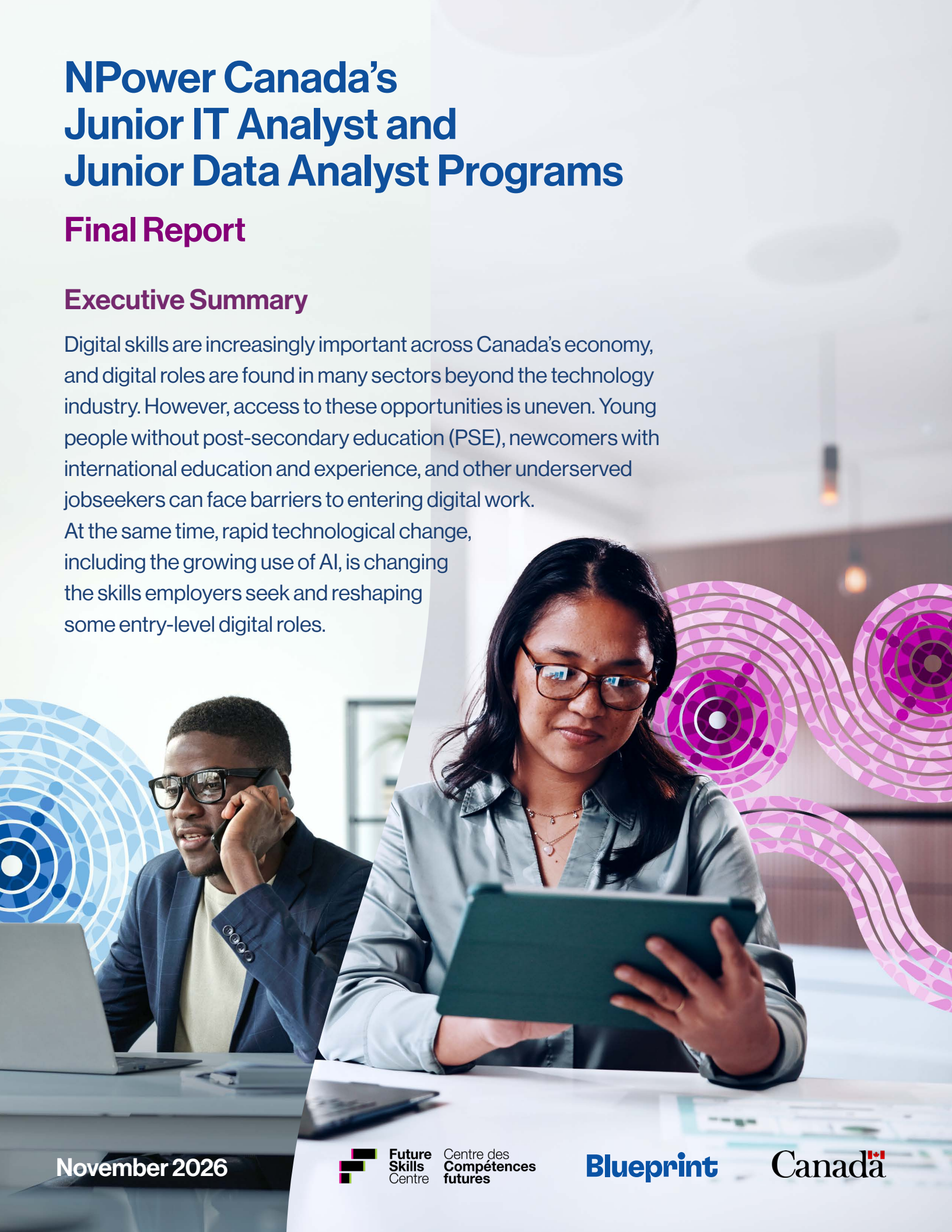
NPower Canada's Junior IT Analyst and Junior Data Analyst Programs

Final Report

Executive Summary

Digital skills are increasingly important across Canada's economy, and digital roles are found in many sectors beyond the technology industry. However, access to these opportunities is uneven. Young people without post-secondary education (PSE), newcomers with international education and experience, and other underserved jobseekers can face barriers to entering digital work. At the same time, rapid technological change, including the growing use of AI, is changing the skills employers seek and reshaping some entry-level digital roles.



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NPower Canada is a national workforce development charity that connects underserved jobseekers with digital and digitally enabled employment. Its Junior IT Analyst (JITA) and Junior Data Analyst (JDA) programs combined technical and professional skills training, industry-recognized certifications, wraparound supports, career coaching, and job placement assistance. Its dual-client model responds to the needs of both participants and employers.

Blueprint evaluated JITA and JDA as part of the Future Skills Centre's Scaling Up Skills Development portfolio. This Final Report presents findings from a randomized controlled trial (RCT) conducted between 2022 and 2025. It examines program reach, participant experiences, and whether being offered a place in JITA or JDA led to better employment, earnings, and job-quality outcomes than applicants would otherwise have experienced. It also examines the programs' potential longer-term financial benefits. The evaluation is an important step in NPower Canada's ongoing work to understand, improve, and evaluate its programs.

"Program outcomes depend on alignment between training, employer demand, and the availability of good-quality jobs."

About the programs

JITA and JDA were free, 15-week, online programs for adults facing barriers to stable employment NPower Canada assessed applicants' skills and career goals to determine which was the better fit. JITA provided foundational training for entry-level IT support and digitally enabled customer-support roles. JDA was for participants with stronger technical skills, education, or work experience and prepared them for data, reporting, and business analysis roles.

Both combined technical and professional skills training, work-simulated learning, industry-recognized certifications, career coaching, job-placement assistance, and at least five years of career-development services. Participants also received wraparound supports, including access to technology, employment and life skills coaching, learning accommodations, and referrals to community services. Employers helped shape the curriculum, provided workplace-learning opportunities, and connected graduates with job openings.





About the evaluation

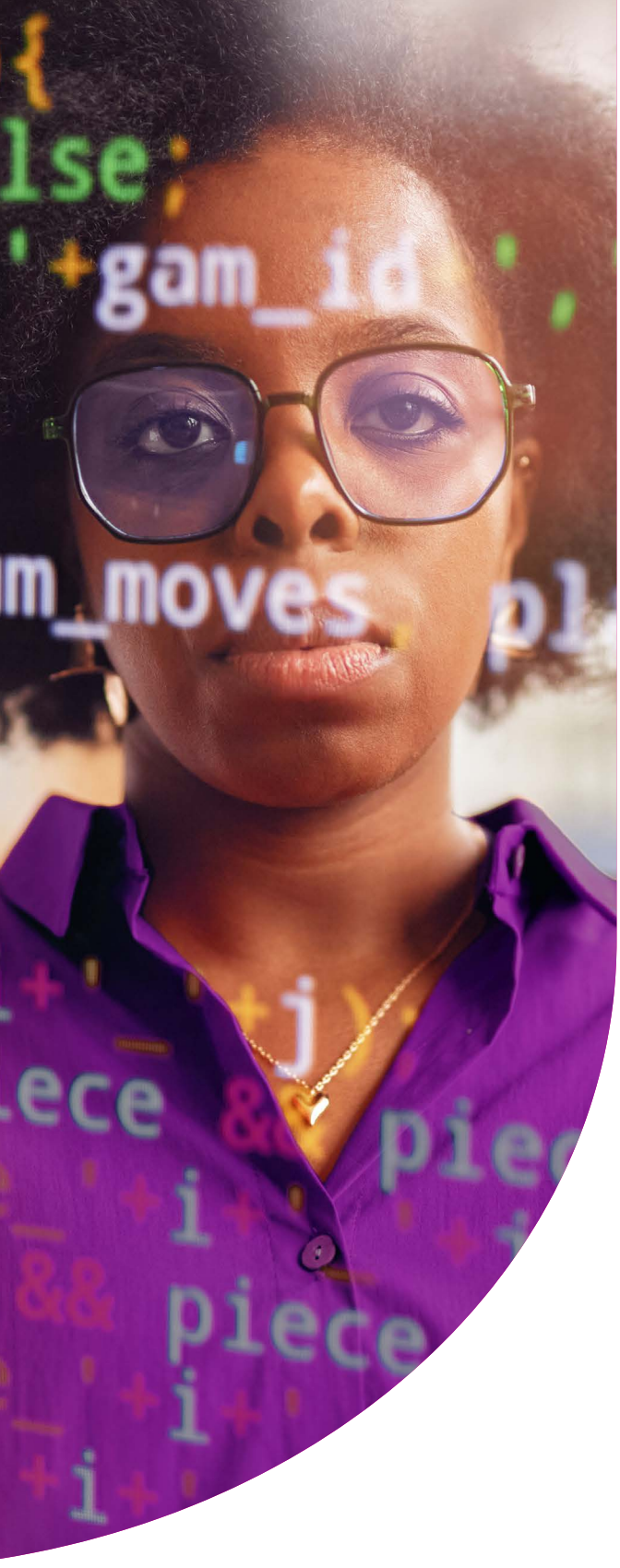
Eligible applicants were randomly assigned within JITA or JDA to one of two groups: a program group that was offered a place or a comparison group that was not, but had access to other employment, training, and community services. This allowed us to estimate whether being offered JITA or JDA led to better outcomes than applicants would otherwise likely have experienced.

"NPower Canada reached people facing barriers to employment, and most participants completed and valued their programs."

Overall, 3,889 applicants consented to the research and were included in the randomized study. The JDA sample included 1,012 program and 224 comparison group members. The JITA sample included 2,055 program and 598 comparison group members.

Participants completed surveys at program exit and six and 12 months later. NPower Canada's administrative data and interviews with 31 participants provided additional information on program reach, completion, satisfaction, and participant experiences.[1]

1 Note that not all participants completed the follow-up surveys, and response rates were lower among comparison-group members. Analyzing JITA and JDA separately also resulted in relatively small comparison groups, limiting our ability to detect some program effects. The 12-month follow-up may have been too short to capture longer-term changes in earnings and career progression.



Key findings

Our evaluation distinguishes between **statistically significant effects** and **potential effects**. Potential effects are promising but not conclusive. They suggest that a program may have affected an outcome, but the estimate did not meet conventional thresholds for statistical significance.

NPower Canada reached people facing barriers to employment, and most participants completed and valued their programs.

- Although 84% of participants held a PSE credential,[2] many had limited access to stable, well-paying work when they applied. Sixty-one percent were unemployed, only 16% were employed full-time, and 79% reported annual earnings below $25,000.
- The programs reached groups underrepresented in IT and digital employment. Ninety-five percent identified as belonging to at least one equity-deserving group, 94% identified as Black or another racialized group, 56% identified as woman+, 72% were immigrants, and 61% were newcomers who had arrived in Canada within five years.
- JITA and JDA served different groups, consistent with the roles each program targeted. JDA participants generally had more education and stronger connections to the labour market, while JITA participants were more likely to be unemployed or receiving income assistance.

2 NPower Canada notes that many of these credentials were obtained outside Canada. The evaluation did not collect information on where participants obtained their credentials.

- Eighty-seven percent of enrolled applicants completed their program, and 78% of survey respondents were satisfied with it. Between 84% and 89% found the programs useful for developing technical, professional, and career-related skills. Interviewed participants valued the training, NPower Canada staff, professional skills development, group work, and opportunities to build their confidence and professional networks.

Both programs showed **potential positive effects** on employment and full-time employment.

- Employment, full-time employment, earnings, and access to benefits generally improved among both program and comparison group members.
- JDA had **potential positive effects** on employment at program exit, six months, and 12 months and on full-time employment at 12 months. JITA had a **potential positive effect** on employment at six months and on full-time employment at six and 12 months.

JITA increased IT-related employment at six months. JDA showed **potential positive effects** across a broader range of digital roles among employed participants.

- JITA **increased IT-related employment** at six months across the full sample and had a **potential positive effect** at 12 months. Among employed participants, JITA had **potential positive effects** on IT-related employment at exit, six months, and 12 months.
- There was no evidence that JDA affected IT-related or digitally enabled employment across the full sample. Among employed participants, JDA had potential positive effects on IT-related employment at six and 12 months and on digitally enabled employment at all three timepoints.
- These patterns are consistent with the programs' different areas of focus. JITA prepared participants more directly for junior IT support and technical roles. JDA prepared participants for data, reporting, and business analysis roles within teams across many industries.

JDA showed **potential** earnings gains. There was no evidence that JITA affected earnings.

- JDA had potential positive effects on earnings among all participants at six and 12 months and among employed participants at six months. The employed-only finding suggests that higher pay, more hours, or more consistent work may have contributed, in addition to more participants finding employment.
- There was no evidence that JITA affected earnings among all participants at any point. Among employed participants, JITA earnings were lower at program exit and six months, with no differences observed by 12 months.
- NPower Canada notes that some participants move from work with limited opportunities for progression into entry-level digital roles that initially provide similar or lower earnings. These roles may offer relevant experience, job benefits, and opportunities for advancement that support later earnings growth. This may explain JITA's potential positive effects on access to benefits at

exit and six months and its increase in perceived opportunities for advancement at six months (see below). However, the evaluation cannot confirm whether participants traded short-term earnings for stronger career prospects or whether their earnings increased later.

- JDA's potential effects on earnings may reflect participants combining their education and work experience with new data and analytical skills. Because JITA and JDA served different populations and were evaluated separately, the findings do not establish that JDA was more effective than JITA.

Both programs affected some aspects of job quality, but the effects were mixed and appeared at different times.

- JITA increased perceived opportunities for advancement at six months. It also had potential positive effects on access to job benefits at program exit and six months and on job satisfaction at exit. JITA potentially reduced casual employment at 12 months but potentially increased seasonal employment at six months.
- JDA reduced perceived opportunities for advancement at program exit, but this effect did not persist. At 12 months, JDA increased job satisfaction and temporary or fixed-term employment and had a potential positive effect on access to benefits. Temporary or fixed-term positions may provide an entry into data and technology roles, but they may also offer less employment security. We cannot determine whether these positions became permanent, so this finding cannot be clearly interpreted as an improvement or decline in job quality.



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If earnings effects persist over time, cost-benefit estimates indicate JDA creates substantial net social and fiscal benefits that significantly outweigh the costs associated with JITA.

- Assuming that JDA's earnings effects persist over a 10-year period, we estimate that the program would generate a net social benefit of $18,040 to $39,548 per participant and a net fiscal benefit of $3,406 to $11,804 per participant, after accounting for program costs.
- Since we do not observe earnings effects for JITA, we estimate that it produces negative net social and fiscal benefits in this scenario. However, since NPower Canada's theory of change indicates that JITA may take longer than our 12-month observation window to produce earnings effects, it is possible that JITA could still result in positive net benefit if earnings increase after the 12-month mark. Since these estimates represent relatively uncertain early projections of cost-benefit, longer-term measurement using linked Statistics Canada data may be needed to rigorously measure JITA's net benefit.
- Comparing both streams, JDA produces social benefits that are approximately four times greater than the social costs of JITA, and JDA's fiscal benefits generally exceed JITA's fiscal costs across scenarios. From a cost-benefit perspective, this indicates that NPower Canada's model overall produces strong net positive returns, even before assessing whether JITA produces longer-term positive benefits.



What the findings mean

Program outcomes depend on alignment between training, employer demand, and the availability of good-quality jobs.

NPower Canada's model seeks to understand employers' needs, translate them into relevant training, and connect employers with jobseekers who might otherwise be overlooked. This can create opportunities for participants while helping employers find workers with the skills they need.

However, program quality alone cannot determine employment outcomes. Results also depend on the availability of suitable jobs, employers' willingness to hire program graduates, and alignment between the skills taught and current labour market needs. The evaluation provides some evidence that participants moved into IT-related and digitally enabled work, but the 12-month follow-up could not determine whether these early roles led to sustained earnings growth, greater stability, or career advancement.

Findings reflect how JITA and JDA performed during a period of labour market volatility and rapid technological change.

The RCT followed applicants from 2022 to 2025, as Canada's digital labour market shifted from rapid pandemic-era growth to slower, less consistent expansion. Technology employers announced layoffs and restructuring, while demand remained stronger for some specialized roles and experienced workers. The growing use of AI also began changing the tasks performed in some entry-level digital roles and the skills employers sought.



This context may have affected the jobs available to JITA and JDA applicants, including their availability, requirements, and starting wages. However, program and comparison group members had to navigate the same broader labour market. This context helps us understand the conditions in which JITA and JDA operated, but it cannot explain why the evaluation did or did not find an impact.

Workforce training pathways should continue to adapt as employer needs and participant populations change.

NPower Canada's original model primarily served young people without PSE and prepared them for entry-level IT roles. During the RCT, the organization served a broader population that included adults, newcomers, and people with PSE and work experience. JDA was introduced as a more advanced pathway in response to this changing applicant population and growing demand for data skills.

JDA showed a more consistent pattern of potential effects across employment, earnings, digital work, and job satisfaction than JITA. However, the two programs served different populations and were evaluated separately, so the findings do not establish that JDA was more effective or that differences in program design caused the different results.

Since the RCT, NPower Canada has enhanced and relaunched JDA as AI & Data Analytics, introduced the Network Security Professional program, and moved toward more modular, customizable training. These changes may help it respond more quickly to new technologies, employer demand, and the needs of different participants and industries. Their effectiveness will need to be tested through continued piloting, evaluation, and refinement.

Longer-term evidence is needed to determine whether early movement into digital work leads to lasting career gains.

This is particularly important for JITA. Some participants may have moved from work that provided immediate income but limited opportunities for progression into junior digital roles with similar or lower starting earnings but better benefits, more relevant experience, and greater potential for advancement. The findings are consistent with this possible pathway, but the evaluation cannot confirm whether participants traded short-term earnings for stronger career prospects or whether their earnings increased later.

Longer-term evidence is also needed to determine whether JDA's potential earnings gains persist and whether temporary or fixed-term positions lead to stable employment and career progression. Planned analysis using linked Statistics Canada data will provide longer-term measures of employment and earnings for the consenting sample. However, these data may not show whether participants remained in digital roles, received promotions, or moved from temporary to permanent employment. Continued follow-up with participants and alumni will be important for understanding these dimensions of career progression.



Looking ahead

This evaluation is an important step in a longer process of understanding and improving NPower Canada's programs. Continued evidence generation can help the organization determine which pathways work best for different participants and how programs should adapt as the labour market changes. It can also show whether early employment gains lead to sustained economic mobility.

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