Reboot Plus Expansion

Interim Report

Blueprint

Table of Contents

About the Future Skills Centre

The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and are funded by thee Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

About Blueprint

Blueprint was founded on the simple idea that evidence is a powerful tool for change. We work with policymakers and practitioners to create and use evidence to solve complex policy and program challenges. Our vision is a social policy ecosystem where evidence is used to improve lives, build better systems and policies and drive social change.

Our team brings together a multidisciplinary group of professionals with diverse capabilities in policy research, data analysis, design, evaluation, implementation and knowledge mobilization.

As a consortium partner of the Future Skills Centre, Blueprint works with partners and stakeholders to collaboratively generate and use evidence to help solve pressing future skills challenges.
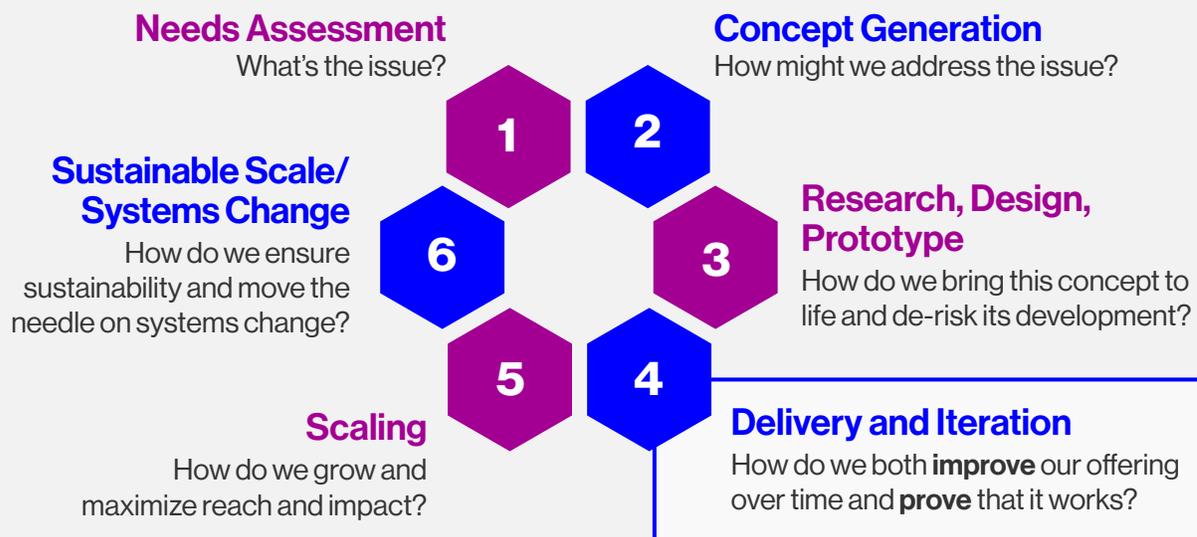
Preface

Canada's labour market is rapidly changing. To keep pace with these changes, Canadians need skills development opportunities that respond to demands and apply evidence-informed practices. Many skills development innovations have emerged to meet these needs, but they often face barriers to scaling their interventions beyond a pilot stage.

To address this challenge, the Future Skills Centre (FSC) and Blueprint launched the Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio**.**

In this initiative, FSC is partnering with 10 organizations with promising skills development interventions that begin scaling up their impact. As part of the FSC consortium, Blueprint is working closely with each grantee organization to generate evidence to support their scaling journey. This is an opportunity to disrupt the current "one study at a time" approach to evidence-building in favour of continuous evidence generation and program improvement. The hope is that this approach will better produce the quality and quantity of evidence needed to help promising interventions progress in their scaling journeys. For more information about Blueprint's approach to scaling, see our Scaling Social Innovation webpage.

Blueprint's evidence generation approach is aligned with the six-stage innovation cycle (see **Figure 1**). Our focus for the Scaling Portfolio is to work alongside partner organizations to generate evidence that helps move their interventions through **Stage 4** to **Stage 5**, with the ultimate goal of supporting sustainable scale and systems change (**Stage 6**).

Table 1 | The Six-stage Innovation Cycle

Needs Assessment
What's the issue?

Concept Generation
How might we address the issue?

Sustainable Scale/ Systems Change
How do we ensure sustainability and move the needle on systems change?

Research, Design, Prototype
How do we bring this concept to life and de-risk its development?

Scaling
How do we grow and maximize reach and impact?

Delivery and Iteration
How do we both **improve** our offering over time and **prove** that it works?
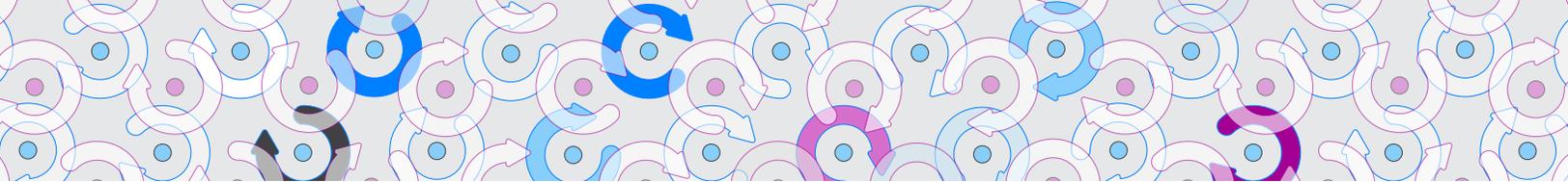
About this report

This *Interim Report* presents early findings from the Reboot Plus Expansion, a program designed to re-engage at-risk youth (aged 17 to 24) in education and career development by providing them with training and exposure to post-secondary education (PSE) and the world of work. The project also aims to raise employer awareness of and willingness to engage and employ this demographic.

The following interim findings are based on data collected by Blueprint and Douglas College (DC) from September 2022 to December 2023. A subsequent report will incorporate data from winter and fall 2024.

This work is part of Blueprint's contribution to the Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio, which involves collecting and monitoring interventions and capturing implementation stories and participant outcomes along their scaling journey. Our report is organized into five sections:

- **Introduction (pgs. 8–10)** describes the policy context related to at-risk youth, stages of the Reboot Plus intervention, and program partners.

- **About the Reboot Plus Expansion (pgs. 11–17)** outlines the goals and components of the scaling program.

- **Methodology (pgs. 18–21)** shares our approaches to evidence generation, learning agenda, data sources, and limitations.

- **Early insights (pgs. 22–31)** presents key findings on program uptake, experience, early outcomes, and implementation.

- **Conclusions (pgs. 32–33)** summarizes our findings and next steps for the program, our evidence generation activities, and future reporting.

Executive summary

This Interim Report presents early findings from the Reboot Plus Expansion: a program led by Douglas College (DC) and PEERs Employment and Education Resources and designed to re-engage and improve outcomes for youth (aged 17–24) at risk of not finishing high school or unsure of their academic and career trajectories. Via 16 weeks of classroom-based and off-site activities at participating college sites, Reboot Plus engages youth in career development and pathway planning support, raises awareness of this demographic among employers, and arranges for youth to meet with professionals and employers in their fields of interest.

College staff liaise with local school boards to recruit participants; enlist boards of trade and chambers of commerce to recruit professionals; and provide instruction to youth along with wraparound supports and ongoing, post-program assistance. The curriculum takes a holistic, flexible, low-pressure approach, incorporating principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, experiential learning, Universal Design for Learning, and Hope-Centred Career Development while introducing youth to several career theories to accommodate diverse learning styles.

After operating the program successfully for several years in BC, DC received Future Skills Centre funding in 2022 to bring the model to three new provinces in partnership with Bow Valley College (AB), Humber College (ON), Fanshawe College (ON), and the College of the North Atlantic (NL). Expanding the geographic reach and size of the populations served would test the scalability and portability of the model and expand the support to vulnerable youth.

This work is part of Blueprint's contribution to the **Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio**, which involves collecting data on the Reboot Plus Expansion and capturing implementation stories and participant outcomes along its scaling journey. Findings are based on administrative data, survey data, and interviews with program participants, employers, and program staff, collected by Blueprint and DC from Sept. 2022 to Dec. 2023. We include longitudinal analysis of surveys to assess changes in participant skill levels from the start to the end of the program.

Early findings reveal promising results:

- The program reached **186** youth at risk of not graduating high school and those requiring support in their transition out of high school. Participants faced mental health challenges and/or family responsibilities leading to their disengagement from the education system.

- According to Facilitators, most participants (**71%–90%**) finished their capstone action plans and remained engaged throughout the program. Surveys revealed that **77%** of youth respondents reported having attended over **61%** of classroom sessions.

- Respondents were highly satisfied with the program: **86%** found the program useful, **89%** enjoyed it, and **90%** would recommend it to others. Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with individual components: **83%** agreed that it had a reasonable schedule and **81%** felt it had clearly explained objectives. Respondents felt their Facilitators were knowledgeable (**95%**), presented concepts clearly (**95%**), promoted discussion (**98%**), were well organized (**91%**), and flexible (**86%**).

- In interviews and diary studies, respondents felt the curriculum offered a well-structured approach and enhanced their career awareness and confidence through self-discovery (personality tests and skills assessments), exposure to college facilities (motivating high school completion and further education), and career exploration (job insights, guest speakers, and informational interviews). The in-person format

fostered self-confidence, peer socialization, and accountability, and Facilitators were praised for their supportive, empathetic, and non-judgmental approach, meeting youth 'where they were.'

- Most participants agreed that the program met its objectives (**84%**) and helped them achieve their goals (**76%**); **82%** indicated an intention to apply what they learned to future studies and **91%** indicated an intention to apply skills they learned to future work and careers. Most showed indications of improved soft skills in general self-efficacy, interpersonal communication competencies, and job clarity.

- In qualitative feedback, respondents noted increased confidence in tackling life situations, more positive feelings, and better clarity about their career-related goals. Several interviewees in high school reported an increased resolve to earn their secondary diploma and map a clearer pathway to doing so.

- Employers and professionals reported increased awareness of this group as a talent pool: **87%** agreed that they would support youth in attaching to the workplace and **86%** agreed that they would be willing to introduce such youth to their colleagues. Professionals appreciated the opportunity to discuss professions with youth and inspire them to make informed decisions. They shared that the program helped them learn about this demographic and build their awareness of existing programs.

- Some professionals mentioned they were exploring other ways to engage youth in their organizations and connect with youth in their areas. Some publicly advocated for the program and expressed interest in remaining involved in future program iterations.

- Facilitators praised the detail and flexibility of the curriculum, which provided sufficient material and instructions for classes but allowed room for adaptation. Facilitators offered wraparound supports in the form of assistance with transportation, subsidized food, and access to other college facilities.

- Staff noted effective recruitment strategies for participants, including through signing agreements with school boards, granting high school credits for completing the program, and marketing campaigns. Partners successfully recruited professionals to participate in the program with the help of chambers of commerce and professional associations.

Stakeholders identified the following opportunities for improvement:

- Some participants recommended including more 'operational information' or practical guidance (e.g., which specific educational programs to attend).

- Professionals indicated that they would have been able to impart more useful information had they known more about individual participants' interests.

- Despite having wraparound supports in place, some participants experienced challenges attending program sessions due to transportation and scheduling constraints.

- Colleges had varying success levels in their recruitment efforts; some described the process of signing an MoU with school boards as complex and time consuming.

- Staff from most colleges described having insufficient time to prepare for recruitment due to funding delays, leading to an unanticipated workload impacting their recruitment.

- Sites in remote areas highlighted some logistical costs with wraparound supports.

These differences in experience are worth considering should the program grow to different locations. Upcoming reports will incorporate data from winter and fall 2024 and provide more thorough analyses and greater insights for future iterations.
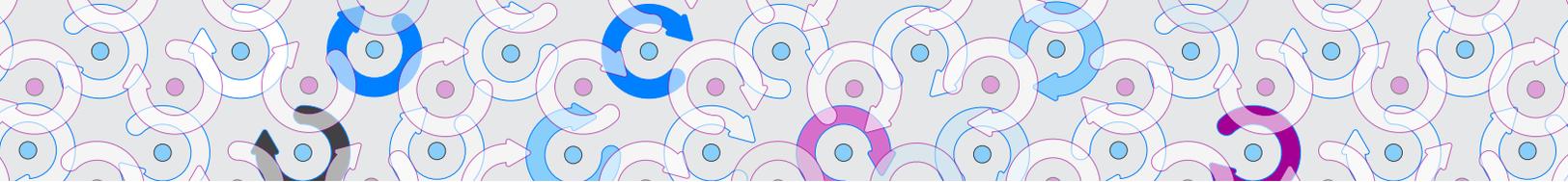
1. Introduction

In 2023, approximately 11% of youth in Canada (aged 15–29) were neither in employment, education, or training,[1]—a group often called "NEET youth" (Not in Employment, Education or Training), "opportunity youth," and/or "disconnected youth."[2] Because of their lack of work and education experience, these young adults face increased risks of long-term economic difficulties and significant labour market barriers.[3] Youth without high school diplomas are particularly at risk of becoming NEET; according to Statistics Canada, 37% of Canadian youth without secondary diplomas were NEET in 2018-19.[4] Moreover, NEET youth often come from disadvantaged, racialized communities with limited resources and few local opportunities.[5] Many of these individuals want to work,[6] but without accessible training and support options, they frequently find themselves outside of employment, education, and training for long periods.

To help address these challenges, Douglas College (DC) and the Burnaby School District in British Columbia (BC) partnered in 2015 to design the 'Education Reboot' training program. Education Reboot combined a flexible delivery approach with in-class curriculum to offer a bridge to post-secondary education (PSE) for youth who were not on track to completing high school. The program ran for three years (2015–2018) in BC while expanding its goals, intervention length, and number of school district partners and students reached.

In 2020, the Future Skills Centre (FSC) provided innovation stream funding to help expand Education Reboot into its second generation, 'Reboot Plus.' This version was delivered in three semester-style 'cycles' (each lasting approximately 16 weeks) through an expanded partnership between DC, the Burnaby and Surrey School Districts,[7] PEERs Employment and Education Resources, and the Boards of Trade in Burnaby and Surrey, BC. Reboot Plus continued to connect youth at risk of not finishing high school with PSE options while a) engaging them in career development and pathway planning support; b) raising awareness of this demographic among employers; and c) providing opportunities for youth to meet with and discuss career pathways with employers and professionals specializing in their fields of interest.

Given these early successes—and given the model's potential to meet Canada's pressing skills needs and its feasibility to scale—the program was selected as one of 10 interventions to form FSC and Blueprint's **Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio**. In 2022, partners received FSC funding for a third generation of the program—called the 'Reboot Plus Expansion'—which brought the model to three new provinces in partnerships with Bow Valley College (Alberta), Humber College (Ontario), Fanshawe College (Ontario), and the College of the North Atlantic (Newfoundland). Expanding the geographic reach and size of the populations

1 Statistics Canada. (2024, May 14). *Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET).* https://www160.statcan.gc.ca/prosperity-prosperite/neet-eng.htm

2 The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2024). *Who are opportunity youth?* https://www.aecf.org/blog/who-are-opportunity-youth

3 Davidson, J., & Arim, R. (2019, November 1). *A profile of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Canada, 2015 to 2017.* Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019020-eng.htm

4 Statistics Canada. (2019, July 5). *The transition from school to work: the NEET (not in employment, education or training) indicator for 20- to 24-year-olds in Canada.* https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/81-599-x/81-599-x2019001-eng.htm

5 Cukier, W., Mo, G. Y., Karajovic, S., Blanchette, S., Hassannezhad, Z., Mohamed, E., & Higazy, A. (2023, March). *Labour market implications for racialized youth.* Future Skills Centre and Ted Rogers School of Management Diversity Institute. https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-03-Labour-Market-Implications-for-Racialized-Youth.pdf

6 Blueprint. (2018). *Towards a better understanding of NEET youth in Ontario: Findings from the "Made in Ontario" NEET Youth Research Initiative.* https://global-uploads.webflow.com/5f80fa46a156d5e9dc0750bc/5fd223a5e5a89c9087781f02_NEET-draft-DEC2020.pdf

7 Though not primary partners in the early years, New Westminster, Maple Ridge, Langley, and Richmond School Districts became involved prior to the expansion.

served would test the scalability and portability of the model and expand the availability of support to vulnerable youth. **Box 1** (below) provides a summary of program leads, partner organizations, and individual roles.

This *Interim Report* investigates early findings from the scaling of the Reboot Plus Expansion to these four colleges. It reports on cycle 1 (fall 2022), cycle 2 (winter 2023), and cycle 3 (fall 2023), explained in greater detail in Section 2. About the Reboot Plus Expansion.

Box 1 | Program leads and partners

Douglas College (DC). As project lead, DC works with all partners to support and monitor project delivery at each site; ensures completion of all required research activities; and oversaw data collection, analysis, and reporting for cycles 1 and 2. DC employs a **Project Partnership Coordinator** who supports the Reboot Plus Expansion, working collaboratively with post-secondary institutions and project partners, and acting as the key contact for operational, program delivery, and research implementation issues.

PEERs Employment & Education Resources. Co-leads and manages the program with DC; oversees employer outreach and partnerships with the Boards of Trade; and maintains an employer database.

Post-secondary institutions implement and deliver the program and support research activities led by DC or Blueprint.

- Bow Valley College (AB)
- Douglas College (BC)
- Fanshawe College (ON)
- Humber College (ON)
- College of the North Atlantic (NL)

At each college site, there are five core roles:[8]

- **Program Manager.** Oversees the overall program, manages staff, budget, and research. Liaises with school districts, boards of trade/chambers of commerce, and the larger college community. Runs local team meetings and participates in national project group meetings.
- **Facilitator.** The primary contact for participants. Delivers the Reboot curriculum, co-develops participant learning and action plans, administers assessments, and provides Essential Skills training. Works in tandem with the Career Liaison in both in-person and hybrid modes.
- **Career Liaison.** Identifies and recruits professionals for informational interviews and guest speaking. Develops workshop materials, conducts training sessions, and provides one-on-one career coaching. Works closely with the Facilitator in planning and delivering the program.
- **Research Site Supervisor.** Responsible for survey administration and data collection. Ensures Research Ethics Board (REB) protocols are followed and maintains data confidentiality.
- **Community Marketing and Outreach:** Supports the Career Liaison in promoting and marketing the project, identifying potential employers and professionals for informational interviews.

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8 These are the recommended roles for each college; in practice, not every college site had all five roles, and in some instances, one individual held more than one role.

Box 1 | Program leads and partners

Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce. Representatives from boards and chambers promote the program to the public; promote the participants' areas of interest; and identify/encourage professionals within their membership and business networks to participate in the program.

- Burnaby Board of Trade (BC)
- Surrey Board of Trade (BC)
- London Ontario Chamber of Commerce (ON)
- Bay St. George Chamber of Commerce (NL)

Local professionals and employers. Provide informational interviews to youth participants, sharing their career journeys and work experiences. They also serve as research subjects themselves.

School districts. District representatives identify and refer potential participants and may provide additional support or resources as needed. At individual schools, **administrative staff** secure buy-in from teachers and counsellors for project participation, sign participation agreements, and liaise with the college Program Manager to resolve inter-institutional issues. **Teachers and counsellors** support youth participants by encouraging participation and attendance. They may attend program sessions and advise the Facilitator and Career Liaison on any issues affecting participants' performance.

- Burnaby School District (BC)
- Maple Ridge School District (BC)
- New Westminster School District (BC)
- Surrey School District (BC)
- Richmond School District (BC)
- Thames Valley District School Board (ON)
- NLESD – Newfoundland & Labrador English School District (NL)

2. About the Reboot Plus Expansion

2.1. Program goals

Reboot Plus is an innovative education and career development model designed to re-engage and improve outcomes for youth (aged 17 to 24) who experience barriers to school and work and to shift employer perspectives about this population's potential as employees. Specifically, Reboot Plus aims to:

- Reconnect youth at risk of not graduating from high school or becoming NEET to career prospects and educational pathways.
- Increase youth confidence, sociability, and self-efficacy.
- Develop employers' understanding of atypical youth.

2.2. Process

In **Table 1** (below), the 'preliminary phase' row describes the foundations for the Reboot Plus Expansion at each new college site. The next row, 'participant journey,' describes how participants are introduced to and enrolled in the program.

Table 1 | Reboot Plus Expansion foundations and participant journey

Preliminary phase				
Staff training	Partnerships and agreements	Curriculum and logistics	Research and enrolment protocols	Outreach and promotion
College staff receive a *Program Manual* and *Facilitator's Guide*. Staff are expected to review these materials to understand the program structure, objectives, and delivery methods. The *Program Manual* emphasizes the importance of staff training in various principles outlined in Section 2.3.	The *Program Manual* outlines the importance of establishing formal partnerships with local school districts, boards of trade, and chambers of commerce. It recommends signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with school boards to clarify roles and responsibilities.	The *Facilitator's Guide* provides a detailed curriculum that Facilitators familiarize themselves with. It indicates that classroom and office space, as well as technological logistics, including tools and resources for both Facilitators and participants, must be secured.	The *Program Manual* specifies the need to apply for REB approval for conducting research involving participants. A Research Site Supervisor must be appointed to manage this research component and establish clear registration protocols for participant.	The *Program Manual* mentions the need to develop participant recruitment and promotional materials and encourages attendance at Board of Trade events and connection with the local business community to create awareness. Outreach efforts, including social media posts and website updates, are recommended to promote the program in the community.

Participant journey	
1. Identification and referral	Staff from participating school districts identify students aged 17–24 at risk of not completing high school. High school teachers and counselors refer these students to the Reboot Plus program and encourage their participation. For youth who have recently graduated from high school without a clear vision for their future, alternative referral pathways include social services, community or school-based support programs, friends, family members, and self-referral.
2. Program introduction and registration	Participants learn about the program through information sessions (in-person or online, group or one-on-one), individual phone calls, and emails. Interested individuals complete a registration form provided by Facilitators.
3. Assessment and enrolment	Facilitators conduct intake interviews to assess participants' interests, motivation, and basic language skills.
4. Program participation	Enrolled participants attend classes at one of the college sites. The program follows a 16-week curriculum (adapted to 12 weeks for some cohorts), with two two-hour classes per week, which may be delivered in-person, online, or in a hybrid format depending on participant needs.[9] Classes are led by the Facilitator and supported by the Career Liaison; both staff members are employed by the program.

As discussed in further detail in Section 2.3, the program adopts a flexible, inclusive approach, meeting youth 'where they are' without imposing disciplinary pressure on performance or attendance. Participants are encouraged to take part in as many activities as they can, with the understanding that they will not be penalized for missing such activities and they are welcome back to the program at any point during the same 'cycle' if they do.

9 In practice, all college sites delivered in-person classroom instruction for cycles 1–3. DC offered online sessions for individual students to catch up on missed classes.

Figure 2 provides a summary of each of the model components—class activities, action plans, employer and professional engagement, wraparound supports, school credits, and ongoing post-program support—in greater detail.

Figure 2 | Reboot Plus model component descriptions

Model component	Description
Curriculum: Skills development and career exploration	Participants engage in 16 weeks of activities, with two two-hour classes per week (which can involve both in-class activities and trips outside the classroom). The curriculum emphasizes three key phases: **i)** self-discovery and skills assessment; **ii)** education and career pathway exploration; and **iii)** connecting personal attributes to educational and career opportunities.
	There are no 'core' components; instead, DC provides a suggested weekly, chronological course schedule with detailed lesson plans including objectives, outcomes, detailed activities, suggested durations, resources, and beyond. Facilitators are encouraged by the *Facilitator's Guide* to adapt content and delivery of the classwork to their students' needs and interests. See **Appendix C** for a list of suggested topics.
	Class topics and activities include:
	• **Essential Skills training:** Participants develop crucial workplace skills identified by ESDC, enhancing their employability.
	• **Theory-informed instruction:** The Reboot Plus approach incorporates experiential learning, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Hope-Centred Career Development, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)—enabling participants to engage in self-reflection and envisioning and build confidence and agency in their career planning (see an expanded note on principles in Section 2.4.).
	• **Workforce preparation:** This includes resume and cover letter building; job search skills; interview practice; and understanding employment standards and workplace health and safety rights.
	• **Career exploration:** Participants complete self-assessments to identify their values, personality traits, interests, and skills; conduct research into career paths aligned with personal attributes; and develop their networking skills.
	• **Post-Secondary education exposure:** Participants explore admission requirements and pathways and are introduced to apprenticeship opportunities. Notably, participants receive at least two on-site campus tours.
	• **Soft Skills development:** The curriculum helps assess and build communication skills, emotional intelligence, and goal setting and planning.

Model component	Description
Action planning	Participants complete an **'action plan'** over the course of the program with guidance from Facilitators. This co-developed document outlines the students' next steps for education and/or career and can take various forms depending on the students' needs and comfort levels (some are PowerPoint decks, for example). The action plan is meant to be completed by the end of the program as a kind of 'capstone project.'
Employer and professional engagement	Once career interests are identified, participants receive opportunities to **connect with employers and professionals**, with the goal of setting up between **four and seven 45-minute informational interviews** for each participant in sectors and careers of their interest. Interviews may be conducted one-on-one or in small groups, depending on participant comfort levels.
Wraparound supports	Participants have access to **additional, flexible supports** as needed to encourage their attendance, including transportation vouchers for taxis and public transportation, supper club invitations, counselling, and beyond.
School credit	In some areas, participants who have not graduated from high school can receive a credit for one high school course by completing the Reboot Plus program. This is dependent on agreements between colleges and school boards. [10]
Ongoing support post-program	After program completion,[11] staff provide **check-ins** with participants and support with: • researching programs and schools; • writing school and job applications; • finding and applying for sources of funding for future education; • connecting with support services and student groups; and • preparing for interviews and maintaining employment once employed.

10 For example, participants may receive credit for the BC High School Career Life Connections course upon completion.

11 Each college noted that this was an ongoing service with no time limitations capping the support offered to participants post-program.

2.3. Principles of the model design

Addressing the needs of at-risk youth requires an approach that considers more than just employment. Evidence suggests that successful programs tend to include elements that help increase self-esteem and relationship-building skills alongside academic instruction. Multifaceted interventions that offer flexible, tailored, wraparound supports and address motivation and confidence-building skills can significantly improve engagement and outcomes, especially at key transition points for 16–18-year-olds.[12]

Part of the challenge in reaching this demographic is their struggles with school attendance.[13] Although not a homogenous group, many NEET youth express antipathy toward education. A psychosocial profile of NEET youth in Canada highlights some common challenges, including poor self-reported physical and mental health, high instances of mood and anxiety disorders, and low levels of life satisfaction.[14] They are also more likely to be from underprivileged and/or racialized communities[15] or Indigenous.[16] These students often require individual attention, experiential opportunities, and the ability to move through learning at their own pace.

In response, the Reboot Plus model takes a holistic approach, offering flexible, low-pressure environments. It incorporates principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), experiential learning, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Hope-Centred Career Development (HCCD), and introduces participants to a variety of career theories to accommodate a diversity of learning and engagement styles.

Holistic elements. By integrating holistic elements, Reboot Plus aims to help participants chart career pathways and improve self-esteem and interpersonal skills. The curriculum builds key communication and emotional intelligence skills while offering strategies to manage mental health challenges and build resilience. It also provides participants with opportunities to interact with employers and professionals in participants' fields of interest, as well as a range of supports designed to help youth re-engage with education and career development.

Flexible, low-pressure approach. The program's flexible delivery structure allows participants who step away to rejoin at any time during the cycle, ensuring continuous support without pressure. The program does not require completion of any activity or assignment and does not penalize participants for missing program elements.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Reboot Plus places significant emphasis on fostering inclusivity, diversity, and equity. Many participants belong to equity-seeking groups; given that some participants have experienced bullying or abuse, the program adopts a trauma-informed approach and provides comprehensive, individualized support. Rather than catering to a one-size-fits-all model, Reboot Plus acknowledges and honours the unique circumstances and experiences of each participant.

12 Learning and Work Institute. (2020, March). *Evidence review: What works to support 15 to 24-year olds at risk of becoming NEET?* https://learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Evidence-Review-What-works-to-support-15-to-24-year-olds-at-risk-of-becoming-NEET.pdf

13 Holliman, A., Schoon, I., Hurry, J., & Waldeck, D. (2023, April). Understanding and reducing NEET: Perspectives of schoolteachers and career advice service providers. Youth 3(2), 579–595. https://doi.org/10.3390/youth3020039

14 Davidson, J., & Arim, R. (2019, November 1). *A profile of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Canada, 2015 to 2017.* Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019020-eng.htm

15 Cukier, W., Mo, G. Y., Karajovic, S., Blanchette, S., Hassannezhad, Z., Mohamed, E., & Higazy, A. (2023, March). *Labour market implications for racialized youth.* Future Skills Centre and Ted Rogers School of Management Diversity Institute. https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-03-Labour-Market-Implications-for-Racialized-Youth.pdf

16 Blueprint. (2018). *Towards a better understanding of NEET youth in Ontario: Findings from the "Made in Ontario" NEET Youth Research Initiative.* https://global-uploads.webflow.com/5f80fa46a156d5e9dc0750bc/5fd223a5e5a89c9087781f02_NEET-draft-DEC2020.pdf

Experiential Learning is a core element; this approach posits that learning occurs through a process of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation—that individuals learn best when they engage in concrete experiences, reflect on their actions, develop new concepts, and then apply them through active experimentation. Learning is a cyclical process, where each stage is interdependent and contributes to the overall experience, fostering an understanding of the material being studied and enhancing personal growth and development.[17]

Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The Reboot Plus model is rooted in CAST's principles of UDL, which advocate for programs that centre the needs of learners—in this case, youth with economic and psychological barriers—and acknowledge that not all people are able to complete work in the same way. UDL accommodates this diversity by providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression, allowing learners to choose how they interact with content.[18]

Hope-Centred Career Development (HCCD). The Reboot Plus model places hope at the centre of career development, helping participants identify their values, interests, and skills to pursue future pathways with confidence. Key HCCD competencies include self-reflection, self-clarity, visioning, goal setting, planning, and adapting, aiming to foster resilience and positive attitudes. Curriculum activities progressively build upon one another, mirroring HCCD's emphasis on developing interconnected career competencies to help participants maintain a sense of agency and optimism as they explore careers and develop their skills.[19]

Introductions to varieties of career theories. The Reboot Plus curriculum introduces career planning through the lens of a variety of career theories, including Chaos Career theory.[20] Life-Career Rainbow theory,[21] and Planned Happenstance theory. [22]

17 Institute for Experiential Learning. (2024). *What is experiential learning?* https://experientiallearninginstitute.org/what-is-experiential-learning/

18 CAST (2024). *Universal Design for Learning guidelines version 3.0.* https://udlguidelines.cast.org/

19 Amundson, N. E., Goddard, T., Niles, S. G., Yoon, H. J., & Schmidt, J. (2016). *Hope centred career interventions: Research project – final report.* MixtMode, UBC, William & Mary, The George Washington University, & CERIC. https://ceric.ca/wpdm-package/hope-centred-career-interventions-research-project/?wpdmdl=19267&refresh=66bc48a978f3b1723615401

20 Chaos Career theory emphasizes the dynamic, unpredictable nature of career paths, noting that chance events and external influences significantly shape those journeys. Challenging notions of linear progression and certainty, it advocates for adaptability and resilience in the face of change and uncertainty. For more, see: Pryor, R. G. L., & Bright, J. (2003). The chaos theory of careers. *Australian Journal of Career Development,* 12(3), 12–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/103841620301200304

21 Life-Career Rainbow theory visualizes life as a rainbow; each arch represents a stage from birth to late adulthood. It posits that we play multiple roles simultaneously throughout life – such as child, student, worker, parent, and citizen. These vary at different life stages, each associated with specific career-related tasks and challenges. The theory emphasizes that our careers are dynamic, lifelong processes influenced by personal and environmental factors – that career choices are essentially expressions of self-concept, holistically evolving with other aspects of life. For more, see: Super, D. E. (1957). *The psychology of careers: An introduction to vocational development.* Harper & Bros.

22 Planned Happenstance theory emphasizes the role of chance events in career development, asserting that individuals can prepare for unplanned opportunities. Instead of attempting to predict a specific career path, individuals should develop skills that allow them to recognize and seize unexpected opportunities. Key skills include enhanced curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking, which enable individuals to navigate the unpredictable nature of life and work. For more, see: Mitchell, K. E., Levin, A. S., & Krumboltz, J. D. (1999). Planned happenstance: Constructing unexpected career opportunities. Journal of Counseling & Development, 77(2), 115–124. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1999.tb02431.x

2.4. Project timeline

In the current scaling phase, the Reboot Plus Expansion aims to assess program scalability to new contexts and identify key factors for successful implementation through local and national expansions. The goal is to apply a co-design approach to translate the values and ethos of the program to other sites and scale the program's reach.

RFPs were distributed to colleges broadly in 2022; recruitment delays meant only DC delivered the project in cycle 1 (fall 2022). By cycle 2 (winter 2023), four additional colleges had been recruited. Funding delays prevented two colleges from continuing in time for cycle 3 (fall 2023). By December 31, 2023, the three cycles of the program had reached 186 students. Two remaining cycles were scheduled for the winter and fall of 2024, the results of which will be covered in an upcoming report.

Table 3 | Project timeline

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Timeline	Fall 2022	Winter 2023	Fall 2023
Length	16 weeks	16 weeks	12 weeks*
Delivery sites	Douglas College	Douglas College College of the North Atlantic Humber College Bow Valley College Fanshawe College	Douglas College College of the North Atlantic Fanshawe College

Note. Training was also shortened in cycle 3 due to the delay in the funding contract.
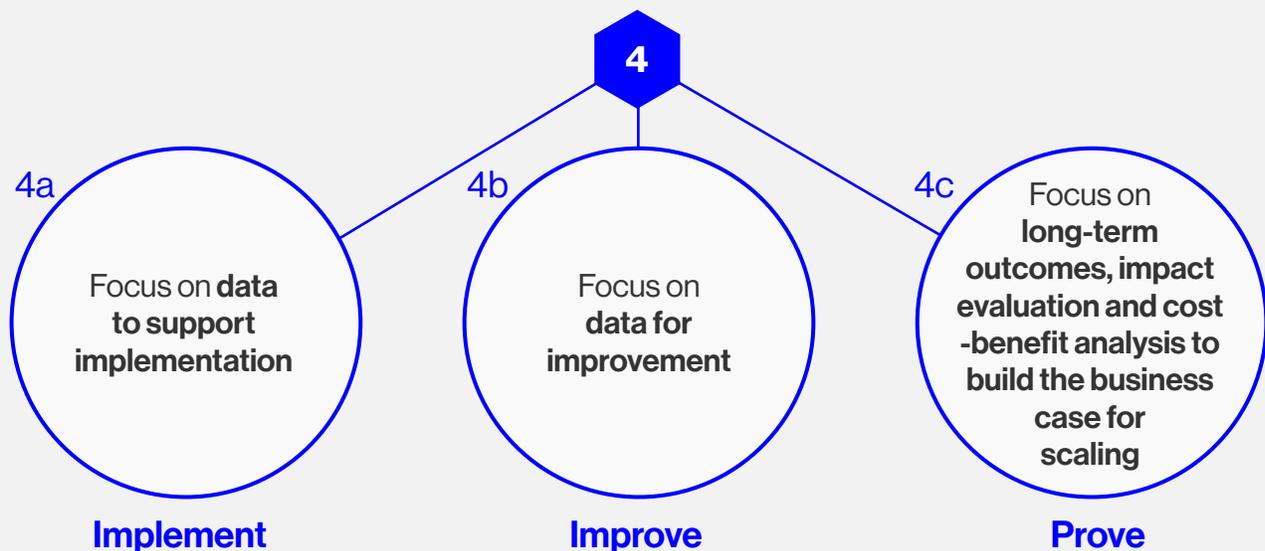
3. Methodology

3.1. Blueprint's evidence generation approach

Blueprint has developed a novel approach to evidence generation that fits within the six stages of the innovation cycle to support the scaling up of promising interventions. By understanding an intervention's stage of development, we can determine the most appropriate tools to advance it to the next stage. **Box 5** of the *Scaling Design Report* provides more details on our evidence generation approach.

Framed among the Scaling Up Skills Development Portfolio interventions, the Reboot Plus Expansion is in **Stage 4** of the innovation cycle, **Delivery and Iteration**. Stage 4 is further broken down into three levels of delivery maturity: *Implement, Improve*, and *Prove* (see **Figure 3**). Because the Reboot model has already been delivered for years and is now expanding delivery to new geographies, we categorize it at **Stage 4b** of the innovation cycle—Improve— where evidence generation is focused on data to support continuous improvement.

Figure 3 | Phases of Delivery Maturity

4a	4b	4c
Focus on **data to support implementation**	Focus on **data for improvement**	Focus on **long-term outcomes, impact evaluation and cost-benefit analysis to build the business case for scaling**
Implement	**Improve**	**Prove**

Our measurement approach includes indicators that are specific to Reboot Plus model as well as common indicators drawn from our Common Outcomes Framework (see **Box 2**).

> **Box 2 | Common Outcomes Framework**
>
> Our measurement approach includes indicators that are specific to an intervention as well as a set of common indicators that are measured for every intervention in the Portfolio.
>
> These common indicators are drawn from Blueprint's Common Outcomes Framework, which was developed in consultation with our partners and was informed by review of employment-related outcomes frameworks and measurement approaches both within Canada and internationally. They include:
>
> - Intermediate outcomes that reflect 'in-program' participant experiences and gains (e.g., program satisfaction and skills development).
> - Long-term outcomes such as employment and educational attainment.
>
> Using a consistent approach to measuring outcomes is part of our commitment to understanding how each intervention in the Portfolio is reaching people across Canada and allows us to measure long-term outcomes using Statistics Canada's Social Data Linking Environment.
>
> For more information on Blueprint's Common Outcomes Framework, see **Appendix A**.

3.2. Learning agenda

This Interim Report answers the following questions:

- **Program uptake.** Is the program reaching its target group?
- **Participant experience.** Do participants persist in the program and complete key components? Are participants satisfied with their experience in the program? What are the program's strengths and areas for improvement?
- **Early outcomes.** What early outcomes are youth achieving following participation in the program? Did employers and professionals become more aware of this youth population as potential job candidates?
- **Program implementation.** How did the program's implementation vary across sites and over periods? How effective were participant and professional recruitment strategies?

3.3. Data sources and sample sizes

Blueprint gathered quantitative and qualitative data to answer our questions. We used a combination of administrative data, survey data, and qualitative data, including 45–60-minute Zoom interviews with program participants, employers, program staff, and partners. We include longitudinal analysis of surveys to assess changes in participant skill levels from the start to the end of the program. A paired t-test was used to assess differences, and Cohen's d was used to measure their strength.

DC and Blueprint shared data collection activities, with Blueprint assuming the role of research lead and conducting participant interviews for cycle 3. **Table 2** outlines the data sources used, organizations collecting the data per cycle, and participant responses for each.

Table 2 | Data sources

Data source	Cycles and data collection party	No. of participants and/or responses	Description
Program administrative data	Cycles 1, 2, and 3: All colleges	186 participants	Collected and shared by colleges on the number of participants who enrolled and participated in at least some capacity in the program.
Participant baseline survey	Cycles 1 and 2: DC Cycle 3: N/A*	82/153 (54%)	Administered to participants at the beginning of the program, which included socio-demographic information and pre-training self-assessment of general self-efficacy, job clarity, and interpersonal communication competence.
Participant exit survey	Cycles 1 and 2: DC Cycle 3: Blueprint	67/173 (39%)	Administered to participants at the end of the program to gather socio-demographic characteristics and included post-training self-assessments of general self-efficacy, job clarity, and interpersonal communication competence.
Employer/	Cycles 1, 2, and 3: DC	96 responses**	Anonymized survey administered by career liaisons to employers and professionals each time they presented as guest speakers in the classroom or participated in informational interviews with participants to understand their perspectives on recruiting and hiring youth.
Participant interviews	Cycle 3: Blueprint***	8 participants	Conducted with youth participants identified by Facilitators as interested in being interviewed (seven participants at DC and one at CNA) to understand their program experience and outcomes.
Staff/partner interviews	Cycle 2: Blueprint****	6 participating organizations	Conducted with staff and partners from the five colleges and PEERs to understand their program experience.

*No baseline survey was administered for cycle 3 due to a delay in the funding agreement.
**Note that since individuals could participate in the program more than once, they could also receive the survey more than once.
***DC conducted participant interviews for cycles 1 and 2 but the data were not included in this report
****No staff/partner interviews were planned for cycles 1 and 3.

 In an upcoming report, Blueprint will gather and analyze survey responses from participants three and nine months after the program. This ability to track medium- to long-term outcomes will allow us to draw comparisons between experiences at the start of the program, throughout the journey, and beyond its completion date.

3.4. Data limitations

Blueprint has identified some limitations of the interim data.

- **Generalizability of quantitative findings.** Low survey response rates (<50%) mean feedback cannot be generalized to all program participants (i.e., the diversity of their perspectives may not be fully reflected in the data). Surveys were optional; many participants did not complete them, and among those who did, many did not answer all the questions, resulting in missing information and different sample sizes for each. To boost enrolment and survey responses in the winter 2024 cycle, Blueprint implemented a default opt-in consent approach: participants were automatically enrolled in research upon registration but could opt out later if they wished.

- **Comparative data analysis.** Survey designs were adjusted between the first two cycles (designed by DC) and the third cycle (designed by Blueprint). The third cycle was also reduced in length due to administrative and funding delays, resulting in a 12-week rather than 16-week program. These differences may create some comparative limitations.

- **Perspectives in the interview data.** The youth participants we interviewed were identified by Facilitators as being highly engaged or as having completed most or all parts of the program; this could mean perspectives are drawn from participants with higher enthusiasm for the program than others.

4. Early Insights

4.1 Program uptake

Is the program reaching its target group?

The program reached 186 youth across five sites and three cycles, as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3 | Program enrolment

	DC	Bow Valley	Fanshawe	Humber	CNA	Totals
Cycle 1	28	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	28
Cycle 2	48	25	36	11	5	125
Cycle 3	21	N/A	7	N/A	5	33
Totals	97	25	43	11	10	186

Source. Administrative data.

The program reached its target demographic of youth at risk of not graduating high school and those requiring support in their transition out of high school. Survey data show the mean age of participants was **19** and that they possessed numerous characteristics of the target population:

- **45%** indicated that someone in their household was on government assistance;
- **35%** were on government assistance themselves;
- **31%** had an overall negative experience of school;
- **39%** contributed financially at home; and
- **12%** self-identified as gender diverse (e.g., gender non-binary, transgender), 37% self-identified as belonging to visible minority groups, and 19% as Indigenous.

Table 4 provides a demographic profile of the sample across all sites.

Table 4 | Participant socio-demographics

Item	Response	% of sample
Age	<17 years	16% (13/83)
	17–20 years	54% (45/83)
	20–24 years	27% (22/83)
	24 years or greater	4% (3/83)
	Mean age	**19**
Gender	Boy/man	47% (41/88)
	Girl/woman	40% (35/88)
	Gender non-binary	9% (8/88)
	Other (Transgender, Two-spirited)	3% (3/88)
Ethnic groups	Visible Minority	37% (31/83)
	Indigenous	19% (16/83)
Life status/ experience	Employed	24% (21/88)
	Contributing financially at home	39% (26/66)
	Someone in household on government assistance	45% (28/61)
	Participant on government assistance	35% (11/31)
	Very or somewhat negative overall experience of school	31% (21/67)

Source. Baseline and Exit surveys

Participants faced mental health challenges and/or family responsibilities that led to their disengagement from the education system. In interviews, staff and partners discussed the psychological and practical challenges students faced, contributing to their low attendance at schools. As one interviewee described:

> "[These participants] have trouble with depression or anxiety; they have trouble getting out of bed and going to school. They might have been bullied at school, so they stayed home. These [are] people [who] … sort of get left out of the conventional secondary education system."

—Project staff/partner interview

Youth participants we interviewed described challenges such as social anxiety and bullying, which were exacerbated by COVID-19. Other participants expressed a lack of clarity about their career pathways and practical skills and their concerns about navigating adulthood before joining the program. Most participants were enrolled in alternative schools, and most indicated that the standard educational system was not meeting their needs—either because it was too rigid and demanding or too flexible and lacking sufficient structure and discipline.

4.2. Program experiences

Do participants persist in the program and complete key components?

According to Facilitators, most participants finished their action plans and remained engaged throughout. Colleges did not share a consistent definition of program 'completion.' Each Facilitator had the freedom to define 'completion' as it suited them. According to the staff we interviewed, however, Facilitators typically defined completion as a) completion of the 'action plan' capstone project; and b) consistent engagement throughout activities.

Based on these definitions, the overall 'completion rates'—based on administrative data gathered from all sites and cycles—ranged from **71%** to **90%**. Survey data revealed that **77%** of youth respondents reported having attended over **61%** of classroom sessions. As many participants had attendance issues in high school, these numbers imply highly successful rates of engagement. Partners indicated that some high school teachers were quite surprised to hear from Facilitators that their students were still in the program.

As discussed, Reboot Plus places zero disciplinary pressure on youth regarding their performance, or attendance, to help rebuild their trust in the school system. This allows them to choose their optimal levels of engagement. As mentioned in the *Program Manual*, "the project serves no common denominator but rather respects the particularity of each participant's experience."

Are participants satisfied with their experience in the program? What are the program's strengths and areas for improvement?

Respondents were highly satisfied with the program; 86% 'somewhat' or 'strongly' agreed that they found the program useful overall, **89%** 'really' or 'mostly' enjoyed the program, and 90% 'somewhat' or 'strongly' agreed that they would recommend the program to others (as shown in Table 3, below).

Respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with individual elements of the program's design. The majority agreed that the program had a reasonable schedule (**83%**) and clearly explained objectives (**81%**). Survey respondents agreed that their Facilitators were knowledgeable (**95%**), presented concepts clearly (**95%**), promoted discussion and participation (**98%**), were well organized (**91%**), and flexible (**86%**). **Table 5** presents the spectrum of survey responses capturing participant satisfaction.

Table 5 | Rates of participant satisfaction

Program satisfaction		Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
					Sum of agreement options	
Program design	The program fits well into my schedule.	0%	7% (3/41)	10% (4/41)	39% (16/41)	44% (18/41)
					83% (34/41)	
	The program's objectives were clearly explained.	0%	5% (2/37)	14% (5/37)	41% (15/37)	41% (15/37)
					81% (30/37)	
Facilitators	The instructor was knowledgeable about the subject matter.	0%	0%	5% (2/38)	24% (9/38)	71% (27/38)
					95% (36/38)	
	The instructor presented the concepts and material clearly in a way that helped me understand.	0%	5% (2/43)	0%	33% (14/43)	63% (27/43)
					95% (41/43)	
	The instructor promoted discussion and participation.	0%	0%	2% (1/43)	23% (10/43)	74% (32/43)
					98% (42/43)	
	The instructor was well organized and kept activities on track.	0%	0%	9% (4/43)	47% (20/43)	44% (19/43)
					91% (39/43)	
	The instructor was flexible and able to adjust the materials to meet my individual needs.	0%	0%	14% (6/43)	30% (13/43)	56% (24/43)
					86% (37/43)	
Overall satisfaction	I found the program useful.	0%	0%	14% 6/43	35% (15/43)	51% (22/43)
					86% (37/43)	
	Overall rating of the program	Really did not enjoy it.	Mostly did not enjoy it.	Neither enjoyed nor	Mostly enjoyed it.	Really enjoyed it.
		2% (1/43)	5% (2/43)	5% (2/43)	42% (18/43)	47% (20/43)
					88% (38/43)	
	I would recommend the program to other students.	0%	0%	9% (4/43)	37% (16/43)	53% (23/43)
					91% (39/43)	

Source. Exit survey

In interviews, participants noted that the program's curriculum was well-structured and valuable for informing their career journeys, and that it boosted their awareness and confidence by helping them reflect on their skills, interests, and plans. Elements interviewees found particularly helpful were:

- the self-discovery process, enabled through personality tests and skills assessments;

- the access and exposure to college facilities and programming, which provided them with more tangible goals for their educational journeys, incentivized them to complete high school, and consider further education; and

- the career exploration components, where participants learned about different jobs, job availability, and wages in their regions and attended guest speaker sessions and informational interviews. Respondents highlighted that these interviews gave them the positive reinforcement they needed to better understand their professions of interest, learn how to enter specific sectors, and be more committed and motivated in their job search.

Participant interviewees also highlighted that the in-person format of the program was helpful and described it as fostering self-confidence, socialization with peers, and accountability (e.g., to ensure they arrived on time and were present for activities).

We also gathered positive feedback about Facilitators during participant interviews that reinforced the high rates of satisfaction captured in the survey. The youth we spoke to frequently described them as helpful, caring, empathetic, supportive, and non-judgmental. These interviewees particularly appreciated that Facilitators met them 'where they were' by positively reinforcing small successes, such as attending class.

Respondents noted some areas for improvement. While expressing appreciation for the program, some respondents noted there was a disproportionate focus on addressing motivations; to improve, they recommended including more 'operational information' or practical guidance (e.g., which specific educational programs to attend, what additional concrete steps to take in their job search, and so forth). In some instances, the matching process with professionals did not meet the participants' interests; professionals echoed this sentiment and indicated that they would have been able to impart more useful information had they known more about the individual participants' interests and motivations. Additionally, despite having wraparound supports in place, some participants still experienced challenges attending the program sessions due to transportation and scheduling constraints (e.g., some needed to coordinate with their high school to leave early to arrive at the program sites on time).

4.3. Early outcomes

> **What early outcomes are youth achieving following participation in the program?**

The program was not designed to help youth find employment or enrol in further education immediately. As such, this *Interim Report* does not analyze employment or education outcomes; such analysis will follow in an upcoming report. Instead, we focus on participants' early outcomes in soft skills and awareness of employment and career options.

The program shows promising early outcomes. Most respondents 'somewhat' or 'strongly' agreed that the program met its objectives (**84%**) and helped them achieve their goals (**76%**). **Eighty-two percent** indicated an intention to apply what they had learned to future studies and **91%** indicated an intention to apply skills they had learned to future work and careers. **Table 6** shows the spectrum of responses to prompts around program outcomes.

Table 6 | Participant rates of satisfaction on program outcomes

Prompt around program outcomes	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
				Sum of agreement options	
I believe the program achieved its objectives.	0%	0%	16% (6/38)	45% (17/38)	39% (15/38)
				84% (32/38)	
The program met the goals that I had when I started.	5% (2/38)	3% (1/38)	16% (6/38)	39% (15/38)	37% (14/38)
				76% (29/38)	
I intend to apply what I learned during the program to my future school/ college studies.	5% (2/39)	3% (1/39)	10% (4/39)	46% (18/39)	36% (14/39)
				82% (32/39)	
I intend to apply what I learned during the program to my future work/ career pursuits.	0%	0%	9% (4/43)	49% (21/43)	42% (18/43)
				91% (39/43)	

Source. Exit survey.

Most participants reported a more positive outlook on their future education and careers and showed indications of improved soft skills. The program aimed to increase participants' general self-efficacy, interpersonal communication competencies, and job clarity through the curriculum and cohort design and through access to PSE resources.

Below, we present quantitative measurements of participants' soft skills as indicators of the program's early outcomes. Using validated scales in both the baseline and exit surveys to track individual responses for comparisons, participants were assessed on their self-reported:

- **general self-efficacy:** describing optimism when dealing with difficulties in life and the belief that one's actions can be responsible for good results.

- **interpersonal communication skills:** including self-disclosure, empathy, social relaxation, assertiveness, interaction management, altercentrism, expressiveness, supportiveness, immediacy, and environmental control.

- **job clarity:** indicating clarity in career goals, pathways, and job search strategies.

We identified respondents who completed their self-assessments in each skill in both the baseline and exit surveys. We averaged scores of all measures in both surveys then calculated the difference between the average scores in each. We analyzed the proportions of respondents whose change in scores was positive (>0), negative (<0), and nonexistent (=0).

As shown in **Table 7**, we observed some average increases in the scores for all three skill areas, with at least half of respondents showing improvement in their soft skills overall. See **Appendix B** for a description of the measures in each scale and more detailed calculations.

Table 7 | Changes in scores

		General self efficacy	Interpersonal communication competence	Job clarity
No. of respondents whose change in scores was ...	Positive	58% (26/45)	50% (22/44)	65% (28/43)
	Negative	33% (15/45)	41% (18/44)	21% (9/43)
	Nonexistent	9% (4/45)	9% (4/44)	14% (6/43)
Average change in scores		0.21 (p=0.007)	0.07 (p=0.367)	0.31 (p=0.006)

Source. Exit survey.

We also explored participants' attitudes toward their educational and career paths in interviews. Respondents attributed to the program increased confidence in tackling everyday life situations, more positive feelings, and better clarity about their education goals related to their desired careers—whether in trade programs at colleges or through degree-based programs at the university level, many of which were new opportunities they had not previously considered. Several interviewees in high school reported an increased desire and resolve to earn their secondary diploma, noting how it was a crucial step toward achieving broader educational, career, and personal goals. Some were able to map a clearer pathway, including the specific courses (or number of credits) to take within the next six to 12 months.

Participants described early program outcomes in the following ways:

> "Before, I didn't really [understand] the process of going to school and getting a degree. I had no idea. But now I feel like I know … what I have. [Facilitators] were asking, 'Oh, what degree do you have to get to be a social worker? What education do you have to get?' And so, I have a better idea."

—Participant interview

> "[Reboot Plus gave me] a lot more direction and a lot more ambition. When it comes to a career or hobby, I found it just reaffirmed what I need to do for my next steps and [it got] me back onto a level that is more … on pace [to where] I needed to be. It kind of gave me a reality check of some sort that [it] was necessary to keep on pursuing … just life in general and finding out what I'm passionate about, really. And hearing from experts that you know I'll be fine, and [that] in the long run, I have the sort of capabilities, technical capabilities to be whatever I want and do whatever I want."

—Participant interview

> "It just gives me more insight into the way the world works. All the presenters were interesting, and the informational interviews were definitely beneficial in helping me progress in what I would want out of a college experience or what I would want out of my hobbies and passions."

—Participant interview

Did employers and professionals report an increased awareness of this demographic of young people as potential job candidates?

Employers and professionals embraced the program and reported increased awareness of this group as a potential talent pool. Among participating professionals who completed the post-participation survey, **87%** agreed that they would be motivated to support youth in attaching to the workplace and **86%** agreed that they would be willing to introduce such youth to their colleagues. As one staff partner described:

> "When you tell [employers] the type of program you're supporting and what it's all about, I think employers … want to be a part of that … it wasn't a hard sell at all."

—Staff interview

In open feedback fields in the surveys, professionals appreciated the opportunity to interact with the youth, discuss their professions, and inspire them to make more informed career decisions. They emphasized the importance of programs like Reboot Plus in providing youth with the right guidance at a critical age. Professionals also shared that the program helped them learn about this youth demographic and their potential, as well as build their awareness around the existing programs that help support this group in their career development.

Some professionals mentioned they were exploring other ways to engage youth in their organizations and connect with youth in their areas. Some also publicly advocated for the program (e.g., at conferences and on social media) and expressed interest in remaining involved in future program iterations. As one participating professional stated:

> "This program brought youth into my field of view. I work with adults, so it was exciting and inspiring to talk to and listen to someone at this pivotal age. It reminds me how much youth need guidance from those who went before them."
>
> —Professional interview

4.4. Program implementation

How did the program's implementation vary across sites and over periods?

The program's curricula and wraparound supports were successfully implemented at the new college sites over the three cycles. The Reboot Plus Program Manual stresses flexibility, responsiveness to individual capacities and needs, and holistic supports as 'core' components of the program; as such, scaling sites were encouraged to adapt expectations from students and supports offered to meet population needs.

In interviews, staff and partners noted successful adoption at each scaling site, with each college providing slightly different activities within the curricula and wraparound supports to participants as per their unique requirements. College Facilitators praised the comprehensiveness and flexibility of the curriculum, as it provided sufficient material for each class but allowed room for adaptation. They also found the clear and detailed curriculum instructions in the *Facilitator's Guide* helpful for class implementation.

Staff mentioned using the following wraparound supports for participants based on their needs:

- **Support with transportation** (e.g., Presto cards, taxi and public transportation vouchers) to enable attendance and to foster self-confidence and socialization.

- **Subsidized food** to facilitate socialization among participants and incentivize those living in low-income households to engage in the program.

- **Access to college facilities** (e.g., Learner Services Centres, libraries, gyms, etc.).

Scaling sites operating in remote areas (e.g., at some CNA and Fanshawe campuses with large catchment areas) highlighted some logistical costs associated with providing wraparound supports. Some Facilitators felt overwhelmed by the additional workload of providing such support while managing multiple roles in program delivery. These differences in experience are worth considering as the program grows and evolves to different locations.

How effective were recruitment strategies for participants and professionals?

Colleges noted several effective recruitment strategies for participants. According to partner interviews, the following recruitment strategies were most effective:

- **Partnerships with school boards.** Three of five colleges signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with school boards; these school boards proved to be effective in facilitating participant recruitment.

- **Academic credits.** Granting a high school credit for completing the program helped incentivize participant registration. This was facilitated through partnerships with local school boards.

- **Marketing campaigns.** Two participating colleges implemented marketing campaigns that included social media advertisements, posters inside the schools, and a press release to draw attention to the program and recruit participants.

- One of the college's marketing campaigns was more effective than the other, thanks to its size, which included ads on Facebook, Instagram, digital screens on campus, and CBC Radio, and shared by community partners and via a press release.

Colleges also identified roadblocks for participant recruitment. These included:

- **Capacity constraints.** Colleges with sufficient staff capacity tended to have more orchestrated, elaborate recruitment strategies that involved social media campaigns and press releases. Others relied primarily on support from school boards. Due to these differing strategies and capacity levels, colleges had varying success levels in their participant recruitment efforts.

- **Administrative processes.** While collaboration with school boards assisted with recruitment, partners described the process of signing an MoU with these boards as being complex and time consuming as it required some degree of negotiation and lengthy administrative processes. Some reported that it was difficult to pitch Reboot Plus vis-a-vis more established programs already being sponsored by the school boards. Even though these established programs were clearly distinct from Reboot Plus in terms of mission and scope (e.g., addressing labour market transitions, not personal interests and career pathways), school boards had such busy agendas that it was difficult to find windows of opportunity to pitch them and generate sufficient buy-in. Two colleges could not complete these administrative processes before the end of the recruitment period and thus could not benefit from this support.

- **Ramp-up time and workload.** Staff from most colleges described having insufficient time to prepare for recruitment due to funding delays, which led to what the recruitment staff described as "an unanticipated workload" that impacted their ability to attract participants.

Partners successfully recruited professionals to participate in the program with the help of chambers of commerce and professional associations. In interviews, partners noted that they leveraged the mailing lists of local chambers of commerce and professional associations to recruit professionals to participate in the program, which they felt was the most effective method of doing so.
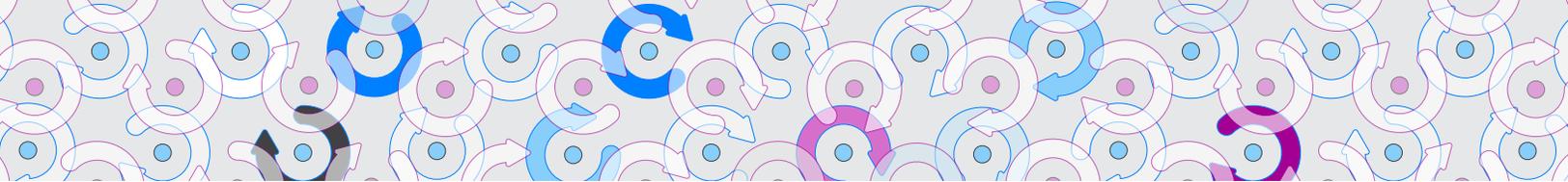
5. Conclusions

5.1. Summary of findings

As of December 2023, the Reboot Plus Expansion was delivered to 186 participants across five colleges in four provinces, targeting youth at risk of not graduating high school or needing transition support—and facing various challenges leading to educational and/or career disengagement. Early data show promising findings, including:

- **High completion and engagement rates.** Participants had high levels of satisfaction with the program overall and with its various components, praising the self-discovery process, college exposure, and career exploration components.

- **Encouraging early outcomes for youth.** Participants agreed that the program met its objectives and helped them achieve their goals. Most reported improved outlooks on future education and careers, along with enhanced soft skills (general self-efficacy, interpersonal communication competence, and job clarity). They attributed increased confidence, clearer educational goals, and better career pathways to the program.

- **Encouraging outcomes among employers and professionals.** Local professionals reported increased awareness of youth as potential talent and expressed willingness to support their workplace attachment. They appreciated the opportunity to interact with participants and inspire more informed decisions. Some advocated for the program themselves and were open to further involvement in future iterations.

- **Successful implementation strategies.** Staff and partners noted successful adoption at each scaling site, the ability to provide a variety of wraparound supports, and curriculum flexibility, allowing for adaptation to local needs. Effective recruitment strategies included offering secondary academic credits, through marketing campaigns, and by signing MoUs with school boards. Professionals and employers were recruited successfully through leveraging local chambers of commerce and professional associations.

Early findings provide us with an example of a slightly unconventional approach to scaling. Instead of focusing on fidelity to—and replication of—rigid program components, the Reboot Plus model centres flexibility and adaptability. This approach is guided by evidence-informed principles and best practices for engaging and improving outcomes for at-risk youth, who often require customized attention, holistic programming, wraparound supports, and reduced pressure to attend and participate. While maintaining a set of general guidelines, Reboot Plus allows Facilitators to adjust their delivery based on their own participant base, partnerships, locations, and other contextual factors. As our data are indicating, this combination of flexible curriculum, college-based tours, interviews with and exposure to local professionals and employers based on interest and need, and responsive wraparound supports is having a positive effect on at-risk youth in considerably different contexts—from Vancouver to Newfoundland and Labrador.

5.2. Next steps

Upcoming reports investigating the Reboot Plus Expansion will include data from cycle 4 (winter 2024) and cycle 5 (fall 2024), in addition to the first three cycles discussed here. Future publications will provide a more thorough analysis of the program and offer greater insights and recommendations for future iterations.

Future reports should also resolve certain data limitations. First, our default opt-in consent approach (automatically enrolling participants in research upon registration with the opportunity to opt out anytime afterward) may increase our survey response rates. Moreover, no further adjustments (or hand-offs) to survey designs are necessary—as Blueprint will continue as research lead for cycles 4 and 5—to ensure consistency in data collection.

Moving forward, it will also be important to understand the perspectives of youth who do not complete the program and to gather additional information about participation and engagement rates. However, due to several characteristics of at-risk youth (who exhibit low attendance and engagement, have experienced multiple changes within the school system, and so forth), gathering this data may pose a challenge.

Upcoming reports can also better investigate recommendations made by participants, employers/professionals, and staff/partners. Participants sometimes recommended including more practical guidance and better professional matching, for example. Staff/partners noted some challenges around logistical costs in remote catchment areas and workload concerns for Facilitators providing wraparound support while delivering curricula. In addition, some colleges faced delays in signing MoUs with school boards, limiting their success with participant recruitment. Blueprint will continue to investigate these opportunities to improve the way Reboot Plus is scaled effectively.

Appendix A
Common Outcomes Framework

	Outcome	Indicators
Socio-demographics	Sex & Gender	Sex at birth
		Self-identified gender
	Age	Age
	Location	Province
		Region & Municipality
	Marital status	Marital status
	Children & Dependents	Children
		Dependents
		Household size
	Household Income	Household income
	Education	Highest credential obtained
		Location of highest credential attainment
	Indigenous Identity	Self-identified Indigenous identity
	Francophone status & languages spoken	First language spoken
		Official languages
		Language spoken at home
		Other languages spoken (At home)
	Citizenship Status	Place of birth
		Year of arrival
		Citizenship status
	Racial identity	Self-identification as member of racialized group
	Disability	Self-identified disability
Employment status and history	Employment	Employment status
		Nature of employment (permanent, temporary, full/part-time)
	Earnings	Hours worked / week
		Wages
		Annual earnings
	Industry and occupation of employment	NAICS code of job
		NOC code of job
	Work history	Time since last employed
		NOC code of job
		NAICS code of job
	Income source	Income sources

	Outcome	Indicators
Intermediate outcomes	Program completion	Successful completion of planned activities
	Participant satisfaction	Satisfaction with program
		Perceived Utility of Program
		Likelihood to recommend
Customized intermediate outcomes	Skills gains	Measured gains in specific skills
	Program-specific credential attainment	Attainment of program-specific credentials
Long-term outcomes	Employment and retention	Employment status
		Nature of employment (permanent, temporary, full/part-time)
		Retention
	Earnings	Hours worked / week
		Wages
		Annual earnings
	Benefits	Presence of benefits including: Paid leave, Health and dental coverage, Pension plan
	Industry and occupation of employment	NAICS code of job
		NOC code of job
	Job Satisfaction	Satisfaction with job
		Perceived opportunity for career advancement
		Perceived job security
	Enrolment in further education	Enrolment in further education
		Type of training
		Field of study
	Credential attainment	Attainment of high school or PSE credentials
		Field of study credentials

Appendix B
Soft skills measurements

Table B1 | General Self Efficacy (GSE) measures

GSE measures Not at all true (1), Hardly true (2), Moderately true (3), Exactly true (4)	Pre-program mean (SD)	Post-program mean (SD)	Difference in mean
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	3.22 (0.60)	3.31 (0.60)	0.09
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	2.76 (0.71)	3.00 (0.56)	0.24
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	2.73 (0.69)	2.88 (0.78)	0.14
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	2.82 (0.75)	3.24 (0.65)	0.42
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	2.84 (0.77)	3.20 (0.76)	0.36
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	3.22 (0.67)	3.42 (0.66)	0.20
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	2.73 (0.67)	3.05 (1.08)	0.31
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	2.71 (0.82)	2.96 (0.71)	0.24
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	3.00 (0.60)	3.07 (0.65)	0.07
I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	3.04 (0.82)	3.10 (0.69)	0.06
Average	**2.91 (0.51)**	**3.12 (0.48)**	**0.21 (p=0.007)**

Source. Baseline and exit surveys. N=45

Table B2 | **General Self Efficacy (GSE) measures**

ICC measures Almost never (1), Seldom (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Almost always (5)	Pre-program mean (SD)	Post-program mean (SD)	Difference in mean
I allow friends to see who I really am.	3.91 (1.10)	3.89 (0.95)	-0.02
I can put myself in others' shoes.	3.75 (0.89)	3.89 (0.87)	0.14
I am comfortable in social situations.	3.14 (0.98)	3.00 (0.91)	-0.14
When I've been wronged, I confront the person who wronged me.	3.27 (1.11)	3.27 (1.21)	0.00
My conversations are pretty one-sided.	2.82 (0.72)	2.75 (0.92)	-0.07
My conversations are characterized by smooth shifts from one topic to the next.	2.89 (1.08)	3.18 (1.02)	0.30
My friends can tell when I'm happy or sad.	3.52 (1.07)	3.61 (0.95)	0.09
My communication is usually descriptive, not evaluative.	3.20 (1.02)	3.52 (0.66)	0.32
My friends truly believe that I care about them.	4.16 (1.06)	4.05 (0.91)	-0.11
I accomplish my communication goals.	3.27 (1.15)	3.43 (1.02)	0.16
Average	**3.39 (0.63)**	**3.46 (0.51)**	**0.07 (p=0.367)**

Source. Baseline and exit surveys. N=44

Table B3 | Job Clarity measures

Job Clarity measures Strongly disagree (1), Somewhat disagree (2), Neutral (3), Somewhat agree (4), Strongly agree (5)	Pre-program mean (SD)	Post-program mean (SD)	Difference in mean
I have a clear idea of the type of job I want.	3.47 (1.16)	4.00 (0.98)	0.53
I have a clear idea of where I want to work.	3.09 (1.19)	3.67 (1.04)	0.58
I do not have very clear job search objectives.	2.93 (1.10)	2.33 (0.99)	-0.60
I have a clear idea of the type of company I want to work for.	3.07 (1.20)	3.44 (1.26)	0.37
I have a clear idea of the type of work I want to do.	3.49 (1.22)	4.16 (0.84)	0.67
Average	**3.21 (0.77)**	**3.52 (0.65)**	**0.31 (p=0.006)**

Source. Baseline and exit surveys. N=43

Appendix C

Program curriculum

	Topic	Description
Week 1	Orientation and onboarding	Introduction to course content and to the college environment
Week 2	Introduction to communication	Exploration of foundational communication skills for employment and networking contexts.
Week 3	Communication continued	Continued exploration of foundational communication skills and development of a "30-second speech"
Week 4	Information interviews and skills	Introduction to the purpose of information interviews, exploration of different communication strategies, and identification of skills using Transferable Technical and Personal Management skills checklists. The first guest speaker is brought to the class.
Week 5	Introduction to essential skills, values and interests	Participants are introduced to new essential skills and are taught to define their own skillset in different contexts and frameworks.
Week 6	Industries research and Workplace Essential Skills Assessment (WESA)	Introduction to the primary industries in each province and matching of participant interests and abilities to potential careers.
Week 7	Values and advanced 30-second speech	Exploration of participants' values and matching of these values to potential careers.
Week 8	National Occupational Classification Codes (NOC) and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment	Continued exploration of possible career areas and exploration of their MBTI types as they relate to possible careers.
Week 9	MBTI and essential skills exploration	Introduction to document use skills and continued exploration of MBTI concepts.
Week 10	Goals and skills portfolio	Continued exploration of document use, introduction to and practice of goal setting using a SMARTER Goals guide.
Week 11	Wellness and emotional intelligence	Reflections on emotional intelligence, identification of areas of strength and areas in need of attention, and introduction to mindfulness.
Week 12	Post-secondary	Exploration of post-secondary institutions, including discussion of costs, requirements, program options, and application processes. Participants take part in a college recruiting session and in a tour of the host college.
Week 13	Post-secondary tours	Guided tours of two new post-secondary schools.
Week 14	Cover letters, resumes and introduction to job interviews	Introduction to and practice developing resumes and cover letters, drawing self-assessment of skills and interests explored in previous weeks.
Week 15	Job interviews and action plans	Job interview practice, including key words on company websites that signal alignment with company cultures. Introduction to basic rules of employment and rights and responsibilities through the Employment Standards website.
Week 16	Action plans and celebrations	Final reflections and conclusions of action plans.

Source. Facilitator's Guide.
Reboot Plus Expansion