

# Accessibility Standards Canada Research Program

## Creating Inclusive Employment: Empowering youth with disabilities through inclusive accessible digital skill development

Alana Armas, Bliss Reynolds, Gabriella Patro, Jaime Brown



### HIGHLIGHTS

- The Creating Inclusive Employment (CIE) multi-year research project will examine digital skill development for young people with disabilities (YPWD) using community-based research methods, grounding the project in community needs and interests.
- The research will conduct a needs assessment and journey mapping exercises with the aim to create pathways for more inclusive digital skill development for YPWD as they transition from school into the workplace.
- The pathways and project findings will inform a set of recommendations and action plans that can be used to address barriers which includes determining skill requirements for successful employment in the digital economy.

### BACKGROUND

- People with disabilities face numerous challenges and barriers in many areas of their lives, including securing and maintaining employment.
- Among individuals aged between 25 and 64 years old, approximately only 60% of people with disabilities were employed compared to approximately 80% of people living without disabilities (1).
- Two in five of people with disabilities of working age, who weren't employed or enrolled in school, provided evidence of work potential (2).
- It is estimated Canada will need 2 million new tech jobs by 2025 (3,4). Thus, it is necessary that YPWD are properly trained in digital skills to successfully gain employment in Canada's evolving economy. Yet research suggests when YPWD are in primary and secondary school, they are often placed in specialized classrooms with fewer opportunities to access computer skills training (5), putting them at a distinct disadvantage for digital skill development.
- Overall, the evidence highlights the complexity when trying to understand the barriers people with disabilities face when seeking and maintaining employment.

References available upon request

### RESEARCH QUESTION

How can we create barrier-free, non-traditional digital skill development pathways for young people with disabilities in Canada?



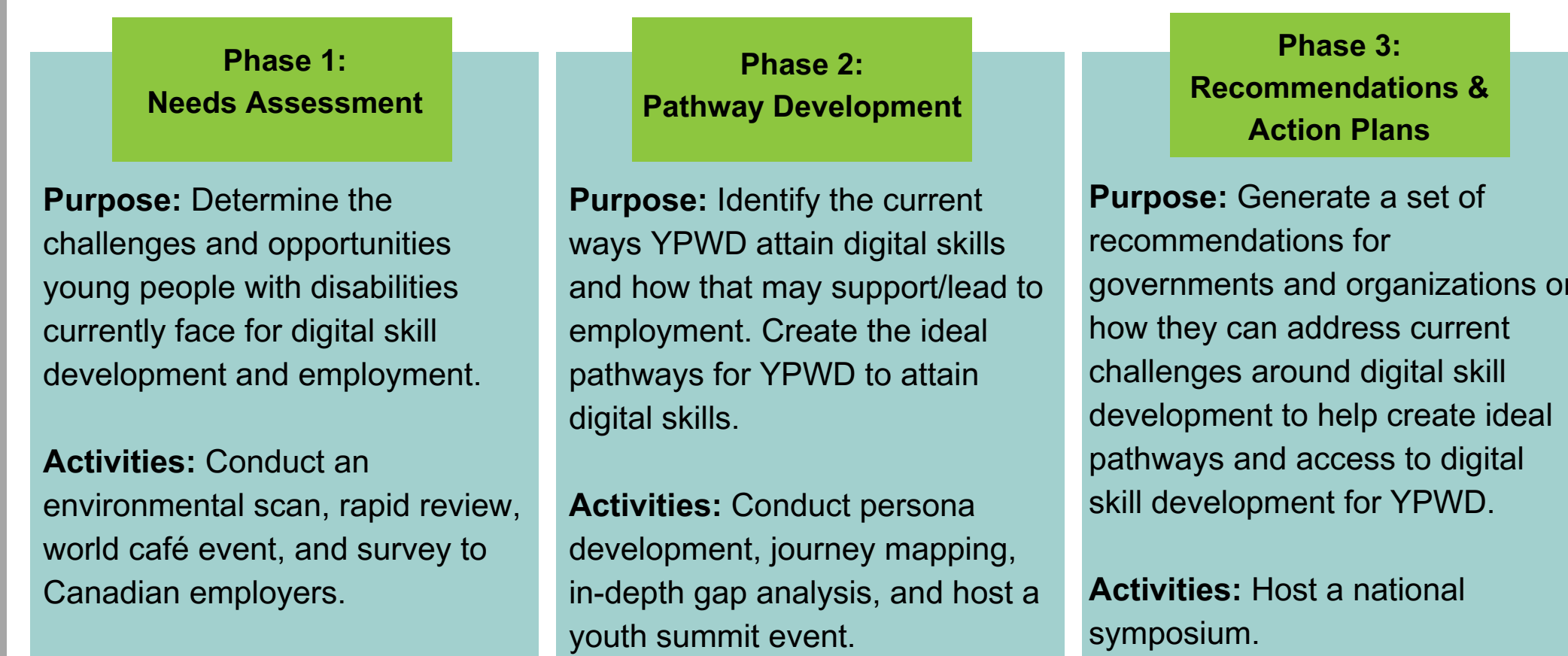
### PARTICIPANTS

We will be engaging a variety of participants for this project including:

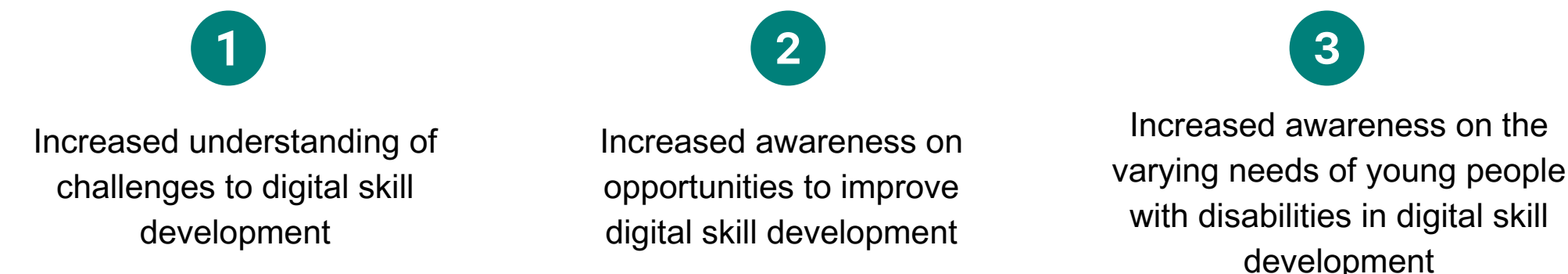
- Young adults with disabilities, aged 18-30
- Canadian employers with experience recruiting and/or hiring employees
- Subject matter experts (expertise in Disability studies, Employment/Labour Market in Canada, Digital/IT industry, Education)
- Knowledge users

### METHODS

The project is using a community-based research approach which helps to ensure that research is conducted with the participants and not on them. The project will work collaboratively with YPWD, people with lived experience, and other stakeholders within our communities throughout the entire research process.



### INTENDED OUTCOMES



### WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Over the long-term the findings from the project could potentially:

- Empower young people with disabilities to seek employment in tech-enabled jobs
- Increase access to digital skill development
- Create opportunities for improved financial stability for people with disabilities
- Improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- Build digital equity for young people with disabilities
- Cause employers to equally consider candidates with non-traditional education pathways

### FUNDER

Accessibility Standards Canada



Accessibility Standards Canada



Normes d'accessibilité Canada

### PROJECT PARTNERS

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

**Holland Bloorview**  
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

IDEA lab (McMaster University)



Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)



Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work (CCRW)

