



Report

Knowledge Mobilization and Change Management for Employers

Youth Employment
COVID Recovery Supports

May 2023



About Us

Riipen is a Canadian Future of Work tech company with a mission to drive innovation economies by closing the skills gap, particularly for youth from underserved and equity-seeking communities. Riipen connects job-seekers and workers of all ages to employers from all sectors via employer-designed skills training projects (work-based learning projects) that enhance skills, enable strategic workforce development, and advance workforce diversity and inclusion. As the world's largest online platform for employer-designed project-based work placements, Riipen offers customizable, accessible skills training in a diverse range of modalities, personalized to the needs of both job-seekers/workers/learners and employers. By partnering with colleges, universities, and rapid-cycle training providers to provide accessible online training for employment-focused skills and technical/professional proficiency, Riipen solves the talent shortage problem for employers, while enabling job-seekers and workers to bridge from training to the workforce, enabling a more diverse workforce while powering inclusive economic growth for Canada.

Riipen has grown exponentially in the past two years due to unprecedented levels of demand for online skills training and the shift in employer skills needs. Since launching our platform in 2017, Riipen has successfully implemented upskilling, reskilling and job training projects, serving over 189,900 job-seekers, 27,800 employers, over 430 academic institutions and training providers in 9 countries, in both English and French.

Riipen's employer-designed work-based learning projects are skills-based, which is distinct from the generic list of to-do's or generic step-by-step guidelines one may find in a typical simulated workplace training tutorial/environment. We developed this model of delivery based on potential benefits for youth and employers. For youth, this approach improves not only learning, but also their ability to demonstrate skills, build employer networks, and land a job. For employers, it helps develop their capacity to innovate while working with youth, diversify their talent pipeline and improve human resource planning and career pathways, particularly for prospective youth employees from underserved communities.

Table of Contents

About Us	1
Table of contents	2
Project Overview	3
Developing a Framework for Knowledge Mobilization and Change Management in a COVID Recovery	
Research Goals and Questions	4
Outcomes of Knowledge Mobilization Scan and Research	5
Hypotheses to Be Tested	7
Methods and Evaluation Framework	9
Results from Data Collection Tools and Discussion	11
Impact of Employer-led Work-based Learning Projects on Employer Capacity	11
Scaling up the Delivery of Capacity-building Initiatives	12
Impact of Employer-led Work-based Learning Projects on Youth Employment	12
Organizational Maturity Change	13
Messaging Framework: Employer-centered Communication	14
Knowledge Mobilization Channels	15
Other Channels: Opportunities	16
Capacity Development that Supported Eliciting Behavioural Change	16
Leveraging Employer-focused Learning and Feedback – Opportunities	17
Youth Training and Access to Further Resources: Opportunities	17
Employers' Early Adopters & Innovators Profile	18
Generalizable KMb and Change Management Framework	20
Recommendations	26
Discussion	29
References	31
Annex 1 Project Boilerplate	32
Annex 2 Capacity Building Initiative (Level UP Program)	36
Annex 3 Summary of Aggregated Data	37

Project Overview

Developing a Framework for Knowledge Mobilization and Change Management in a COVID Recovery

In 2022, ESDC YESS commissioned Riipen to develop and launch a knowledge mobilization (KMb) and change management project with the goal of testing novel approaches to mobilizing knowledge that would elicit meaningful change in employers' behaviours and practices.

Specifically, this project aimed to develop a KMb and change management framework to support the adoption of solutions among youth employers. Youth employers in this context refer to employers who hire and retain youth. This project also aims to share insights and lessons to enhance resiliency in the youth employment sector. The project focused on behavioural approaches to knowledge uptake and fostering change by incentivizing partnerships between employers and other stakeholder groups and increasing access to capacity-building interventions. As part of this project, we reviewed published research and reports on effective knowledge mobilization strategies. We also reviewed Riipen's previous knowledge mobilization strategies and designed and tested novel strategies and tactics to support the development of a generalizable framework that could engage employers in contexts beyond this project, with an emphasis on 'early adopters' of new practices or solutions.

Previous knowledge mobilization research has shown that the mechanism of behavioural change (in the context of knowledge translation) involves reducing behavioural barriers and increasing behavioural enablers that can be opportunities, capabilities or motivators (Waddell & Sharples, 2020). Therefore, this project incorporated our understanding of relevant barriers, enablers and motivators into our overall research and development plan. This report summarizes the hypotheses that we tested, the methodology we employed, the tools and research that supported implementation, and the outcomes of our deployment of new KMb tools and interventions among a group of youth employers. The report concludes with our proposed generalizable KMb framework and a discussion of recommendations and limitations, and other considerations.

Research Goals and Questions

The goals of this project were twofold:

Project Goal 1.

Test the effectiveness of knowledge mobilization strategies and capacity-building initiatives that will elicit meaningful behavioural change in youth and youth employers.

Project Goal 2.

Develop a tested knowledge mobilization and change management framework to support catalyzing changes in the sector to support behavioural change and change management.

In order to achieve the goals of this project, we developed 3 key research questions that allowed us to explore the development and testing of a knowledge mobilization and change management framework and strategies, as well as evaluate the profiles of early adopter employers. The research questions are:

Research Question 1.

What are the elements of an effective knowledge mobilization and change management framework that support eliciting behaviour change for youth employers?

Research Question 2.

What employer characteristics or profiles are found in youth employers who qualify as “innovators and early adopters” and what are the knowledge-building channels they use to develop their capacity as youth employers?

Research Question 3.

Does an incentive-driven model for youth employment increase the participation of youth and youth employers (eliciting behavioural change in the sector)?

In this context, ‘innovators and early adopters’ refer to employers who engage and participate in the early stages of initiatives to support developing their capacity as youth employers and to support youth accessing the workforce. The “innovators” also refer to employers who engage in the initial development and design stages of such initiatives by sharing their insights or feedback.

The KMb strategies (tools, methods, etc.) developed and tested throughout this project are described later on in this report. Our definition of successful behaviour change among employers is supported by several indicators, also described in detail in upcoming sections. These indicators demonstrate that employers 1) actively engaged with the KMb tools and 2) participated in the capacity-building initiatives, and 3) hired youth or indicated adding the youth to their talent pipeline as a result of this engagement.

Outcomes of Knowledge Mobilization Scan and Research

Before we began answering the research questions, we conducted a scan to determine best practices in knowledge mobilization and their impact on end-user behavioural change. We reviewed published literature that included journal articles, review articles, and industry insights and reports on various strategies and structures of knowledge mobilization and change management frameworks.

Our analysis of these results led us to the conclusion that Riipen's existing approach to using KMb as a tool to support the dissemination of knowledge and application of best practices and research aligns with the "Building Bridges" strategy articulated by Anderson and McLachlan (Anderson 2015). In this strategy, several stakeholders and organizations are brought together to collaborate and co-create new ideas and solutions. The strategy is thus a tool to foster sharing of knowledge amongst diverse knowledge communities. At the time of our research, Riipen was already leveraging this strategy in the space of strategic workforce development, as Building Bridges reflects our crucial role in connecting and engaging key stakeholders to support

1. **aligning training with industry needs,**
2. **supporting employers in connecting to youth,**
3. **enabling diverse learners to access practical work experiences, and**
4. **supporting an inclusive post-pandemic recovery.**

Our next step was to determine the best way of assessing the success of the novel KMb tools and interventions that we were testing in this project. In order to develop the evaluation plan for this project, we leveraged an evaluation framework described by Worton et al. (Worton et al. 2017). This framework looks at the knowledge-to-action continuum while capturing the different forms of knowledge sharing. Rather than designing program-specific evaluation that would be applied at the end of the project, we selected Worton et al.'s approach based on its alignment with our project's iterative structure, as we wanted to capture the impact of knowledge mobilization and change management strategies on behavioural change at different points throughout the deployment, rather than at the project's conclusion. Although this evaluation framework focuses on the qualitative component of the evaluation design, we also incorporated quantitative components to further support assessing the success of different components of the knowledge mobilization and change management framework.

In order to design and evaluate the specific components of an effective KMb strategy, we consulted a review article that evaluated several knowledge mobilization strategies (Lavi, Robertson, and Woodside 2003). This article summarized the 5 key elements of effective knowledge mobilization frameworks. These components include:

- message,
- target audience,
- messenger/channel,
- process of communication infrastructure, and
- evaluation.

These 5 key components were also used during the evaluation process of this project to leverage existing frameworks in the analysis.

As mentioned, previous knowledge mobilization research has shown that the mechanism of behavioural change (in the context of knowledge translation) relates to reducing behavioural barriers and increasing behavioural enablers that can be opportunities, capabilities or motivators (Waddell and Sharples 2020). Therefore, we explored different ways of incorporating messaging frameworks and strategies that support reducing barriers for employers or increasing other incentives. [Annex-1](#) provides examples of the final messaging frameworks and the channels used in this project that align with reducing barriers for employers or increasing other incentives.



Hypotheses to Be Tested

We developed several hypotheses from our research questions that we assessed throughout the project. The hypotheses are listed below and their numbering corresponds to the research questions mentioned above:

Hypothesis 1.

Knowledge mobilization and change management frameworks that include evidence-driven and capacity-building materials and resources that are shared with the target audience via appropriate channels will elicit behavioural change.

Hypothesis 2.

Youth employers who identify as early adopters or innovators have common profiles and have undergone a certain level of capacity building and change management to support developing sustainable practices to continue engaging with youth.

- A.** Employers who are engaged in this project will have a minimum of 15% positive shift from their baseline readiness after the completion of the project.

Hypothesis 3.

The incentive-driven model (coupling short-cycle training with paid micro-internships) will support more youth to participate in short-cycle training while increasing the participation of youth employers to engage with youth. This model will reduce barriers for employers and youth while increasing the employability of youth.

Riipen facilitated and leveraged a capacity-building initiative to assess the above hypotheses and to develop KMb tools and channels for its adoption. More specifically, Riipen's Level UP program is designed as a capacity-building initiative that supports employers to grow their workforce, connect to more youth and accessing resources and support. The Level UP program offers employers access to 80-hour fully-subsidized micro-internships. See [Annex-2](#) for more detail.

We aimed to assess the impact of these 80-hour fully-subsidized micro-internships on developing employers' capacity to recruit, hire and retain youth, particularly NEET youth (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Furthermore, we wanted to assess the impact of this initiative on eliciting behavioural change as a result of engaging in knowledge mobilization activities. Behavioural change in this context generally refers to enabling employers to participate in youth-employment initiatives while adapting aspects of their engagement with youth to ensure the development of their capacity as youth employers. More specifically, successful behavioural changes as they align with this capacity-building initiative include developing projects that align with the youth's skills and experience level, developing resources for youth onboarding, offering mentorship and support for the youth, offering feedback to the youth, and continuing engaging with other youth in the program and post-program.



Methods and Evaluation Framework

In order to evaluate the hypotheses and assess the effectiveness of the KMb and change management framework, we leveraged two data collection strategies:

Strategy	Focus	Summary of the Channels for Data Collection
Method 1: Small-Scale Project that leverages an incentive-driven model in partnership with short-cycle training providers to increase the engagement of youth and youth employer. The project aims to incentivize the youth to participate in the training to access the Level UP paid micro-internships.	The focus is mainly on youth from underserved communities. <hr/> Engaging employers who have not engaged with the capacity-building initiative before. <hr/> Engaging other stakeholders and community-based groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing of new campaigns for youth and employers (campaign-related metrics) • Interviews of youth, employers and other stakeholders. • Platform-related data. • Surveys. • Qualitative data collection for barriers and motivators for the KMb tools.
Method 2: Evaluating our previous work with youth, employers, other service providers, and key stakeholders. This strategy involved gathering insights around the effective elements of earlier KMb frameworks deployed by Riipen, to better understand motivators and barriers that limit or accelerate change management for employers, as well as to evaluate existing programs and services that support change management and capacity building for employers.	Youth in general with a focus on underserved communities and demographics including remote and rural communities. <hr/> Youth employers in general focus on the early adopters and innovators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of effective KMb channels from previous projects. • 3rd party commissioned employer interviews. • Early Adopter employer interviews. • Platform-wide data. • Surveys.

The data collection tools we applied included surveys, interviews, focus groups, and platform-specific data and metrics. These tools are summarized in [Annex-3](#).

In order to evaluate the research questions and hypotheses, we gathered fresh insights and data from employer and youth surveys (a total of 876 responses), interviews (a total of 12 in-depth interviews and 5 stakeholder interviews), other sets of 33 employer interviews and surveys commissioned by Riipen and analyzed by a third party, and platform-specific data for youth and employers (over 12,000 responses and related data points). We also evaluated the digital (online) campaigns that we implemented by assessing the reach and the conversion rate associated with these campaigns.

The evaluation plan was developed in alignment with the research questions to explore the following themes:

- The most effective channels for the campaigns to scale employer engagement;
- The most effective tools and messaging frameworks to engage the target audience;
- The early adopter and innovator profiles;
- The current gaps and opportunities that exist in the youth employment ecosystem;
- The most effective strategies to engage youth, especially youth from underserved communities;
- Other capacity-building activities required for employers.

In order to implement the project and support data collection, we began by evaluating our previous KMb strategies to assess their impact and effectiveness. We evaluated previous KMb strategies that had high employer adoption of a certain tool or resource or program as well as KMb channels that resulted in higher conversion rates of youth from underserved communities and demographics. We evaluated both the success metrics of certain tools and channels and the overall impact of these channels. More examples of this evaluation are explained in [Annex 1 and 3](#).

The second stage of the project implementation included reviewing published research findings on effective KMb strategies to evaluate the alignment between the proposed KMb tools and channels with previously identified best practices. We leveraged these findings to support developing several new KMb channels and tools aimed at supporting employers in adopting new strategies or engaging in new initiatives through the current small-scale project. We also aligned these efforts with the second data collection strategy ('Data collection strategy from our existing work') to collect data and insights from our employers, youth and other stakeholders to evaluate the impact of other capacity-building initiatives or identify other gaps and opportunities. [Annex-3](#) provides a detailed list of metrics and tools used at this step.

Results from Data Collection Tools and Discussion

This section presents key findings and insights gathered from the numerous data collection tools we employed in this project. In order to collect data to assess the evaluation questions, we developed 37 indicators that were collected by qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The methods included but were not limited to, surveys, interviews (both led by the project team and a third party), platform data, and campaign analytics. An example of a related indicator includes the conversion rate of employers who accessed the KMb tools to develop projects for youth on the platform; this indicator was collected via platform-specific data and campaign analytics. Another example is the employer satisfaction or NPS score that was collected through surveys and interviews. More details on the collected data and their impact on the project can be found in [Annex-3](#).

Impact of Employer-led Work-based Learning Projects on Employer Capacity

We leveraged an existing capacity-building initiative, the Level UP program, to assess the impact of initiatives on developing employers' capacity to recruit, hire and retain youth. We collected data on employer engagement with youth and related employment outcomes after employers participated in the capacity-building initiative and its related KMb tools and resources. The following results were collected from these employers:

73%

of employers who worked with a youth have reported they had issued youth one or more job offers, or that they would have offered a job if they had funding:

21%

of employers have made youth one or more job offers – on average each employer offered 2.2 job offers

52%

of employers indicated that they would have hired the youth if they had had access to resources or funding

88.6%

of employers reported they would consider the youth they worked with on the Riipen platform through the work-based learning projects for future employment opportunities

88.6%

of employers who participated plan to continue using work-based learning in their organization to support recruitment and human resource planning

These results suggest that employers who participate in the initiative, by offering youth access to employer-led work-based learning projects, develop their capacity to work with youth and diversify their talent pipeline, which leads to adopting new behavioural changes to hire and retain youth. These results also suggest that employers who participated in this capacity-building initiative are willing to engage in further programs and initiatives to support their human resource planning and youth recruitment.

Scaling up the Delivery of Capacity-building Initiatives

There are over 3,800 unique employers who have accessed the Level UP program as a tool to support accessing practical capacity-building activities and initiatives. Approximately 1,760 job positions were offered to youth by employers after the completion of this capacity-building program. Furthermore, over 2,780 employers have reported either offering youths one or more job offers or that they would have if they had access to funding. We anticipate that the youth employment outcomes will continue to grow as the majority of employers indicated that they will be considering these youth for future employment.

More than half of the employers (52%) have reported that they would have hired the youth after the practical capacity-building activities and initiative (Level UP program), however, the youth were not hired due to the lack of funding or other resources. Based on employer interviews that we have conducted, the majority of employers have indicated that accessing or navigating other resources, such as wage subsidy programs, is challenging and in many cases, employers are not aware of these programs or their application processes.

Impact of Employer-led Work-based Learning Projects on Youth Employment

The youth have also reported positive impacts and outcomes from participating in this capacity-building program. The following data shows the reported employment and employability outcomes for the youth:

71%	of the youth reported receiving one or more job offers as a result of participating in a project-based learning program (Level UP)
74%	of the youth self-identified as being from an equity-seeking group
90%	of the youth agree that Riipen projects helped them connect their learning to future career goals
80%	of the youth felt the project made them more employable

86%	of the youth report that the project helped them grow their professional network
81%	of the youth report that working on the project helped prepare them for the workforce
87%	of the youth report that the project helped them improve their skills in communication
86%	of the youth report that the project helped them improve their skills in problem-solving
87%	of the youth report that the project helped them improve their skills in critical thinking
87%	of the youth report that the project helped improve their skills in time management

These results suggest that online, accessible and flexible short-term project-based opportunities are an effective mechanism to reduce barriers faced by youth to transition to employment. The results also suggest that these projects support career clarity and help youth develop their social capital to thrive in the workplace.



Organizational Maturity Change

Employers who have participated in this capacity-building initiative and its related KMb resources (such as accessing a training academy, project templates from other employers) have reported an average of 47% increase in their maturity level from their baseline readiness after the completion of the work-based learning projects and the related resources. Employers have elaborated that this increase in their maturity level is associated with their ability to access several sources of knowledge and training including accessing the template library of previous projects by other employers to support aligning their projects with the changes in the workforce. The participating employers have also reported that this capacity-building initiative reduced their perceived risks of working with youth. These insights demonstrate that capacity-building initiatives will increase the employer's willingness to continue working with youth.

Messaging Framework:

Employer-centered Communication

We evaluated several channels and partnerships that supported employers in adopting new practices to work with youth. We found that the most effective channels involved content (assets) that offered key actionable information with further access to insights or knowledge, including interactive events/webinars or access to landing pages or one-pagers. These assets also included a language or messaging framework that's clear and aligns with employer needs or business goals.

After facilitating third-party analyzed interviews on KMb tools and channels with 33 employers, we found that the communication and messaging framework used in the campaigns impact employer engagement. The list below includes some of the common themes for effective frameworks and quotes from the employers who participated in these interviews:

- **Theme 1:**

Clear description of benefits to employers:

- “.. highlights the benefits to the business. Small business owners and managers are stressed and have limited time. They need to see a benefit”
- “It felt the most concrete in terms of what I'd actually be getting and/or doing with the company”

- **Theme 2:**

Offering employers access to clear step-by-step instructions:

- “and provides step-by-step action. The content and design flow, explaining the concept and answering questions along the way.”

- **Theme 3:**

Demonstrating credibility (credible information or credible partnerships):

- “it has the Canadian government logo on it and it honestly is something I'd like to try”
- “The companies shown stand out as Canadian companies, which look more legit to me. It looks more inviting”

These themes suggest that a messaging framework that offers 1) actionable, 2) clear, and 3) credible messages will resonate best with employers and lead to higher engagement rates.

Knowledge Mobilization Channels

We tested several campaigns that were targeted to employers on multiple channels and platforms. We noticed that targeted digital campaigns which offer employers access to clear benefits and actionable information resulted in the highest engagement and conversion rate. The campaigns used language or a messaging framework with simplified messaging and introduced topics that are familiar to employers. The content does not explicitly promote Riipen's brand/offerings, but rather generates interest through valuable resources, blogs, whitepapers, how-to's, videos, etc.

For example, the use of the following statement resulted in a very low employer interest or engagement:

“Access innovative and remote 80-hour work-based learning projects with students from across Canada”.

On the other hand, the following statement resulted in a more significant engagement from employers:

“Access flexible, 80-hour fully-subsidized internships that can be completed fully online or hybrid”.

The example mentioned above aligns with the feedback we received from the employer interviews. Using a simple messaging framework with clear benefits and next steps (actions) results in a better engagement rate for employers. A recent campaign we led (via LinkedIn InMail) that targeted small and medium enterprises in Canada had a reach of 10,000 with an engagement rate of 58%. This campaign used the messaging framework identified above: “access flexible, 80-hour fully-subsidized internships that can be completed fully online or hybrid”, and invited the employer to register on the platform or attend an informational webinar. The same message framework was used in an email campaign to a similar employer group resulting in a 30% conversion rate for employers to act on the key actionable items in the campaign.

These insights suggest that diversifying the KMb channels is an important step to engaging with diverse employers. The selection of the KMb channel (digital channel) itself might not have a high impact on employer engagement, however, the messaging framework is the most important component that supports the engagement of employers.

Other Channels: Opportunities

Through our surveys and interviews, employers have reported several channels that helped them learn about other programs and services, as well as other capacity-building initiatives. The most common channel for learning about other services and initiatives was the direct referral from other business owners or colleagues:

- **43%** of the employers reported employer referral or colleague referrals as their key channel to learn about or access other services;
- **21%** of the employers reported websites or web searchers as their key channel to learn about or access other services;
- **17%** of employers reported business associations or network referrals as their key channel to learn about or access other services;
- **11%** of employers reported social media as their key channel to learn about or access other services.

These results indicate that employers value peer-to-peer learning and recommendations. This can be attributed to employers looking for credible and proven models to help develop their capacity. Therefore, implementing strategies that feature other employer experiences through case studies, for example, will yield better results in terms of employer engagement and participation.



Capacity Development that Supported Eliciting Behavioural Change

After the completion of the work-based learning projects (a component of the capacity-building initiative), employers reported in interviews that participating in this project has helped them develop the following practices and behaviours:

- Developing new onboarding materials and resources for youth;
- Developing and implementing new tools for project management and progress tracking that aligns with the virtual (or remote) work environment;
- Developing project-based opportunities that helped youth to work on flexible hours;
- Offering more detailed and comprehensive feedback session with youth to support informal learning;
- Creating more opportunities for professional development for youth (for example, shadowing meetings)

These results suggest that the initiative we introduced enabled employers to grow their capacity to develop tactics and strategies that will support their role as youth employers. Therefore, these types of newly developed skills and tactics can be highlighted in KMB tools as motivators and incentives for employers to grow their capacity.

Leveraging Employer-focused Learning and Feedback – Opportunities

During our interviews, employers reported the need to learn best practices from other employers and industry experts as a part of the capacity-building process. We have co-developed thought leadership articles and resources housed on our website and platform to support employer learning and growth. For one of the published articles that highlight employers' learning, nearly 225 unique employers have read the blog post article which resulted in publishing 75 projects on the platform to work with youth; a 33% conversion rate.

During the third-party conducted employer interviews, employers also reported that they had a positive experience exploring our program's virtual [Wall of Love](#) which provided them with access to employer testimonials and feedback. Employers also mentioned that adding more industry or sector-specific case studies and examples to the Wall would help them design better projects and experiences for the youth.

These insights suggest that sharing learnings and feedback from other employers is an effective strategy that can help scale up the engagement of employers.

Youth Training and Access to Further Resources: Opportunities

Employers also shared with us some of the gaps they have noticed while working with youth. Employers suggested that youth need to access more resources or training on developing their soft skills which are important for success in a virtual work environment. Employers also suggested incorporating further resources for youth to continue learning beyond the scope of the internship, as an incentive to drive their professional development and to help them gain career clarity. This step can be achieved by consolidating resources and fostering partnerships between different organizations that offer other wrap-around support and services. For example, an organization that is delivering foundation or soft-skills training can partner with another organization that's supporting the delivery of wage subsidies to offer the youth access to the training as they transition to employment.

Employers shared with us during interviews and through surveys that navigating other capacity-building programs or government resources is very challenging. They expressed their interest in accessing a consolidated resource list that's up-to-date and interactive to support them in better understanding the ecosystem and how they can engage in programs that align with their business needs.

These insights suggest that both employers and youth lack the ability to navigate and access other programs, training opportunities and services. Therefore, more effort is needed to support spreading initial awareness of these services and events.

Employers' Early Adopters & Innovators Profile

After consulting our program leads for employer engagement as well as some of the stakeholders involved in providing employer support, we developed the following profiles of employers who fit the definition of "Early adopters and innovators". These are employers who engage with programs and initiatives early on to support their businesses and youth.

The following is a list of common attributes of early adopters and innovators that we developed through conducting interviews, surveys and engaging with employer stakeholder leads:

- Typically, these businesses are founded or led by individuals who were in education or started their career 10–15 years ago (relatively young leaders);
- In some cases, the businesses that are led or founded by members of the underserved communities value working with youth to support reducing the barriers youth face. This can be attributed to the shared experiences between these groups. We have also observed that employers who are members of the underserved communities are interested in working and mentoring youth from similar backgrounds to them (for example, Indigenous business owners have requested or indicated their interest in working with and mentoring Indigenous youth);

- Social impact companies are also key players in the youth employment sector. These companies tend to engage with youth as key stakeholders in their social mission as well as to advance alignment with their equity, diversity and inclusion policy and plans;
- These employers tend to be SMEs with 10–50 employees with at least one employee who will act as a supervisor to the youth. These employers have also reported that they have developed their capacity or skills as employers to support human resource planning. Some of the key capacity-building topics that were mentioned are:
 - **Leadership:** how to manage teams and delegate tasks;
 - **Feedback:** how to receive and give constructive feedback;
 - **Communication:** how to communicate the organization's goal and mission to the youth while demonstrating the role the youth is playing to achieve that goal.

These identified characteristics
of early adopter employer profiles
supported us in **developing targeted
strategies and campaigns.**

Generalizable KMb and Change Management Framework

Riipen has developed and tested numerous knowledge mobilization and change management channels and tools throughout this project. We have also deployed different resources and messaging frameworks in these campaigns in order to assess the most effective elements of a framework that will support eliciting behavioural change for employers and support developing employer capacity, thus leading to sustainable practices in the sector.

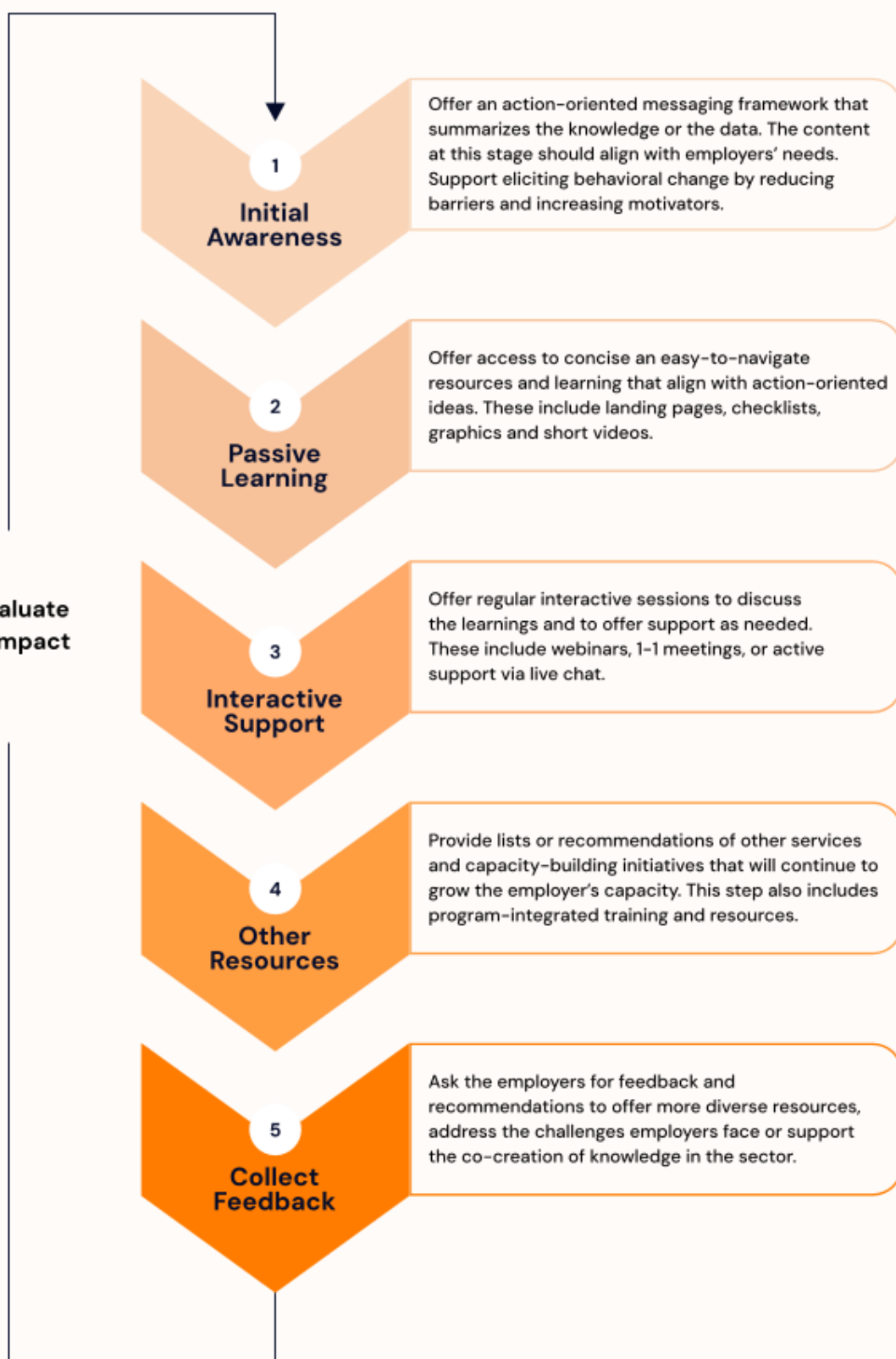
The following graphic serves as a summary of the proposed knowledge mobilization framework. This framework has been developed from evidence resulting from this project and specifically, from our analysis of our previous knowledge mobilization initiatives as well as by testing new strategies that we designed based on our analysis of employer feedback and published research.

The framework is divided into 6 stages that form an iterative process to support continuous improvement and updating of KMb tools and channels. These stages include

1. Initial awareness
2. Passive learning
3. Interactive support
4. Access to further resources
5. Feedback collection
6. Evaluations & iterate

The framework was developed based on the insights and data gathered during this project to support increasing employer participation in capacity-building activities and initiatives. We have also designed this framework to be generalizable and applicable to all types of employer projects and initiatives; by collecting feedback from employers on their experience accessing other KMb initiatives, we were able to gather insights into their engagement with the KMb initiatives and which strategies were the most effective for them then we analyzed the common elements of the KMb strategies that were discussed by the employers. Furthermore, this framework is designed to engage the early adopter employer group and also go beyond this group to engage other employers; this was done by adding emphasis on the initial awareness phase.

6. Evaluate the Impact



Stage 1 – Initial awareness phase:

This stage is the most important point to engage employers during knowledge translation initiatives; it addresses broader environmental or foundational factors that impact employer engagement in innovative programming or solutions, such as digital readiness. Lower levels of technology adoption and digital readiness can have an impact on the organization's culture and processes, which might limit employers from participating in digital capacity-building programs. Recent research highlights that Canadian employers have lower spending or investment in technology in general. It is estimated that Canadian **employers invest 54 – 68 per cent of the US level in information and communication technologies** (Munro, Lamb, 2022). Therefore, employers might not be actively seeking or engaging in programs and initiatives that support developing digital transformation and innovation. This reality increases the importance of this step, and this stage of the framework should engage both early adopters and other employers.

We have tested initial awareness campaigns that resulted in high engagement and conversion rates. **One of these campaigns resulted in a 58% engagement rate from employers (nearly 10,000 employers were invited to engage with this campaign).** The tools developed at this stage should communicate action-oriented messages with employers. To further support our suggestion, a systematic review paper showed that using ideas and action-oriented language, instead of general information or data, has the most impact on managerial decision-making processes during knowledge mobilization (Lavi et al., 2003). Our testing of various KMb tools and employer interviews has also shown that offering employers access to action-oriented messaging (such as registering for a webinar and filling out a form), with clear benefits to employers, results in higher employer engagement and adoption rates. This messaging framework was leveraged in the above-mentioned campaign that targeted over 10,000 employers and resulted in a 58% engagement rate. In another campaign through a different channel, employers were invited to click on an actionable link to sign up for the program and complete a form. **This campaign resulted in a 30% conversion rate for employers to act on the identified action items in the campaign (369 employers had actioned on the call-to-action).**

We have also found through our employer feedback and interviews that using a messaging framework that shares the participation benefits and incentives, is also an important step in increasing employer adoption. For example, one of the key incentives that employers have shared with us was reducing the risk of working with youth for the first time. Therefore, we used “Pay the youth with mentorship” as part of the messaging framework to encourage the participation of employers who have not worked with youth before. This component of the messaging framework also aligns with published research on knowledge translation framework that induces behavioural change by reducing behavioural barriers and increasing behavioural enablers that can be opportunities, capabilities or motivators (Waddell &

Sharples, 2020). For example, we highlighted in this section, “pay the youth with mentorships” is a mechanism that aligns with reducing their behavioural barriers (financial risk of working with youth for the first time) and increasing their behavioural enablers (being able to offer mentorship).

Stage 2 – Passive learning phase:

Offering employers further resources and training will support their engagement in the activities and the programs. Through the testing of our KMb tools and employer interviews, we have found that offering employers access to passive learning, such as step-by-step resources and checklists, increased the employer participation rate and their ability to continue using the program or service.

Although published research on knowledge mobilization indicates that passive learning plays a limited and possibly ineffective role in knowledge mobilization (Lavi et al., 2003), we found that employers, especially those who are not early adopters or who signed up but have not worked with youth, responded positively to accessing easy-to-navigate knowledge-specific or program-specific learning; this is because it removed any ambiguity or uncertainty associated with the initiative and supported their participation in the initiative. Furthermore, this step accelerates the engagement of the early adopter group of employers who engage with the proposed knowledge and initiatives as it supports sharing of new ideas and innovations to test.

We launched several campaigns that included articles and blog posts with passive learning materials. **One of the campaigns resulted in 225 employers viewing the article and 75 employer projects developed as a result of this passive learning resource; this resulted in a 33% conversion rate of employers** from passive users to engaged employers who offered youth access to projects.

Stage 3 – Interactive support phase:

This step involved offering employers access to further resources, onboarding or training that is interactive and led by an expert or a project lead. Examples of interactive support include offering webinars, interactive chat sessions or access to 1-1 support. We found that employers who access or participate in these interactive learning and support sessions are typically those who have not engaged with youth and are looking for ways to de-risk their engagement. **A systematic review of knowledge mobilization research has also shown that offering interactive training or capacity-building activities results in effective knowledge translation and elicits behaviour change for managerial decision-making** (Lavi et al., 2003). Furthermore, investing in knowledge infrastructure such as websites and

newsletters can support and augment the in-person interactive component of this step (Lavi et al., 2003). Therefore, passive learning materials can be introduced to employers in an interactive format that will support diversifying the target audience and accelerate the adoption of programs.

The majority of employers have reported in interviews that they found the webinars and interactive sessions to be the most effective in developing their capacity and supporting growing their engagement with youth.

Stage 4 – Offering further support phase:

This component of the framework encourages the continuous support of employers who are actively engaging in programs and initiatives to develop their capacity as youth employers. **Over 50% of employers who engaged with youth through this program have continued to engage with youth and access further initiatives as a direct result of developing their capacity.**

These employers reported working with over 3 youths on average. Nearly 20% of the employers have also indicated their interest to access further resources and information to continue working with youth beyond the initiative we led. Furthermore, this stage also supports developing employers' maturity level which is correlated to their ability to continue engaging with youth. Employers who have participated in the initiative have reported an average of 47% increase in their maturity level from their baseline readiness after the completion of the initiative and its related resources, indicating a higher likelihood of continuing their engagement with other youth directly or via other capacity-building initiatives.

Stage 5 – Collect feedback from employers to co-create content:

The co-creation of knowledge and engaging stakeholders in this step will support evolving the knowledge mobilization strategy and the capacity-building activities to meet the growing needs of employers. Employer interviews have demonstrated that employers valued accessing resource libraries that were created by other employers to support aligning their business goals and growth with the emerging skills-based projects on the platform. Furthermore, during the in-depth evaluation of KMB tools, significant numbers of employers reported that accessing other employers' case studies, testimonials or project examples increased their interest to continue working with youth and engaging with the initiative.

We have also noticed a relatively high conversion rate of employers who accessed content and materials that were developed from other employer feedback and experiences. For example, in the recent blog post that offered resources and how-to's based on other employers' experience, **33% of employers have acted on the blog post and created projects that align with the learnings and the contents shared in the article.**

Stage 6 – Evaluate the impact and iterate the cycle:

Building on the previous feedback collection step, this component of the framework involves the evaluation of the KMb activities and their impact on engagement with the target employer audience. Measuring the impact of the different components of the framework will support allocating resources and support for each of the steps identified. We have found that communicating the impact of the capacity-building initiative, its activities, and the changes made to align with employer feedback has increased the engagement of early adopters who play a role as the “champions” in engaging other employers in their network. The champions play a major role in sharing of the KMb activities and also support employer adoption of the initiative.

Our surveys have indicated that **43%** of the employers who participated in the initiative have learned about it as a direct result of referrals or recommendations from other employers in their network.

Recommendations

Consolidate Resources

We recommend that the federal government create consolidated portals or platforms for resources and programs available for employers to speed up employer engagement and adoption as well as reduce barriers faced by employers to apply and engage with these programs. Through our employer' interviews and surveys, employers reported facing several challenges to discovering and engaging with other programs. Employers have also expressed their interest in accessing a simplified application portal that can be housed on other intermediary organizations like Riipen. For example, the Level UP program is designed to engage employers at scale to develop their capacity as youth employers and for the majority of the employers, the Level UP program is their first experience working with youth. Given that employers have reported an average of 47% shift from their baseline readiness as youth employers after the completion of the Level UP micro-internships, these employers are the ideal target audience for other programs that offer employers longer-term support to continue working with the youth (such as SWPP or CSJ). This will be incredibly beneficial to over 50% of the employers who have reported that they would have hired the youth after the completion of the micro-internship if they had access to funding and other resources. Furthermore, nearly 79% of employers have reported that these micro-internships (employer-designed work-based learning projects) have also supported employers to develop organizational capacity and create jobs in the long term – thus positioning them as the ideal target audience for other programs and services.

The majority of employers who used Riipen's programs have reported that the platform supported them to automate the process of creating their profile and connecting to youth easily. They also reported that the Level UP program reduced the risk of working with youth (time, resources, recruitment, etc.), and the project-based nature of the program helped align the youth with their organizational needs. Developing a consolidated employer resources and services page on the Riipen platform will also reduce barriers faced by employers to discover, apply, report, and participate in other programs and capacity-building activities. This will also support employers to access services that best align with their growth stage and their human resources needs.

Scenario: After applying to the Level UP program, employers can access the services page to view other programs and related information (including eligibility, timeline and benefits). Employers will also be able to view application guidelines in an interactive format and access the application forms. The application form can also

be pre-populated with the information they have already added to their Riipen and Level UP profile to speed up the administrative task.

Develop a toolkit for youth: Community-based organizations are the bridge to engage with youth, especially from underserved communities, as they play a role in offering wrap-around support and have a deep understanding of the challenges faced by these youth. Based on our conversations with various stakeholders, we recommend offering community-based organizations that work with youth an updated toolkit of emerging programs that can support and engage youth in the labour force. This initiative should also be monitored to assess the effectiveness of the toolkit in engaging youth regularly.

Employer training: During interviews, employers reported that they tend to align with key service providers that support their stage of development. Therefore, service providers who have engaged employers at a larger scale, such as Riipen, should continue to offer employers access to capacity-building activities and training to engage a diverse range of employers. These service providers play an important role in delivering capacity-building activities and are being viewed as credible resources by employers. We recommend policymakers invest in key service providers and facilitate collaborations to develop or leverage existing, easy-to-access, micro-training that will be embedded in their platforms or services. Employers have identified training topics and themes that will help them develop their skills to become more resilient employers in this changing workforce. Examples of this micro-training are:

- **Leadership:** how to manage teams and delegate tasks;
- **Feedback:** how to receive and provide constructive feedback;
- **Communication:** how to communicate organizational goals and mission and how to communicate the role of the youth in contributing to this mission.
- **Onboarding:** how to support youth onboarding in a virtual workplace.

Facilitate More Research and Collaboration: Support more collaborative research and innovative projects to better understand systems-informed knowledge mobilization strategies for the employment sector. During interviews, employers reported that there are other external factors that can impact their access to services and programs, including power inequities or the level of digital transformation. Research indicates that Canadian employers tend to be more conservative when it comes to investing in technology and digital solutions compared to other countries with similar economies (Munro, Lamb, and Wernick 2022). The systems-informed KMb strategies will take into consideration other external and environmental factors that impact employer engagement as well as developing practices (Haynes et al. 2020); they can offer a focused approach to complex real-life problems that employers and other stakeholders experience. This strategy will also offer

more insights into which issues in the youth employment sector are interdependent or dynamic, in order to support system-informed solutions to knowledge mobilization.

There is limited research on the impact of systems and other external factors on employer knowledge mobilization. However, understanding these factors and their impact on KMb can support addressing employer adoption of new strategies and initiatives, given the trends and challenges noted above. Therefore, understanding the impact of these factors on employer access to programs and services can contribute to better outcomes.

Invest in an open-source knowledge mobilization strategy: We recommend piloting an Open Educational Resource (OER) for service providers, employers, academia, and other stakeholders that can support sharing of knowledge and foster innovation and collaboration. A thought leadership report commissioned by UNESCO discussed the use of the OER methodology by Canadian researchers in the education sector to offer a virtual, customizable, modifiable, and open-source knowledge platform that can be accessed and reviewed in real-time (McGreal, UNESCO). The use of OER has supported student retention in education and facilitated more collaboration between researchers. Although we could not find any evidence of the impact of the creation of an OER on the employment sector, there is a strong correlation between the education sector and the employment sector when it comes to engaging youth and especially youth from underserved communities and demographics.

Discussion

This project has helped us analyze, develop and test knowledge mobilization and change management strategies that are effective in engaging employers. This project also aimed to identify opportunities that will support the government and other intermediaries to evolve their programming and services to adapt to the changing and emerging workforce. The capacity-building initiative that was used in this project, (Level UP – employer-designed work-based learning projects) has been a proven mechanism to support employers in adopting new strategies to develop their capacity as youth employers. This project resulted in the development of a tested framework for knowledge mobilization and change management that can be used as a guideline to support organizations to develop and implementing strategies that can accelerate knowledge mobilization and result in the impacts intended.

To develop this framework, we have tested several strategies, collected data from various channels, and explored published research and thought leadership articles to develop and test key knowledge mobilization and change management strategies that can help employers' adoption of new initiatives.

The shift to a remote and virtual workforce will require organizations (service providers & intermediaries, policymakers, and funders) to implement new strategies that engage employers and develop their awareness about other initiatives. We have discovered that leveraging digital tools with a specific target audience will result in better engagement rates if the messaging frameworks resonate with SMEs. We learned that employers are interested in actionable knowledge that reduces their risk as employers while offering them incentives such as diversifying their talent pipeline, learning from other employers or industry experts, supporting their digital transformation, etc. The messaging framework that involves action-oriented language while reducing barriers or increasing incentives aligns with the components of the effective knowledge mobilization frameworks that were discussed in some published research (Lavi, Robertson, and Woodside 2003) (Worton et al. 2017).

As a result of these project learnings, Riipen aims to continue developing campaigns to engage employers through the development of an action-oriented messaging framework that offers clear benefits for employers while emphasizing the impact of such initiatives on employers. We will also continue to co-create knowledge, training, and resources with employers. During our interviews, employers expressed their interest to learn best practices from other employers and industry experts. Also, the majority of our employers have heard

about our programs through direct referrals from other employers and colleagues; emphasizing the important role of peer-to-peer learning in employers.

Riipen will also develop further partnerships with organizations that can offer employers access to capacity-building training that will support the development of their managerial skills and their capacity as employers to engage other employers who aren't early adopters. We will also leverage the developed knowledge mobilization framework to reach and engage with early-adopter employers for future programs and initiatives. This project also helped us recognize the importance of engaging employers as key stakeholders in the developed framework to support the co-creation of tools and as an effective channel to support knowledge sharing with other employers. We aim to strengthen our relationships with employers to cultivate a knowledge co-creation ecosystem.



References

Anderson. 2015. "Transformative research as knowledge mobilization: Transmedia, bridges, and layers." *Action Research*. doi:10.1177/1476750315616684.

Haynes, Abby, Lucie Rychetnik, Diane Finegood, Michelle Irving, Louise Freebairn, and Penelope Hawe. 2020. "Applying systems thinking to knowledge mobilisation in public health." *Health Research Policy and Systems* 18 (134): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-020-00600-1>.

Lavi, J., D. Robertson, and J. Woodside. 2003. "How can research organizations more effectively transfer research knowledge to decision makers." *Milbank Quarterly (Milbank Memorial Fund)* 81 (2): 221–248.

McGreal, Rory. n.d. "The role of open education in mobilizing knowledge creation and transmission." *Canadian Commission for UNESCO*.

Munro, Daniel, Creig Lamb, and Michael Wernick. 2022. "The pandemic forced Canadian business out of a tech lethargy. What happens next?" Policy Options. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/april-2022/the-pandemic-forced-canadian-business-out-of-a-tech-lethargy-what-happens-next/>.

Waddell, S., and J. Sharples. 2020. "Developing a behavioural approach to knowledge mobilisation Reflections for the What Works Network." *The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF)*. <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/developing-a-behavioural-approach-to-knowledge-mobilisation-reflections-for-the-what-works-network>.

Worton, K., C. Loomis, Pancer M, G. Nelson, and R. Peters. 2017. "Evidence to impact: A community knowledge mobilisation evaluation framework." *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, 10 (121–142). doi: 10.5130/ijcre. v10i1.5202.

Annex 1

Project Boilerplate

We have developed and implemented 4 key knowledge mobilization channels and tools that will be highlighted:

- **Strategy 1:**
Action-oriented messages in digital format (Ads and Campaigns)
- **Strategy 2:**
Access to training, resources and other support (both passive and interactive)
- **Strategy 3:**
Co-creation of knowledge through articles developed from employers' insights and feedback
- **Strategy 4:**
Partnering with employer network organizations or resources (thought leadership and webinars)

The intended goals of these 4 strategies was to support increasing 1) employer awareness about innovative models of working with youth and 2) share data, knowledge and best practices for employers to support developing their capacity to develop sustainable practices in the youth employment sector.

Strategy 1:

Action-oriented messages in digital format (Ads and Campaigns)

One channel that we leveraged to engage employers, who have not worked with youth or are not aware of programs offered by service providers, is using social media ads and campaigns to support employer acquisition:

We run campaigns that offer employers access to specific services or benefits or reduce their risk of working with youth. The campaigns support employers to access a [landing page](#) (or [this landing page](#)) with general program offerings and benefits.

The asset (graphic) implements a messaging framework that aims to reduce employers' barriers or risks when working with youth while offering an action-oriented framework. The messages used in these campaigns are developed from the feedback we gathered through surveys from our highly engaged employers to support sharing the benefits employers gain

when they work with youth or access programs like the Level UP program. These action-oriented messages address reducing barriers for employers while gaining other business-related benefits or incentives which is a framework that aligns with theories related to knowledge-to-action strategies by increasing motivators and reducing barriers to support eliciting behavioural change. Examples of the action-oriented messaging framework that aligns with reducing barriers and increasing motivators include:

“Get Fresh Ideas, Work with a Student. Pay with Mentorship. Join 27K employers!”

Strategy 2:

Access to training, resources and other support (both passive and interactive)

This strategy combines the passive and interactive elements of sharing knowledge and training to be able to cater to diverse types of employers. Research has shown that passive processes for knowledge mobilization are relatively ineffective in comparison to interactive processes (Lavi et al., 2003). Employers who will act on our social media campaigns and messages, or explore the project on their own, will be provided with a landing page with access to case studies and employer feedback. They will also be invited to attend webinars that will share resources and tips with employers to develop their capacity to work with youth.

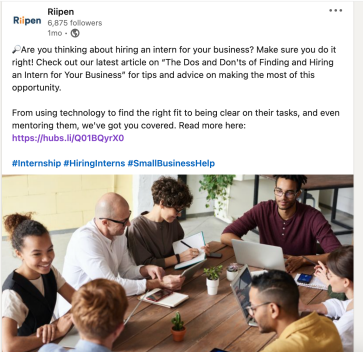
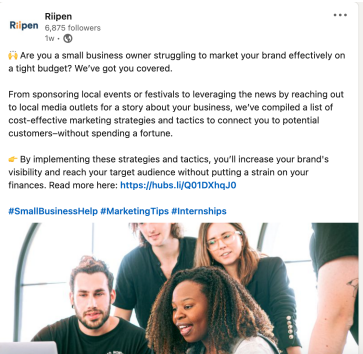

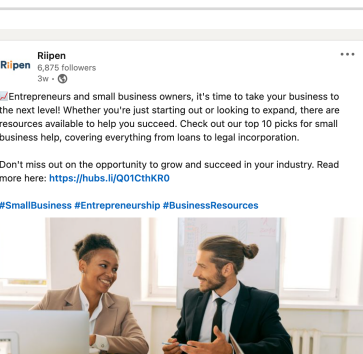
Employers will also access several follow-up emails that aim at offering them the steps needed to develop projects and focus on the skills they want to see in the project. The email templates offer the employers access to step-by-step instructions or tips and access to other resources like a template library for projects or access to onboarding videos and courses.

Employers also have access to the Riipen Academy which provides them with a list of resources and training that support developing their capacity and offer more solutions and support. You can access the Riipen Academy for employers using this link: <https://www.riipen.com/academy/employers>

Strategy 3:

Co-creation of knowledge through articles developed from employers' insights and feedback

Developing articles with tips and tricks for employers is another strategy where we leveraged our online channels to transform our evidence-based approaches and the learnings we gathered from employers into resources for employers. Below are some examples of these articles that we have developed and implemented after conducting surveys and interviews with employers:

Title	Link to article	Social media post (used LinkedIn only as an example)
The Dos and Don'ts of Finding and Hiring an Intern for Your Business	The Dos and Don'ts of Finding and Hiring an Intern for Your Business	 <p>A LinkedIn post from the account 'Riipen' (6,875 followers) dated '1mo'. The text discusses the importance of hiring an intern for a business, mentioning a recent article on 'The Dos and Don'ts of Finding and Hiring an Intern for Your Business'. It lists benefits like finding the right fit, being clear on tasks, and mentoring. The post includes a link to the article and hashtags #internship, #HiringInterns, and #SmallBusinessHelp. The image shows a group of diverse people in a meeting.</p>
Marketing a Small Business on a Budget: Creative Strategies and Tactics	Marketing a Small Business on a Budget: Creative Strategies and Tactics	 <p>A LinkedIn post from 'Riipen' (6,875 followers) dated '1w'. It addresses small business owners struggling with marketing on a tight budget, offering a list of cost-effective strategies and tactics. It mentions reaching out to local media and leveraging news. The post includes a link and hashtags #SmallBusinessHelp, #MarketingTips, and #Internships. The image shows a group of people looking at a laptop.</p>
Where to Find the Best Interns for Your Small Business	Where to Find the Best Interns for Your Small Business	 <p>A LinkedIn post from 'Riipen' (6,875 followers) dated '2w'. It discusses the importance of finding the right team and includes tips on finding interns, such as looking for new perspectives and ensuring business runs smoothly. It provides a link and hashtags #SmallBusiness, #SmallBusinessHelp, and #InternshipTips. The image shows a group of people in a meeting.</p>
Small Business Help: 10 Resources for Entrepreneurs	Small Business Help: 10 Resources for Entrepreneurs	 <p>A LinkedIn post from 'Riipen' (6,875 followers) dated '3w'. It encourages entrepreneurs and small business owners to take their business to the next level by utilizing available resources, such as top 10 picks for small business help. It includes a link and hashtags #SmallBusiness, #Entrepreneurship, and #BusinessResources. The image shows two people working at a desk with a laptop.</p>

Strategy 4:

Partnering with employer network organizations or resources

Aside from continuing to strengthen and evaluate the impact of our partnerships with chambers of commerce and business associations, we have explored new collaborations and partnerships with organizations that have a reach to diverse employers to be able to leverage their existing networks and channels.

We have leveraged the reach of the [Canadian Women's Network](#) which produces the [Disruption magazine](#) to support implementing KMb tools to enable new employers to engage with youth. We developed a thought leadership article that was published in the 19th edition of the magazine focusing on BIPOC business leaders. The article can be accessed [here](#).

Annex 2

Capacity Building Initiative (Level UP Program)

In 2020, Riipen led a \$12.7 million project from ESDC's Innovative Work-Integrated Learning (I-WIL) program to deliver the Level Up program (www.riipen.com/levelup), the goal of which was to deliver 6,443 paid online, customizable and flexible micro-internships placements to post-secondary learners across all academic disciplines, with the goal of reaching underserved and underrepresented learners.

Riipen was given 14 months to deliver, but demand was so high that the program was oversubscribed in just under 4 months, with a large waitlist of both employers and learners. Over 92% of the participating job-seekers who completed a Level UP project said they gained valuable experience that would help them in the workplace after they complete their training and education. Moreover, over 70% of the participants in Riipen's Level Up program self-identified as individuals from underserved communities. Given this success, Riipen's contract with ESDC was renewed in Q1 2022 for \$36 million to deliver 18,000 paid work placements for learners from across the country. To date, Riipen has delivered 16,213 work-integrated learning experiences through Level UP, on time and on budget.

- Over **92%** of the participating learners who completed a Level UP project said they gained valuable experience that would help them in the workplace.
- Over **68%** of participants said that they received a job offer after completion...
- Over **72%** of the participants in Riipen's Level Up program self-identified as individuals from underserved communities.

Each placement lasts 80 hours, spanning anywhere from two to eight weeks, and comes with a set \$1,400 stipend. Students are able to participate in up to three placements each year, giving them experience with a variety of employers before they graduate. The participants also receive employer feedback and skills validation that is housed on an e-portfolio on Riipen's platform. Participants can highlight that work experience on their resumes and platforms like LinkedIn to set themselves apart from other candidates in their field. Participants complete intake and exit surveys to support assessing their employability and skills development. We have also introduced a new payment system where Riipen became the employer of record for stipends associated with projects, thereby removing friction and barriers for employers to participate in skills training projects.

Annex 3

Summary of Aggregated Data

#	Evaluation Question	Outcome(s) Process and Impact)	Insights Gathered
A	What was the total reach of each of the KMb materials and activities?	<p>Process-related outcomes: The KMb materials and channels were effective in reaching a large audience.</p> <p>Impact-related outcomes: The KMb materials and channels support exposing the target audience to updated resources, services, and support to help them develop their capacity and incorporate sustainable practices.</p>	<p>The action-focused KMb materials were effective in engaging a large group of employers.</p> <p>We have leveraged several channels to disseminate the tools we have developed, for example, Google's Search Ads, Social advertising (Meta, Twitter, and LinkedIn) and Newsletters.</p> <p>Several channels were effective in engaging employers to discover new resources, training and services. One of the effective direct-to-employer channels is LinkedIn InMail, if the ideal employer profile is identified that aligns with the messaging framework. The most effective partner-to-employer channel is through promoting services and resources to business networks or associations as a benefit or resource for the members (employers). Business associations and networks are viewed as a reliable resource for employers and partnering with them supports a higher engagement from employers.</p> <p>In a recent LinkedIn InMail campaign; around 10,000 employers were shown the messaging framework, and over 58% of these employers have opened the message to read more and access the information.</p>
B	What is the conversion rate of the KMb campaigns?	<p>Process-related outcomes: The KMb activities induce users to act after the knowledge acquisition stage.</p> <p>Impact-related outcomes: The KMb materials and their contents were effective in motivating the audience to engage and start eliciting behavioural change.</p> <p>The incentive model is a motivator to elicit the engagement of employers and youth.</p>	<p>Coupling a concise action-oriented messaging framework with access to passive and interactive capacity-building materials has yielded a high engagement rate from employers.</p> <p>The incentive-driven model has been an effective strategy to engage employers to participate in capacity-building initiatives. This could be attributed to the alignment of the incentive model with reducing barriers for employers while introducing other motivators to support eliciting behavioural change.</p> <p>The above-mentioned campaign yielded a 1.6% conversion rate. This could mean that at least 100 employers have clicked through the provided links, and possibly 100 new employers who adapt using project-based learning opportunities to lead projects will 100 unique youth from across Canada.</p>

<p>C Which channel or activity resulted in the best reach and conversion?</p>	<p>Process-related outcomes: Effective channels for KMb and the type of materials used are identified.</p> <p>Impact-related outcomes: The KMb materials and content in the successful campaigns align with increasing the motivators for the target audience and reducing barriers to participation.</p> <p>Identify what messaging framework is the most successful to support engaging the target audience.</p> <p>Identify the partners who have the highest success in engaging the target audience and understand how the partner's clients are supported (level of capacity building or services they access).</p> <p>The channels for the KMb activities yielded similar effectiveness in engaging employers. The key components of having successful KMb channels are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) identifying the ideal end-user profile (employers) who can benefit and act on the knowledge being transferred; 2) ensuring the messaging framework aligns with knowledge mobilization as a mechanism for behavioural change: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) reducing behavioural barriers or risks; b) increasing behavioural enablers that can be opportunities, capabilities or motivators. <p>Through our surveys and interviews, employers have reported several channels that helped them learn about other programs and services, as well as other capacity-building initiatives. The most common channel for learning about other services and initiatives was the direct referral from other business owners or colleagues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% of the employers reported employer referral or colleague referrals as their key channel to learn about or access other services; • 21% of the employers reported websites or web searchers as their key channel to learn about or access other services; • 17% of employers reported business associations or networks referrals as their key channel to learn about or access other services; • 11% of employers reported social media as their key channel to learn about or access other services;
<p>D Did the KMb activities attract and engage with the target audience?</p>	<p>Process-related outcomes: Identify the key channels, partners, and materials that are the most effective in engaging the target audience.</p> <p>Impact-related outcomes: Evaluate the quality of the KMb materials and activities and their effectiveness in aligning with the barriers and the motivators for engagement of youth/employers from underserved communities.</p> <p>The KMb materials and activities have been effective in reaching and engaging the target audience. On average, our KMb activities and materials, which have been highlighted in the section above, have an engagement rate of 50%.</p> <p>The majority of these employers are SMEs with roughly 20% of them, being not-for-profits.</p> <p>Employers breakdown by the regions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52% from Ontario • 21% from the Prairie Provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) • 19% from British Columbia • 6% from Quebec • 2% from the Atlantic provinces (New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island)

E	<p>What other KMb activities can attract and engage the target audience?</p> <p>Process-related outcomes: Identify ways to engage with the audience to share more information about the gaps and what's missing.</p> <p>Impact-related outcomes: Identify the gaps associated with KMb activities that can attract the audience and possible ways of closing the gaps (explore new opportunities).</p>	<p>Employers recognize the need for developing their own capacities and skills to be able to manage future employees and youth. Employers have also mentioned the need for incorporating general technical skills training as part of the pre-internship support to help them understand the emerging technologies and tools, and how they can impact their capacity to manage a youth (employee).</p> <p>Employers have also reported that they would like to access short-video training (easy to access and to understand) that is coupled with the initiative or the project. For example, many employers have reported their interest in accessing short videos on the Riipen platform that will support their capacity building while they are working with youth (for example, how to develop HR practices in a remote setting and strategies for developing inclusive work culture).</p> <p>Employers have mentioned creating an interactive website or a resource that they can navigate with up-to-date information with key deadlines and checklists.</p>
F	<p>Did employers visit our services and resources available for them?</p> <p>Process-related outcomes: The KMb materials and content shared with the employers enabled them to identify the resources and services available to them.</p> <p>Impact-related Outcomes: Identify what resources or services are needed by the employers and the extent of the capacity building required before they engage with the youth.</p> <p>Identify the most in-demand resources and services that employers are accessing or requesting that align with developing their capacity as employers.</p> <p>Assess the need for other services and resources that can be incorporated into future programs or sources from other services providers.</p>	<p>Employers have reported that they accessed both our passive and interactive forms of training and support. Many employers also mentioned having a designated person or a team to answer questions or direct resources toward them supported their ability to undertake these projects and work with you.</p> <p>The common theme that was mentioned by employers was the need for follow-up support and recommending further services or resources that can help with future capacity building and hiring of the youth. For example, one employer stakeholder lead has mentioned that roughly 10% of the employers contact them to explore further resources or services or support available to develop their capacity as employers or to hire a youth permanently.</p> <p>We have also developed blog articles that highlighted employer learning and capacity-building activities required. One of these campaigns has resulted in 225 employers accessing the article within 48 of launching it. As a result, 75 projects were developed on the platform by employers to work with youth.</p>

Did the KMb and change management activities and resources elicit behavioural change in the employers?

Process-related

outcome: Effective knowledge mobilization and change management channels and frameworks identified.

Impact-related

outcomes: Knowledge mobilization and change management frameworks support eliciting change in the employers to support developing their capacity (And to support developing sustainable practices).

Identify the needed capacity-building resources to support change management (evaluating existing programs, services, and KMb channels used by employers in a post-pandemic recovery).

Assessment of the organizational maturity level to assess if employers are reporting a 15% increase in their maturity level.

Employers reported that the resources and the support they accessed have helped them to develop the following practices and behaviours:

- Developing new onboarding materials and resources for the youth;
- Developing and implementing new tools for project management and progress tracking that aligns with the virtual (or remote) work environment;
- Developing project-based opportunities that helped the youth to work on flexible hours;
- Offer more detailed and comprehensive feedback session with the youth to support in-formal learning;
- Create more opportunities for professional development for the youth (for example shadowing meetings)

NPS score: Employers have reported an NPS score of +87 which falls into the "World Class" category as determined by Bain & Company, the creators of Net Promoter Score. Employers have reported a 47% increase in their maturity level after the completion of the micro-internship model and the related resources and learnings.

Employers have attributed this to their ability to access several sources of knowledge and training including accessing the template library of previous projects by other employers (supports aligning their business with the skills for the youth) and also due to de-risking of the engagement with the youth.

This increase in the maturity level can be associated with the high retention rate of employers who continue working with youth; 53% of over 3,800 employers have returned to work with another youth after their first youth micro-internships with an average number of 3.6 projects per employer.

<p>H What other KMb and change management activities and resources are needed to support engaging more employers and eliciting behavioural change?</p>	<p>Process-related outcomes: Identify the effectiveness of the KMb in communicating existing activities and resources.</p> <p>Impact-related outcomes: Identify the gaps in the services and resources and identify ways of closing these gaps (identify key partners or service providers that can address these gaps).</p>	<p>Employers have reported that some programs or services that can support developing their capacity are hard to find or navigate. And other services or programs are industry-specific or require a lot of administrative work and processes that aren't supportive of SME capacity or capabilities.</p> <p>For example, a few employers mentioned that the wags-subsidies program applications were an admin-heavy task and the applications were not accepted at the end due to eligibility requirements, but they were not able to access this information earlier on.</p> <p>Employers have also indicated that they value learning about or accessing further resources or services from a trusted partner or a service they already used (credible source). Employers have also reported that they would like to access short-video training (easy to access and to understand) that is coupled with the initiative or the project.</p> <p>For example, many employers have reported their interest in accessing short videos on the Riipen platform that will support their capacity building while they are working with youth (for example, how to develop HR practices in a remote setting and strategies for developing inclusive work culture).</p> <p>Employers have mentioned creating an interactive website or a resource that they can navigate with up-to-date information</p>
<p>I What support does the youth require or need to complete the training and the micro-internship ?</p>	<p>Process-related outcomes: Identify resources and knowledge available for youth to meet their needs and support their skills development.</p> <p>Impact-related outcomes: Youth feel supported and able to access resources and knowledge to support them in the skills development and micro-internship programs.</p> <p>Youth are more engaged with programs and services to increase their employability.</p> <p>NEET youth feel more prepared and supported to access more programs that reduce their barriers to transition to meaningful employment.</p>	<p>Both employers and other stakeholders have shared some insights into what resources or training will support youth to be more employable and support their retention in the labour force. Some of these examples were: Access to training and mentorship to build foundational and transferable skills that are crucial for entering and thriving in the labour market (for example, time management, professionalism etc).</p> <p>Youth reported a significant increase in their employability as a result of accessing practical learning and training via the Level UP micro-internships; 8/10 of the youth have reported that these micro-internships and their related portfolio development have made them more employable.</p> <p><u>NPS score:</u> Youth have also reported an NPS score of +75 which falls into the "Excellent" category as determined by Bain & Company, the creators of the Net Promoter Score.</p> <p>It was evident in our implementation that developing partnerships with community-based organizations is an effective strategy in engaging with the NEET youth. Many of these organizations also offer related support (like mentorship and access to resources like the internet) that's also crucial to ensure the successful engagement of the NEET youth.</p> <p>NEET youth also tend to view resources that are offered via community organizations as trustworthy and valuable.</p> <p>More data and insights will be offered in the discussion section.</p>

J	<p>What barriers are youth facing that limit their ability to engage or participate in employment programs and services?</p>	<p>Process-drive outcomes: Identify KMb activities and channels that can address barriers facing youth.</p> <p>Impact-driven outcomes: Identify the barriers faced by youth and ways of addressing them in the programs.</p> <p>Identify the gaps in the services and resources and identify ways of closing these gaps (identify key partners or service providers that can address these gaps).</p> <p>Offer recommendations for scaling up certain programs and initiatives that can address these barriers.</p> <p>Developing awareness of existing programs or resources is a barrier that youth are facing, especially NEET youth. Although social media campaigns have been effective and engaging with the youth, a much participation rate is associated with working with an organization or a partner that represents a youth group.</p> <p>Through engaging with other stakeholders, and attending thought leadership events of youth employment, it is evident that there is a need for offering support for youth during programs and projects, this includes case management or access to resources. Mentorship is another theme of the topic that was mentioned often as mentorship offers informal learning and guidance that many youths might be lacking or missing.</p> <p>Employers have also shared with us some of the gaps they have noticed while they were working with the youth. Employers have suggested that the youth need to access more resources or training on developing their soft skills, in short formats or videos that are tailored to their demographic. Employers have also suggested incorporating further resources for youth, to continue learning beyond the scope of the internship, as an incentive to drive professional development and to help to use gain career clarity. This step can be achieved by sharing resources and programs between different organizations so that the youth will be able to access the information.</p>
---	--	--



Accomplish
more as part
of the Riipen
community!