

## LEVELLING UP: THE QUEST FOR DIGITAL LITERACY

*Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship releases new report identifying the existing gaps and potential opportunities to improve digital literacy in Canada*

TORONTO, June 19, 2018 – Digital literacy—and the skills and capabilities that it comprises—is vital for achieving economic prosperity, access to public services and social well-being, according to a new report titled [\*Levelling Up: The Quest for Digital Literacy\*](#) by the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship (BII+E) with support from the Ontario Government.

The first of its kind, this report maps the landscape of digital literacy policies and programs across Canada. It explores the types of digital skills people are pursuing, the barriers to access, as well as the existing gaps and potential opportunities to improve digital literacy education and training.

"Digital skills and capabilities have become critical for Canadians to fully participate and be productive in an increasingly digital economy," said Sean Mullin, Executive Director of the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship. "Yet, navigating Canada's dynamic landscape of digital literacy training and education is complicated, even for the most digitally savvy learners. As a country, we need to think critically about how to enable more widespread and equitable access for all our citizens."

### Report Key Findings:

- + Digital literacy, and the skills and capabilities that it comprises, continues to evolve as technology becomes more all-encompassing, forcing people to remain up-to-date to facilitate civic and social participation, access public services, and succeed in a digitizing economy.
- + While coding is an in-demand digital skill, learning specific coding languages is not enough in today's evolving digital environment. Curricula should also include the more transferable skills associated with computational thinking and computer science theory needed to understand, use, and create digital tools and products. Advanced training may also involve skills related to data science, cybersecurity, digital production and creative arts, machine learning and artificial intelligence.
- + There is a wide array of digital literacy education and training programs available, some entirely within the formal K-12 and post-secondary education system and others led by nonprofit and private sector actors working alongside, and sometimes in partnership with, schools, colleges and universities.
- + However, the landscape of opportunities for learning digital skills is fragmented and difficult for some learners to navigate, even those that are digitally savvy. In their quest for digital literacy development, learners are moving between educational sectors, programs and fields, building career and learning

pathways that may pivot and take sharp turns or—in some cases—missteps.

- + Many people in Canada are at risk of falling through the cracks, with low levels of digital literacy continuing to overlap with other aspects of socioeconomic marginalization, including low incomes, low literacy and numeracy rates, and remote and un-networked communities.
- + Canada suffers from a digital divide despite public funding commitments for Internet, hardware and training. Consistent digital access (to hardware, software, Wifi and data) and training in digital skills are foundational requirements for building and maintaining digital literacy and confidence using technology.

*Levelling Up* is a follow-up report to the BII+E's discussion paper, [Digital Literacy in a Digital Age](#), published in August 2017, which provided a working definition of digital literacy and tested thinking and insights. It also contributed to the [Digital Literacy + Coding Pilot](#), a community-based model for delivering digital skills training to youth in Ontario that has the potential to scale across the country.

The report includes research from more than 90 semi-structured interviews with experts and practitioners working across Canada and examines how learners navigate existing programs, as well as the challenges they face in developing digital literacy. It also looks at the roles of organizations and educational institutions within the digital literacy sector and shares trends in curricula, including program models for people of all ages, gathered from provinces and territories throughout the country.

*The Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship (BII+E) is a new, independent and nonpartisan institute, housed within Ryerson University, that is dedicated to making Canada the best country in the world to be an innovator or an entrepreneur. BII+E supports this mission in three ways: insightful research and analysis; testing, piloting and prototyping projects; enlivened by policy innovation. For more information, visit [brookfieldinstitute.ca](http://brookfieldinstitute.ca).*

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