



Influence of Project Management Practices on Successful Project Completion in Rwanda: A Case of Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) Rwanda, 2024–2025

Ingabire Mugiraneza Deborah and Samuel Wabala
University of Kigali, Rwanda
Email: ingabineza@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study examined the influence of project management practices on the successful completion of the Digital Skills for Employability (DES) Project implemented by Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) Rwanda. Despite Rwanda's ambitious digital transformation agenda and substantial donor investment in youth-employability programs, many similar interventions continue to face delays, budget overruns, and incomplete achievement of objectives because of weak planning, inadequate feasibility assessment, poor risk management, and limited monitoring and evaluation. The study was guided by four objectives: to assess the influence of project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, and monitoring and evaluation on the successful completion of the DES Project. A descriptive and correlational research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. From a target population of 3,967 project personnel and beneficiaries, a sample of 364 respondents was determined using Slovin's formula and selected through stratified random sampling, complemented by interviews with 12 purposively selected key informants. A total of 342 questionnaires were returned, representing a 93.9% response rate. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression in SPSS. The findings showed that project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, and monitoring and evaluation, each had a positive and statistically significant effect on project success. Qualitative findings indicated that, despite strong internal management systems, communication gaps and limited technical capacity continued to constrain full project effectiveness. The study concludes that integrated project management practices significantly enhance the successful completion of digital-skills interventions and recommends strengthening participatory planning, continuous feasibility review, proactive risk communication, and real-time monitoring and evaluation systems.*

Keywords: *Project planning, Feasibility study, Risk management practices, Monitoring and evaluation, Project success*

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1. Introduction

Successful completion of development projects has become an important concern as organizations are increasingly required to deliver interventions within planned time, budget, quality, and expected results (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2021; Kerzner, 2022). This is

particularly relevant to digital-skills and employability projects, which operate within changing technological and labor-market environments; the growing global demand for digital competencies has increased investment in youth digital-skills initiatives, but their success depends on how effectively projects are planned, assessed, controlled, and adapted during implementation (World Economic Forum, 2023). Project planning, feasibility assessment, risk

management, and monitoring and evaluation are widely recognized as core practices through which financial and technical resources are converted into sustainable project results (PMI, 2021; Kerzner, 2022).

Across Africa, governments and development partners increasingly promote digital skills as a pathway to youth employment, yet implementation remains constrained by infrastructure limitations, unequal access to technology, capacity constraints, financing challenges, and coordination difficulties among multiple stakeholders (African Development Bank, 2024). In Rwanda, digital transformation and youth employability have become central development priorities under Vision 2050, with government and development partners investing heavily in digital skills, entrepreneurship, and employment initiatives (Ministry of ICT and Innovation [Rwanda], 2023). Recent Rwandan evidence links structured planning and coordinated implementation with improved programme performance (Nsengiyumva, 2024), but this evidence mainly addresses individual management dimensions rather than the combined influence of planning, feasibility assessment, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation within a single digital-employability project.

This study focuses on DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability (DES) Project, launched in October 2024, which aims to equip more than 10,000 young people, particularly young women and other groups facing barriers to employment, with digital and entrepreneurial skills and pathways to dignified livelihoods (Digital Opportunity Trust [DOT] Rwanda, 2024). The scale of the project, its multiple stakeholders, technological requirements, and youth-employability focus require effective planning, feasibility assessment, risk management, and continuous monitoring throughout implementation. Despite this, limited empirical evidence specifically examines how these four practices jointly influence the successful completion of a digital-skills and employability project in Rwanda, motivating the present study.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite Rwanda's ambitious digital-transformation agenda and substantial donor investment in youth-employability programmes such as DOT Rwanda's DES Project, many similar initiatives fail to achieve timely completion, budget adherence, and sustainable outcomes. Global evidence points to failure rates of 30–40% in digital-skills projects attributable to inadequate planning and risk management (Standish Group, 2020; Kerzner, 2022), while East African development projects have recorded substantial budget overruns and delays linked to weak monitoring systems (World Bank, 2023). Rwandan project environments have likewise recorded persistent execution difficulties, particularly where risk identification and monitoring

systems remain underdeveloped (Niyonzima, Habimana, & Uwizeyimana, 2025).

The DES Project, which targets over 10,000 vulnerable youth amid a 28.4% youth NEET rate (National Institute of Statistics Rwanda [NISIR], 2024), faces implementation risks arising from rural access gaps, fragile funding cycles, technical capacity shortages, and gender disparities. Although project-management literature establishes planning, feasibility assessment, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation as critical success factors (PMI, 2021), their specific application within Rwanda's digital-skills context remains empirically underexplored, leaving policymakers, NGOs, and practitioners without adequate evidence-based guidance. This study therefore examined the influence of project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, and monitoring and evaluation on the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's DES Project.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

General objective

To evaluate the effect of project management practices on the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.

Specific objectives

1. To assess the influence of project planning on the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.
2. To analyze the influence of feasibility study on the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.
3. To examine the contribution of risk management practices to the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.
4. To determine the role of monitoring and evaluation in the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.

1.3 The Study Tested the Following Null Hypotheses

1. H01: Project planning has no significant effect on the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.
2. H02: Feasibility study has no significant effect on the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.
3. H03: Risk management practices have no significant effect on the successful completion of

DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.

4. H04: Monitoring and evaluation have no significant effect on the successful completion of DOT Rwanda's Digital Skills for Employability Project.

2. Literature Review

This section presents the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical review relating to the study variables, together with the conceptual framework and research gap addressed by the study.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Project Planning

Project planning involves defining project objectives, developing timelines, allocating resources, assigning responsibilities, and identifying stakeholders before implementation (Eskerod & Huemann, 2013). Planning is supported by tools such as Gantt charts, work-breakdown structures, and logical frameworks; in digital-transformation settings, upfront planning has been associated with reduced scope creep and better coordination of activities and resources (Baier, Jürgens, & Kalvelage, 2022), while Rwandan evidence from digital-skills programming links structured planning to improved coordination and reduced donor misalignment (Nsengiyumva, 2024).

2.1.2 Feasibility Study

A feasibility study evaluates the technical, financial, operational, and social viability of a project before implementation (Kerzner, 2022). Feasibility assessment enables organizations to anticipate challenges and optimize resource allocation, reducing the likelihood of project failure; in digital-skills programmes specifically, feasibility analysis is important for addressing technological requirements and labor-market demands before resources are committed (MINICT, 2021).

2.1.3 Risk Management Practices

Risk management involves identifying, analyzing, and mitigating potential events that could negatively affect project outcomes (PMI, 2021). Effective risk management enhances decision-making and reduces uncertainty; meta-analytic evidence confirms a consistent positive association between risk management and project success (Hubaček & Svatá, 2022), and digital-skills projects face particular risks related to technology adoption, funding continuity, and changing market needs that require

systematic identification and mitigation strategies (Aarseth, Ahola, Aaltonen, Økland, & Andersen, 2017).

2.1.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is the continuous assessment of project activities to ensure they remain on track, while evaluation examines the extent to which objectives have been achieved (Brightline Initiative, 2023). Systematic reviews link consistent monitoring and evaluation practice to improved timeline adherence (Iriarte & Villalobos, 2020), and digital-project evidence from African organizations associates real-time monitoring dashboards with reduced reporting delays and more timely corrective action (CARI Journals, 2025).

2.1.5 Project Success

Project-success literature distinguishes traditional “iron triangle” metrics of time, cost, and scope from product success (quality and functionality) and business success (sustainability and return on investment) (Ika, 2012). For digital-skills projects specifically, success is commonly assessed through trainee completion, achievement of milestones, and the extent to which the project improves beneficiaries' employability outcomes (Baccarini, 1999).

2.2 Theoretical Review

The study is anchored on four complementary theoretical perspectives: Project Management Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Systems Theory, and Results-Based Management (RBM) Theory. Together, these perspectives provide managerial, relational, systemic, and results-oriented explanations of how project planning, feasibility assessment, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation influence the successful completion of the DES Project.

2.2.1 Project Management Theory

Project Management Theory emphasizes the systematic application of knowledge, tools, and techniques to plan, execute, monitor, and control project activities in order to achieve predetermined objectives, integrating planning, risk management, and monitoring as complementary determinants of successful implementation (PMI, 2021; Kerzner, 2022). The theory is directly relevant to this study because project planning, feasibility study, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation represent core managerial processes across the project life cycle. Its main limitation is an emphasis on predetermined plans and control mechanisms that may understate the uncertainty surrounding development and digital-skills projects, whose success is increasingly recognized as multidimensional rather than confined to time, cost, and scope.

2.2.2 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) emphasizes identifying and managing individuals and groups who affect, or are affected by, organizational activities. Within the DES Project, beneficiaries, trainers, project personnel, donors, and government institutions represent distinct stakeholder groups whose interests must be managed for successful implementation. Stakeholder Theory complements Project Management Theory by directing attention to the relational and participatory dimensions of planning, risk communication, and monitoring.

2.2.3 Systems Theory

Systems Theory (Checkland, 1981) conceptualizes projects as interdependent systems composed of interacting components, such that a weakness in one area, for example feasibility assessment, can affect outcomes elsewhere, such as risk exposure or the effectiveness of monitoring. This perspective supports the study's integration of four interrelated management practices rather than treating them as isolated determinants of project success.

2.2.4 Results-Based Management (RBM) Theory

RBM Theory emphasizes defining measurable results, tracking performance indicators, and using performance information for accountability and corrective action (UNDP, 2020). RBM Theory is directly relevant to the monitoring-and-evaluation dimension of this study and reinforces the expectation that structured performance tracking contributes to successful project completion.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Project Planning and Project Success

Evidence from digital-transformation settings indicates that comprehensive upfront planning reduces scope creep and supports better coordination of activities and resources (Baier et al., 2022), while stakeholder-inclusive planning approaches have been shown to strengthen ownership and coordination in development projects more broadly (Eskeroth & Huemann, 2013). Within DOT Rwanda's own programming, structured planning practices, including clearly defined responsibilities and schedules, have been associated with improved implementation outcomes (Nsengiyumva, 2024). These studies support the expectation that clear objectives, coordinated scheduling, and defined responsibilities contribute to successful project completion, although limited evidence specifically examines planning alongside feasibility, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation as combined predictors within a single digital-skills project, as the present study does.

2.3.2 Feasibility Study and Project Success

In Rwanda, Habimana (2023) found that ICT-related development projects that assessed technical requirements, beneficiary needs, and local operational conditions before implementation were better positioned to sustain their activities, providing contextual support for the expectation that feasibility assessment strengthens project preparedness. Nonetheless, feasibility study continues to receive comparatively less empirical attention than planning, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation in the broader project-management literature (Ika, 2012), a gap the present study addresses by examining technical, financial, human-resource, beneficiary, and environmental feasibility together as predictors of successful completion.

2.3.3 Risk Management Practices and Project Success

Meta-analytic evidence confirms a consistent positive association between systematic risk management and project success across sectors (Hubáček & Svatá, 2022), while digital and technology-dependent projects face risks related to technology adoption, funding continuity, and changing market conditions that require proactive identification and mitigation (Aarseth et al., 2017). In Rwanda, Niyonzima et al. (2025) found that systematic risk identification, assessment, and monitoring strengthened project control and performance, offering local evidence for the relevance of structured risk management to project outcomes, including in digital-skills interventions.

2.3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation and Project Success

Systematic reviews link consistent monitoring and evaluation practice to improved timeline adherence across project types (Iriarte & Villalobos, 2020), while digital-project evidence from African organizations shows that real-time monitoring dashboards and regular performance reviews reduce reporting delays and support timely corrective action (CARI Journals, 2025). These findings support the expectation that continuous performance tracking, rather than monitoring treated solely as a compliance or reporting exercise, is central to the successful completion of digital-skills projects such as DOT Rwanda's DES Project.

2.4 Conceptual Framework and Research Gap

The study conceptualizes project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, and monitoring and evaluation as independent variables jointly influencing project success, measured through adherence to timelines, budget compliance, milestone achievement, and goal attainment, with implementation challenges such as limited technical capacity, funding constraints, and communication gaps expected to moderate this relationship.

While existing literature confirms that individual practices are associated with project performance, most studies treat them as a single broad maturity construct or examine them separately within general development, construction, or corporate-IT settings (PMI, 2021; Serrador & Pinto, 2015). Limited evidence specifically examines how these four practices jointly influence the successful completion of digital-skills and youth-employability projects within Rwanda’s donor-dependent, rapidly digitalizing development context (Ika, 2012; Nsengiyumva, 2024; Niyonzima et al., 2025). This study addresses that gap by providing project-specific, multi-informant evidence from DOT Rwanda’s DES Project.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted an explanatory research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to

examine the influence of project planning, feasibility study, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation on the successful completion of the DES Project. A sequential mixed-methods approach was used, in which quantitative questionnaire data were collected first and followed by qualitative interviews that provided deeper explanation of the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

3.2 Samples and Sampling

The target population comprised 3,967 individuals involved in the DES Project, including 18 project personnel across DOT Rwanda’s Kigali headquarters and eight district offices, and 3,949 beneficiaries comprising 99 digital coaches and 3,850 direct youth trainees. A sample of 364 respondents was determined using Slovin’s formula at a 5% margin of error and selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation of project personnel and beneficiaries

Table 1: Sample size determination

Category	Population (N)	Sample (n)	Sampling method
Project personnel	18	12	Stratified random sampling
Beneficiaries (digital coaches and direct youth beneficiaries)	3,949	352	Stratified random sampling
Total	3,967	364	

Source: Field data, 2026

An interview guide was additionally administered to 12 purposively selected project personnel, including project coordinators and technical leads, to complement the quantitative findings with qualitative insight into planning, feasibility, risk, and monitoring processes.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

The study used structured questionnaires, administered on a five-point Likert scale, and semi-structured interviews as the main data-collection instruments, supported by a review of project documents including implementation plans, monitoring reports, and risk registers. The instruments were pilot-tested and reviewed for content and construct validity, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha, with a coefficient of 0.70 or above considered acceptable for social-science research.

Table 2: Reliability statistics

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach’s alpha
Project planning	6	0.841
Feasibility study	6	0.817
Risk management practices	6	0.856
Monitoring and evaluation	6	0.832
Project success	6	0.878
Overall instrument	30	0.845

Source: SPSS output, 2026

The results in Table 2 show that all constructs recorded Cronbach’s alpha coefficients above 0.70, ranging from 0.817 to 0.878, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.845, confirming that the research instrument was internally consistent and suitable for data collection.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher obtained authorization from the University of Kigali and relevant DOT Rwanda authorities. Questionnaires were self-administered to sampled project personnel and beneficiaries, while interviews were conducted with selected key informants. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness before coding and entry into SPSS, and interview responses were recorded and organized for thematic analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized respondents’ characteristics and views on the study variables. Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationships between project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, monitoring and evaluation, and project success, while multiple linear regression analysis determined the extent to which the four practices jointly and individually predicted project success. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$). Qualitative data from

interviews were analyzed thematically to complement and explain the statistical findings.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study observed standard ethical principles throughout data collection and analysis. Participation was voluntary and informed, and respondents were assured of their right to withdraw without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by omitting personal identifiers, and the data collected were used strictly for academic purposes.

4. Results and Discussion

Of the 364 questionnaires distributed to project personnel and beneficiaries of the DES Project, 342 were successfully completed and returned, representing a response rate of 93.9%. Project personnel recorded a 100% response rate, while beneficiaries recorded 93.8%, exceeding the 70% threshold generally recommended for social-science research and providing a sound basis for the analysis that follows.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, monitoring and evaluation, and project success.

Table 3: Correlation matrix					
Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1.Project planning	1				
2. Feasibility study	0.68**	1			
3. Risk management practices	0.71**	0.66**	1		
4. Monitoring and evaluation	0.74**	0.69**	0.72**	1	
5. Project success	0.76**	0.73**	0.75**	0.78**	1

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: SPSS output, 2026*

Table 3 shows that all four project management practices have a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship with project success. Project planning correlates positively with project success ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that clearly defined objectives, schedules, and resource planning are associated with higher levels of success. Feasibility study is also positively associated with project success ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$), while risk management practices show a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.01$). Monitoring and evaluation recorded the strongest

correlation with project success ($r = 0.78$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that continuous performance tracking and corrective action play a particularly important role in the DES Project.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the combined and individual effect of the four project management practices on project success.

Table 4: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.84	0.71	0.69	0.31

Source: SPSS output, 2026

The model summary shows an R value of 0.84, reflecting a strong overall relationship between the combined project management practices and project success. The R² value of 0.71 indicates that project planning, feasibility study, risk management, and monitoring and evaluation jointly

explain 71% of the variance in project success, with the remaining 29% attributable to other factors such as funding continuity and the broader institutional environment. The adjusted R² of 0.69 confirms the robustness of the model.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	32.45	4	8.11	68.52	0.000
Residual	39.89	337	0.12		
Total	72.34	341			

Source: SPSS output, 2026

The ANOVA results confirm that the overall regression model is statistically significant (F = 68.52, p = 0.000 < 0.05), indicating that project planning, feasibility study,

risk management practices, and monitoring and evaluation jointly exert a significant influence on the successful completion of the DES Project

Table 6: Regression coefficients

Predictor variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.
(Constant)	0.42	0.18	2.33	0.022
Project planning	0.28	0.07	4.00	0.000
Feasibility study	0.24	0.06	3.67	0.001
Risk management practices	0.26	0.07	3.85	0.000
Monitoring and evaluation	0.30	0.06	5.00	0.000

Source: SPSS output, 2026

The regression equation is expressed as $Y = 0.42 + 0.28X_1 + 0.24X_2 + 0.26X_3 + 0.30X_4 + \varepsilon$, where Y represents project success and X₁ to X₄ represent project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, and monitoring and evaluation respectively. Monitoring and evaluation exerted the strongest positive and statistically significant effect on

project success (β = 0.30, p = 0.000), followed by project planning (β = 0.28, p = 0.000), risk management practices (β = 0.26, p = 0.000), and feasibility study (β = 0.24, p = 0.001), the smallest of the four coefficients but still statistically significant.

Table 7: Hypothesis testing results

Null hypothesis (H0)	β	p-value	Decision at α = 0.05
H01: Project planning has no significant effect on project success	0.28	0.000	Rejected H01
H02: Feasibility study has no significant effect on project success	0.24	0.001	Rejected H02
H03: Risk management practices have no significant effect on project success	0.26	0.000	Rejected H03
H04: Monitoring and evaluation has no significant effect on project success	0.30	0.000	Rejected H04

Source: SPSS output, 2026

All four null hypotheses were rejected because their p-values were below 0.05, confirming that project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, and monitoring and evaluation each have a statistically significant positive effect on the successful completion of the DES Project, with monitoring and evaluation the strongest predictor, closely followed by project planning.

These findings are consistent with prior research. The positive effect of project planning is consistent with evidence that upfront, coordinated planning reduces scope creep and strengthens implementation coordination (Baier et al., 2022; Nsengiyumva, 2024). The significant contribution of feasibility study supports Habimana (2023), who found that technical, human-resource, and operational assessment strengthens project preparedness in Rwandan ICT-related projects. The strong effect of risk management is consistent with Hubaček and Svatá (2022) and Niyonzima et al. (2025), who found that systematic risk identification and mitigation strengthen project control. The finding that monitoring and evaluation is the strongest predictor is consistent with Iriarte and Villalobos (2020) and CARI Journals (2025), who emphasise continuous performance tracking as central to project success.

Qualitative findings nuanced this picture. Interview respondents described the use of structured workplans, defined responsibilities, and planning meetings, alongside contingency arrangements and regular review processes, that reinforced the quantitative results. At the same time, respondents identified communication gaps, limited technical capacity, and periodic technology constraints as factors that continued to affect coordination and information flow, even where formal planning, feasibility, risk, and monitoring systems were well established. This suggests that strong project management practices, while significant predictors of success, do not by themselves eliminate operational constraints tied to communication and capacity.

4.3 Implications of the study

Theoretically, the results support Project Management Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Systems Theory, and Results-Based Management Theory by demonstrating how planning, feasibility, risk, and monitoring processes jointly relate to project success in a donor-supported digital-skills initiative. Practically, the findings suggest that DOT Rwanda and similar implementing organizations should prioritize strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems and participatory planning, given their strongest predictive power, while also reinforcing feasibility assessment and risk communication. For policymakers and development partners, the substantial explanatory power of the model

(71%) indicates that project management practices are necessary but not sufficient conditions for success; complementary attention to funding continuity, technical capacity building, and stakeholder communication is required to achieve the full benefits of strong project management systems in Rwanda's digital-skills and youth-employability sector.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of project management practices on the successful completion of the Digital Skills for Employability Project implemented by DOT Rwanda. The findings confirm that project planning, feasibility study, risk management practices, and monitoring and evaluation each have a statistically significant, positive effect on project success, jointly explaining 71% of the variance in project outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation emerged as the strongest predictor, underscoring the importance of continuous performance tracking, reporting, and corrective action, followed closely by project planning, risk management practices, and feasibility study. At the same time, qualitative evidence indicates that communication gaps and technical-capacity constraints continue to limit the full effectiveness of otherwise strong management systems. The study concludes that integrated, participatory project management practices are essential for the successful completion of digital-skills and youth-employability projects in Rwanda's development context.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, DOT Rwanda should strengthen participatory project planning by involving beneficiaries and trainers more directly in setting objectives and communicating timelines. Feasibility assessment should be treated as a continuous rather than a one-time process, with periodic reassessment of technological, financial, and operational conditions. Risk management should be strengthened through more consistent communication of identified risks to stakeholders and faster response mechanisms for unexpected challenges. Finally, monitoring and evaluation systems should be reinforced through real-time performance tracking, improved reporting, and systematic use of lessons learned to support timely corrective action. Policymakers and development partners are encouraged to incorporate these findings into the design of future digital-skills and youth-employability interventions in Rwanda and comparable contexts.

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