comparison groups were constructed through three main steps:

- Restricting the initial comparison pool. IRCC participants who were not plausible comparison cases were removed. For example, participants were excluded where their province or industry was not represented among the corresponding FSC participants. IRCC participants with pre-program earnings above the range observed among FSC participants were also excluded. Restrictions were tailored to the characteristics of each program.
- Balancing on observed characteristics. Weights created with propensity-score analysis were used to make the remaining IRCC participants resemble the FSC participant group across characteristics available in the linked data. These included demographic and immigration characteristics, education and intended occupation, previous use of IRCC employment services, and pre-program labour market circumstances. The analysis also accounted for the year services were received, an important consideration given that the study period overlapped with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Estimating differences in outcomes. We then used regression analysis to compare employment and earnings outcomes between FSC participants and the balanced IRCC comparison group. The same observed characteristics used to create the weights to

balance the groups were also included in the regression models. This provides additional adjustment for remaining observed differences between the groups.

Characteristics accounted for in the analysis

The balancing and regression models accounted for a range of characteristics available through the linked FSC and IMDB data, including:

- age at landing and years since landing;
- birth region, immigration category, and official-language knowledge;
- previous temporary-resident status and participation in Express Entry;
- education at landing and intended occupation;
- previous use of IRCC employment services, including pre-arrival services;
- province and industry before program participation;
- pre-program employment earnings; and
- year of program or service completion.

Where categories contained very few participants, categories were combined to support reliable estimation and meet Statistics Canada confidentiality requirements.

As with any non-experimental analysis, the comparison groups may differ from FSC participants in ways that are not captured in the available data.

Appendix D:

Employment and earnings outcomes for IRCC comparison samples

We constructed separate samples of IRCC employment service participants as the starting point for planned comparisons with FAST, EDGE UP, and ADaPT. Each sample was restricted to reflect basic characteristics of the corresponding FSC program, such as the provinces in which it operated (see Appendix C for more information). The tables below show pre- and post-service employment and earnings outcomes for these three IRCC samples. Despite differences in their composition, all three show a broadly similar pattern of substantial increases in employment and earnings following participation.

Additional statistical adjustment was applied when constructing the balanced comparison group used for the FAST effectiveness analysis presented in Appendix C. Credible comparison groups could not ultimately be constructed for EDGE UP or ADaPT with the available linked data.

Table D1 | Pre- and post-program employment rates for IRCC employment services participants

IRCC employment services participants	(1) Pre	(2) Post	Diff. (2) – (1)
Sample for FAST comparison	30%	71%	+40 pp
Sample for EDGE UP comparison	32%	76%	+44 pp
Sample for ADaPT comparison	35%	74%	+39 pp

Source. IMDB

Table D2 | Pre- and post-program earnings for IRCC employment services participants

IRCC employment services participants	(1) Pre	(2) Post	Diff. (2) – (1)
Comparison for FAST-only	$29,900	$46,900	+$17,000
Comparison for EDGE UP	$30,800	$51,400	+$20,600
Comparison for ADaPT	$28,700	$49,400	+$20,700

Source. IMDB

Endnotes

i Myers, K., & Schmidt, J. (2026). *Unlocking potential: Strengthening employment services for skilled newcomers*. Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Public Policy Centre. https://www.csagroup.org/wp-content/uploads/CSA-Unlocking-Potential-Skilled-Newcomers-Policy-Report-EN_Accessible.pdf

ii Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). (2024). *2024 Annual report to parliament on immigration*. Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2024.html

iii Schimmele, C., & Hou, F. (2024, May 22). Trends in education–occupation mismatch among recent immigrants with a bachelor's degree or higher, 2001 to 2021. *Economic and Social Reports*, *4*(5). Statistics Canada. https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202400500002-eng

iv Mahboubi, P., & Zhang, T. (2026). *2025 labour market review: Trade uncertainty, structural pressures, and policy priorities for Canada* (Commentary No. 718). C.D. Howe Institute. https://cdhowe.org/publication/2025-labour market-review-trade-uncertainty-structural-pressures-and-policy-priorities-for-canada/

v Lovei, M. (2026, April 7). *Job mismatch among core working age immigrants with postsecondary education*. Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2026002-eng.htm

vi Note that there exist many different measures of overqualification, resulting in different absolute levels being reported. See, for example, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, & European Commission. (2023). *Indicators of immigrant integration 2023: Settling in*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en. What remains consistent, however, is the conclusion that immigrants are more likely to be overqualified than the Canadian-born.

vii Myers, K., & Schmidt, J. (2026).

viii Hardy, V. (2026, April 7). *Labour market experiences of recent working-age immigrants and non-permanent residents, 2019 to 2024*. Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2025002-eng.htm

Parkin, A. (2025). *Barriers to immigrants' employment: Do employers recognize foreign experience, qualifications and credentials?* Toronto Metropolitan University Diversity Institute. https://www.torontomu.ca/diversity/news-events/2025/05/barriers-to-immigrants-employment/

ix Mahboubi, P., & Zhang, T. (2024). *Harnessing immigrant talent: Reducing overqualification and strengthening the immigration system*. C.D. Howe Institute. https://cdhowe.org/publication/harnessing-immigrant-talent-reducing-overqualification-and-strengthening/

Banerjee, R. (2022). *Time to change focus? A review of immigrant labour market barriers, outcomes and the role of employers in Canada*. Institute for Canadian Citizenship. https://forcitizenship.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/TimeToChangeFocus_ICC.pdf

x Myers, K., & Schmidt, J. (2026); Senthanar, S., Koehoorn, M., & McLeod, C. B. (2025). Provision of employment-related settlement services and relationship with paid employment for immigrants in Canada. *PLOS ONE*, *20*(4), e0321927. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0321927; Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. (2022). *Assessment of IRCC settlement service impacts: Stage 1 research report*. https://srdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/assessment-of-ircc-settlement-service-impacts-stage-1-research-report.pdf; IRCC. (2021). *Settlement outcomes highlights report: Summary findings from IRCC's first settlement outcomes report, 2021*. https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/documents/pdf/english/corporate/publications-manuals/settlement-outcomes-highlights-report-2021.pdf

xi For example, see: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation. (2022). and Senthanar, S., Koehoorn, M., & McLeod, C. B. (2025).

xii Myers, K., & Schmidt, J. (2026).

xiii Ibid.

xiv Ibid.

xv Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2017). *Evaluation of the Settlement Program*. Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/settlement-program.html

Future Skills Centre | Centre des Compétences futures

Blueprint

Canada