



Portfolio Sensemaking and Impact Measurement

Embedding a new qualitative measurement capability in public service programs

Who: Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), Government of Canada

Where: Canada

When: 2022 - 2023

Overview

Industry:

Public Sector

Program Size:

~ CAD 1.2 billion

Themes:

Scaling Impact
Youth Employment
Monitoring-Evaluation-Learning
Economic Development

Core Activities:

Sensemaking
Portfolio Governance Design
Portfolio Composition
Partner Engagement

Challenge

How can we complement and stretch existing approaches to impact measurement by building an in-house Sensemaking capability?

The Youth Employment Skills Strategy program (YESS) within the Employment and Social Development ministry of Canada supports youth furthest from employment and the broader social development ecosystem. To complement the emerging portfolio approach within the YESS program, they sought to integrate an effective, qualitative practice for measuring and reporting that could grow the potential for impact through the program and beyond.

Solution

Together with the Research & Development and Impact Measurement Team of the YESS program, CHÔRA designed a 10-month long program of work that adapted CHÔRA's Sensemaking and Acceleration Protocol into a prototype for the YESS program.

The prototype was deployed as a collaborative and iterative multi-layered Pilot that engaged key stakeholders through a series of workshops to make sense of the dynamics, opportunities and connections in the employment ecosystem in Canada. CHÔRA developed program-specific tools and training to inform, support and scale new in-house impact measurement capabilities.

Results

- **Program Evolution:** 10% of funding allocated to strategic collaborations for strengthening the youth employment ecosystem and being responsive to the evolving needs of youth.
- **Learning Cycle:** The Impact Measurement Team integrated Sensemaking into quarterly reviews, using recommendations from the sensemaking workshops to inform their action plans for the next quarter
- **Policy Influence:** Sensemaking insights was identified as useful and relevant to address policy questions and advise on emergent issues

Program Contact

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"Sensemaking brought together public servants, start-ups, community based organisations and policy representatives. It showed how learning can be a true accelerator of impact."

"Through Sensemaking we gathered organisations' perspectives on the youth employment ecosystem and reflected as a collective on "What works for who, and in what context?", this is an asset that we continue to refer back to, one year on, to inform our impact measurement and policy discussions. "

Jason Pearman, Head of R&D at ESDC