



# Evaluation of the Workforce Development Agreements (WDAs)



## Program Objectives

The WDAs are a key mechanism to provide training and employment supports to Canadians. Under these bilateral agreements between the federal government and individual provinces and territories, financial support is provided for the design and delivery of programs and services to support individuals and employers.

The agreements aim to help participants get the training, skills, and work experience they need to improve their labour market outcomes. They include targeted funding for persons with disabilities as well as funding that can be used to serve members of other groups who are underrepresented in the labour market. The WDAs also allow for the provision of support to employers seeking to train employees.



## Evaluation Objectives

The evaluation had 4 main objectives:

- Describe the types of programs and services funded by the agreements and the delivery approaches.
- Identify the labour market needs and priorities that the agreements are being used to address.
- Examine the labour market outcomes observed for participants.
- Identify strengths and challenges associated with the design and implementation of the agreements.



## The WDA investment

The WDA investment includes:

- An on-going annual funding envelope of \$722M.
- An additional \$900M over 6 years from April 2017 to March 2023.
- An additional \$1.5B in the 2020 to 2021 fiscal year to support economic recovery.



## Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to address the evaluation questions:

- Five literature reviews.
- A document review.
- A national survey of 5,707 WDA participants.
- A British Columbia survey of 3,017 WDA participants.
- Sixty-four key informant interviews with:
  - ESDC officials.
  - Provincial and territorial representatives.
  - Service providers/caseworkers who work with persons with disabilities.
- An assessment of program data provided by provinces and territories.





## Key Findings

Participants in WDA programs and services increased their employment rate, hours worked and weekly earnings. Most survey respondents attributed these increases to their participation in WDA programs or services. Most also reported a high level of satisfaction with the programs and services they received.

The Evaluation Report also found that:

- Nearly 132,400 individuals participated in 291,200 WDA-funded programs and services in the 2020 to 2021 fiscal year.
- The agreements reached targeted participants, namely those who are unemployed or further from the labour market, as well as members of underrepresented groups.
- The employment rate of those who were unemployed pre-participation increased by 43 percentage points post-participation nationally and 62 percentage points in British Columbia.
- Twenty-seven percent of the national survey respondents reported working more hours post-participation. Of those, 73% attributed the increase in the number of hours worked to the program or service they received.
- While challenges were identified, almost all provinces and territories emphasized that the WDAs are, overall, flexible enough to meet their needs and to respond to their priorities.



## Recommendations

The evaluation made 3 recommendations:

- To support program and service delivery, ESDC and provinces/territories are encouraged to share and discuss the lessons learned, best practices and challenges associated with serving persons with disabilities and individuals who are further removed from the labour market.
- Building on existing flexibilities in addressing labour market challenges, ESDC and provinces/territories are encouraged to continue working to ensure that the WDA programming responds to the needs of the ever-evolving labour market and discuss ways to reach more individuals who are further removed from the labour market.
- ESDC and provinces/territories are encouraged to discuss what further steps could be taken to facilitate the collection of data necessary to assess the impact of the WDA programming and demonstrate the results to Canadians.