AIxHER:

National Inclusive AI Program

Solo_Data

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"When we think of the AI revolution, we often imagine innovation, efficiency, and limitless potential. But for many women in Canada, AI doesn't yet feel like an opportunity ,rather, it feels like another wave they might be left behind by."

Understanding the Challenge

AIxHER

AI adoption in Canada is accelerating but uneven. **Men** dominate **high-paying AI-exposed roles**, while **women** remain concentrated in **lower-wage, AI-complementary sectors** such as healthcare and education.

Why women are left behind?

"They're stuck in their role"

40% of **mid-level administrative** roles (mostly women) face high automation exposure

Source: OECD, 2023.

40%

"Confidence & Adoption Gap"

Women report **less confidence** using AI and **slower uptake** in female-dominated sectors

Source: HBS, 2024

"Skills Gap"

Lower AI literacy and **coding proficiency** limit women's ability to complement AI tools

Source: UNESCO, 2023.

"STEM Education & RetentionGap"

Only **33% of STEM grads** are women; **1 in 3 exit tech mid-career** due to **gender bias and culture**

Source: McKinsey, 2023

33%

CORE PROBLEM: Women face **limited access** to **AI-relevant skills, roles, and confidence-building pathways**

Let's take a look on:

How others Global Leaders solve this problem?

Program	Core Strategy	Impact
PwC "Tech She Can" (UK)	Free AI lesson plans, national bias-awareness campaigns.	Reached 100K+ students; boosted girls' STEM interest.
AI for Education (Global, but US based in various regions: New York, Chicago, Houston Area,...)	AI literacy for educators and governance training for schools.	250+ education partners worldwide.
Women in AI (Europe, Middle East and Africa, Asia and Pacific)	Global mentorship and training network promoting women's AI leadership.	Active in 30+ countries; shaped inclusive AI policies.

Lesson Learned:

Global evidence shows that closing the gender gap in AI requires action across the full **learning-to-career pipeline.**

1. **Early Education & Awareness:** Embed AI literacy in K–12 and challenge gender stereotypes.
2. **Institutional Capacity:** Train educators and expand access to structured AI programs.
3. **Career & Leadership:** Build mentorship networks and support women's advancement in AI roles

Policy Options and Strategic Choice

AIxHER

Implementation Options

Option 1

ALC Pathway: AI Learning-to-Career Pathway

Type: Prototype (Pilot Model)
Implementation: Develop a national prototype program connecting high school AI literacy modules → postsecondary AI bootcamps → industry placements. Includes mentorship by Women in AI Canada and employer partnerships (like Shopify, RBC).
Cost: $15–18M (pilot phase)
Benefit: Builds structured pathways for women from education to AI roles.

Option 2

"She Codes the Future" Campaign

Type: Public Awareness Strategy
Implementation: A nationwide media and school outreach campaign to normalize women in AI and data roles. Combines storytelling, social media, and ambassador programs to challenge stereotypes and celebrate role models.
Cost: $5–8M
Benefit: Shifts cultural bias; raises visibility of female AI talent.

Option 3

AIxHER: National Inclusive AI Program (Recommended)

Type: Prototype / Policy Proposal
Implementation:

- Create an AI Industry Consortium: bring together leading tech firms, finance institutions, and public agencies to co-develop inclusive AI career pipelines.
- Launch AI Apprenticeship Grants
- Embed Reskilling Modules: integrate short, industry-certified AI micro-credentials co-delivered by colleges and employers.
- Employer Incentives: provide tax credits or wage subsidies
- Tracking & Reporting: dashboard monitoring AI workforce diversity and inclusion progress.

Cost: $150–200M (5 years)
Benefit: Directly integrates women into AI workforce; builds national accountability.

Decision Matrix

Option 1: ALC Pathway	Option 2: "She Codes the Future" Campaign	Option 3: AIxHER
Financial Impact: Medium	**Financial Impact: Low**	**Financial Impact: High**
Moderate cost, strong ROI via direct placements.	Low cost but limited economic return.	Large investment with co-funding and measurable workforce ROI.
Impact Potential: High	**Impact Potential: Medium**	**Impact Potential: High**
Builds full school-to-career pipeline.	Raises awareness, not direct employment.	Creates direct job and reskilling pathways for women.
Scalability: Medium	**Scalability: High**	**Scalability: High**
Complex stakeholder coordination.	Easily scalable through national campaigns.	Co-funded, cross-sector, and replicable nationally.
Equity Focus: Medium	**Equity Focus: Medium**	**Equity Focus: High**
Broad but limited reach to marginalized groups.	Diverse representation but lacks structural access.	Targets underrepresented groups via equity grants and benchmarks.

Feasibility: How easily the policy can be launched using current infrastructure and resources.
Impact Potential: Expected effectiveness in closing the gender gap in AI participation or leadership.
Scalability: Potential to expand regionally or nationally.
Equity Focus: Degree to which the policy specifically targets women and marginalized groups.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt **Option 3: AIxHER** — the most systemic and scalable model aligning with government priorities on innovation, equity, and workforce development.

Implementation Plan:

AIxHER:
National Inclusive AI Program

Implementation Overview

GOAL: **Strengthen women's participation and leadership** in Canada's AI-driven economy by creating **inclusive, industry-integrated training and employment pathways.**

Lead Agency	Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED)
Partners	Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), provincial governments, industry consortia (finance, tech, health, manufacturing), postsecondary institutions, and Women in AI Canada.
Duration	5 years (pilot + national scale-up)
Estimated Budget	$150–200M (co-funded by federal, provincial, and private sector partners)
Potential Funding Sources	• AI Compute Access Fund - Federal: $300M fund supporting affordable compute access for AI innovation. • CanCode 4.0 (ISED) - Federal: $40M for digital & AI literacy (K–12, educators, underrepresented youth). • Regional AI Initiatives (PrairiesCan) - Federal (Regional): $33.8M for AI commercialization and adoption across sectors. • Women in STEM Scholarship (e.g.Alberta Model) - Provincial: $125K total fund for women in underrepresented STEM careers.

Implementation Plan

PHASE 1: DESIGN & PARTNERSHIP FORMATION

Timeline

Months 1 –12

Objective

Establish governance, partnerships, and pilot framework

Deliverables

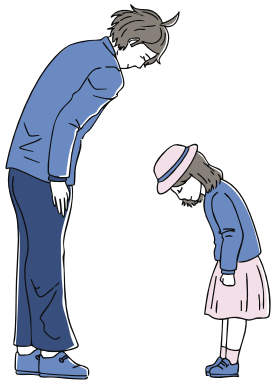
- Consortium structure
- Pilot funding framework
- Stakeholder engagement plan

Estimate cost: $10–15M

Key Activities:

- Create National AI Workforce Consortium
- Design Apprenticeship Grant Model
- Develop standardized AI micro-credentials
- Select pilot regions (ON, QC):
  - Quebec: Montreal has a strong focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion in tech, and leads national AI adoption.
  - Ontario: Toronto — Canada's "Silicon Valley North" — hosts a thriving AI and fintech ecosystem supported by venture capital and gender equity policies, which promotes women's leadership and pay equity in the workforce.
- Launch branding & awareness campaign

PHASE 2: PILOT IMPLEMENTATION



Timeline: Months 13–36
Objective: Test and refine program models
Key Activities:
- Launch 500–1,000 AI apprenticeships
- Deploy micro-credential modules
- Provide employer incentives
- Launch mentorship & leadership streams
- Monitor & evaluate outcomes

Deliverables: Pilot impact report, refined scale-up model
Estimated Cost: $50–70M

PHASE 3: NATIONAL EXPANSION

Timeline: Months 37–60
Objective:
Scale successful models nationwide
Key Activities:
- Expand to all provinces
- Create long-term funding streams
- Introduce "AI Equity Certified Employer" designation
- Launch leadership acceleration programs
- Publish annual diversity report

Deliverables:
National rollout framework, sustained funding model, public impact report
Estimated Cost: $90–110M

PHASE 4: EVALUATION & SUSTAINABILITYNSION

Timeline: Months 55–60
Objective: Measure impact and embed successful models
Key Activities:
- Conduct an independent evaluation
- Transition to permanent AI Workforce Secretariat

Deliverables: Final evaluation report, Phase 2 recommendations, institutionalization roadmap
Estimated Cost: $5M

5-YEAR SUCCESS TARGETS

Wage Gap: Narrow from **$28/hr vs $39/hr to $35/hr vs 39$/hr (90% parity)** through apprenticeships and incentives.
AI Wage Premium: Achieve **+$6–7/hr** differential via reskilling into AI roles.
AI Micro-Credentials: Support 8K–10K women to earn college–industry certifications.
Women in STEM: Increase representation from **30% → 40%** through targeted mentorship and training.

RISKS & MITIGATION

Economic slowdown: Use **countercyclical funding** to sustain reskilling.
Program attrition (dropouts): Offer **mentorship, childcare support**, and flexible options.
Low employer recognition: Co-design credentials with industry and tie to wage incentives.
Regional resistance: Showcase ON/QC pilot results to drive provincial adoption.