



Newfoundland and Labrador Employment in 2030 Action Labs: Regional Summary



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A special thank you to all of the workshop participants who contributed their lived expertise and energy to help job seekers and workers better prepare for the future labour market in Canada.

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Introduction

Employment in 2030 was an 18-month initiative that combined futures research, expert workshops, and a machine-learning algorithm to generate a forecast of skills demand and occupational growth in 2030. The project was summarized in the Brookfield Institute's *Ahead by a Decade* (Spring 2020). The intent of the original initiative was to fill a gap in Canada's labour market information (LMI) by providing a skills-based forecast that was responsive to changing labour market conditions across the country.

Given the Brookfield Institute's mandate to make research practical and applied, Employment in 2030 Action Labs (herein referred to as "Action Labs") was designed to build on the original initiative and to translate this labour market forecast (in addition to other sources of LMI) into tangible solutions that could help workers prepare for their future. With funding from the Future Skills Centre, this project launched in fall 2020.



Given the diversity of Canada's labour market and worker experiences across the country, this project sought to generate region-specific solutions that would ideally have replicability and scalability to other contexts. To accomplish this, we partnered with five organizations:

- + Yukon University (Whitehorse, Yukon),
- + RADIUS SFU (Vancouver, British Columbia),
- + Tech Manitoba (Winnipeg, Manitoba),
- + Observatoire compétences-emplois (Montréal, Québec), and
- + Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre (Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador).

The following summary describes the Newfoundland and Labrador Action Labs.

About Action Labs

Action Labs included three project phases. The first phase focused on exploring the impact COVID-19 may have on Canada's labour market, and how that may impact current projections. To do this, we conducted futures research and engaged a national panel of experts to provide feedback on emerging trends and their potential impact. This phase culminated in the release of *Yesterday's Gone: Exploring possible futures of Canada's labour market in a post-COVID world.*

The second phase entailed a series of human-centred design workshops that started by reviewing existing LMI to identify a regional challenge area. After identifying the challenge, we conducted interviews with living experts [see call out box] to gain a deeper understanding of the current experience, which led to two virtual workshops to translate the challenge into possible solutions. These challenge areas varied across regions.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Action Labs focused on supporting career practitioners to assist displaced, highly skilled mid- to late-career (40+ years) job seekers to explore future-oriented skills and new, alternative careers in order to facilitate career transitions. For more details about the design of the workshops, see our workshop design [commentary](#).



What is a living expert?

Every day, each of us uses the skills and experience we possess to solve challenges. These skills and experience are part of our “expertise” and the result of our lived experiences, education, and training. While we may each take a different approach to tackle a challenge based on our expertise, problem-solving is a shared human experience, a skill we are all required to use on a daily basis. This project invited participants to bring their expertise, as a living expert, to explore and suggest ideas that respond to the regional challenge.

The third and final phase focused on translating our process into LMI insights, which led to the generation of a series of considerations and ideas about how we might redesign LMI in the future to be more worker-centric. This information is summarized in *Ground Control to LMI: Making Labour Market Information Work for Workers.*

Selecting the Newfoundland Regional Challenge

We started with the broad research question of “How might we identify practical solutions that help workers across Canada gain the foundational skills and abilities, identified by the *Forecast of Canadian Occupational Growth* (FCOG), critical for the future of work?” We worked with Newfoundland and Labrador Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC), along with a number of labour market experts, career practitioners, and other stakeholders in Newfoundland and Labrador to identify a promising focus area based on the regional labour market in the province.

A regional analysis of the FCOG told us that over 45 percent of workers in occupations projected to decline are between 45 and 65 years old. In addition, there is a rapidly-changing economy in Newfoundland and Labrador where there are a number of highly skilled, displaced job seekers from the aerospace, oil and gas, and construction sectors. In some cases, employers and job seekers are challenged to assess and communicate their skill requirements and existing transferable skills respectively.



And while there are a number of programs to support job seekers in Newfoundland and Labrador, delivered by the regional offices of the Department of Immigration, Population Growth, and Skills, Employment Options and a number of other employment assistance services, there are none specifically designed to target the needs of mid- to late-career job seekers particularly related to career transitions.

**Regional challenge question:
How might we support career practitioners to support displaced, highly skilled mid- to late-career (40+ years) job seekers to explore future-oriented skills and new, alternative careers in order to facilitate career transitions?**

Understanding the Challenge

Working with NLWIC, the Brookfield Institute first interviewed three career practitioners to understand their experiences. We shared edited summaries of these interviews, in the form of short videos, with all workshop participants in order to ground our understanding of the challenge in the perspectives of living experts. Based on the interviews, a number of key insights emerged:

- + Brainstorming or fluency of ideas is an important skill for mid- to late-career job seekers to develop, in order to explore and be open to other career possibilities
- + Financial supports and income are important considerations for career transitions
- + Technology and computer skills are really important
- + Mid- to late-career job seekers want to see other people who have made the transition
- + Mid- to late-career job seekers find it difficult to think about transferable skills outside of their current industry



Using this information as a foundation, the Brookfield Institute facilitated a two-part workshop series with 10 participants in Newfoundland and Labrador on June 2 and June 17, 2021. The individuals who participated in the workshop series represented a diversity of perspectives—career counselling practitioners, as well as representatives from industry associations, indigenous programs, training providers, and government stakeholders.

A focus on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI): Working closely with our partners at RADIUS SFU, we incorporated a JEDI approach to our workshop design. This included setting a series of community commitments and expectations at the beginning of the workshop to ensure each participant understood and was committed to creating an environment of respect. This was particularly important given that our process intentionally engaged a diversity of participants, including “users” with lived experience related to the challenge area. This also resulted in an overall shift in the language we used, avoiding suggestions that the challenges these workshops sought to address would be “solved” and that a “solution” was not necessarily the workshop goal or a required contribution of participants.

To better understand the challenge, we asked all participants to consider the current experience of the community we were designing for—career practitioners who support mid- to late-career job seekers. We asked participants to consider the current experience of career practitioners to understand what they might think and feel, see, say and do, and hear in relation to the challenge. We also asked participants to summarize, overall, what is working well and what is the most frustrating. Because of the multi-faceted nature of the challenge, responses to the questions represent the perspective of career practitioners and the perspective of mid- to late-career job seekers. Here is a summary of what we heard:

What career practitioners think + feel:

- + How can I help my clients get from Point A to Point B (new employment)?
- + How can I guarantee my clients a job?
- + Where can I find labour market information to help clients?
- + What specific skills need to be developed?
- + How do I best match diverse skills to the needs of the future (and what are the needs of the future?)

What mid- to late-career job seekers think + feel:

- + Defeated, stuck, and like they don’t have anything to offer in a different sector
- + “I don’t have the financial resources to pay for new career or career pivot”



- + “How can I support my family during the re-skilling process?”
- + Fear, uncertainty, and anxiety over re-skilling
- + Employers are not going to invest in them because they want a younger skilled-up person
- + “Can I still learn?”

What career practitioners hear:

- + “What are my skills?”
- + “What kind of jobs could I do? How can I transfer my skills?”
- + “What skills or education do I need to get a job? Where can I go to retrain?”
- + “How will I pay my bills while I retrain? How will I support my family while I retrain? Is there funding for me to re-skill?”
- + “What program suits my needs?”
- + “How long will this take?”

What mid- to late-career job seekers hear:

- + “I don’t have current digital skills”
- + Job opportunities are limited here

What career practitioners say + do:

- + Help link job seekers with financial support for any necessary training
- + Explore client skills and match to future jobs

What mid- to late-career job seekers say + do:

- + “Where can I find jobs that match my skills?”
- + “Can I still learn?”
- + They want to do self-directed learning
- + They look and ask for help
- + Pick career options that will enable access to funding (not necessarily best option)

What career practitioners see:

- + Lack of confidence in job seekers
- + Job seekers want to work fulfilling jobs and to support themselves and their family
- + Hard work, perseverance, and dedicated time management skills
- + Resources that exist in silos (e.g., training not connected to funding available)
- + Digital skill challenges (e.g., job seekers need support to set up email addresses and access online job ads)
- + Increasing numbers of late-career job seekers looking to transition
- + Potential for growth for their clients through a mapping of existing skills to new opportunities



What mid-to-late career job seekers see:

- + Big changes in job market and dominant sectors
- + An almost overwhelming amount of information to deal with in terms of career direction
- + That younger workers are being presented with more opportunities.
- + That there is not a one-stop shop

Overall, what is working well for mid- to late-career job seekers:

- + There are assistance programs and some financial assistance available for retraining and internship programs
- + More options for people looking to reskill through micro-credentials
- + Willingness to learn and interest in exploring options

Overall, what is most frustrating for mid-to late-career job seekers:

- + Difficulty navigating the system
- + Don't know how to identify skills (only thinking about technical skills and not about other essential skills) and no clear path forward
- + Different support for women job seekers is needed (e.g., pathways for women in tech)
- + Limited digital skills
- + Mind shifts required to think about new options
- + Trying to qualify for funding when criteria is very strict
- + Difficult to network and talk to people doing other jobs
- + There is a mismatch between training / education programs that people want and the jobs available
- + Late-career job seekers do not want to spend three to four years studying as part of a career transition



Solution Criteria

Building on our understanding of the challenge, we asked workshop participants to develop a list of solution “must haves” to use as inspiration for identifying new ideas and solutions. Based on the discussions held in the various groups, what follows is the list of solution criteria.

In order to be successful, any solution must:

- + Be accessible, simple, user-friendly, customized, and individualized
- + Build connections and contacts in the community; build in support with real people to answer questions
- + Redefine funding criteria such as funding for mid-career jobs/internships and funding for the individual and not specific programs
- + Consider digital literacy and connectivity levels of participants as well as changes in job-search technology and expectations
- + Align with current LMI and provincial mega projects
- + Engage all relevant stakeholders (government, industry / employers, training institutions, and career practitioners)
- + Be scalable to reach wider audiences
- + Address any mental-health issues or supports needed

Initial Solution Ideas

Using these criteria and knowledge of the challenge, participants identified the following ideas as possible solutions to support career practitioners and / or mid- to late-career job seekers with career transitions:

1. Internship program or career trials for late-career job seekers
2. A visual map of career pathways for late-career job seekers
3. A skills-match app to link past experience and skills to in-demand alternative career options with connections to industry (also linked with LMI and future trends)

Other ideas discussed include:

- + Mentorship programs for late-career job seekers
- + Digital literacy programs for late-career job seeker
- + Virtual career expo or annual career / LMI research event
- + A weekly or monthly newsletter to provide up-to-date labour market information, information, news, jobs compiled for career practitioners
- + Targeted advertisements for job seekers (using public job postings and algorithms to reach late-career job seekers)



Developing and Refining Solutions

To further refine these ideas, participants developed a series of prototypes. Each group created a storyboard outlining how the solution would be used, allowing groups to clarify their ideas and identify areas for improvements. From there, groups explored further prototyping options including app designs and program outlines. Based on this exercise, participants clarified their solutions and identified possible implementation considerations.

Solution 1: Internship program or career trials for late-career job seekers

The group working on this idea identified a proposed length and format of the program so that participants could get hands-on learning and explore three different options. They proposed a 16-week program that involved the following components:

- + Four weeks of career options research at the beginning of the program
- + Three career internships for three weeks each in order to explore multiple options
- + Four weeks at the end of the program to debrief and reflect on the career options experienced and determine next steps to make a career transition.

How does this fill a gap? Mid- to late-career job seekers have limited access to “try out” new career options—this program would enable job seekers to explore a number of different options prior to committing to a new path.

Solution 2: Visual integrative career mapping website / app for late-career job seekers

The group working on this idea wanted to create a visual map of career pathways so that there is something concrete that a client could look at to understand where they are and where they want to be. The group ended up proposing a more interactive solution.

The proposed solution is a website or app that would integrate an individual’s skills, education, and prior experience, and combine that with LMI and potential opportunities. The group thought it could be a type of flowchart that would provide suggestions to job-seekers depending on the preferences they indicated; for example, whether work-integrated learning or a transition to another sector would be the best choice to put them on track to their desired career. The solution might also include examples of different people at various stages of their transition along with integrated links and checklists to assist with career transitions. The group anticipated that clients would still need hands-on support from career practitioners.



How does this fill a gap? Through this initiative, career practitioners told us that mid- to late-career job seekers may have difficulties imagining some alternative pathways. This solution is meant to help address this gap by providing different options along with additional information to assist job seekers with making informed decisions.

Solution 3: A skills map app to link past experience and skills to in-demand alternative career options with connections to industry (also linked with LMI and future trends)

The group working on this idea wanted a solution that links job seekers' skills to today's economy—jobs and career opportunities—so that displaced workers can see that they have other options. The group came up with a tagline for their solution— “Digitize, track, assess, connect. Report on skill gaps and opportunities today”. The group recommended that this would be a free, open-access tool used by career practitioners and job seekers and would have the following functionality:

- + Enter skills as an input and the app provides suggestions on occupations that match job-seeker skills
- + Links to job boards to show current vacancies
- + Links to opportunities for enhancing and gaining more skills through post-secondary education
- + Capacity for career practitioners to engage with the client via the app, looking at their profile and skills and history

How does this fill a gap? While career practitioners may already have access to some of the elements of this solution today, they don't have a user-friendly solution that integrates these elements together to support their clients.

Next Steps

There is interest in moving forward with all of the solutions identified, with 63 percent of participants indicating that they want to continue working on their ideas. Each solution would require partners and funding. The groups identified various potential partners such as employers for short internships, as well as the Labour Market Information Council (LMIC), career development organization CERIC, post-secondary institutions and NLWIC for the skills related tools. Further funding is required to pilot each of these ideas, as well as a landscape analysis to understand existing tools that could be improved to incorporate functionality needed to support mid- to late-career job seekers and career practitioners.



About the Regional Partner

Established by the provincial government in 2017 and administered by the College of the North Atlantic (CNA), the NL Workforce Innovation Centre (NLWIC) has a provincial mandate to provide a co-ordinated central point of access to engage all labour market stakeholders about challenges, opportunities and best practices in workforce development.

The Centre's goal is to promote and support the research, testing and sharing of ideas and models of innovation in workforce development that will positively impact employability, employment, and entrepreneurship within the province's labour force and particularly under-represented groups.

Funding for NLWIC is provided by the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills (IPGS) under the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Development Agreement.

Quick Links:

[Executive Summary](#)

[Ground Control to LMI](#)

[British Columbia Regional Summary](#)

[Manitoba Regional Summary](#)

[Rapport sommaire régional, Québec](#)

[Yukon Regional Summary](#)





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