

## Adult Learning and Returns to Training Research Program

*Adult Learning and Returns to Training* was a three-year project to develop and test an analytical framework for adult learning and the returns to training. The project included four structural components — a typology, a conceptual framework, a practical guide to adult learning research, and a dictionary of terms — as well as a state of knowledge review, based on those components. [Read the Adult Learning and Returns to Training Overview](#)

The project also included a research program with several goals. The first was to add new insights to the empirical literature, particularly in areas where the state of knowledge review identified information gaps. The second was to test the usefulness of the analytical framework in different contexts. The third was to explore innovations that could add to the resources for empirical research. Projects were selected on the basis of policy relevance, particularly in relation to Employment and Social Development Canada's research priorities.

Six papers were produced under the research program. Three papers estimated the returns to different types of training: foundational learning, workplace training, and higher education. One paper directly examined the usefulness of the adult learning typology developed earlier in the project. Another explored the potential of social finance models to improve the outcomes of adult learning programs. The sixth paper investigated the prospects for data linkages to support new research into the individual, employer, and social outcomes of adult learning. Synopses of each paper follow.

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### [\*Does adult training benefit Canadian workers?\*](#)

Wen Ci, José Galdo, Marcel Voia, and Christopher Worswick (Carleton University)

This study estimates individual outcomes for employer-supported courses, both in and outside of the workplace, using a range of empirical strategies. It addresses several policy-relevant subgroups of adult learners, including those with less education and immigrants. In addition to the financial returns, the authors also estimated the impact of adult learning on self-rated health.

### [\*An analysis of a foundational learning program in BC: the Foundations Workplace Skills Program \(FWSP\) at Douglas College.\*](#)

David Gray and Louis-Philippe Morin (University of Ottawa)

Gray and Morin exploit administrative data to examine the skills gains and employment effects of a foundational learning program in British Columbia. The evaluation of the program was hindered by the structure and contents of the administrative data. Moreover, there was significant attrition between each stage of the program, which was primarily related to participants finding jobs or returning to school before they completed the program. The authors make recommendations on improvements to the program-related data collection activities.

[\*Adult learning inside firms: Evidence using performance management records\*](#) (this paper is temporarily unavailable).

Chris Riddell (Cornell University)

Riddell examines the learning activities in three small- to medium-size enterprises and the effects of the learning activities on measured performance, salary, and promotion. The study found that about half of the employees engaged in on-site training, much of which is very similar to courses or certification programs offered by education institutions or training organizations. Participation in training was correlated to improved performance ratings but not to salary increases or promotion rates.

[\*A typology of adult learning: Review of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation of Canada's Model.\*](#)

Kjell Rubenson and Maren Elfert (University of British Columbia)

This study provides a systematic examination of the typology of adult learning. It compares the typology to others developed by international organizations, paying particular attention to how they treat the motivation and the setting for adult learning activities. It also examines how well the typology fits patterns of adult learning observed in the Access and Supports to Education and Training Survey and how well it aligns with the adult learning environment in British Columbia. The authors suggest how the typology might be improved to better guide adult learning policy research in Canada.

[\*Social finance and employment and training programs.\*](#)

Karen Myers and Natalie Conte (SRDC)

Social finance refers to ways of mobilizing capital that connect investors and organizations interested in *both* making money and promoting positive social outcomes. This paper identifies six distinct models that apply a social finance approach to the provision of employment and training services. The authors note that models focused on non-governmental organizations generally provide the greatest prospect for social innovation. On the other hand, models with greater government involvement may be better positioned to achieve large-scale social impacts.

[\*Enhancing research opportunities on the returns to adult learning with national survey and administrative data sources.\*](#)

Marc Frenette (Statistics Canada), Douwre Grekou (SRDC), and Ted Wannell (SRDC)

This paper explores how research on returns to adult learning could be informed by more complete use of the data resources of Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). Linking administrative data sources within Statistics Canada would create the opportunity to examine adult learning outcomes for postsecondary studies. Opportunities exist in ESDC to link some outcome data to adult learning program data. Research possibilities would expand considerably by way of ESDC-Statistics Canada linkages, since one could estimate the returns to very specific government initiatives in adult training programs, not just those delivered in postsecondary institutions, on many financial and non-financial outcomes. The authors point out that full exploitation of these data resources would still leave large knowledge gaps, particularly related to adult learning delivered in workplaces.