

# Empowering Organizations Through Career Development – A Blueprint for Creating Career Development Centres of Expertise

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Project Partners:



Funding Partner:



**CERIC**

Advancing  
Career Development  
in Canada

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## A. PROJECT TEAM

### A.1 PROJECT TEAM

#### PRIMARY CONTACT

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#### CHALLENGE FACTORY

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Challenge Factory is an international research and advisory firm that fixes Broken Talent Escalators®, the workforce systems that power talent mobility, career growth, and long-term contribution.

When productivity stalls and workforce investments fail to deliver, the problem isn't people. It's missing career infrastructure, exposed and intensified by longevity and AI-driven change.

We work with organizations and governments to diagnose where skills, mobility, and capability break down. Then we design systems that connect skills ecosystems and talent strategy directly to performance, translating investment into impact when and where it's needed.

As a proud B Corporation, we combine research with practical implementation at scale to drive evidence-backed, adaptive transformation. We're a trusted partner to C-suites and system leaders carrying the weight of workforce risk who need clarity and confidence to move forward.

Website: [www.challengefactory.ca](http://www.challengefactory.ca)

**Role in the Project:**

Challenge Factory led all aspects of project design, research, content development, facilitation, evaluation, and knowledge mobilization.

#### CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF CAREER EDUCATORS AND EMPLOYERS (CACEE)

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The Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) is the pan-Canadian network and leading authority for professionals focused on supporting students on their journey from post-secondary studies to career success. CACEE empowers its members by providing access to expertise, tools, exchange of ideas, relationships, thought leadership, and resources needed to excel in their work. CACEE's offerings include micro-credential and certificate programs, regional PD events, community of practice roundtable discussions, virtual workshops and webinars, networking opportunities, research and advocacy initiatives, partner access to programming offered by other national and international associations, and a national conference.

Website: [www.cacee.com](http://www.cacee.com)

**Role in the Project:**

CACEE contributed strategic insight, supported outreach to employer networks, and advised on the relevance and applicability of the learning materials for employer-facing audiences.

## PROJECT TEAM

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**Lisa Taylor – Executive Sponsor**

Provided strategic oversight, ensured alignment with workforce strategy and sector priorities, supported external engagement and knowledge mobilization, and served as co-chair of the steering committee. She is a co-author of *Career Development as Strategy: A Practical Guide to Creating Internal Career Centres*.

**Sheila Rider – Project Lead**

Led development of the playbook and bootcamp, ensuring alignment with career development best practices and the practical needs of employers. She is a co-author of *Career Development as Strategy: A Practical Guide to Creating Internal Career Centres*.

**Dr. Taryn Blanchard – Director, Research and Innovation Strategy**

Integrated systems-level frameworks and AI-enabled research supports to strengthen the project’s evidence base and design. She is a co-author of *Career Development as Strategy: A Practical Guide to Creating Internal Career Centres*.

**Trevor Buttrum – Executive Director, CACEE (Project Partner Representative)**

Contributed sector insight, connected employer networks, and supported knowledge-sharing strategies.

**Mariel Ferreras – Marketing and Graphic Design Coordinator**

Designed the visual identity and design of the playbook and supporting materials for digital and print publication.

**Emma James – Project Manager**

Stewarded the project from initiation through completion, strengthening alignment across partners, planning, and reporting to ensure cohesive delivery and served as co-chair of the steering committee.

The project was also supported through the contributions of Emily Carew, Elizabeth Shechtman, and Barbara Wilson.

## B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

B.1 PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE ORIGINAL PROJECT OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY, OVERALL TIMEFRAME, AND BUDGET, MARKETING/DISSEMINATION PLAN, ANTICIPATED IMPACT, AND REFLECT ON ANY CHANGES IN THE SCOPE OF WORK, OBJECTIVES, METHODOLOGY, OR UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS.

At the proposal stage, the project responded to a growing employer interest in exploring internal career centres as a strategic lever to strengthen workforce resilience and talent retention. The intent was to develop practical learning materials to help organizational leaders understand how a career centre of expertise—focused on enterprise-wide internal mobility—can transform their organizations to align with Canadian career development best practices.

The project was carried out substantially as intended. The core objectives, methodology, and phased approach remained aligned with the original proposal. However, the scope and depth of several deliverables evolved in response to stakeholder engagement, pilot testing, and emerging insights.

### OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERABLES

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The original objectives were to:

- Review literature and evidence to clarify the formal role of career development in informing organizational strategy
- Develop learning products, including a 15–20-page playbook and a three-hour synchronous workshop, to educate senior leaders and HR professionals
- Strengthen cross-sector collaboration between organizational leaders and career development professionals

All objectives were achieved.

The environmental scan and research synthesis informed the development of the learning materials. During design and development, both primary deliverables expanded beyond their original scope.

Originally envisioned as a 15–20-page guide, the playbook evolved into a 77-page, systems-level blueprint featuring comprehensive frameworks, diagnostic tools, governance considerations, and applied implementation guidance. The workshop expanded from a three-hour session to a full-day bootcamp to enable applied exercises, structured cross-sector discussion, and business-case development. These enhancements strengthened its usability and practical relevance without altering its purpose.

### METHODOLOGY AND TIMELINE

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The project followed the phased methodology outlined in the proposal, including planning, discovery, requirements, design, development, pilot test and revise, and knowledge mobilization. Core phases were completed within the anticipated timelines. The only modification occurred in the knowledge mobilization

phase, which was extended to accommodate the print launch, spring webinar, and additional dissemination activities. This extension did not alter the project scope or budget.

An important methodological enhancement was the adoption of an AI-first, human-led approach. AI tools supported research synthesis and draft iteration, while all insights and frameworks were reviewed and contextualized by the project team to ensure accuracy and alignment. This approach accelerated development and modelled responsible integration of AI into workforce learning systems.

## ANTICIPATED VS. ACTUAL OUTCOMES

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The anticipated outcomes were to increase employer engagement in career development, strengthen connections between community-based career development professionals and organizational leaders, advance professional standards and best practices, and expand networks and innovation.

These outcomes were achieved and, in several instances, deepened.

Pilot participants across government, higher education, and financial services sectors reported strong resonance with the internal career centre model. Employers expressed increased clarity around career development as a workforce strategy rather than a standalone program, and several indicated interest in future cohorts or internal pilots.

Resonance of cross-sector applicability was stronger than anticipated. Shared challenges related to internal mobility, retention, leadership capacity, and workforce adaptability created a unifying narrative across diverse contexts. An additional emerging insight was the demand for more sector-specific proof points and case examples to support internal advocacy, which may inform future iterations.

Overall, the project achieved its intended objectives while expanding the depth, reach, and practical cross-sector applicability. The internal career centre framework moved from concept to a tested model, supported by practical tools and real-world feedback.

## C. ABSTRACT

### C.1 DESCRIBE HOW THE PROJECT CONNECTED TO THE VISION, MISSION, AND OBJECTIVES OF CERIC AND YOUR ORGANIZATION.

This project remained strongly aligned with CERIC’s Vision, Mission, and Strategic Mandates, while deepening its emphasis on employer-facing impact and innovation.

CERIC’s vision is for Canadians to have the capacity to use their skills and talents towards a more fulfilling future for all. The project advanced this vision by equipping employers with a structured blueprint for integrating career development into organizational workforce strategy. By positioning internal career centres as enterprise-wide systems rather than isolated programs, the initiative strengthened organizations’ ability to provide proactive, continuous career development support to employed Canadians. In doing so, it addressed Canada’s persistent “fail-first” model of career services and promoted earlier, preventative engagement within workplaces.

CERIC’s mission is to advance career development in Canada. The project supported this mission by translating career development principles and professional standards into practical, employer-facing tools and frameworks. While the initial proposal anticipated strong engagement with organizational leaders, the final implementation revealed that business-friendly language and executive-level framing were even more critical than originally anticipated. As a result, the project strengthened its emphasis on aligning career development with workforce strategy, governance, retention, and internal mobility priorities.

The initiative also aligned with CERIC’s Strategic Mandate to promote career development as a priority for the public good. By engaging HR leaders, workforce development professionals, and organizational decision-makers, the project expanded the reach of career development beyond traditional practitioner audiences. It contributed to building career literacy among network managers and influencers, reinforcing career development as essential workforce infrastructure rather than a reactive support service.

An important evolution during implementation was the integration of an AI-first, human-led approach. AI tools were used to enhance research synthesis, drafting, and iteration, while all content was curated and contextualized by subject matter experts. This approach modelled innovation in both content and process, demonstrating how technology can augment professional expertise and accelerate knowledge mobilization without replacing human judgment.

The internal career centre framework resonated consistently across sectors, including government, higher education, and financial services. This cross-sector applicability reinforced the project’s alignment with CERIC’s broader objective of strengthening the career development ecosystem nationwide.

Overall, the project not only maintained alignment with CERIC’s Vision and Mission but deepened its contribution by embedding career development more firmly within organizational systems, advancing interdisciplinary collaboration, and modelling innovation in workforce learning design.

## D. NEED FOR THE PROJECT

### D.1 HOW DID THE PROJECT ADDRESS GAPS IN THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND COUNSELLING FIELDS, AND HOW DID THIS UNDERSTANDING EVOLVE OVER THE COURSE OF THE WORK?

At the proposal stage, the project identified a gap at the intersection of organizational leadership and the formal field of career development. A review of CERIC's previous initiatives did not identify practical learning materials designed specifically to help organizational leaders explore how career centres of expertise, focused on enterprise-wide internal mobility, could strengthen workforce strategy while aligning with Canadian career development best practices.

The proposal recognized that while interest in corporate career centres was increasing, these initiatives were often implemented without the involvement of credentialed career development professionals and without a clear systems-level framework. Career centres were commonly associated with postsecondary institutions rather than internal workforce strategy. In workplace settings, career supports often become visible only during disruption or transition, reinforcing a "fail-first" model instead of a proactive developmental approach.

Over the course of the project, this core gap remained valid and was reinforced through engagement with employers, practitioners, and the steering committee. However, the project's evolution clarified the gap in three important ways.

First, a systems-level integration gap became evident. Many organizations had career-related initiatives embedded within HR, learning and development, succession planning, or engagement programs. These efforts existed, but they operated in silos. What was missing was a coherent framework that connected them and positioned career development as integrated workforce systems infrastructure, rather than as a collection of discrete programs. The internal career centre model provided that connective structure.

Second, a governance and readiness gap emerged more clearly. Organizations often expressed interest in strengthening career development but lacked clarity about accountability, maturity, and sequencing. The project addressed this by embedding diagnostic tools and readiness frameworks into the playbook and bootcamp, enabling organizations to assess their current state and identify realistic implementation pathways.

Third, a practical tools gap within the field became visible. While the career development profession offers strong theoretical foundations and standards, there was limited employer-facing guidance that translated those principles into structured, actionable tools for senior leaders. The project responded by developing templates, frameworks, and applied examples grounded in Canadian best practices.

In practice, the project filled the originally identified gap by bridging strategic career development expertise with enterprise-level decision-making. It shifted the conversation from advocating for career services to designing career development systems embedded within governance, workforce planning, and leadership structures.

The core gap did not change direction during the project; rather, it became more clearly defined. What began as a need for practical learning materials evolved into a systems-level model that connects professional career development standards with organizational design. In doing so, the project strengthened the bridge between

employers and career development professionals and supported the ongoing evolution of career counselling from a reactive service model to a strategic workforce function.

## D.2 WHAT NEEDS WERE ADDRESSED BY THE PROJECT AND HOW DID THESE NEEDS EVOLVE OVER TIME?

At the proposal stage, the project identified several interconnected organizational needs: improving retention and engagement, strengthening integration between HR and career development professions, supporting workforce upskilling and agility, and responding to labour market volatility and talent shortages.

These needs remained highly relevant throughout the project and were reinforced during pilot implementation and dissemination activities. However, the depth and clarity of certain needs evolved.

Retention remained a central driver, but internal mobility emerged as equally significant. Participants consistently framed career development not only as a strategy to retain talent, but also as a mechanism to enable internal movement, redeploy skills, and build workforce resilience. Organizations were seeking structured approaches to make internal pathways more visible and navigable, reducing reliance on external hiring while strengthening capability from within.

The need to move beyond ad hoc or program-based approaches to career development also became more explicit. Many organizations had career-related initiatives embedded across HR, learning and development, or talent management functions, yet these efforts lacked intentional integration. The project addressed this by introducing a systems-level framework that connected career development to workforce strategy and organizational performance.

Labour market volatility and economic pressures remained key contextual drivers. Talent shortages, turnover costs, and workforce instability heightened the urgency for more proactive internal workforce infrastructure. Economic framing was important in positioning career development as a strategic investment tied to organizational sustainability.

During development and testing, governance and readiness needs expanded beyond the original articulation. Organizations required clarity regarding accountability, sequencing, structural placement, and maturity. Interest in strengthening career development was present, but confidence in how to operationalize it within existing structures and constraints was often limited. Participants sought phased, realistic entry points rather than aspirational models.

The demand for concrete tools and applied guidance became more pronounced than initially anticipated. Pilot participants, all working in HR or related workforce functions, quickly moved discussions toward operational questions. The focus was not on whether career development was valuable, but on how to assess readiness, identify gaps, and take structured next steps within current governance frameworks. This reinforced the need for diagnostics, sequencing guidance, and implementation tools embedded within the playbook and bootcamp.

Some needs originally emphasized in the proposal became less central. While collaboration between career development professionals and organizational leaders remained relevant, the project reiterated that influence is most effective when embedded within organizational roles or structured implementation partnerships.

Overall, the needs identified at the outset remained consistent but deepened in complexity. What began as a need for practical guidance evolved into a broader requirement for integrated, systems-level support that builds organizational confidence to act. By addressing both the original and expanded needs, the project moved from conceptual advocacy to practical workforce implementation.

### D.3 WHAT EVIDENCE INFORMED THE IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT NEEDS, AND HOW DID STAKEHOLDER AND TARGET AUDIENCE INSIGHTS DEVELOP OVER TIME?

A project needs assessment was conducted through a combination of research, labour market analysis, and practice-based evidence available at the time of proposal development.

Research and real-time field experience underscored the increasing workforce complexity, labour market volatility, and limitations of traditional program-based approaches to career development. Research highlighted persistent challenges related to retention, internal mobility, skills alignment, and employee career visibility. These findings also aligned with broader field-level trends emphasizing lifelong career development, shared responsibility, and the influence of organizational context on individual career outcomes.

Labour market analysis and advisory experience reinforced the urgency of strengthening internal mobility and integrating career development more deliberately within HR and talent systems. This initial analysis provided a clear and evidence-informed foundation for the project's framing.

As the project progressed, additional insights were gathered through steering committee review and pilot testing of the bootcamp. Steering committee members provided cross-sector expertise and confirmed the relevance of identified needs while offering refinements in sequencing, governance emphasis, and systems integration. Cross-sector pilot participants provided real-time and post-activity feedback on organizational readiness, implementation barriers, and the types of tools and frameworks most needed. Insights from the pilot were interpreted cautiously and not generalized beyond participating organizations.

Recent workforce developments reinforced the relevance of the project's focus. Increased attention to skills-based approaches, internal mobility strategies, talent marketplaces, and employer responsibility in career development amid technological change and labour market volatility underscored the relevance of the project's focus. These trends did not fundamentally alter the project's design but strengthened confidence in its timing and applicability.

An AI-first, human-led approach further supported expanded research synthesis during development. AI tools were used to organize literature, test framing approaches, and identify thematic connections, while all interpretation and final decision-making remained with the project team.

Overall, the information used to determine project needs proved accurate. Subsequent review and pilot testing primarily validated and refined the original analysis rather than redirecting it. The project's needs assessment

remained evidence-informed, responsive to evolving context, and grounded in the lived realities of Canadians and organizations.

#### D.4 WHO WERE THE PROJECT'S KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND TARGET AUDIENCES?

At the proposal stage, the primary target audience consisted of professionals within medium-to-large private and public sector organizations responsible for advancing workforce strategy. This included:

- HR professionals leading talent management, employee engagement, and organizational development
- Talent development and learning and development teams focused on upskilling and internal mobility
- Organizational leaders and executives shaping workforce initiatives, strategy direction, and resource allocation

Early on, employers were identified as a critical but under-supported audience within the career development ecosystem. The project was designed for professionals responsible for identifying workforce challenges, building internal business cases, designing solutions, and advancing implementation within their organizations. Senior leaders and executives were recognized as essential decision-makers who allocate resources and set strategic direction. However, the playbook and bootcamp were intentionally structured to support the operational leaders responsible for developing proposals and coordinating action, while providing language and frameworks that could inform executive decision-making.

Career Development Professionals (CCDPs) were identified as a secondary but essential audience. The project aimed to strengthen their capacity to engage employers at a systems-level and contribute strategically to organizational workforce initiatives.

#### TARGET AUDIENCE BY DELIVERABLE

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##### **Playbook**

The playbook was designed for HR leaders, talent professionals, organizational leads, and executives evaluating internal career centre models. While always a primary audience, the employer audience became more specifically defined. Language and framing were refined to align more directly with governance, workforce strategy, and performance priorities for those building internal business cases and advising senior decision-makers.

CCDPs remained an important audience but were more clearly positioned as internal contributors or strategic partners supporting employer-led implementation.

No new audience was introduced.

##### **Bootcamp**

The bootcamp targeted organizational leaders and HR professionals responsible for advancing workforce strategy within their institutions, including both operational and strategic level participants. The pilot cohort included participants from diverse sectors, working in HR or related people management functions.

No new audience was introduced. During the design phase, the expansion from a three-hour session to a full-day format reflected the target audience's need for building proposals and coordinated internal planning.

### **Supporting Tools and Diagnostic Resources**

Supporting tools and diagnostics were primarily designed for HR and talent leaders responsible for assessing readiness, sequencing initiatives and building structured organizational plans. Resources were intended to support those preparing proposals and coordinating action, while also providing clarity to inform executive decision-making and resource allocations.

No new change in audience, but refinements focused on accommodating varying states of organizational readiness.

### **Public Knowledge Mobilization Outputs**

Public dissemination targeted employers and career development professionals through digital release, conference presentation, and webinar delivery (*forthcoming*). The pilot cohort represented a broad cross-section of organizations; no additional stakeholder groups were formally added as target audiences. Broader reach and long-term audience expansion require additional time to assess.

### **Stakeholder Evolution**

Key stakeholders throughout the project included CACEE as the project partner, CERIC as a partial funder and partner, a steering committee that provided cross-sector advisory input, and pilot participants who contributed to applied testing and feedback.

The core target audiences remained consistent with those identified in the original proposal. The primary evolution was not expansion but clarification: employers were consistently the central audience, and within that group, the focus sharpened toward professionals responsible for building and advancing workforce solutions, with executives positioned as critical decision-makers supporting adoption. CCDPs remained important partners, with their role more clearly defined as strategic contributors for sustainable and central implementation within organizations.

## **D.5 HOW DOES THE PROJECT BUILD ON AND COMPLEMENT EXISTING WORK IN THE FIELD, AND WHAT ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS EMERGED DURING ITS DEVELOPMENT?**

This project was intentionally designed to complement, rather than replicate, existing work in the career development and career counselling field. At the time of proposal development, there was a strong body of research and practitioner guidance focused on individual career development, career counselling interventions, and program-level supports. However, there was limited applied guidance to help organizations design internal systems that enable career development to function consistently at scale. This project addresses that organizational layer while building on an established foundation.

Career development theories and standards were applied to workforce and governance contexts. Rather than introducing new concepts, it translated existing knowledge into practical frameworks and tools that support

employers to embed career development within learning, talent management, and workforce planning structures. In doing so, it complemented practitioner-led career counselling and program delivery by strengthening the organizational conditions that enable sustained and equitable access.

The project also built upon Challenge Factory and CERIC's prior work, including the [Retain and Gain](#) series, [Hidden Sector, Hidden Talent](#) research and [Career Development in 2040 Final Report](#). While earlier work focused on equipping managers and profiling emerging workforce trends, this project shifted the lens toward organizational systems and enterprise-wide integration. Established sector frameworks, including the [Guiding Principles of Career Development](#), the [Pan-Canadian Competency Framework for Career Development Professionals](#), and the [Career Development Maturity Matrix™](#), informed the design and sequencing of the playbook and bootcamp materials.

As the project progressed, the broader workforce development landscape reinforced its timeliness and relevance. Increased attention to skills-based approaches, internal mobility strategies, and employer-led workforce development initiatives aligned with the project focus. Rather than reacting with standalone “fixes”, the project situated these developments within a coherent career development framework, demonstrating how to approach emerging practices as integrated into structured systems.

Overall, the project complemented existing research, standards, and programs by translating established knowledge into organizational practice, enhancing sustainability, and enabling long-term impact.

#### D.6 HOW DOES THIS INITIATIVE DIFFER FROM EXISTING SERVICES OR PROGRAMS ALREADY IN PLACE?

During proposal development, the project was positioned as distinct from existing services and programs within both the career development field and organizational HR practices. Many organizations offer research, programs, and professional development. This project differed in both audience and structural focus. While some resources support employer engagement, they are typically designed for practitioner audiences rather than employers themselves.

Traditional organizational career programs often operate as discrete initiatives, such as mentoring programs, leadership tracks, or training offerings housed within a single department. This project provided an integrative framework that connects elements across the organization, aligning them with workforce strategy, internal mobility, and business priorities.

A further differentiator was the explicit grounding of employer-facing tools in Canadian career development standards and competencies. The playbook translated established principles into practical design guidance tailored to decision-making environments, bridging the divide between career development expertise and organizational application.

Uniquely, the project introduced methodological differentiation through its AI-first, human-led approach. AI tools were used to enhance research synthesis, scenario testing, and design iteration, while all content remained grounded in expert review and labour market context. This demonstrated how emerging technologies can support innovation in workforce learning design.

Overall, the project differed from existing services by focusing on enterprise-level coordination rather than program delivery. It provided structured guidance to enable organizations to align existing career-related initiatives within sustainable and strategically coherent systems.

## D.7 WHAT IMPACT(S) HAS THE PROJECT HAD, OR IS EXPECTED TO HAVE, ACROSS THE CAREER FIELD/PRACTICE, CLIENTS, POLICY, RESEARCH, AND TRAINING/EMPLOYMENT?

The project has, and is expected to continue to have, impacts across multiple levels, including career development practice, employer capability, and the broader career development field. While some impacts are already observable, others are expected to unfold over time through continued uptake and application.

### **Impact on Career Counselling and Field/Practice**

At the practice level, the project provides structured tools and shared language that support career development professionals and employers in approaching career development as coordinated organizational design rather than isolated programs or individual interventions. The internal career centre framework positions career development as shared infrastructure connecting individual agency, managerial practice, and organizational systems.

While it is too early to confirm widespread shifts in practitioner behaviour, early engagement and dialogue indicated a strong interest in systems-level framing. The project both synthesizes established concepts and offers a recognizable organizing framework that connects practitioner standards with organizational governance. This contributes to ongoing discourse within the field that is moving from programmatic delivery toward coordinated infrastructure.

### **Impact on Employers and Clients**

For employers, the project increased clarity of how internal career development practices relate to workforce strategy, internal mobility, and long-term talent sustainability. Through pilot learning activities and applied tools, participating organizations identified concrete next steps and implementation pathways.

The observable impact to date is reflected in increased confidence, shared language, and clearer sequencing for action rather than immediate structural change. Participating organizations are at varying stages of readiness and have indicated plans to explore phased implementation. For employees, anticipated impacts include improved visibility of internal pathways and more coordinated access to career supports. However, employee-level outcomes require longitudinal observation and follow-up.

### **Impact on Policy**

While not a formal policy initiative, the project contributes to policy-relevant dialogue about shared responsibility for equitable and accessible opportunities, skill development, and mobility.

### **Impact on Research (Longitudinal and Ongoing)**

The pilot generated structured, analyzable feedback regarding organizational readiness, governance challenges, and implementation sequencing. These insights contribute to applied research on how employers interpret and operationalize career development frameworks.

Longitudinal follow-up and continued applied research with participating organizations is anticipated. The internal career centre model provides a structured basis for examining maturity progression, internal mobility outcomes, and integration over time.

### **Impact on Training and Employment Practices**

The initiative strengthens alignment across career development professionals, employer partners, and postsecondary stakeholders by providing a shared framework and language. This strengthens professional learning and cross-sector collaboration.

By focusing on systems design rather than isolated interventions, the project enables more sustainable and coordinated integration of career development within HR, talent management, and workforce planning functions. The framework is especially relevant in the context of skills-based approaches and internal mobility systems, offering structure for integrating initiatives coherently.

### **Methodological and Innovation Impact**

The AI-first, human-led methodology generated curiosity and dialogue during testing activities. By demonstrating how AI can enhance research synthesis and design while remaining grounded in professional judgment, the project modelled responsible innovation within career development practice.

Overall, the project's impacts are enabling and capacity-building rather than transactional. It has laid the groundwork for sustained systems-level integration of career development within organizations and contributes to the continued evolution of career development as strategic workforce infrastructure.

## E. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### E.1 WHAT WERE THE PROJECT'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, HOW WERE THEY MEASURED, AND HOW DID THEY EVOLVE OVER TIME?

At the proposal stage, the overarching goal of the project was to develop comprehensive, research-backed learning materials to assist organizations in establishing internal career development practices and career centres of expertise, integrating career development with traditional HR and training-focused models.

The original objectives and measures are restated below, followed by reflections on implementation and evolution.

#### OBJECTIVE 1

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To review existing and current literature and evidence of this trend, with a specific focus on surfacing the role that formal career development professionals and resources play in informing such strategies.

##### **Proposed Measures:**

- Number and diversity of sources
- Identification of key trends and gaps
- Qualitative feedback from CERIC and the project advisory group (steering committee) on the perceived value of the insights

##### **Implementation and Evolution:**

This objective was achieved as proposed. The environmental scan was conducted at a depth consistent with the original plan. AI tools were used to support literature synthesis, thematic organization, and identification of emerging patterns, expanding analytical capacity while maintaining human-led interpretation.

The steering committee played an active role in validating findings and refining interpretation. Their expertise strengthened the contextual relevance of the research and ensured alignment with current practice realities.

While the proposal emphasized counting sources and surfacing trends, the application of AI tools allowed for deeper cross-comparison and synthesis. The measure evolved from simply documenting breadth to demonstrating coherence across research, workforce trends, and applied practice.

No changes were made to the objective itself.

#### OBJECTIVE 2

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To develop learning products (a 15–20-page playbook and 3-hour synchronous workshop) to educate organizational senior leadership and HR on evaluating the benefits of a career centre strategy and assessing organizational readiness.

### **Proposed Measures:**

- Adherence to adult learning best practices, the Guiding Principles of Career Development, and the Pan-Canadian Competency Framework
- Qualitative feedback from the steering committee
- Learning outcome metrics through in-module activities and post-learning surveys assessing knowledge, confidence, and applicability

### **Implementation and Evolution:**

This objective was achieved, though implementation expanded beyond the originally proposed format.

The playbook developed into a more comprehensive systems-level guide, reflecting the complexity of the internal career centre model and the need for deeper applied guidance. The workshop evolved from a three-hour session to a full-day bootcamp to allow for practical exercises, sequencing discussions, and readiness assessment.

Adult learning principles remained explicit design criteria throughout development. Formative evaluation tools were embedded within learning activities, and post-workshop survey data captured participant feedback on knowledge acquisition, confidence, and applicability.

Measures evolved in sophistication rather than intent. The availability of AI-supported research synthesis, combined with field experience and steering committee feedback, allowed for higher-quality integration of theory and practice. Evaluation included structured participant feedback and qualitative insights, reinforcing applied relevance.

The expansion of scope was driven by the complexity of the systems model, field experience, quality considerations, and the iterative refinement enabled by AI-assisted research and analysis. The objective itself did not change.

## **OBJECTIVE 3**

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To expose organizational leaders to career development professionals (CDPs), fostering stronger community connections and advancing the perception of the field.

### **Proposed Measures:**

- Number of organizational participants in the pilot workshop
- Post-workshop survey feedback regarding evolving views of CDPs
- Number of new partner engagements among participating organizations

### **Implementation and Evolution:**

This objective was achieved in terms of exposure and engagement. Organizational leaders participating in the pilot were introduced to structured career development frameworks grounded in professional standards.

However, formal measurement of changes in perception toward CDPs was not directly captured through survey instruments. Instead, the impact was observed indirectly through engagement quality and expressed interest in continued collaboration.

No objectives were removed or replaced. The partnership potential between employers and career development professionals remains an area for continued development beyond the funded period.

### **Overall Reflection on Objectives and Measures**

The project's objectives did not change over the course of implementation. However, the methods used to achieve them expanded in depth and quality.

Several internal and external factors contributed to this evolution:

- The complexity of positioning career development as organizational infrastructure
- Field experience revealing the need for deeper systems guidance
- Steering committee feedback refining governance and sequencing components
- The ability to synthesize and analyze research more comprehensively using AI tools
- A commitment to high-quality, research-to-practice integration

Measures evolved from being primarily output-focused to incorporating deeper qualitative and formative evaluation insights. The project maintained alignment with its original strategic intent while strengthening rigour, usability, and applied relevance.

## F. PARTNERSHIPS

### F.1 WHAT PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS SUPPORTED THE PROJECT, AND HOW DID THEY DEVELOP OVER TIME?

At the proposal stage, partnerships and collaborations were identified as a core design feature to ensure relevance, credibility, and applied impact. Challenge Factory served as the lead organization, working in collaboration with the project partner CACEE, with funding support from CERIC. CACEE was the primary formal partner, contributing sector insight, participating in the steering committee, engaging in the pilot bootcamp, and supporting knowledge mobilization efforts.

The steering committee included experts from career development, postsecondary education, employer associations, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and workforce strategy. While initially envisioned as a periodic review body, the steering committee played a more active role than required. Members contributed to sensemaking, validation of emerging insights, and refinement of project direction. This sustained engagement strengthened the quality, applicability, and field alignment of the final outputs.

Employer organizations were identified in the proposal as a key target audience. Through the pilot learning activities, their role evolved into that of active collaborators for testing and validation. Participating employers engaged in the full-day bootcamp, shared implementation challenges, and provided applied feedback that informed refinements to the playbook and tools. While they were not formal partners in governance, their collaboration deepened in practice as the workshop expanded from its original three-hour scope.

No formal partner organizations were removed or replaced during the project lifecycle. No additional formal partners were added. Informal outreach to employer networks and sector contacts supported pilot recruitment and knowledge mobilization, but these engagements did not alter the project's governance structure.

Overall, the partnership structure remained consistent with the original proposal, with collaboration intensifying primarily through deeper steering committee engagement and expanded pilot participation rather than through changes in formal partnership composition.

### F.2 HOW DID PARTNER COLLABORATIONS INFLUENCE THE PROJECT, AND HOW WERE THESE PARTNERSHIPS STRUCTURED AND MAINTAINED?

The project involved active collaboration with several organizations and individuals, most notably through the steering committee and employer participation in the pilot learning activities. These collaborations had a significant and positive effect on the project's direction, relevance, and final outputs.

The steering committee played a central advisory and sensemaking role throughout the project. Members brought expertise from career development, postsecondary education, employer associations, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and workforce strategy, and contributed to testing assumptions, refining language, and validating emerging insights. Their input influenced both the structure and framing of the playbook, helping ensure that it reflected real-world conditions and could be applied across diverse organizational contexts. The

steering committee met at multiple key points during the project through structured virtual meetings focused on review, discussion, and sensemaking. Between meetings, members provided asynchronous feedback on draft materials and emerging concepts.

This collaborative process strengthened the project's credibility and reduced the risk of producing guidance that was theoretically sound but operationally disconnected. Steering committee members reported that participation deepened their understanding of how career development operates at the organizational systems-level and strengthened cross-sector perspectives.

Employer collaborators, while not formal partners at the proposal stage, became an important source of applied insight through their participation in the pilot learning activities. Their role was to engage with the draft tools and frameworks, share candid feedback about organizational readiness and constraints, and surface practical challenges related to implementation. This insight was provided in-the-moment, during the pilot bootcamp, in the post-bootcamp survey, and additional post-bootcamp follow-up discussions.

This feedback directly influenced refinements to the playbook, including clearer sequencing, emphasis on readiness and governance, and stronger alignment with workforce strategy rather than standalone programming. Feedback indicated that insights from the project informed their own practice, advisory work, or internal discussions beyond the scope of the pilot.

Overall, collaboration functioned as a core design feature rather than a peripheral activity. Regular engagement, clear roles, and structured feedback loops supported an iterative, research-to-practice approach that strengthened both the project outcomes and the learning of participants.

### F.3 WHO WERE THE KEY INFORMANTS, ADVISORY OR STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT, AND HOW DID THEY SHAPE ITS DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION?

The project engaged with both a steering committee and pilot participants from three organizations. Their involvement was intentionally designed to support applied learning, validate assumptions, and ensure alignment with the realities of career development practice and employer decision-making.

The steering committee membership included leaders and practitioners from postsecondary education, local and federal government, industry and sector leaders, and workforce strategy experts. Members served as advisors and thought partners throughout the project, contributing strategic guidance rather than operational delivery. Their role included reviewing early concepts, challenging framing and assumptions, advising on language and positioning, and helping interpret insights emerging from research and pilot activities. This input directly influenced the structure, sequencing, and emphasis of the final playbook, ensuring it reflected systems-level thinking and was relevant across organizational contexts.

Pilot participants were engaged informally through targeted conversations and pilot activities. Participating teams came from the postsecondary, financial and wealth planning, and the federal government sector. Members' professional backgrounds included HR, career development, and workforce development professionals who brought applied perspectives on organizational readiness, implementation barriers, and enabling conditions for internal career development. Their insights helped ground the project in lived

experience and informed practical decisions related to tool design, examples used, and guidance provided for different organizational maturity levels.

The steering committee and pilot participants also supported project testing and iteration. Their feedback informed iterative refinement of materials, supported decision-making around scope and sequencing, and strengthened confidence in the project's direction. By integrating collaborative insight throughout the project, rather than at a single review point, the project was able to respond dynamically to emerging learning while maintaining alignment with its original objectives.

Overall, the engagement of pilot participants and the steering committee functioned as a core mechanism for relevance, validation, and knowledge translation. Their contributions strengthened both the execution of the project and the credibility of its outputs, reinforcing the project's research-to-practice approach.

#### F.4 WHAT NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED BY CERIC, AND HOW DID IT CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROJECT?

The project received, and plans to continue to receive, non-financial support from CERIC, primarily for visibility and knowledge mobilization. CERIC's support to date has included sharing a project announcement, an opportunity to present initial findings at Cannexus, and creating a landing page that also provides online access to the playbook. We are also expecting CERIC's support with the launch announcement, media engagement, and outreach related to bootcamps to take place through 2026.

In the near-future, CERIC will host a webinar, make the playbook available online and in print, and provide other promotional support. These efforts expand the reach of the playbook beyond the pilot cohort and immediate project networks, increasing awareness across the career development field and among employer-facing professionals.

## G. ACTIVITIES & RESEARCH THEMES

### G.1 WHAT ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OR CHALLENGES AROSE DURING THE PROJECT, AND HOW WERE THEY ADDRESSED?

At the proposal stage, no significant ethical concerns were anticipated. The project was designed as a learning and applied research initiative focused on organizations and professional practice, rather than on vulnerable populations or the collection of sensitive personal data. Ethical considerations identified at the proposal stage centred on responsible engagement with participants, transparency of purpose, and appropriate use of feedback and insights shared during the project.

These initial ethical considerations remained consistent throughout the project. No new or unforeseen ethical challenges emerged during the project lifecycle.

In practice, potential ethical considerations were addressed through clear communication, informed participation, and respect for confidentiality. Participants engaged in steering committee activities and pilot learning sessions were informed of the purpose of the project, how their input would be used, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Survey responses were aggregated and analyzed. Where individuals were publicly identified in promotional materials or acknowledged as steering committee members, this occurred transparently and with awareness of intended use.

Care was taken to ensure that no personally identifiable information or sensitive organizational data was collected, stored, or published as part of the project. Discussions focused on systems design, governance, and readiness considerations rather than proprietary information. Any examples or scenarios reflected in project materials were presented in generalized or fictionalized form to avoid identifying specific organizations or individuals.

The integration of AI tools introduced additional ethical considerations related to transparency and responsible use. AI tools were used to support synthesis, reflection, and thematic analysis. Participants were aware that AI tools were incorporated into facilitation and feedback processes. All AI-generated outputs were reviewed by human project leads before integration into materials, and final interpretation and decision-making remained human-led.

Overall, ethical considerations were managed through proactive planning, transparent engagement, and ongoing attention to participant comfort and responsible data use. This approach ensured alignment with the ethical expectations outlined in the original proposal.

### G.2 HOW DID THE PROJECT CONTRIBUTE TO AND STRENGTHEN THE CAREER COUNSELLING FIELD?

The initial project proposal identified multiple areas of benefit for the career counselling and career development field, including increasing employer engagement in career development, strengthening connections between community-based career development practitioners and organizational leaders,

advancing shared standards and best practices, strengthening professional networks, and contributing to applied learning and innovation.

These areas of benefit remained consistent through project implementation. However, the relative emphasis and clarity of impact evolved as the project progressed.

### **Increase employer engagement in career development**

In practice, the project most strongly benefited the employer-facing and systems-level dimensions of the field. Employer engagement deepened within the pilot cohort through structured frameworks, shared language, and practical tools that supported integration of career development within organizational systems. While broader field-wide engagement will depend on continued dissemination, participating organizations demonstrated increased clarity regarding sequencing, governance, and integration within workforce strategy.

### **Connect community-based career development practitioners and organizational leaders**

The project clarified and strengthened the conceptual bridge between career development professionals and organizational leadership. Although CCDPs were not the primary audience of the pilot, the playbook provides structured tools that support practitioners in translating career development principles into organizational contexts. Rather than establishing new formal partnerships, the initiative created clearer pathways for CDPs to engage employers at a systems-level and influence the structural components that shape individual career outcomes.

### **Advance career development standards and best practices**

The playbook aligns explicitly with the Guiding Principles of Career Development and the Pan-Canadian Competency Framework for Career Development Professionals. By translating these standards into employer-accessible language and organizational design guidance, the project advanced their practical application across sectors and reinforced a shared language for career development integration.

### **Strengthen professional networks**

Cross-sector dialogue occurred through the steering committee and pilot engagement, bringing together practitioners, employer representatives, and workforce strategists. While it is too early to assess sustained network expansion, the project created conditions for ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange through dissemination and continued interest in engagement.

### **Expand career development research and innovation**

The project generated applied insights into organizational readiness, governance considerations, and implementation sequencing. These insights contribute to the field's knowledge base regarding how organizations operationalize career development frameworks.

The initiative also introduced AI-enabled synthesis as an innovation in applied research and knowledge translation. AI tools supported thematic analysis, feedback consolidation, and iterative refinement while

maintaining human-led interpretation. This approach demonstrated how AI can enhance research-to-practice integration within the career development field.

Overall, the most notable shift was not in who benefited, but in how those benefits were realized. What was initially framed as a broad cross-sector benefit became more concretely anchored in employer-facing systems design, with career counselling and career development professionals positioned as key enablers of that work. This clarification strengthened the project's relevance and deepened its contribution to the field without altering its original intent.

### G.3 WHAT ACTIVITIES WERE UNDERTAKEN TO ACHIEVE THE PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES, AND HOW DID THEY CHANGE OVER THE PROJECT LIFECYCLE?

The project activities were designed to support the development of practical, evidence-informed guidance to help organizations build internal career centres as a core workforce strategy. While the overall sequence of activities aligned with the proposal, several adaptations were made over the project lifecycle to strengthen relevance, quality, and applied impact.

#### **Project planning and discovery**

The project began with confirmation of scope, timelines, and roles, and early engagement with the steering committee to refine assumptions and clarify priorities. A structured project plan guided milestones across phases. This stage aligned closely with the proposed activities and was supported by strong advisory engagement and shared understanding of objectives.

#### **Research synthesis and concept development**

An environmental scan and research synthesis were conducted to identify gaps between career development theory and organizational practice. AI tools supported literature synthesis, thematic organization, and pattern recognition across sources. Human oversight ensured contextual interpretation and alignment with Canadian career development standards.

While this phase unfolded largely as planned, more time than anticipated was devoted to sensemaking and framing but was made up during content development. Translating systems-level career development concepts into accessible employer-facing guidance required deliberate iteration. An additional challenge involved navigating responsible and transparent use of AI tools. AI enhanced efficiency and synthesis, but required disciplined human review to ensure clarity, contextual appropriateness, and professional integrity.

#### **Co-design and content development**

Content development occurred through an iterative co-design process involving the project team and the steering committee. Draft frameworks, tools, and language were reviewed and refined through structured feedback cycles.

The original proposal outlined the development of a 15–20-page playbook and a 3-hour workshop. Early in the design stage, it became clear that organizations required more integrated, sequenced guidance rather than

discrete tools. As a result, the playbook evolved into a more comprehensive systems-level guide and the workshop expanded to a full-day bootcamp during the design and development phase. These changes did not alter project objectives but reflected the complexity of positioning career development as infrastructure rather than programming.

Balancing conceptual depth with usability was a central challenge. Helpful factors during this phase included steering committee validation, cross-sector insight, pilot participant candour, and AI-enabled synthesis that supported iterative refinement.

### **Pilot bootcamp**

A structured full-day bootcamp was piloted with three organizations representing the postsecondary education sector, financial and wealth planning, and the federal government. The bootcamp functioned as a learning lab, allowing participants to apply concepts, surface implementation challenges, and provide structured feedback. Engagement occurred during the session and through post-workshop follow-up.

Employer participation was a critical enabling factor. Insights from the pilot directly informed refinements to sequencing, readiness emphasis, governance framing, and practical examples. The most significant deviation from the proposal during this phase was the expansion from a 3-hour workshop to a full-day format, which allowed deeper applied testing and dialogue.

### **Refinement and finalization**

Following the pilot, feedback was synthesized and incorporated into the final playbook. Refinements focused on clarifying sequencing, strengthening alignment with workforce strategy, and balancing conceptual framing with practical tools. This ensured that the final output was grounded in real organizational contexts and aligned with project objectives.

### **Knowledge mobilization and dissemination**

Knowledge mobilization occurred throughout the project and became more prominent than originally anticipated. In addition to uploading materials online and preparing evaluation summaries, dissemination activities included a print version launch of the playbook, a webinar hosted through CERIC, public project announcements, introduction of the steering committee, and reflections on the pilot. Interest from the field created additional opportunities for outreach and engagement beyond the originally scoped activities.

Overall, the project followed the core structure proposed in the application. Key adaptations included the expansion of the workshop format, the evolution of the playbook into a more robust and comprehensive guide, deeper emphasis on co-design and systems framing, and the extended scope of knowledge mobilization. These changes were responsive to applied learning and quality considerations and strengthened the project's ability to deliver practical, evidence-based resources without altering its fundamental purpose.

#### G.4 HOW WERE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CONSIDERATIONS MANAGED THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT?

Intellectual property issues were avoided and mitigated through the contract, clear authorship, transparent use of input, and intentional design of publicly accessible resources. No substantial intellectual property challenges arose during the project to date, and the approach supported both responsible stewardship and broad knowledge mobilization.

## H. DELIVERABLES

### H.1 WHAT DELIVERABLES WERE INITIALLY PLANNED, WHAT WAS ULTIMATELY PRODUCED, AND HOW DID THESE DELIVERABLES EVOLVE OVER THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT?

#### **Intended Deliverables (as outlined in the proposal):**

- Complete designed and laid out “playbook” in English (15–20-page)
- Interactive workshop materials, including slides, handouts, assessments, and evaluations (3-hour)
- Summary report of program evaluation findings
- Marketing and post-launch support materials (website and social media copy)
- Findings to be presented at conferences, including Cannexus 2026
- Playbook and workshop to be promoted through digital and social media channels, including CERIC hosted webinar

#### **Actual Deliverables (at project completion):**

- Final digital and print version of *Career Development as Strategy: A Practical Guide to Creating Internal Career Centres* (77-page)
- Bootcamp workshop materials, including slides, handouts, assessments, and evaluations (full-day)
- Summary report of program evaluation findings (this Final Report)
- Marketing and knowledge mobilization materials, including website copy, social media content, blog articles, and launch communications
- Findings presented at Cannexus 2026 (January 2026)
- Playbook and bootcamp promoted through digital and social media, including a CERIC-hosted webinar (forthcoming, April 2026)

The core intent of the deliverables remained consistent throughout the project. Changes reflected expansion in depth, format, and timing rather than a shift in purpose.

### H.2 HOW DID THE NATURE OF THE PROJECT DELIVERABLES EVOLVE OVER TIME AND WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCED THESE CHANGES?

The core deliverables outlined in the proposal were completed; however, their nature evolved in depth, format, and visibility over the course of the project.

The playbook expanded beyond its originally anticipated 15–20-page format and developed into a 77-page guide. This expansion occurred organically during the design and development process as research synthesis, steering committee feedback, and pilot insights revealed the complexity of supporting organizations in establishing internal career centres as integrated systems. Additional tools, diagnostic resources, and implementation supports were incorporated to address governance, readiness, cross-functional alignment, and integration with workforce strategy. The evolution enhanced the playbook’s usability and strategic value without altering its original purpose.

The workshop component also evolved. While a synchronous learning session was included in the proposal, the format expanded from a three-hour session to a full-day bootcamp during the design and development phase. This change allowed sufficient time for immediate evaluation through structured cross-functional dialogue and applied engagement with the tools. Post-participation survey feedback confirmed that the full-day format was appropriate. The pilot functioned as a practical, real-time validation mechanism among several methods used to refine and strengthen the deliverables. Participant feedback directly informed adjustments to framing, tools, and practical examples within the playbook.

Knowledge mobilization activities extended beyond the originally anticipated timeline due to production timing and alignment with webinar scheduling. In addition to the originally proposed dissemination activities, Challenge Factory undertook supplementary awareness and knowledge-sharing efforts, including public announcements, thought leadership articles, and reflective learning pieces documenting project insights. These activities were not new core deliverables but supported broader engagement, reinforced career development as a public good, and extended the project reach.

No intended deliverables were removed, and no fundamentally new deliverables were created. Rather, the deliverables evolved in depth and format to reflect applied learning, systems complexity, and stakeholder engagement. These adaptations strengthened the alignment between the project's objectives and its final outputs without altering the project's purpose.

## I. MARKETING AND DISSEMINATION PLAN

### I.1 HOW HAVE PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT BEEN SHARED, AND HOW WILL THIS DISSEMINATION CONTINUE?

Information regarding the project's outcomes and impact has been shared through targeted presentations, public reflections, and structured knowledge-sharing opportunities, and will continue to be communicated through ongoing sector engagement.

The project's findings were presented at Cannexus in January 2026 and at a CACEE conference in November 2025, supporting dialogue between employer audiences and the career development field. Additional conference presentations remain under consideration as opportunities arise.

A forthcoming (April 2026) webinar, delivered in partnership with CERIC, will share outcomes and lessons learned from the playbook and bootcamp, introducing a systems-level lens for embedding career development within organizational infrastructure.

Dissemination of information has become more robust than originally anticipated, and the knowledge mobilization timeline has been extended to align with production timing and webinar scheduling. No originally planned activities were removed.

While the playbook is designed primarily for senior leaders and HR professionals, communication approaches have intentionally bridged employer audiences and the formal career development community to support cross-sector learning and sustained field impact.

### I.2 HOW HAS THE INITIATIVE BEEN PROMOTED TO ITS INTENDED AUDIENCES, AND HOW DID THE STRATEGY EVOLVE?

The initiative has been promoted through coordinated outreach, digital platforms, partner engagement, and event-based visibility. Promotion efforts have focused primarily on senior leaders, HR professionals, and employer networks, while maintaining relevance for the career development field.

Challenge Factory leveraged its partnership with CACEE and engaged steering committee members to support awareness and outreach within their respective networks. Promotion has included conference visibility, direct outreach to employer contacts, and cross-promotion through partner newsletters and webpages.

Two co-branded landing pages were developed through Challenge Factory and CERIC, serving as central promotional hubs. Challenge Factory published three blog posts to build awareness and stimulate engagement. Although not included in the original proposal, Challenge Factory also created an additional promotional video to enhance digital visibility and support uptake.

Limited promotion has occurred in advance of the formal launch. A coordinated social media campaign and digital advertising strategy will accompany the major launch, tied to physical copies of the playbook becoming available to order.

Promotion and marketing activities have become more structured and robust than originally proposed. No promotional channels were removed, and the marketing period has been extended to support sustained uptake.

### I.3 WHAT KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND DISSEMINATION STRATEGIES WERE USED, HOW WERE PROJECT OUTPUTS SHARED AND PROMOTED, AND WHAT FACTORS AND METRICS INFLUENCED THEIR EFFECTIVENESS?

The overall knowledge transfer and dissemination plan followed a phased and adaptive approach. While initial dissemination channels were identified at the proposal stage, implementation evolved iteratively based on stakeholder engagement, production timing, and emerging opportunities. This approach allowed the team to respond to uptake and refine tactics in real-time while maintaining alignment with project objectives.

The initiative is centred on sharing a tangible product, the playbook and associated bootcamp, while also contributing to broader dialogue about embedding career development within organizational systems. Dissemination activities combined direct promotion of the deliverables with thought leadership and field engagement.

Strategies used to share the deliverables included conference presentations, co-branded landing pages hosted by Challenge Factory and CERIC, blog posts, direct outreach to employer and partner networks, and use of multimedia. A forthcoming webinar, delivered in partnership with CERIC, serves as a structured knowledge-sharing event designed to extend reach within the career development community and employer-facing advisors. Additional dissemination will continue through partner newsletters, future speaking opportunities, and direct employer engagement.

Knowledge dissemination activities have included:

- Publication of blog posts and thought leadership articles ([project announcement](#), [steering committee introduction](#), and [insights from the pilot bootcamp](#))
- Hosting dedicated project playbook on [Challenge Factory](#) and [CERIC](#) landing pages
- Creating a [promotional video](#) about the bootcamp and learning experience
- Tracking playbook downloads through a registration-based access page
- Monitoring webinar registrations and attendance
- Post-participant surveys and engagement
- Tracking bootcamp inquiries
- Monitoring social media engagement
- Conference presentations at Cannexus (January 2026) and a CACEE-hosted event (November 2025)

Evaluation metrics focus on reach, engagement, and early indicators of uptake rather than long-term implementation outcomes, which require more time to assess. Tracking downloads and registrations provides insight into audience interest, while webinar attendance and bootcamp inquiries indicate movement toward deeper engagement.

The knowledge mobilization timeline has extended beyond the original forecast dates to align with print production timing and webinar scheduling. A coordinated print launch and expanded digital promotion will further support uptake.

Critical factors contributing to a successful implementation of the dissemination plan include:

- Strong cross-sector partnerships, particularly with CACEE and CERIC
- Credibility with employer audiences
- Steering committee advocacy and informal referral activity
- Digital accessibility through co-branded landing pages
- Integration of employer-facing language and positioning
- Iterative refinement of messaging throughout the project lifecycle

No originally planned dissemination activities were removed. Rather, knowledge transfer efforts became more robust and structured over time. While the formal obligations of the project conclude following the webinar, the initiative represents part of a longer-term body of work and will continue to be shared through ongoing workshops, digital presence, and partner engagement.

## J. REVENUE GENERATION/COST RECOVERY

### J.1 WHAT REVENUE GENERATION OR COST-RECOVERY STRATEGIES WERE DEVELOPED AND HOW DID THEY CHANGE OVER THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT?

This remained unchanged. Challenge Factory is in the midst of early-stage discussions with organizations and network associations to offer bootcamps. We have not changed our expectations, including our interest in CERIC and CACEE assisting in the outreach and awareness-raising activities.

## K. EVALUATION & MONITORING

### K.1 HOW WAS PROJECT SUCCESS DEFINED, MONITORED, AND EVALUATED, AND HOW DID THIS APPROACH EVOLVE?

At the time of proposal submission, four key elements were identified as indicators of success. These measures remained valid throughout the project and continue to guide how success is assessed.

#### **1. Project deliverables have been developed, tested, and made available.**

This criterion has been achieved. The playbook has been developed, refined through the steering committee's review and pilot testing, and is publicly available online, with print distribution forthcoming. The bootcamp was successfully piloted with three organizations, exceeding the minimum requirement of one pilot delivery. Post-pilot feedback informed revisions to language, tools, and structure before final release. Dedicated landing pages hosted by Challenge Factory and CERIC provide access to the playbook and related materials.

#### **2. Feedback from early participants indicates greater awareness of career development practices and principles to integrate into corporate human resources and talent strategies.**

This measure has been met. Survey data collected following the pilot bootcamp indicated increased awareness of career development as a systems-level workforce strategy, greater clarity regarding internal readiness, and increased confidence in identifying next steps. Participants confirmed that a full-day format was appropriate to support meaningful engagement with the tools and frameworks. Feedback highlighted the practical value of diagnostic tools and readiness-focused exercises in supporting internal discussions.

#### **3. The playbook is available for public download with evidence that it has informed strategic planning for at least three early adopting organizations.**

This criterion has been met. The playbook is publicly accessible via registration-based download. Multiple organizations have confirmed that the playbook has informed internal strategic conversations, and at least three have initiated internal planning steps based on its frameworks. While it is too early to assess long-term implementation outcomes, early adoption signals indicate that the playbook is being used to guide organizational reflection and planning.

#### **4. Career development professionals validate that the materials enhance their understanding of corporate environments and partnership opportunities.**

This measure has been met. Career development professionals involved in the project, including certified practitioners, validated that the materials strengthen understanding of how career development functions within corporate and institutional contexts. Feedback reflected increased clarity regarding how practitioners can engage employers at a systems-level and align career development principles with organizational priorities.

Beyond these original measures, additional indicators of early success have emerged. Multiple organizations have expressed interest in participating in future bootcamps. The playbook has begun generating download

registrations, and further engagement is anticipated following the official launch. Conference presentations and public reflections have generated awareness and sector dialogue.

Evaluation and monitoring were designed to support applied learning and refinement rather than formal long-term impact measurement. Throughout the project, quality and progress were reviewed through structured steering committee input, internal project team reviews, and pilot feedback mechanisms. Applied evaluation during the pilot included facilitated discussions, reflective exercises, and post-session input focused on clarity, usability, and applicability of the tools.

Rather than relying solely on quantitative indicators, the project emphasized qualitative signals of success, including shared language development, increased organizational clarity, expressed readiness to act, and early evidence of internal planning conversations. Some measures, particularly sustained organizational implementation, will require additional time to assess.

Based on the original criteria and the early indicators observed, the project can be considered successful. The deliverables were completed and refined through applied testing, early users reported increased understanding and readiness, and initial adoption signals are evident. Ongoing dissemination and continued engagement will provide further insight into long-term impact.

## K.2 WHAT OUTCOMES WERE ANTICIPATED, HOW WERE THEY MEASURED, AND WHAT RESULTS WERE ACHIEVED?

### ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

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The proposal identified four primary anticipated outcomes:

1. Project deliverables, including a playbook and workshop materials, would be developed, tested, and made available.
2. Pilot participants would demonstrate increased awareness of career development principles and how to integrate them into organizational human resources and talent strategies.
3. The playbook would be publicly available and inform strategic planning for adopting organizations.
4. Career Development Professionals would validate that the materials enhanced their understanding of corporate environments and strengthened their ability to partner with employers.

In addition to these publicly stated outcomes, internal expectations included the need to validate employer-facing language, assess demand for systems-level framing, and test the depth required for applied implementation support. These internal hypotheses required evidence through pilot testing and field engagement.

### HOW OUTCOMES WERE MEASURED

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The proposal outlined the following measures:

- Approval and sign-off of design and development drafts

- Successful completion of pilot workshop delivery
- Participant evaluation data
- Follow-up surveys and testimonials
- Feedback from knowledge mobilization activities
- Online usage and download data

During implementation, these measures were applied in an adapted form:

- The playbook was completed, reviewed by the steering committee, refined through pilot testing, and published online.
- A pilot bootcamp was delivered to three organizations and structured post-session surveys were administered individually.
- Survey instruments included Likert-scale and open-ended questions measuring clarity, confidence, and perceived applicability.
- Facilitated reflection exercises were embedded within the bootcamp to generate real-time evaluative insights.
- Qualitative feedback from steering committee members and conference participants was documented through structured notes and review cycles.
- Public release activity and download registrations were tracked as indicators of early reach.
- AI tools were used to assist in synthesizing qualitative feedback, with all outputs reviewed and validated by the project team before informing revisions.

Consistent with the project’s developmental nature, qualitative indicators of clarity, readiness, and applicability were used alongside quantitative signals rather than relying exclusively on numeric metrics.

## ACTUAL OUTCOMES

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### **1. Development, Testing, and Release of Deliverables**

The playbook and associated learning materials were developed, refined through steering committee and pilot feedback, and made publicly available in digital format, with print release forthcoming. The pilot bootcamp was successfully delivered and evaluated. This anticipated outcome was fully achieved.

### **2. Increased Awareness and Strategic Clarity Among Pilot Participants**

Survey results from the pilot indicated that participants demonstrated strong conceptual understanding of the Career Development Centre of Expertise model. All participants reported they could explain the concept and its relevance within their organizational context. A strong majority agreed that the tools enhanced their ability to initiate strategic internal conversations.

Responses reflected nuance: while conceptual clarity was high, confidence in immediate implementation varied depending on organizational readiness and internal data capacity. This anticipated outcome was achieved, with contextual variation as expected.

### 3. Public Availability and Early Strategic Influence

The playbook is publicly accessible through dedicated landing pages hosted by Challenge Factory and CERIC. Early adoption signals are strong. Participating organizations have confirmed that the materials have informed internal strategic discussions and early planning considerations. As of February 26, 2026, there have been 278 downloads of the playbook.

As expected, long-term organizational impact will require extended follow-up beyond the funded project period. However, initial indicators suggest the playbook is functioning as a framing and planning tool within early adopting organizations. This anticipated outcome has been achieved in its initial phase.

### 4. Validation from Career Development Professionals

Career development professionals engaged through the steering committee and knowledge mobilization activities, confirmed that the materials strengthened their understanding of how career development operates within corporate and institutional environments. Feedback indicated that the frameworks and language supported more strategic positioning of career development within organizations. This anticipated outcome was achieved through qualitative validation and field engagement.

## UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

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Through implementation and pilot testing, several assumptions underpinning the project were tested and validated in practice:

- **High acceptance of AI-supported learning.** All pilot participants indicated that structured AI-supported activities enhanced their thinking during the bootcamp. This suggested greater readiness for AI-enabled strategic work than initially assumed.
- **Data capability as a systemic constraint.** While participants expressed interest in linking career development to measurable outcomes, many identified internal data limitations as a barrier. This surfaced organizational data maturity as a foundational condition for sustainable career development strategy.
- **Validation of depth required for implementation.** The expansion from a three-hour workshop to a full-day bootcamp was reinforced through participant feedback, confirming that meaningful engagement required more time than originally scoped.

No negative unintended consequences were identified during the project lifecycle.

Overall, anticipated outcomes were achieved at the level appropriate to the project timeline. Early indicators of adoption, awareness, and strategic influence are strong. Longer-term impact will require continued observation beyond the funded period.

## K.3 WHAT EVALUATION TOOLS AND METHODS WERE USED, AND HOW DID THEY ALIGN WITH THE PROJECT'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES?

## Evaluation Approach

The project used a blended, developmental evaluation approach aligned with its applied and research-to-practice design. Evaluation was embedded throughout implementation rather than conducted as a separate, end-stage assessment. The focus was on learning, validation, refinement, and alignment with real organizational conditions rather than experimental measurement or long-term impact tracking.

Evaluation occurred at three levels:

- Developmental validation during content creation
- Applied formative validation through the pilot bootcamp
- Field validation through sector engagement

## Evaluation Tools Used

The project used a combination of structured and qualitative tools, including:

### Structured Post-Bootcamp Survey

A structured individual survey was administered to all pilot participants. It included:

- Likert-scale questions assessing conceptual clarity, tool relevance, confidence, and applicability
- Questions measuring understanding of the Career Development Centre of Expertise model and the Five Drivers of Workforce Change
- Questions assessing readiness to initiate internal conversations
- Questions evaluating the integration of AI-supported elements
- Open-ended responses capturing perceived value, areas of confusion, and implementation barriers

Survey results confirmed high levels of conceptual clarity and perceived applicability, while qualitative responses surfaced contextual constraints such as data maturity and implementation sequencing.

### Bootcamp Diagnostic and Reflective Exercises

The following tools functioned both as learning instruments and real-time evaluative indicators:

- Career Development Maturity Matrix™ self-assessment
- Challenge Factory's Risk and Readiness Checklist
- Challenge Factory's Business Case modelling exercises

Participants' ability to use these tools meaningfully served as a practical measure of clarity and transferability. Areas of hesitation or uncertainty directly informed revisions to guidance and explanatory content.

### Facilitated Observation and Field Notes

Evaluation was embedded within live facilitation through:

- Facilitator observation of participant dialogue
- Documentation of questions, hesitations, and emerging themes
- Capture of resonance points and friction points

This qualitative insight was critical for refining language, sequencing, and emphasis within the playbook.

### **Steering Committee Validation**

Structured advisory sessions were conducted at multiple points in development. Steering committee members:

- Reviewed framing and terminology
- Challenged assumptions
- Tested alignment with career development standards
- Validated applicability across sectors

This functioned as expert-level validation prior to finalization of materials.

### **Knowledge Mobilization Observations**

Field notes from the Cannexus presentation captured:

- Participant reactions
- Areas of resonance
- Clarifying questions
- Early signals of sector interest

These observations functioned as early indicators of broader field relevance beyond the pilot cohort.

### **AI-Assisted Synthesis**

AI tools were used as a synthesis support and structured thought partner to:

- Analyze qualitative survey data
- Identify thematic patterns
- Stress-test interpretations
- Support reflection during facilitated sessions

AI-supported synthesis and drafting were used throughout the project; all outputs were reviewed, validated, and contextualized by the project team before being incorporated into materials or delivery.

### **Evaluation Process**

Evaluation was iterative and unfolded in phases:

1. Advisory validation during content development
2. Applied testing during pilot delivery

3. Structured individual post-session survey
4. Thematic synthesis and refinement
5. Early dissemination monitoring

The process emphasized refinement over measurement, clarity over scoring, and readiness signals over numerical benchmarking.

### **Connection Between Evaluation Tools and Project Goals**

Evaluation tools were intentionally aligned with the project's three core objectives.

#### **Objective 1: Review literature and surface trends and gaps**

Steering committee review validated whether the synthesized research reflected real-world organizational conditions and workforce trends.

#### **Objective 2: Develop a playbook and learning experience**

- The draft playbook was reviewed through structured internal project team analysis and steering committee feedback cycles to assess coherence, alignment with career development standards, clarity of employer-facing language, and practical usability prior to publication.
- Post-bootcamp surveys measured conceptual clarity and perceived applicability.
- In-session diagnostic tools tested whether participants could apply frameworks meaningfully.
- Observed friction points, particularly around data readiness, directly informed revisions to sequencing and guidance.

These tools ensured the deliverables were not only conceptually sound but operationally usable.

#### **Objective 3: Expose organizational leaders to CDPs and strengthen perception of the field**

- Survey responses assessed shifts in understanding of career development as a strategic function.
- Qualitative feedback captured increased confidence in initiating employer-facing conversations.
- Cross-sector resonance at Cannexus indicated broader applicability beyond early adopters.

### **How Evaluation Evolved**

The proposal anticipated structured learning outcome metrics and included both quantitative and qualitative measures from the outset. As experienced evaluators, the project team intentionally designed the evaluation approach to capture not only knowledge acquisition but also shifts in readiness, shared language, and strategic confidence.

During implementation, the emphasis within this blended approach was refined to better reflect the project's developmental and systems-level focus. Specifically:

- Qualitative indicators such as shared language development, organizational readiness, and confidence to initiate internal conversations were intentionally prioritized as leading indicators of systems change.

- The small pilot cohort was purposefully leveraged to generate depth of insight rather than statistical generalization, consistent with developmental evaluation principles.
- Learning tools embedded within the bootcamp (e.g., diagnostics and business case exercises) were used deliberately as dual-purpose instruments, functioning both as participant learning supports and as real-time evaluation mechanisms.

Rather than shifting direction, the evaluation design was calibrated for emphasis. The final approach integrated:

- Quantitative clarity and confidence indicators
- Qualitative readiness and sequencing signals
- Facilitated observation and applied dialogue
- Structured advisory validation

This refinement ensured that the evaluation strategy remained aligned with the project’s objectives: to test usability, strengthen coherence, and ground the final deliverables in applied organizational realities.

#### K.4 WHAT EVALUATION APPROACHES WERE USED, AND WHAT WERE THE KEY INPUTS, PROCESSES, RESULTS, AND IMPACTS IDENTIFIED?

The project was implemented with a structured developmental, formative, and summative evaluation framework, consistent with the approach outlined in the proposal. While the scale of evaluation remained appropriate to the project’s applied nature, each phase was undertaken substantially as planned, with refinements based on emerging learning.

### I. DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

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#### **Purpose**

To refine concepts, validate assumptions, and ensure alignment with both career development standards and employer realities during early design stages.

#### **Timeline**

Primarily conducted during the Discovery and Design phases of work.

#### **Inputs**

- Literature and labour market research synthesis
- Challenge Factory’s applied advisory experience
- Steering committee expertise
- Internal project team expertise
- AI-assisted synthesis and structured reflection tools

#### **Process**

Developmental evaluation occurred through structured advisory conversations and iterative working sessions with the steering committee. These sessions were used to test framing, terminology, and assumptions before

finalization of materials. A requirements summary was developed and shared within the project team, and steering committee members were engaged in continuous feedback loops rather than a single-point review.

AI tools were used during this phase as synthesis supports and structured thought partners to test clarity, surface gaps, and stress-test framing. All AI-supported outputs were reviewed and validated by the project team.

Developmental evaluation directly influenced the evolution of the deliverables. The expansion to a 77-page playbook and the expansion to a full-day bootcamp were informed by early validation that designing internal career centres required deeper systems-level exploration than initially scoped.

## Results and Impacts

- Validation of internal career centres as a viable organizational systems model
- Refinement of employer-facing language
- Increased depth and integration of tools within the playbook
- Confirmation that AI could responsibly support synthesis and learning design when human-reviewed

## II. FORMATIVE EVALUATION

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### Purpose

To assess the effectiveness of components mid-development and ensure alignment with stated learning objectives.

### Timeline

Conducted during the Design, Development, and Pilot phases of work.

### Inputs

- Pilot bootcamp participants
- Diagnostic and reflective learning tools
- Structured post-session survey
- Facilitator observations and field notes
- AI-assisted thematic synthesis

### Process

The pilot bootcamp functioned as the primary formative evaluation mechanism. Participants engaged in live application of the Career Development Maturity Matrix™, Challenge Factory's Risk and Readiness Checklist, and Challenge Factory's business case modelling exercises.

Formative evaluation specifically assessed whether learning objectives were met, including participants' ability to:

- Explain the Career Development Centre of Expertise model and its strategic value

- Interpret and apply diagnostic tools meaningfully
- Initiate informed internal conversations about career development strategy

A structured individual survey was administered following the session to measure clarity, relevance, confidence, and readiness to act. Qualitative responses surfaced contextual constraints, particularly around internal data maturity and sequencing of implementation steps.

AI tools supported the synthesis of qualitative responses and identification of thematic patterns. These insights were validated by the project team prior to integration into final materials.

While no deliverables were removed, the depth of content, framing of guidance, and integration of AI-enabled activities were refined based on formative insights.

## **Results and Impacts**

- High levels of conceptual clarity among pilot participants
- Validation that a full-day format was necessary for meaningful engagement
- Identification of organizational data readiness as a key implementation constraint
- Strengthened practical guidance and sequencing within the playbook

## **III. SUMMATIVE EVALUATION**

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### **Purpose**

To evaluate the overall success of the program upon completion of development and pilot implementation.

### **Timeline**

Conducted during the Revise and Knowledge Mobilization phases of work.

### **Inputs**

- Completed and publicly available playbook
- Completed pilot delivery
- Post-session survey data
- Steering committee validation
- Early dissemination engagement (including Cannexus presentation)

### **Process**

Summative evaluation was conducted by the internal project team at the conclusion of the pilot and refinement phase. This included review of deliverable completion, synthesis of survey findings, assessment of alignment with original objectives, and evaluation of early dissemination signals.

Longer-term organizational impacts were identified as intended outcomes but have not yet been measured due to project timing. Additional early-stage evaluation will occur following the formal public launch and webinar programming.

## **Results and Impacts**

- All core deliverables completed, tested, and released
- Demonstrated increase in awareness and strategic clarity among pilot participants
- Early adoption signals within participating organizations
- Validation of employer-facing positioning and cross-sector resonance
- Confirmation that mid- and long-term impacts will require follow-up beyond the funded period

## **Overall Assessment**

The project implemented a structured evaluation approach consistent with the original proposal. Developmental evaluation refined the model, formative evaluation validated learning objectives and usability, and summative evaluation confirmed achievement of core objectives within scope.

The evaluation design appropriately matched the project's applied, innovation-focused nature. While longer-term organizational impacts remain to be measured, the combination of advisory validation, pilot testing, structured survey data, and field engagement provides strong evidence that the project achieved its intended short-term outcomes and laid the foundation for sustained impact.

### **K.5 HOW WERE THE THREE STAKEHOLDERS WHO PROVIDED LETTERS OF SUPPORT INVOLVED AND WHAT IMPACT DID THE PROJECT HAVE ON THEM?**

To respect confidentiality commitments, this report does not disclose identifying information about specific external stakeholders who provided letters of support.

## L. TIMELINES

### L.1 WHAT WERE THE PLANNED AND ACTUAL PROJECT TIMELINES, AND HOW DID THEY EVOLVE OVER TIME?

Challenge Factory developed a phased workplan to guide the delivery of the project, supported by work effort estimates and sequencing outlined in the proposal. The project formally began in August 2025 and followed the planned structure of Planning, Discovery, Requirements, Design, Development, Pilot and Revise, and Knowledge Mobilization and Implementation.

After a delayed start, the project timeline was adjusted and revised as listed below.

- Phase 1: Planning – 3 weeks
- Phase 2: Discovery – 4 weeks
- Phase 3: Requirements – 3 weeks
- Phase 4: Design – 5 weeks
- Phase 5: Development – 8 weeks
- Phase 6: Pilot, Test, and Revise – 7 weeks
- Phase 7: Knowledge Mobilization and Implementation – 9 weeks, but now ongoing

In implementation, the project followed this intended sequencing and level of effort. Planning and Discovery were completed in August and September 2025. Requirements and Design extended through early fall, followed by an eight-week Development phase. The pilot bootcamp was delivered on December 4, 2025, and the subsequent revised period continued into early January 2026.

The primary timeline adjustment occurred in the Knowledge Mobilization phase. While dissemination was originally planned as ongoing, the formal public launch was aligned with the availability of the print version of the playbook (February 2026) and the scheduling of the webinar delivered in partnership with CERIC (April 2026). As a result, knowledge mobilization activities extended beyond the initial January 2026 window to support coordinated promotion, webinar delivery, and broader field engagement.

## M. KEY FINDINGS/INSIGHTS

### M.1 WHAT KEY FINDINGS, INSIGHTS, AND LEARNINGS EMERGED FROM THE PROJECT?

The project generated several key findings that deepen understanding of how career development can function as organizational infrastructure rather than as a collection of programs or isolated initiatives.

#### **1. Career development must be positioned as workforce infrastructure**

A central finding was that employers respond most strongly when career development is framed as core workforce infrastructure, connected directly to internal mobility, retention, workforce planning, and organizational sustainability. Positioning career development as a strategic operating condition, rather than as a discrete HR program, strengthened engagement and clarified its relevance to senior leaders.

#### **2. Employer-facing language is essential for uptake**

Translating career development theory into business-relevant language significantly enhanced clarity and resonance. While the foundational concepts remained grounded in career development practice, adoption required language aligned with governance, risk, readiness, and operational sequencing. This reinforced the importance of bridging professional standards with employer realities.

#### **3. Data readiness is a structural constraint**

Participants expressed strong interest in linking career development to measurable outcomes, while also identifying limitations in internal data systems and proxy measures. This validated an early assumption that data capability is a foundational enabling condition for sustainable career development strategy and implementation.

#### **4. Systems-level engagement requires depth and time**

The evolution from a three-hour workshop to a full-day bootcamp was reinforced through applied testing. Participants confirmed that meaningful dialogue about governance, sequencing, readiness, and cross-functional alignment requires sustained engagement. Superficial exposure is insufficient for organizational systems change.

#### **5. Structured AI-supported learning enhances strategic reflection**

The project incorporated AI tools as structured synthesis and reflection supports during design and pilot delivery. Participants reported that AI-supported activities enhanced clarity and idea development when embedded within human-facilitated discussion. This suggests that AI can effectively augment strategic workforce conversations when used intentionally and human-led.

#### **6. Cross-sector workforce challenges are structurally similar**

Participants from different sectors identified remarkably consistent themes related to retention, internal mobility, and career visibility. This reinforced the structural nature of the challenges the playbook addresses and suggests that systems-level guidance has broad applicability.

## BROADER INSIGHTS

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An important insight for the field is that career development professionals create impact across multiple levels of practice. Direct program delivery, counselling, and intervention work remain essential and foundational. In addition, this project reinforces the opportunity to extend that impact by engaging as strategic partners in organizational system design. When career development expertise informs workforce governance structures and internal mobility pathways, it strengthens the conditions in which individual services can thrive and reach more people over time.

Strengthening employer capacity to design career development as workforce infrastructure does not replace program implementation; it complements and amplifies it. Systems-level integration creates an enabling environment where high-quality career development practice can scale, sustain, and align more closely with organizational strategy.

Learning and evaluation were, and continue to be, dynamic. Signals such as shared language adoption, readiness conversations, and governance exploration function as meaningful early indicators of systems-level influence, even before structural change is fully realized.

## IF UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT AGAIN

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The foundation established through this project provides a strong platform for continued refinement and impact. Two potential enhancements were identified and may strengthen future iterations to build on learnings.

Development of sector-specific briefs: While cross-sector resonance was strong, tailored sector summaries could accelerate adoption by contextualizing the playbook's frameworks within specific workforce environments. Short, sector-adapted briefs may support faster translation into practice while maintaining the integrity of the core model.

Longitudinal follow-up built into scope: While early adoption signals are strong, systems-level change requires time. Incorporating structured longitudinal follow-up would allow deeper assessment of organizational change over time and clearer measurement of mid- and long-term outcomes.

## M.2 WHAT REFLECTIONS EMERGED FROM THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS, AND HOW WILL THESE LEARNINGS INFLUENCE FUTURE SERVICES, METHODS, OR STRATEGIC DIRECTION?

The implementation of this project meaningfully influenced both methodology and future service design.

A significant methodological evolution was the structured integration of artificial intelligence (AI) as a thought partner within research, synthesis, and facilitated learning. The project confirmed that AI can enhance strategic reflection when used intentionally, with human oversight and facilitation guiding interpretation and application. This experience strengthened confidence in AI as a synthesis tool, scenario-testing mechanism, and structured reflection aid. Going forward, AI will continue to be deliberately embedded into both advisory workflows and learning design, always within a human-led framework that ensures context, judgment, and professional standards remain central.

The project also reinforced the importance of establishing organizational clarity early in engagement. Participants consistently required structured sequencing before engaging with tools or implementation tactics. This confirmed that governance clarity and readiness assessment are not optional components, but rather foundational steps in systems-level change and entry points for deeper strategic work.

Another key learning relates to sequencing. Organizations benefit from a clearly staged progression that builds shared language, establishes governance clarity, and then moves toward measurement and implementation. This insight will influence how future services are structured, ensuring that systems thinking is introduced in a practical, accessible, and layered way.

At a broader level, the project validated and strengthened Challenge Factory's research-to-practice translation model. Iterative design, pilot validation, and structured feedback loops reinforced the value of co-design in developing practical guidance. Future offerings will continue to integrate applied testing and validation as core components, not optional enhancements.

The project also clarified the importance of employer-facing positioning when advancing career development at a systems-level. Career development professionals are central to design, delivery, and ethical practice. At the same time, sustainable organizational impact is strengthened when leaders understand career development not only as a set of high-quality programs and services, but also as infrastructure that shapes workforce systems, decision-making, and internal mobility pathways. Positioning career development in this dual way, as both professional practice and organizational infrastructure, will continue to shape how services are framed, delivered, and scaled.

Overall, this project did not simply produce a playbook and bootcamp. It refined how systems-level workforce strategy is researched, tested, and translated into practice. The learnings will influence service design, engagement models, AI integration practices, and knowledge mobilization strategies well beyond the life of this specific project.

### M.3 DID THE PROJECT PARTNERSHIP FUNDING LEAD TO ANY CAPACITY-BUILDING WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION, AND IF SO, HOW?

While early indicators suggest strengthened collaboration, enhanced shared language, and increased systems-level engagement, formal assessment of sustained capacity-building outcomes requires additional time beyond the current reporting period.

### M.4 WHAT LESSONS WERE LEARNED FROM THE COLLABORATION PROCESS WITH PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS?

The collaboration process reinforced three practices that are essential in systems-level projects.

First, early and sustained engagement improves quality. Involving the steering committee throughout the project lifecycle ensured that emerging concepts were tested in real-time rather than reviewed only at the end. Structured feedback cycles, combined with smaller-group dialogue, supported deeper discussion and more candid exchange. This approach strengthened clarity of framing and prevented premature finalization of ideas.

Second, applied collaboration through the pilot bootcamp confirmed that real-time testing is more valuable than post-project evaluation alone. Participants engaged directly with draft tools and frameworks, and their questions, hesitations, and reflections provided insight that could not have been captured through survey data alone. The structured environment encouraged candid discussion, reinforcing the value of facilitated, applied dialogue.

Finally, cross-sector collaboration surfaced shared structural challenges across different organizational contexts. Participants from varied sectors identified remarkably similar governance, sequencing, and data readiness considerations. This reinforced the importance of shared language development and validated the systems-level orientation of the project.

#### M.5 WHAT LESSONS WERE LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTING REVENUE GENERATION OR COST-RECOVERY STRATEGIES?

From an implementation perspective, the project reinforced the importance of planning for sustainability early, including clear role definition for ongoing stewardship, practical dissemination pathways, and maintaining alignment between accessibility, quality, and long-term field relevance.

## N. NEXT STEPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

### N.1 WHAT NEXT STEPS ARE RECOMMENDED TO BUILD ON THE PROJECT?

The primary recommendation emerging from this project is that employers intentionally position career development as core workforce infrastructure. Organizations seeking to strengthen retention, internal mobility, engagement, and workforce resilience should move beyond isolated programs and instead examine how governance, accountability, readiness, shared language, and data capability interact as an integrated system.

Three practical next steps are recommended:

**1. Conduct an internal readiness and maturity assessment.**

Organizations benefit from establishing a clear baseline of current career development practices, governance structures, and internal mobility pathways before introducing new initiatives.

**2. Align career development with workforce strategy and business outcomes.**

Leaders should explicitly connect career development efforts to organizational priorities such as productivity, succession planning, skills development, and risk mitigation. This alignment strengthens sustainability and executive sponsorship.

**3. Commit to phased implementation and longitudinal evaluation.**

Systems-level change requires staged progression. Organizations are encouraged to monitor leading indicators such as shared language adoption, cross-functional collaboration, internal mobility activity, and employee career visibility over time. Continued evaluation will strengthen the evidence base for internal career centres as a strategic workforce model.

The playbook, *Career Development as Strategy: A Practical Guide to Creating Internal Career Centres*, provides structured guidance and tools to support these next steps. Ongoing application, sector adaptation, and structured follow-up with early adopters will further enhance understanding of implementation patterns and longer-term outcomes.

Organizations, practitioners, and researchers interested in continued dialogue, implementation support, or future applied research partnerships are encouraged to connect.

**Playbook landing page:**

[www.challengefactory.ca/internalcareercentreplaybook/](http://www.challengefactory.ca/internalcareercentreplaybook/)

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