Canada's Creator Consultation





YouTube

abacus data

The case for creators

How Creators Power Canada's Creative Economy

For decades, Canadian cultural policy has focused on protecting and funding domestic screen space. That framework built a world-class production infrastructure to fuel the domestic market. Today, a new generation of digital-first storytellers, educators, and innovators is expanding that foundation into an economic and cultural engine that resonates deeply with Canadians while commanding a global audience.

These creators are agile businesses operating from home studios and independent production houses in every province and territory. They finance their own productions, build proprietary intellectual property (IP), and broadcast Canadian perspectives directly to domestic and international audiences.

The economic footprint is undeniable: in 2025 alone, the YouTube creator ecosystem contributed over $2 billion CAD to Canada's GDP and sustained 35,000+ full-time equivalent jobs. This is net-new capital entering our economy, achieved without drawing on conventional broadcast production subsidies.

Thriving In Spite of the System, Not Because of It

Despite driving billions in economic activity, Canada’s institutional, financial, and policy frameworks continue to view digital-first production through a 20th-century lens. Because creators do not follow the legacy linear broadcast model, they fall between the cracks of our national economic strategy.

- **Invisible in Policy: 60% of Canadian creators report having no voice or representation in policymaking that directly determines their business viability.**
- **Unrecognized by Industry: 57% feel the broader Canadian creative sector does not treat their work as a legitimate, high-value creative industry.**
- **Capital-Constrained: Only 8% have access to business loans or institutional credit to scale, hire staff, or invest in advanced production technology.**
- **Skill-Starved: Just 12% have access to the enterprise-level business training, legal mentorship, and operational toolkits needed to transition from solo operators into sustainable small studios.**

Canada has built incredible pillars that have long supported the strength of its cultural sector. Now, we simply need to modernize the regulatory and financial plumbing so these self-starting entrepreneurs can scale, hire, and remain headquartered right here at home.

What Canadian Creators Need to Thrive

To bridge this disconnect, YouTube Canada and Abacus Data launched a nationwide Creator Consultation, surveying and interviewing over 2,500 digital entrepreneurs across the country. From their lived experiences, we have identified four critical pillars to unlock the next wave of borderless Canadian growth.

Foreword

Canadian storytelling has always been fueled by creativity and grit, but today’s generation of digital creators has taken that tradition to unprecedented heights. Operating as filmmakers, actors, producers and researchers, they are building the creative media companies of the future across the country, and commanding global audiences on day one.

These creators bring uniquely Canadian perspectives to the world while driving significant economic growth and employment at home. They do all of this outside traditional distribution pipelines, powered by raw ambition, resilience, and vision.

Yet, despite this undeniable impact, new insights from Canada’s Creator Consultation reveal a stark disconnect between the creator community’s global success, and the domestic support available to them here at home. A majority of creators feel locked out of government policymaking and lack recognition by the broader cultural sector. Only a small fraction report having adequate access to essential business financing and skills training to scale their ventures.

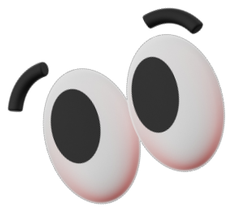
Supporting this community does not mean tearing down our country's rich cultural traditions; it means modernizing them. It means ensuring our tax systems, economic development programs, and public institutions recognize digital-first creators as the legitimate business owners they are.

Thank you to all of the creators who took the time to share their experiences and contribute to this vital research. YouTube is committed to doing our part: we’re funding a new Independent Production Fund (IPF) program to help Canadian creators level up and take their business to the next stage of growth. Alongside this work, we will continue collaborating with government partners and cultural leaders to champion the creator economy, break down barriers, and ensure Canada backs the entrepreneurs who are carrying our stories to the world.

— **Nicole Bell**, Head of YouTube Canada



01 Government Recognition



02 Industry Representation

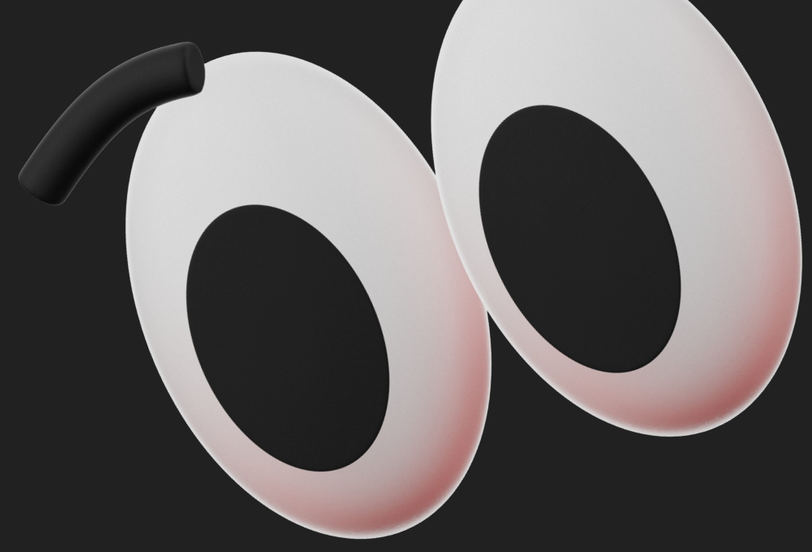


03 Access to Finance

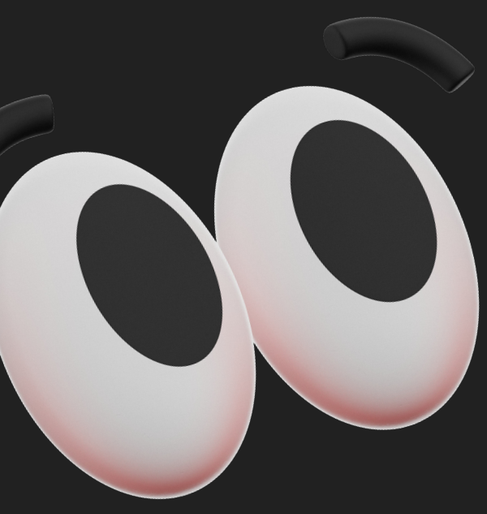


04 Training and Skills





Creators need Government Recognition



While digital creators generate billions in export revenue, the consultative machinery of federal policy, encompassing copyright modernization, digital trade talks, and foreign income tax rules, remains largely inaccessible to them. The current consultative process was built for large broadcast conglomerates, established labour guilds, and trade associations with dedicated government-relations desks.

60%

of surveyed YouTube creators said they feel they have no voice in shaping government policies and regulations impacting their work.

Independent creators and boutique digital production shops rarely have in-house regulatory counsel or the margins to spend weeks navigating CRTC notices or committee briefs. As a result, critical policy interventions are frequently designed without input from the very operators driving Canada's global digital reach. To make policy that works in practice, federal agencies must actively engage digital creators as core economic stakeholders, establishing clear entry points for their feedback.

OPPORTUNITIES

Government Recognition

Establish Dedicated NAICS Codes for Digital Creators

Statistics Canada should introduce distinct North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes for "Digital-First Media Creators & Studios," capturing accurate macroeconomic data on creator revenue, employment, and export receipts.

Launch an All-Party Parliamentary Creator Economy Caucus

Parliamentarians should establish a non-partisan Creator Economy Caucus to create a regular, structured forum for MPs and Senators to meet directly with independent creators to examine new and emerging policy issues and growth opportunities.

Form a Joint Industry-Government Creator Advisory Council

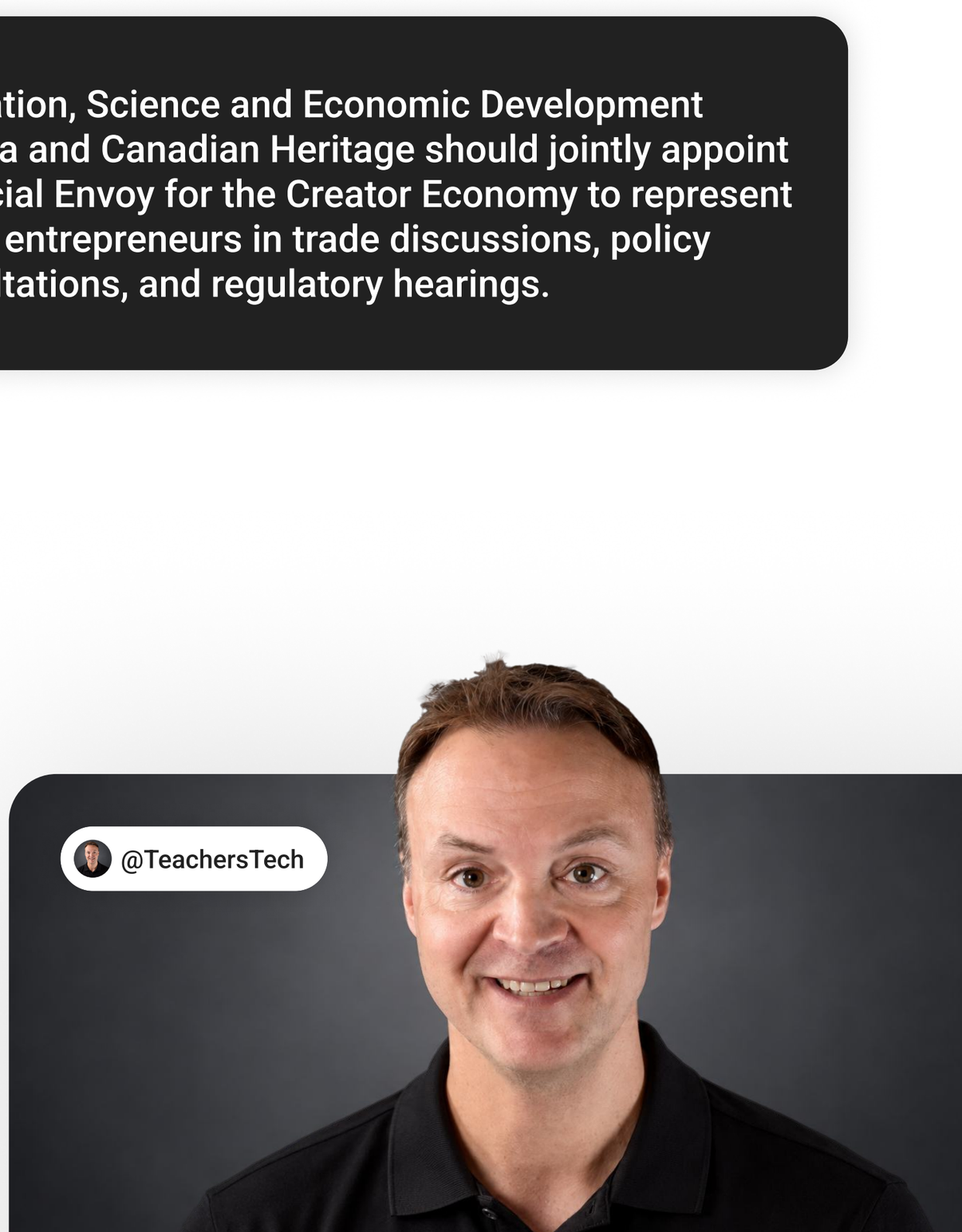
Canadian Heritage should establish an advisory council co-chaired by government and working creators, modelled on the UK's Creative Industries Council, to provide direct feedback on cultural and economic legislation.

Appoint a Federal Creator Economy Envoy

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Canadian Heritage should jointly appoint a Special Envoy for the Creator Economy to represent digital entrepreneurs in trade discussions, policy consultations, and regulatory hearings.

“On paper, my channel doesn’t fit anywhere. It's education, but not for schools. It's media, but not broadcasting. It's an export business, but nothing physical crosses a border. When there's no category for what we do, we don't get counted, and when we don’t get counted, we don’t get consulted.”

— Jamie Keet, Teacher’s Tech





Creators need Industry Representation



Canada has built an enviable cultural infrastructure through institutions like the Canada Media Fund (CMF), Telefilm Canada, the National Film Board (NFB), and our creative guilds. However, access to this institutional architecture has historically hinged on linear requirements: obtaining a broadcast licence or securing theatrical distribution.

57%

of surveyed YouTube creators said that the broader Canadian creative industry fails to sufficiently recognize their value.

This model unintentionally sidelines creators who finance their own productions, own their IP, and self-distribute directly to audience demand. Digital creators producing scripted animation, investigative long-form journalism, and STEM educational content are frequently excluded from national award competitions, co-production incentives, and creative trade missions. Integrating the creator economy does not dilute traditional screen funding, it expands the talent pipeline, allowing independent digital producers to collaborate with traditional craftspeople and access national cultural networks.

OPPORTUNITIES

Industry Representation

Make the CMF Digital Creators Envelope Permanent

Transition the Canada Media Fund's Digital Creators Pilot into a permanent, multi-year funding stream with rolling applications, increasing its allocation to $20 million annually.

Launch a Creator Export & Trade Mission Track

The Department of Canadian Heritage should integrate digital creators into the Creative Export Strategy and national creative trade delegations, backing curated Canadian creator contingents at major global marketplaces like VidCon, MIPCOM, and SXSW.

Modernize Canadian Screen Awards to Reflect Modern Formats

The Canadian Academy should restructure the "Web Program" division with platform-agnostic Short-Form and Episodic categories (mirroring the Emmy model). Removing the mandatory broadcaster-agreement rule while organizing by format ensures digital-first creators can compete on a fair playing field.

Leverage Creators across Public Cultural Institutions

The Department of Canadian Heritage should release new guidance for public cultural institutions (museums, parks, arts) to ensure they are leveraging creators in their communications strategies in order to reach new audiences, support emerging talent, and strengthen Canada's global cultural influence.

“ Digital creators are building an export industry and showing the world who Canada is; our people, our experiences, our stories. But this isn't the same model as traditional broadcasting. Any system designed to support this industry must recognize self-distribution and help creators retain ownership of the IP they build.”

— Morghan Fortier, Skyship Entertainment



Creators need Access to Finance









While top-tier creators run profitable enterprises with diversified income streams—programmatic ad revenue, brand integrations, consumer product licensing, and digital subscriptions—they encounter persistent friction when approaching Canadian commercial lenders. Underwriting models remain tethered to physical real estate, inventory liens, or legacy paper accounts receivable. Lenders routinely discount programmatic platform income and cross-border brand contracts as volatile, regardless of multi-year balance sheets.

Only 8%

of surveyed YouTube creators said they receive adequate support with access to business loans/capital.

Simultaneously, creators grapple with complex cross-border tax issues, including overseas withholding taxes, domestic digital GST/HST compliance, and home-studio depreciation rules. Without accessible working capital and clear fiscal guidance, creators are forced to self-fund major studio expansions or relocate production to jurisdictions with more flexible commercial credit markets.

OPPORTUNITIES

Access to Finance

Launch a BDC Digital Studio Financing Initiative

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) should introduce a dedicated lending stream for digital media entrepreneurs that evaluates rolling digital platform cash flows and intellectual property when assessing creditworthiness.

Publish a Dedicated CRA Digital Economy Guide

The Canada Revenue Agency should release clear, plain-language tax bulletins covering multi-jurisdictional withholding tax credits, home-studio capital cost allowances, and software/hardware depreciation for digital creators.

Include Creators in Export Development Canada Portfolios

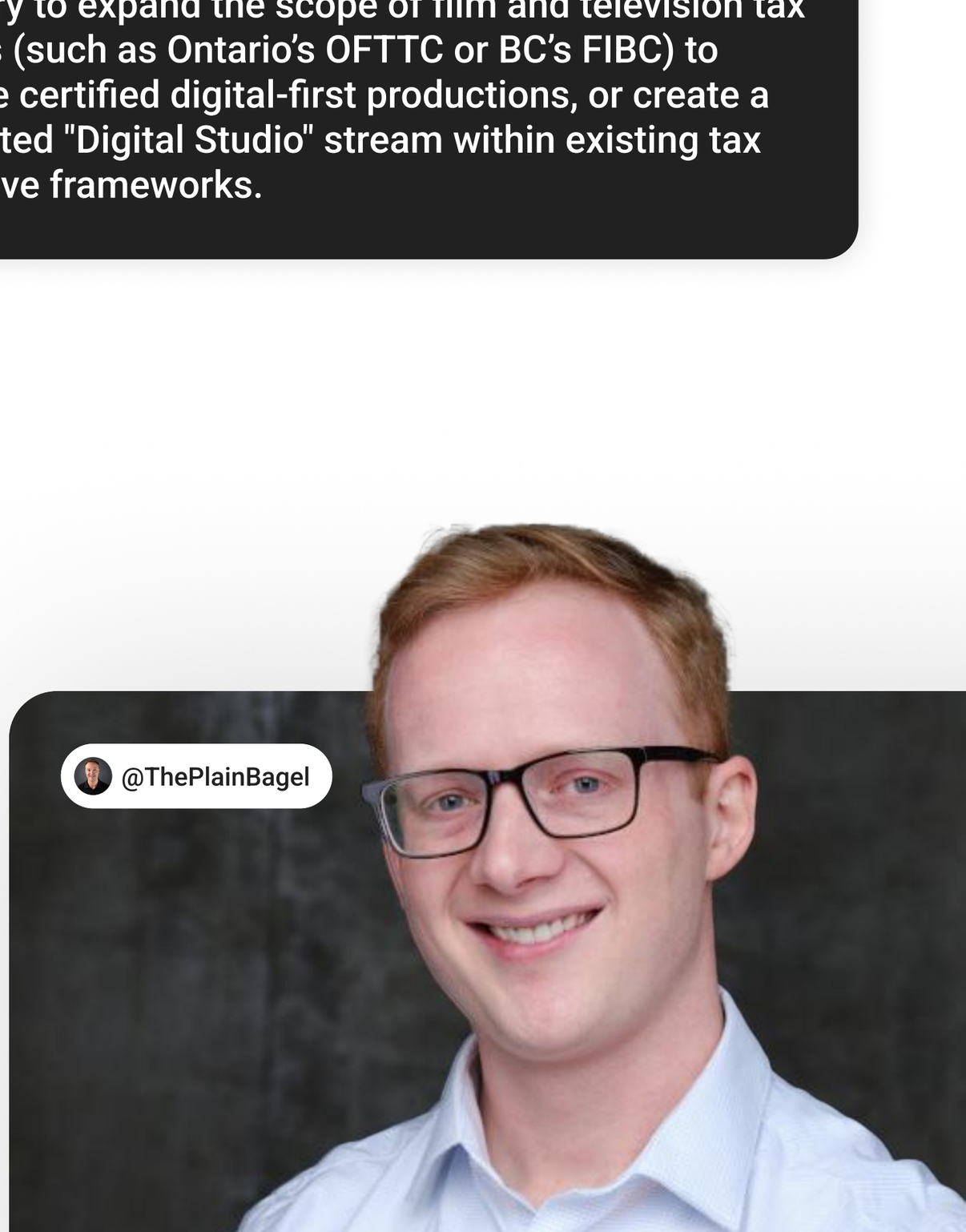
Since a massive proportion of Canadian creator watch time comes from international audiences, Global Affairs should confirm creator businesses are eligible for CanExport SMEs, and EDC should recognize digital service exports in its eligibility criteria.

Modernize Provincial Film & Digital Media Tax Credits

Provinces should collaborate with the digital creator industry to expand the scope of film and television tax credits (such as Ontario's OFTTC or BC's FIBC) to include certified digital-first productions, or create a dedicated "Digital Studio" stream within existing tax incentive frameworks.

“ Applying for loans is incredibly frustrating as a content creator. Banks frequently ignore YouTube revenues when approving creators for lines of credit or mortgages because it doesn't fit within their standard risk model. This makes pursuing independent content creation full time difficult.”

— Richard Coffin, The Plain Bagel





Creators need Training & Skills

A solo creator frequently evolves into an enterprise executive. As viewership scales, creators quickly become regional employers, hiring full-time video editors, 2D/3D animators, thumbnail illustrators, script researchers, and operations managers. However, this growth happens in an operational vacuum.

Only 12%

of surveyed YouTube creators think they receive adequate support with training and skills (for creators and/or employees).

Most creators must teach themselves enterprise bookkeeping, cross-border intellectual property assignment, fair-dealing rights, and employment standards through costly trial and error. Traditional business school curricula overlook platform dynamics, while arts training rarely covers digital commercial operations. If Canada is to anchor these high-growth studios domestically, we must supply working digital entrepreneurs with the legal, commercial, and operational tools required to manage resilient, mid-sized enterprises.

OPPORTUNITIES Training & Skills

Launch a National Creator Business & IP Toolkit

The Canadian Intellectual Property Office and BDC should build an open-access, self-paced digital curriculum. This toolkit should cover contract negotiation, intellectual property assignment, fair commercial licensing, brand contract indemnification, and merchandising operations.

Provincial Training & Job Grant Integration

Provincial governments should expand programs like the Canada-Ontario Job Grant or the BC Employer Training Grant to subsidize professional development, business legal education, and digital tool training for independent creators and their employees.

Launch a Dedicated “Creator Business & Financial Operations” Clinic

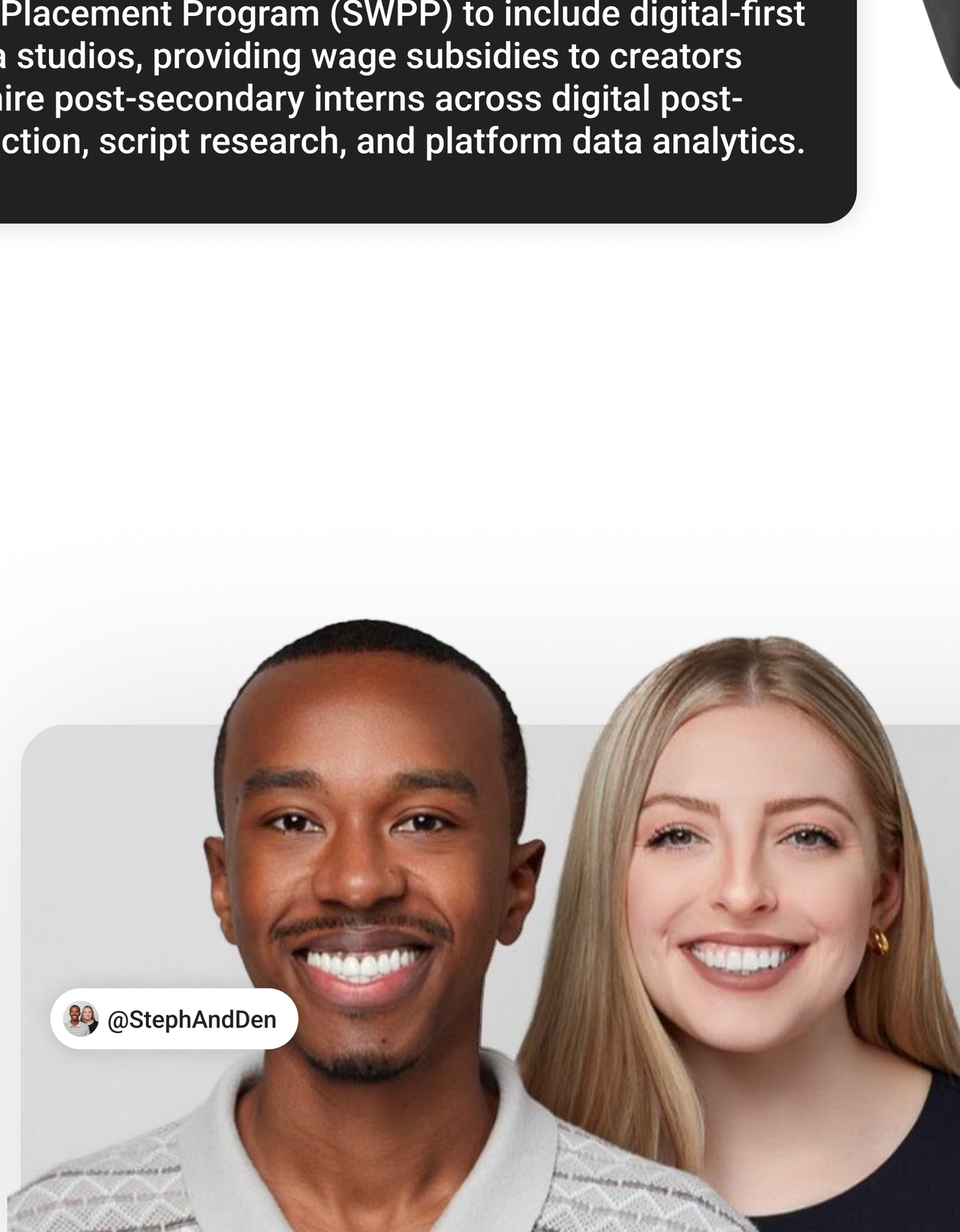
The BDC, in partnership with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), should fund specialized, cohort-based business clinics for digital creators. Curriculum should address the concrete financial hurdles of platform businesses.

Establish Applied Creator Studio Co-op Programs

The federal government should expand the Student Work Placement Program (SWPP) to include digital-first media studios, providing wage subsidies to creators who hire post-secondary interns across digital post-production, script research, and platform data analytics.

“We wear a lot of hats – every single day – as digital creators. When we look to expand our teams, we’re also tasked with training new team members ourselves. More resources and training on the small-business side of what we do (trademark, copyright, contract negotiation, etc) with language that resonates with digital creators would be very helpful.”

— Steph & Den



Thank You

We are grateful to the creators and experts who contributed to this report and its findings. Your voices have shaped this report and helped make the case for stronger support for Canada's creator economy. We're also grateful to the many experts, advocates, and industry partners who contributed their time, ideas, and feedback throughout this process.

ABOUT THE CONSULTATION

Abacus Data ran an anonymous online survey of creators between May 18 and June 18, 2026. In total, 2,596 Canadian creators completed the survey.

ABOUT ABACUS DATA

Abacus Data is one of Canada's leading full-service market and public opinion research agencies. Combining rigorous quantitative polling with in-depth qualitative analysis, the agency delivers research-backed insights to help organizations understand shifting perspectives, public policy dynamics, and future industry trends.