

# Career Development in 2040



## PREPARING FOR POSSIBLE SCENARIOS OF WORK & CAREERS: Policymakers Summary January 2024

This report is a summary of **Preparing for Possible Scenarios of Work & Careers**, written for policymakers. It is part of CERIC's **Career Development in 2040** research series. To access these reports, visit [www.ceric.ca](http://www.ceric.ca)

## Overview of Policymaker Recommendations

As the world grapples with vast labour market changes, career development professionals (CDPs) possess unique capabilities that are critical in helping workers and employers adapt. Unfortunately, not all learners and workers have access to this support due to current funding and service models. Research conducted shows that Canada has a robust career development landscape, but it is vastly underutilized (Bonen and Williams, 2021). At the same time, careers and the nature of work are facing tremendous changes, responding to shifts in modalities, emerging technologies, as well as broader changes such as climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and generational values shifts (Russek and Thornton, 2023). Today, nearly 1 in 4 workers in Canada report being unhappy in their work (Léger and Hamster, 2022), while employers are experiencing labour shortages due to skill mismatches (Statistics Canada, 2023).

All in all, there is a significant need to support current (and future) workers and employers to adjust to the changing labour market, and career developers are uniquely positioned with the skills, passion, and experience to do exactly this. However, for this to happen, a series of changes are required, shifting away from the current failure-first model. Failure-first, meaning one must first be unemployed to access publicly funded career development supports. With workers and employers needing support to weather the changes ahead, there is a significant opportunity to evolve the career development system in Canada to help ease these changes, transitions, and disruptions.

*Career Development in 2040: Preparing for Possible Scenarios of Work & Careers* explores how career development and work may evolve between now and 2040, and what that might mean for career development professionals. This is the focus of the research project *Career Development in 2040*, commissioned by CERIC, and led by Creative Futures. *Career Development in 2040* started with a deep dive into the major changes with the potential to impact career development in 2040, which was published October 2023. *Preparing for Possible Scenarios of Work & Careers* builds on these changes, exploring what they might mean in more detail, and how career development services, and the role of Career Development Professionals (CDPs) themselves may evolve by 2040 (see image on page 2). Based on these findings, a series of key insights are identified, and translated into a series of recommendations for how the career development sector, policymakers, and advocacy organizations can prepare.



## CDPs in 2024...

- ▶ Provide individual career development sessions
- ▶ Help individuals to manage learning and employment, acquire and enhance skills, seek and create employment, and access community services
- ▶ Conduct research to identify new job opportunities for their clients
- ▶ Support students with exploring possibilities, newcomers and refugees, individuals facing multiple barriers to employment, and unemployed workers transitioning to new opportunities
- ▶ Support clients within their local geography



## CDPs in 2040...

- ▶ Help individuals with the mindset shift and resilience required to navigate a rapidly changing world and labour market
- ▶ Serve as consultants for governments, employers, and post-secondary institutions
- ▶ Provide in-person, virtual, asynchronous, and self-service delivery options
- ▶ Knowledgeable and comfortable with providing AI-supported personalized career development
- ▶ Facilitate group sessions and provide complex individual support
- ▶ Interpret and translate complex data sources and emerging technologies to conduct labour market research, identify new industries and new opportunities within a broader geographic area
- ▶ Support a much broader range of clients from K-12 students to older adults who are proactively managing their work transitions throughout their lifetime
- ▶ Assist clients within local, national, and international geographies

In order to support a preventative approach and lifelong support for career development, individuals need to be aware that this support is available to them (a recommended focus of *Preparing for Possible Scenarios of Work & Careers*), but funding and services also need to be available to support their participation. However, the current funding models and services for career development prevent the sector from assisting a wide variety of clients, or assisting clients *before* they are in a position of need. In essence, the funding models as they currently exist prevent a proactive approach to career development. In order to move to a model that is able to take a preventative approach to the career needs of individuals, there is a need to expand and reassess funding supports and services. To advance this focus area, the following are related recommended actions for policymakers, listed in the suggested order of action. This order reflects the prioritization of actions gathered through the research, while also considering the overall sequence of actions needed to advance the priority areas.

**1. Prioritize Now (Next 1 - 2 years): Reassess funding models for government-funded career development services and programs.**

In order to move to a career development model that proactively supports the needs of individuals, there is a need to:

- a. **Explore the expansion of funding supports for employed workers, not just those who are unemployed.** This could mean a focus on workers in sectors expected to be significantly disrupted or forced to experience significant change in the coming years, or mid and late-career workers who are looking for a significant change and are unaware of options available.
- b. **Assess the salaries and professional development supports for CDPs to attract diverse professionals to the sector,** including Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, whom CDPs at the workshops noted are underrepresented. Career developers play a critical role in preparing workers in Canada for the future of work, and need to be paid a fair, living wage to do this vital work, while also having support to engage in critical learning needed to support individuals. This includes professional development related to AI and emerging technologies, mental health, skills assessments, and more.
- c. **Reimagine career development in the K-12 system.** Students consistently hear the message that the job they will have doesn't exist yet and then do not receive the support they need to interpret what that





means and what they should do to prepare for their careers. From the perspective of CDPs who participated in this project, ideally, career development starts early, and is integrated across the K-12 system, separate from the existing guidance program which is more focused on social elements and self-identity rather than guiding possible career paths. To do this, more funding is needed, as well as an overall redesign of the current approach.

## **2. Prepare For (next 2 - 4 years): Incentivize employers to work with CDPs to support their talent needs proactively.**

As noted in *Career Development in 2040: 10 Major Changes*, mental health is the leading cause of disability in Canada, costing approximately \$51 billion a year in health care costs, lost productivity, and reductions in health-related quality of life (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2023). Research also shows that individuals who are stressed and unhappy at work, are also more likely to face a variety of health-related issues (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2018). In order to reduce this pressure on Canada's health system, there is an opportunity to work directly with employers to provide career development coaching and support. This could include:

- a. **Provide funding for CDPs to work directly with employers to coach existing staff and provide support for skills development.** Several of the workshop participants felt that career developers are uniquely positioned to provide career coaching and guidance that human resource departments lack. For example, human resource departments typically focus on the needs of the employer and are less equipped to provide individual coaching for workers related to ways they may upskill or develop to adjust to the needs of the employer. Career developers on the other hand are trained to do exactly this. Providing this service could support the identification of workers who would benefit from additional training to meet the employer's current and future needs, increasing retention, and reducing future unemployment.
- b. **Provide employer-matched funding for employers to access career development services.** While providing funding for CDPs to work directly with employers may work in some jurisdictions, another solution is to provide funding directly to employers, with a requirement that they provide matched funding to indicate their commitment to their employees. The percentage match could be reduced for



small or non-profit employers who may not have sufficient budgets to support a full match but have demonstrated need for the support.

c. **Advocate for employers to extend health benefits to cover career services, as is done in Québec.**

While employer-paid benefit packages regularly include support for visiting a mental health professional, or professional development and training opportunities, it is not common that benefits extend to the engagement of CDPs. However, all have the potential to support the productivity, success, and well-being of workers, to the benefit not only of the individual, but the employer's retention rates, and long-term healthcare-related costs.

**3. Longer term (over next 5+ years): Involve CDPs in policy-related discussions, program design and evaluation.**

CDPs have a unique bird's-eye view of Canada's labour market that could be invaluable to policymakers. CDPs should be seen as a key resource as governments address significant changes facing the workforce now and in the coming years. For example, their work helping students prepare for the labour market in post-secondary institutions means they have insightful perspectives on critical changes needed to Canada's education system. Additionally, their work directly with job seekers means they also have unique insights into the needs of workers, and critical changes needed to support meaningful employment. Lastly, CDPs are hungry for information about the future of work, and how they can support individuals to prepare, demonstrating their willingness and interest to support policy development. CDP engagement may be valuable in the following policy domains, as well as others:

- a. **Labour and economic development:** CDPs can provide critical insights into the experience and needs of current (and future) workers. This knowledge should be leveraged to support the design of worker-centred policies, labour market information sources, and employment programs.
- b. **Immigration:** CDPs have a long history of working with newcomers and have critical knowledge of the needs and experience of workers who are new to Canada. As employment is a key consideration in immigration policy, CDPs have critical insights that should be incorporated into the design and refinement of immigration programs and policies.



- c. **Education:** From K-12 to post-secondary, CDPs are deeply embedded in Canada’s education system, with in-depth knowledge of how individuals are supported throughout these systems to transition into the labour market. As curriculums are changed, evaluated, or developed, CDPs should be deeply engaged, providing their unique perspective on how it may support an individual’s pathway toward long-term employment.

This project used strategic foresight methodology and engaged career development professionals (CDPs) from across Canada through interviews and a bilingual workshop. The approach is described further in the main report, which outlines the methodology (Section 2), major changes impacting the future of career development in 2040 (Section 3), and three provocative scenarios developed to support the interrogation of the futures of career development (Section 4). Based on this exploration into possible changes to career development in 2040, career developers identified ways their profession might change, which are synthesized into a series of insights (Section 5), and inform three recommended focus areas (Section 6). This report concludes with a look at possible future research topics that may deepen understanding related to this topic.

Overall, the purpose of *Preparing for Possible Scenarios of Work and Careers* is to identify how the career development sector, advocacy organizations, and policymakers need to prepare for 2040 and beyond. While the purpose of this research project was not to predict the future, it is to help create greater understanding of the range of possible futures we might expect. In doing so, the aim of *Career Development in 2040* is to motivate action that ensures workers across Canada have the support they need to prepare and adjust to the futures of work.



*This report was written by Creative Futures Studio Inc., commissioned by CERIC. Creative Futures Studio uses applied strategic foresight methodologies to help organizations prepare for their futures.*

*For more details, see: [www.creativefutures.studio](http://www.creativefutures.studio)*

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