

Zoom in and out to find what's hidden



Adjusting your zoom can reveal new insights and create broader impact.

When problems seem unsolvable, it may be that you need to apply a different level of “zoom.” Zooming in or out can shift your perspective about a problem or challenge, the obstacles you’re facing, and your way forward.

Question: Define the unknown. What do you want to know? What feels like the most natural starting point in your efforts to find the answer?

Your current focus

Challenge Factory is often asked to solve problems that are narrowly defined. In 2023, we were asked to determine how many people work in Canada’s career services sector. From a distance, this may seem easy. Career services are delivered through the education system and in government-run centres, right? Or are they?

Question: Within the problem or challenge you’re trying to address, can you identify nuance and complexity that deserves your notice?

Practitioner Penny

Career Educator Emir

As we zoomed in, we discovered that there are more than two types of practitioners working on the frontlines of career service delivery. We had to get more granular and add the managers of career/employment centres, instructors and teachers, and parents to our career services ecosystem map.

Director Deepika

Parent Parker

Instructor Iris

When Challenge Factory was asked to determine how many people work in Canada's career services sector, at first it seemed like a straightforward task. As we zoomed in on career practitioners, however, we realized that they work in all different settings, with very different profiles. As we zoomed out, we realized friends and family provide career advice, teachers include career education in their course materials, and financial planners provide work-related advice to clients. We could have continued to focus only on frontline career practitioners. But, instead, we zoomed out and exposed the sector's entire hidden ecosystem. Visit www.challengefactory.ca/hiddensector to access the final report.

When you're trying to answer a research question, solve a business problem, or address a workforce challenge, use the questions in this tool to help you zoom in and out to know where to focus for impact.

Your shifted focus

Zooming out includes intentionally looking for what is hidden or seems unrelated. In the case of career services, it means asking where Canadians may turn for informal career advice and guidance.

Question: What is the goal at the heart of your initial research question, business problem, or workforce challenge? How many other ways might that goal be realized?

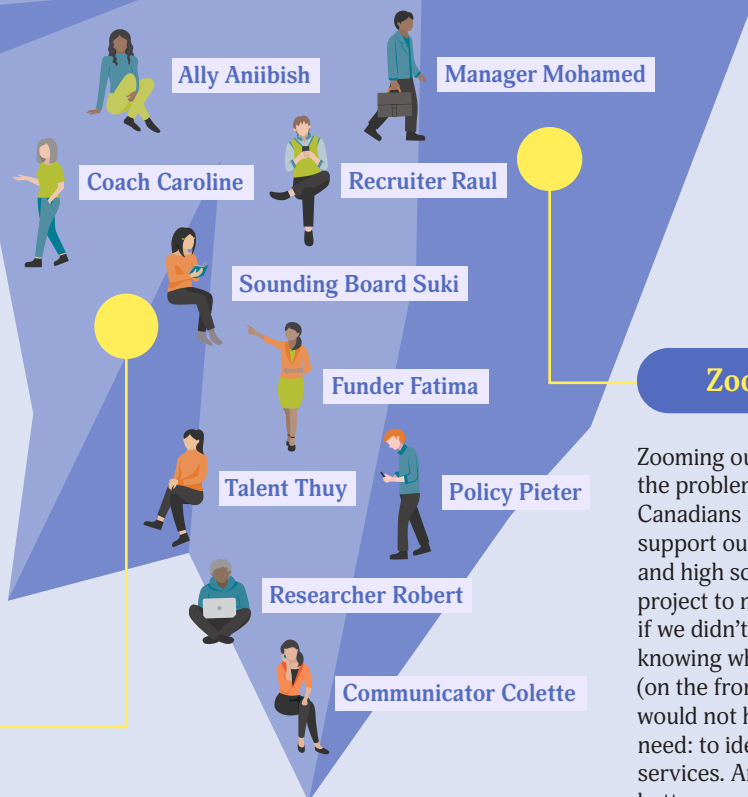
As we looked more expansively at Canada's career services sector, we began to notice other people involved and common themes that could be important.

Question: Are you worried that expanding your zoom might lead to "paralysis by analysis"? What if you had a way to better understand what you can see—by better identifying what's hidden?

Zoom in

Zooming in added nuance and definition to the challenge of mapping an entire sector. But it also made the challenge bigger.

Question: Will taking a narrower or more focused view lead to recommendations that have impact?



Zoom out

Zooming out challenged us to reframe the problem and focus on impact. Most Canadians receive career advice and support outside career service centres and high school guidance offices. In our project to map the career services sector, if we didn't take a more expanded view, knowing who is at the "tip of the iceberg" (on the frontlines of service delivery) would not help address the underlying need: to identify the impact of career services. An expanded view allowed better questions to be asked and a more inclusive approach to be taken.

Question: As you widen your focus to push boundaries, what else comes into view? What is the biggest that you can make the scope of your exploration, even if it makes the work feel harder?