



**Higher
Education**
STRATEGY ASSOCIATES

TalentED YYC:

Sustain, Scale, and Scope
for the Future

**Prepared for the Calgary Work Integrated
Learning Secretariate**

June 2024



**MONITORING
AND
EVALUATION**



Higher Education

STRATEGY ASSOCIATES

Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) is a Toronto-based firm providing strategic insight and guidance to governments, postsecondary institutions, and agencies through excellence and expertise in policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and strategic consulting services. Through these activities, HESA strives to improve the quality, efficacy, and fairness of higher education systems in Canada and worldwide.

Authors: Janelle Curry, Nancy Johnston, and Barry Burciul

Work completed on behalf of: the Calgary Work Integrated Learning Secretariate

Design notes: Icons from Flaticon.com. The shape of the footer is an outline of the Rocky Mountains. The pattern within this shape is a stylized representation of the Calgary road network. Combined, this illustration represents Alberta as a whole while also highlighting TalentED YYC's specific connection to Calgary.

Acknowledgements: This report benefitted from valuable input from TalentED YYC's partners and stakeholders, who generously offered their time to discuss the project, its future, and the state of WIL in Alberta throughout the course of this evaluation period. These include PSI administrators, WIL practitioners, employers, funders, etc. from the following organizations: the Alberta University of the Arts, Ambrose University, Bow Valley College, Mount Royal University, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, St. Mary's University, the University of Calgary, Calgary Economic Development, Calgary Chamber of Commerce, Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, PrairiesCan, BHER, Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Alberta.

Any errors or omissions are the authors' alone.

Contact:

Higher Education Strategy Associates
Suite 207, 20 Maud Street
Toronto ON
M5V 2M5, Canada
info@higheredstrategy.com
www.higheredstrategy.com

© Higher Education Strategy Associates, 2024

Glossary of Abbreviations

ACE WIL: Association for Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning

BHER: Business and Higher Education Roundtable

CCC: Calgary Chamber of Commerce

CCVO: Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

CED: Calgary Economic Development

CEWIL: Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning

CoP: Community of Practice

CPDT: Community & Practice Development Team

EAG: Executive Advisory Group

ED: Executive Director

EET: Employer Engagement Team

EWO: Experiential and Work Integrated Learning Ontario

Future NB: Future New Brunswick

GNB: Government of New Brunswick

GoA: Government of Alberta

HEQCO: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

HESA: Higher Education Strategy Associates

KPI: Key Performance Indicators

MCT: Marketing & Communications Team

NPO: Non-Profit Organization

PSE: Post-Secondary Education

PSI: Post-Secondary Institution

ROI: Return On Investment

SET: Strategy and Evaluation Team

SME: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, defined as 1-99 employees (Small) and 100-499 employees (Medium)

SUNY: State University System of New York

TDST: Technology & Data Systems Team

WACE: World Association for Co-operative and Work Integrated Education

WIL: Work-Integrated Learning



Purpose and Structure

TalentED YYC has been operating since April 2023 and is set to run until March 2025 with its current funding and mandate to develop a regional WIL model to contribute to the sustainable labour market in Calgary. Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) is the third-party evaluator of the project, taking on the role of learning partner by providing formative and iterative reviews of the project's goals and outputs throughout its duration.

As TalentED YYC marks the halfway point of its pilot, this report explores scaling and sustainability options for the project past its current funding period, and potential avenues for its next iteration, which will be referred to throughout this document as **TalentED 2.0**. The report draws from previous deliverables produced by HESA for the TalentED team, as well as new research and insights collected through a Community of Practice workshop facilitated by HESA, interviews with funders, partners, and stakeholders, and public document analysis of comparable organizations on regional and national scales.

The report is structured in four parts.

→ **Part 1: Understanding TalentED YYC**

- The Team
- The Partners and Funders
- The Network
- Successes & Roadblocks

→ **Part 2: Setting up the future of TalentED 2.0**

- Insights from Partners
- Challenges, Needs, Actions, and Decisions¹

→ **Part 3: Pathways for TalentED 2.0**

- The Two-Lane Highway of WIL
- Lane One: Convenor of PSI WIL Practitioners
- Lane Two: Supporting the WIL Ecosystem

→ **Part 4: Determining a vision for TalentED 2.0**

- Building Sustainable WIL Capacity
- Considerations to Inform Strategic Planning



PART 1:

Understanding TalentED YYC

The Team

TalentED YYC is housed in Calgary Economic Development (CED), one of the project's founding partners and ongoing champion. It is operated by a Secretariate composed of an executive director and four sub-teams with distinct responsibilities, including cross-team support and collaboration. Eighteen people currently work at TalentED YYC: 1 executive director, 5 managers, 12 staff, plus occasional summer students and interns.

Broad purpose of each Secretariate team

Executive Director (ED): Oversees the work of the three branches/four sub-teams, and acts as the main representative of TalentED YYC.

Strategy and Evaluation Team (SET): Collects and distributes project updates and KPIs to stakeholders and funders through collaboration between its sub-teams. Conducts strategic planning for the future of the project.

- **Technology & Data Systems Team (TDST):** Evaluates, configures, and/or implements the various technology platforms used by TalentED YYC.
- **Community & Practice Development Team (CPDT):** Acts as primary contact for PSI WIL practitioners and develops and gathers resources relevant to employers, PSI WIL practitioners, and students.

Employer Engagement Team (EET): Acts as primary contact for employers, providing tailored 1:1 service from scoping out WIL opportunities to helping employers navigate PSI WIL requirements.

Marketing & Communications Team (MCT): Supports the public-facing brand of TalentED YYC.

A detailed chart indicating the cross-team support and collaboration activities follows on page 3.

The Partners and Funders

TalentED YYC operates for and with its partners and funders.

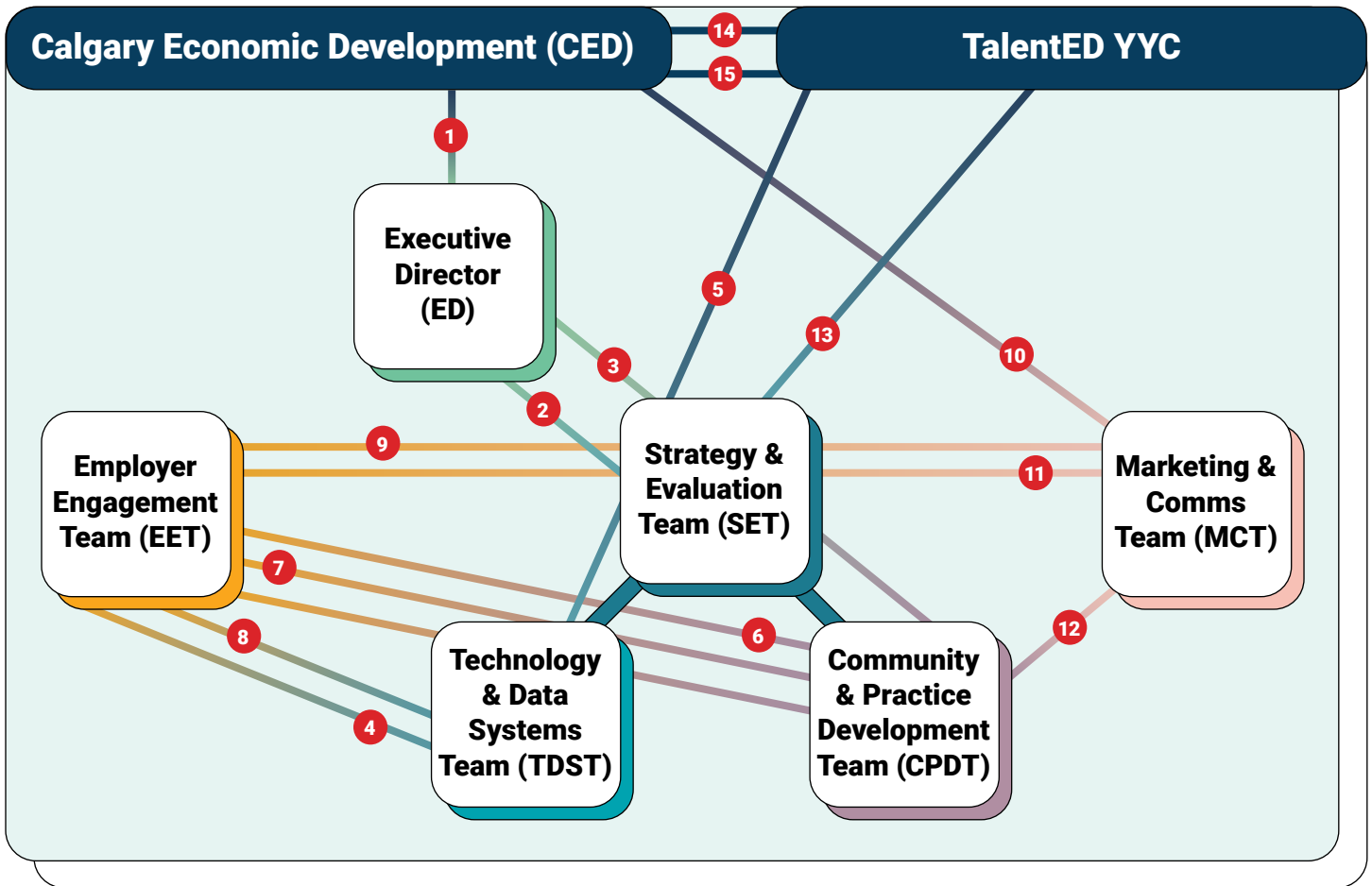
THE PARTNERS



THE FUNDERS



HOW AND WHY THE TEAMS WORK TOGETHER



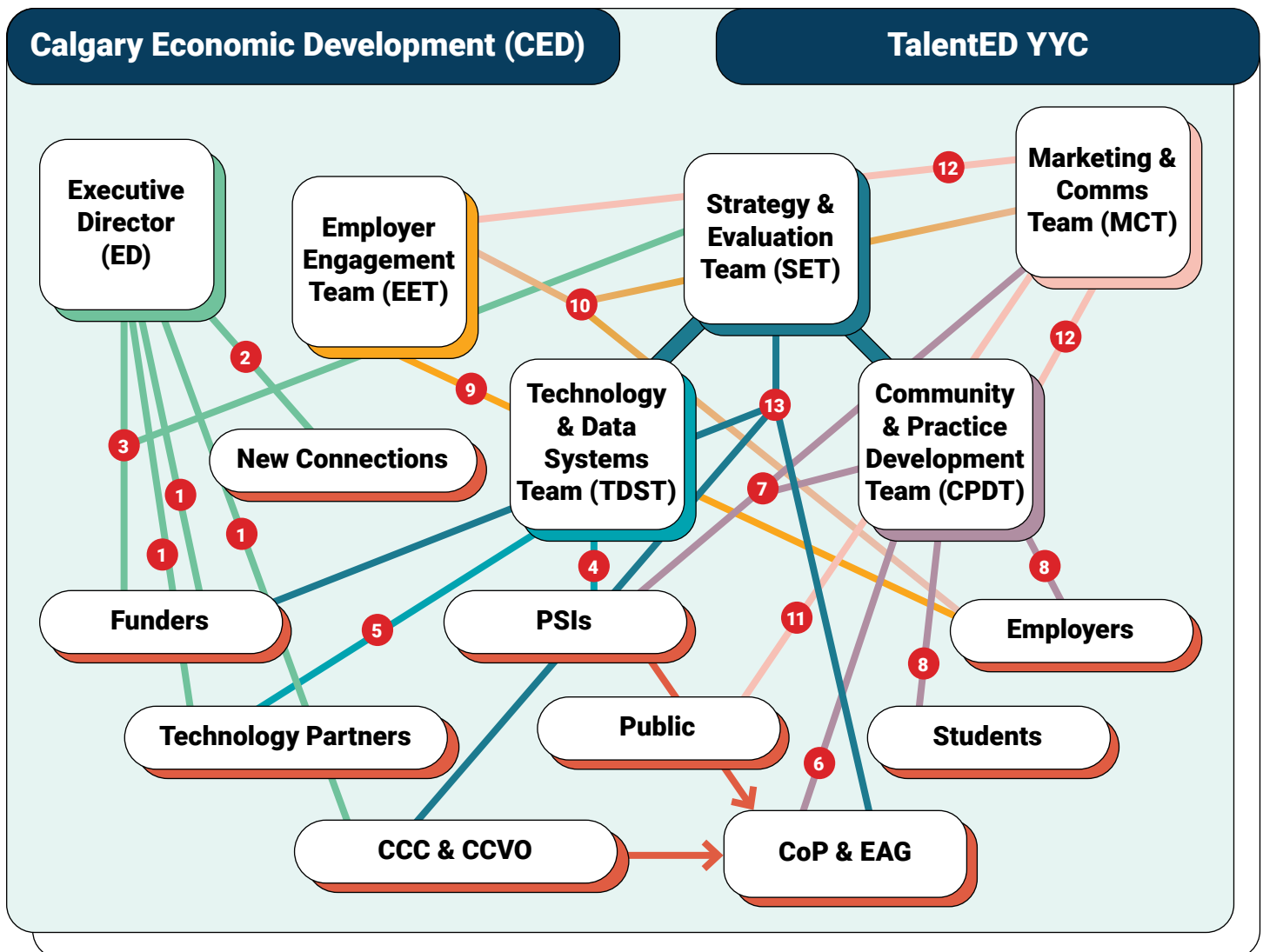
Legend of Activities

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| 1 ED explores ways to collaborate within CED | 5 TDST facilitates internal process mapping for TalentED YYC | 9 EET collaborates with MCT on communications to employers | 14 TalentED YYC leverages internal and external CED contacts to engage new employers in discussions about the value and accessibility of WIL |
| 2 ED collaborates with SET, to write and distribute monthly TalentED YYC project reports for stakeholders | 6 CPDT works with the EET to identify WIL programs at partnering PSIs that can benefit from employer referrals | 10 MCT provides TalentED YYC updates to CED staff | 15 CED facilitates conversations between TalentED YYC and economic development and governmental agencies in other municipalities to discuss scaling |
| 4 TDST supports EET with their configuration and use of the Orbis/Magnet portal | 7 EET works with the CPDT, acts as liaison for employers | 11 MCT supports the EET with marketing | |
| | 8 EET works with the TDST for Orbis/Magnet and HubSpot support | 12 MCT supports the CPDT with marketing | |
| | | 13 SET oversees strategic planning, KPI collection, and reporting | |

The TalentED YYC Network

TalentED YYC's objective of fostering reciprocal relationships with its partners, funders, and stakeholders has generated a new network within the existing WIL ecosystem in Calgary.

OUTWARD FACING ACTIVITIES



Legend of Activities

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1 ED liaises with funders (current and potential) and other major partners | 4 TDST supports partnering PSIs with their configuration and use of the Orbis/Magnet portal | 7 CPDT hosts workshops and events for PSI practitioners and students with support from MCT | 11 MCT maintains the TalentED YYC website; produces content for LinkedIn, blog, and newsletter |
| 2 ED prospects for funding and opportunities to collaborate | 5 TDST liaises with the technology partners | 8 CPDT coordinates and administers student and employer surveys for data collection (I-WIL) | 12 MCT supports the EET and CPDT with marketing outreach and coordination of events |
| 3 ED oversees SET's reporting and KPI submissions to funders | 6 CPDT supports a WIL Community of Practice across seven partnered PSIs in Calgary and the CCC and CCVO | 9 EET conducts outreach with employers | 13 SET engages CoP & EAG, CCC & CCVO, and Funders in strategic planning activities |
| | | 10 EET co-hosts workshops to educate employers | |

Successes and Roadblocks

SUCCESSSES



The TalentED YYC team is consistently praised by stakeholders and partners for being responsive, friendly, helpful, proactive, and adaptable. With WIL being such a relational activity, these attributes are invaluable.



Laying a foundation for increasing employer engagement by building awareness about the benefits of WIL, available funding sources, and processes for creating a WIL opportunity.



Large employers with established WIL programs benefit from a streamlined interface with PSIs through *Outcome Campus Connect*, with some indicating a desire for the portal to be scaled beyond Calgary.



Fostering a Community of Practice amongst WIL practitioners from the seven partner PSIs to enable knowledge and resource exchange, peer networking, and group problem solving.



Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) new to WIL are especially benefiting from the project's support in navigating the WIL space and process.

ROADBLOCKS



Defining the boundaries of the project and reasonable timelines for project-related activities when partners and stakeholders vary in their needs and expectations.



Finding the balance between the value of a collective PSI voice and resource-sharing while respecting the parameters of institutional autonomy.



Obtaining data that responds to the expected metrics and outputs of funders, largely due to 1) the Orbis portal's limitations in data collection, 2) the complexity of data sharing from PSIs, and 3) the overall complexity of WIL (i.e., types, durations, wages, etc.).



Determining the most effective ways to support PSI WIL practitioners when each institution differs in size (i.e., enrollment varying from <1000 to >35,000 students) and has different needs, capacity for engagement, and buy-in for the project.

→ SMEs represent **99.8%** of businesses in Alberta² and employ **53%** of the workforce in Alberta.³

PART 2:

Setting up the future of TalentED 2.0

Insights from Partners

TalentED YYC's partners were engaged by HESA in three ways to gather insights for this report. HESA met with both the Calgary Chamber of Commerce (CCC) and the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO) to discuss how the project has been serving their organizations' and members' needs. Future actions for a TalentED 2.0 were also discussed.

PSI partners engage with TalentED YYC through two groups: the Community of Practice (CoP) for WIL practitioners at PSIs and the Executive Advisory Group (EAG) for the Vice-Provosts and WIL leaders at PSIs. The CCC and CCVO are invited to attend both groups' meetings.

On May 6, 2024, HESA facilitated a workshop during TalentED YYC's fifth quarterly Conversations on Calgary WIL session. Nearly 40 people from the CoP participated in the workshop, representing the seven partnered post-secondary institutions and the Calgary Chamber for Voluntary Organizations. The theme for the workshop was:

"Based on your experience and knowledge, what questions or issues do you think TalentED YYC should consider with respect to promoting and developing WIL in Calgary (and beyond?) going forward?"

This question was also posed to the EAG in a separate meeting on May 24, 2024, so that HESA could compare and link the insights from these different perspectives.

HESA has categorized what we heard from these sources into four areas to inform the direction of TalentED 2.0: the challenges in operating WIL (from a PSI perspective and an employer perspective); what gaps need to be filled in the WIL space; ideas for actions TalentED 2.0 could take on; and key decisions the TalentED team will need to make when scaling the project.



Key WIL Challenges for PSIs

- Translating WIL terminology to employers.
- Meeting the required volume of WIL opportunities due to shortage of employers.
- Generating faculty buy-in for integrating WIL into their courses.
- Ensuring a safe and quality WIL experience for students.
- Designing WIL programs that reconcile the diverse needs and preferences of participants, providers, employers, and funders.
- Reducing financial barriers for students to participate in WIL.
- Offering WIL opportunities to international students.
- Ensuring that WIL is appropriately resourced and supported within the institution.

Key Challenges for Employers

- Navigating the PSI systems for setting up WIL opportunities (e.g., starting partnership agreements, understanding the varying WIL definitions, types, and durations, etc.).
- Finding and applying for the appropriate funding to subsidize WIL positions, as the process is time consuming and varies by funder.
- Trusting that the students in WIL opportunities will be present, engaged, and indeed provide value to the organization.
- Understanding what their role is in ensuring the student's/PSI's learning outcomes are met.
- SMEs, small NPOs, and start-ups: Having the internal capacity to pursue the process of developing a WIL experience and hosting a student.

Needs in the WIL Ecosystem

- New and more sector-diverse quality WIL opportunities.
- Identifying, collecting, and tracking relevant WIL data at the system level.
- Increase in capacity for SMEs, NPOs, and start-ups to hire students (i.e., through help navigating funding applications, PSI requirements, etc.).
- More communication paths between PSIs, students, and employers to better understand each other's needs and motivations for participating in WIL.
- Promotion of non-traditional WIL disciplines (e.g., arts and theatre, social science, humanities, etc.) and types (e.g., capstone projects) with employers.
- Positioning the needs of PSIs to the GoA with suggestions for support, such as the GoA offering resources and additional provincial funding to the PSIs to increase their capacity for administering WIL adhering to the Alberta 2030 strategy.
- Positioning the needs of employers--with a focus on SMEs, NPOs, and start-ups--to the GoA with suggestions for support, such as the GoA offering incentives to employers to offer WIL opportunities.
- A shared understanding of what constitutes a "quality WIL" placement and what is needed to support that.

Potential Actions for TalentED 2.0

- Create and house WIL resources for PSIs, students, and employers.
- Identify relevant WIL impacts/outcomes for each major stakeholder (employer, PSI, student, funders) and collect system level data to assess those outcomes.
- Facilitate employer mentoring networks to bring more employers into WIL.
- Explore with employers how to build a quality WIL experience, how to provide a safe experience for a student, and how and where to apply for funding for a WIL student.
- Start a yearly award recognizing outstanding employers offering WIL.
- Advocate to the GoA on behalf of PSIs and employers, to grow the provincial WIL ecosystem.

Key Decisions for the TalentED Team

- What is the sweet spot between scale and value/impact for TalentED 2.0?
- How will TalentED 2.0 identify and fill a space in the WIL ecosystem without duplicating efforts?
- With what kinds of WIL should TalentED 2.0 engage?⁴
- Should TalentED 2.0 continue to act as convener of PSIs through the CoP and EAG? Can/should/is it helpful for Talented YYC to help launch a PSI led association that could ultimately be self-governed?
- What supports should and shouldn't TalentED 2.0 provide to PSIs, based on PSI feedback, the TalentED team's experience, and TalentED 2.0's potential capacity?
- Should TalentED 2.0 advocate on behalf of any stakeholder?
 - If so, which ones? to whom? for what?
- Should TalentED 2.0 directly interface with students? If so, how and for what purposes?
- Should TalentED 2.0 focus primarily on supporting employers?
- Should the Orbis/Magnet portal continue on with TalentED 2.0? If so, should the project provide funding to PSI partners to pay for the platform?

PART 3:

Pathways for TalentED 2.0

The Two-Lane Highway of WIL

Imagine the WIL ecosystem in which TalentED 2.0 could play a unique and important role as a two-lane highway, where both lanes are going in the same direction but have different uses.

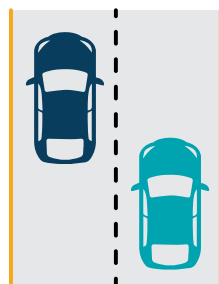
Lane One corresponds to work with PSIs aimed at increasing their individual capacity for developing and administering WIL. Such activities may be internal to the post-secondary sector, such as inter-institutional collaboration, networking, and support amongst PSI WIL practitioners. Activities may also involve external outreach to and collaboration with employers, governments, funders, and organizations dedicated to WIL that are not based within PSIs.

Lane Two corresponds to activities aimed at growing the WIL ecosystem outside of PSIs while still in partnership with them, e.g., by conducting outreach to employers, funders and other external stakeholders to increase the latter's familiarity with (and ultimately interest in) engaging with and supporting WIL. Activities in this lane also include providing support for these stakeholders in navigating the PSI and funding systems to build WIL opportunities and identify outcomes they are interested in assessing together.

Working together, these two allow the exchange of each of their primary stakeholders' needs to the other, bridging a gap between PSIs and employers and providing evidence in the form of data to funders and policy makers.

The TalentED YYC pilot project was designed to operate in both these lanes initially, eventually ceding operation of Lane One activities to the EAG and CoP (most members of which are from PSIs) once a charter and governance structure had been put in place with TalentED YYC's administrative support. Looking ahead, how will TalentED position itself in relation to these two lanes?

An environmental scan of organizations dedicated to promoting WIL informed the concept of this two-lane highway. Below are key takeaways and comparative summaries of these organizations. These provide a contextual understanding of what entities and structures exist in the WIL ecosystem across Canada. In the final part of this report, information from this and the preceding sections is consolidated into suggestions for forward movement, along with a set of questions and considerations with which the TalentED team and its supporters will need to engage to form a vision for a sustainable, scaled TalentED 2.0.





Lane One: Convenor of PSI WIL Practitioners

The organizations in Lane One convene PSI WIL practitioners for varying activities related to promoting WIL. No such association yet exists in Alberta, though there are active conversations amongst PSI WIL practitioners about establishing one.

Comparative summaries of seven organizations working within Lane One follow. Below are six key takeaways from this scan which are relevant to the strategic visioning the TalentED team will need to undertake to guide their sustainability and scalability planning.

KEY TAKEAWAYS


- 1.** Most of the current WIL based regional associations are practitioner focused, with the vast majority of members coming from PSIs.
- 2.** Members tend to pay very modest fees (\$25-50/year per practitioner) so most of these associations bring in very modest amounts through membership fees alone, typically insufficient to fund full-time paid staff.
- 3.** The organizations focus on services for their members, general advocacy, and promotion of WIL within their region. Some also dabble in research (e.g., ACE WIL and CEWIL), and some offer their own conferences and regional events. (e.g., ACE WIL, CEWIL, and WACE).
- 4.** They are primarily led by a volunteer board and committees, with administrative assistance from an external organization where there is financial capacity to support it.
- 5.** These many long running and multi-tiered associations suggest there is both interest and value in bringing together PSIs who share an interest the growth and development of quality WIL, and that PSIs can function well together and are supported in such membership based, volunteer led, organizations.
- 6.** The regional associations tend to work very closely with the national association (when applicable) and through them to the other regional groups. These intentional linkages can form important partnerships and are examples of useful and purposeful intersections that can be built into the system where more than one organization occupies the space.

SUMMARY OF COMPARABLE ASSOCIATIONS





EWO: Experiential and Work Integrated Learning Ontario⁵

 **Scale:** Provincial

 **Mandate:** EWO is a provincial non-profit composed of public post-secondary institutions in Ontario that offer co-operative education, work-integrated learning, and experiential learning. Core activities include:

- Advocacy
- Education
- Annual WIL student awards
- Knowledge building and sharing
- Embracing broader forms of experiential education


 **Membership and Governance:** 33 PSI members, 443 total members. It is led by an elected Board of Directors, composed of Ontario PSIs representatives.

 **Operating model⁶:** Volunteer-led, supplemented by modest fees from individual and institutional membership (\$25/year and \$350/year respectively).




ACE WIL BC/Yukon: Association for Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning⁷

 **Scale:** Regional

 **Mandate:** ACE-WIL BC/Yukon is a non-profit organization representing PSI WIL practitioners whose purpose is to:

- Promote WIL to students, employers, and key stakeholders.
- Provide professional development for their members.
- Facilitate a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences.
- Liaise with other organizations involved in related interests.
- Maintain a leadership role provincially, nationally, and internationally in the field of WIL.


 **Membership and Governance:** Over 300 members working at 25 public post-secondary institutions across BC and the Yukon that, together, offer over 300 WIL programs. It is led by a Board of Directors comprised entirely of staff housed in BC/Yukon PSIs.

 **Operating model:** Volunteer-led, supplemented by modest individual membership fees (\$100/ two years).


BC WIL COUNCIL


BCWILC: BC Work Integrated Learning Council – an independent council within ACE WIL BC/Yukon

 **Scale:** Regional

 **Mandate:** The *BCWILC* is an independent council within ACE WIL BC/Yukon that provides the opportunity for institutional WIL leaders to meet and strategize. Core activities include:

- Provide program guidelines and standards for quality WIL.
- Gather and disseminate WIL-related data amongst members.
- Work as a collective voice to discuss issues related to WIL.
- Collaborate with the provincial government to develop grants and make recommendations for government funding to strengthen WIL across BC.


 **Membership and Governance:** One member from each public WIL PSI, appointed by their institution's president, plus the current president of ACE-WIL and a representative from the provincial ministry.


 **Operating model:** Not Applicable: Housed in ACE WIL BC/Yukon.




WACE: World Association for Co-operative and Work Integrated Education⁸

 **Scale:** International

 **Mandate:** As the only international professional organization dedicated to developing, expanding, branding and advocating for WIL programs within industry and educational institutions, WACE strives to create, implement and maintain events, programs and services geared to the support and expansion of its networks and the entire WIL community.


 **Membership and Governance:** 45 member institutions across the globe, ranging from PSIs to national WIL associations. An elected Executive Council leads the corporation and strategic operations are informed by an internal council of representatives from diverse geographical regions and industries.

 **Operating model:** Not-for-profit, volunteer-led with administrative assistance provided by an external management firm, supplemented by membership fees⁹ and conference/symposia registration fees and sponsorships.




CEWIL Canada: Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Canada¹⁰

 **Scale:** National

 **Mandate:** *CEWIL* is the lead organization for WIL in Canada with a mission to build the capacity to develop future-ready students through quality WIL. Core activities include:

- Develop resources to promote high quality WIL programs.
- Provide a national forum for WIL practitioners.
- Establish national standards for WIL.
- Promote the value of WIL.
- House councils and committees with specific related foci.¹¹


 **Membership and Governance:** Over 1800 members (WIL practitioners, faculty, corporate recruiters, etc.) from 138 Canadian post-secondary, corporate, or government institutions. It is governed by a Board of Directors comprised primarily of staff from WIL PSIs.

 **Operating model:** One part-time paid staff, or a management company, funded by membership fees (\$225 to \$375 per member, up to \$4,650 per institution).




CEWIL iHub – operates within CEWIL Canada

 **Scale:** National

 **Mandate:** *CEWIL iHub* operates as a centre of expertise providing grant-based funding to enable and promote primarily four types of WIL: applied research/industry projects, entrepreneurial WIL, field placements, and service-learning WIL. Core activities include:


- Support the advancement of, and innovation in, the above forms of WIL.
- Extend access to WIL.
- Quality assurance of WIL programs.

 **Operating model:** Operating within *CEWIL Canada* with a full-time paid staff of 13¹² – due to support from the Government of Canada – to manage over \$70 million in grants and other support.




CEWIL Atlantic: Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Canada Atlantic^{13, 14}

 **Scale:** Regional

 **Mandate:** *CEWIL Atlantic* is a maritime association for WIL, dedicated to promoting WIL and fostering partnerships between academia and industry for student success. Core activities include:

- Provide a forum for discussion.
- Provide professional development for their members.
- Liaise with *CEWIL Canada* and other government and private agencies.
- Develop strategies to promote WIL in the Atlantic Region.
- Provide expertise in WIL to the educational system at large.

 **Membership and Governance:** 14 Atlantic PSIs. Members may be PSI WIL practitioners or employers, government, or community partners interested in growing WIL. An Executive Committee oversees the branch, composed primarily of PSI WIL practitioners.

 **Operating model:** Volunteer-led, supplemented by a modest individual membership fee (\$30/yr).



Lane Two: Supporting the WIL Ecosystem

The organizations, initiatives, and partnerships in Lane Two support the WIL ecosystem by primarily interfacing with employers/employer associations or government agencies and bringing this information to PSIs through partnerships and collaboration.

Comparative summaries of six initiatives working within Lane Two follow. Below are six key takeaways from this scan which are relevant to the strategic visioning the TalentED team will need to undertake to guide their sustainability and scalability planning.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. There are distinct needs for various WIL stakeholder groups within the WIL ecosystem. Much of the evidence needed to assess the different WIL outcomes resides within their respective organizations (PSIs, employers, professional groups) and is not readily captured or shared across these organizations.
2. WIL outcomes of interest are often quite different for WIL educators, students, employers, hosts, professional associations, and governments, to name a few. This poses a challenge to generating streamlined and comparable data at any scale.
3. There are several examples of organizations representing the PSE sector that effectively capture and track WIL data relevant to their members within certain geographic areas (e.g., Lane One examples of ACEWIL in BC/Yukon, and CEWIL for the Canadian PSE system). Few Lane Two partners conduct parallel WIL data on employers, and none do so specifically in Alberta.
4. There are a few unique organizations that effectively work across stakeholder groups to better serve their members with data, research, initiatives, and supports for systems within geographic regions (e.g., BHER serves the Canadian landscape and HEQCO serves the Ontario postsecondary system).
5. There is one experiment (Future NB) that is led by the provincial government and whose staff mostly reside within PSIs in a shared capacity. It brings all the sectors together towards the shared goal of growing WIL as a strategic tool for learning, EDI, and economic impact goals. Formative assessments of this program should help inform such possibilities for other provinces, such as Alberta, in the near future.
6. There is one instance (Alberta 2030 WIL Pilot Program) of an organization external to the PSIs that is providing funding to grow WIL in specific economic sectors. Here WIL is utilized primarily as an economic development and employability strategy and should have different expected impacts and outcomes than those that are typically measured by PSIs, which have typically focused on student learning outcomes, numbers of placements, and more recently access and inclusion of equity deserving populations.




SUMMARY OF COMPARABLE ASSOCIATIONS




Alberta 2030: Work-Integrated Learning Pilot Program¹⁵

 **Scale:** Sector-wide

Time span: 3 years (2021- 2024)

 **Purpose:** Providing paid work placement for hundreds of students in their field of study, ensuring they get meaningful, hands-on experience from industry experts and launch successful careers after graduation.

 **Partners:** Targeted sectors through partnerships with three key industry associations: Technology Alberta, Alberta Construction Association, and BioAlberta. These partners and the GoA work with PSIs and employers to match students with new WIL opportunities.


Goals: To help employers in Alberta's key priority sectors access emerging local talent, while also helping them to grow, innovate, and respond to their business needs.




Future NB (aka Future Wabanaki, Avenir NB)¹⁶

 **Scale:** Provincial


Time span: 2019 to present

 **Purpose:** Fostering strong partnerships to create and invest in accessible, high-quality experiential learning opportunities for all students across New Brunswick, and support increased student contributions to the workforce.

 **Partners:** New Brunswick business and economic councils/organizations, student associations, Indigenous students, post-secondary universities, United Way, and the Government of New Brunswick.

Goals: To have a sustainable structure, create meaningful experiential learning opportunities for students, support employers, and leverage technology through a common platform (i.e., Outcome Campus Connect) for all stakeholders.^{17, 18}

Impact to date: Since its inception, they have created 300+ employer partnerships, engaged 1,500 students, and developed 250+ new experiential learning opportunities.


 **Operating/Funding model:** Largely funded by the GNB with in kind contributions from the project partners. It has a paid staff of 10, all of whom are current employees of the partnered PSIs and led by a PSI WIL practitioner.




BHER: Business and Higher Education Round Table¹⁹

 **Scale:** National


Time span: 2015 to present

 **Purpose:** BHER works with the Government of Canada to promote the value of WIL and build a network of partners in business and PSIs to advance and strengthen the WIL ecosystem. They provide tools, resources, and support to help host organizations create or expand WIL opportunities, and their WIL Hub contains resources and tools for employers to explore, invest in, and create quality WIL placements.

 **Partners:** BHER represents businesses and PSIs across the country.

Goals: To create 44,000 WIL opportunities for students, and ultimately ensure that every student at a Canadian PSI can have a WIL experience.


Impact to date: Delivering nearly 46,000 WIL opportunities in partnership with 75 organizations and PSIs across the country.


 **Operating/Funding model:** Funding provided by the Government of Canada, with the most recent investment totalling \$17.1 million over three years (2022 through 2025).²⁰

HEQCO: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario²¹


 **Scale:** Provincial


Time span: 2006 to present

 **Purpose:** As an agency of the Government of Ontario, HEQCO evaluates the postsecondary sector primarily through research activities and provides policy recommendations to enhance the access, quality and accountability of Ontario's PSIs.

 **Partners:** Researchers and practitioners across PSE, brought together through major projects, expert discussion papers, conferences, and workshops.

Goals: Creating evidence-based research to inform decision-making and policy-making to support the continued improvement of the postsecondary education system in Ontario.


 **Governance:** The Board of Governors comprises leaders in business, academia, and government, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. They work closely with management to set HEQCO's the strategic direction.

 **Operating/Funding model²²:** An annual allocation of \$4.1 million from the provincial government for 2024-2027²³, plus an estimated biannual \$60,000 revenue from conference fees. Approximately 85% of HEQCO's funding is dedicated to research costs. It currently employs 23.5 full-time positions.





State University System of New York (SUNY) Works²⁴

A comprehensive review of this initiative is available in HESA's first deliverable "Scan of WIL Types and Comparator System- Level WIL Initiatives." It is based on the mid-way review of the program released in 2015 and outlines several lessons learned from the project that may inform TalentED's future thinking and planning.

 **Scale:** Sector-wide (within a US state)

Time span: 2012 to present

 **Purpose:** To expand applied learning opportunities through the system, especially internships and co-op education, and provide support to students, faculty, and employers.


 **Partners:** SUNY (State University of New York System), Lumina Foundation, and Carnegie Corporation of New York.




CEWIL and BHER grant partnership²⁵


 **Scale:** National

Time span: One-time competition, 2020-2021

 **Purpose:** A one million dollar collaborative grant-based funding initiative aimed at creating WIL opportunities across Canada, in part to offset the postponed or cancelled placements due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

 **Partners:** CEWIL Canada and BHER, with funds provided by BHER through the Government of Canada.

Goal/Result: To create more than 1000 quality WIL opportunities across six provinces, with a focus on underrepresented students (e.g., students in rural or remote locations, Indigenous and racialized students).

 **Operating/Funding model:** Funds allocated through a competitive grant process, with funding going to employers or employer associations to provide resources for joint partnerships with PSIs. Applications are for an initial one-year period with the possibility of renewal for a second year.

PART 4

Determining a vision for TalentED 2.0

Building WIL Capacity in Sustainable Ways

The Secretariate of Talented YYC has a unique opportunity to leverage the successful work they have done in developing closer ties amongst the seven participating PSIs in the Calgary region and providing support for WIL activities that help better serve these institutions and their students. The Community of Practice that has developed as a result of this project provides evidence for how WIL institutions and practitioners can benefit collectively and individually from collaboration and sharing of WIL best practices. Given that there are active discussions regarding the possibility of forming a provincial WIL association for members of WIL PSIs currently underway, the timeliness of leveraging the PSI focused work of the Secretariate in support of such an association makes very good sense.

Once launched, such a PSI WIL practitioner association could function independently under the auspices of the PSIs who ultimately manage the WIL programs and have access to the WIL students and related data and outcomes. Typically such associations in other regions are registered non-profit organizations that function through the support of volunteers drawn largely from the post-secondary sector (i.e., Lane One). Other models could be considered, but such governance decisions would be best made by the PSI stakeholders themselves and could be supported by the experiences and capacity of the Secretariate, especially in the early stages of formation.

The interests and outcomes of the Lane Two initiatives also align very well with TalentED YYC's current mandate, successes, and existing partners. It is well positioned within CED given the organization's connections to potential and current external WIL stakeholders. The key "external to PSE" WIL stakeholders would benefit from an entity that:

1. Helps define their collective needs.
2. Assists in articulating outcomes and measures of collective interest related to their participation in WIL.
3. Collects and reports on the identified measures of interest.
4. Coordinates promotion of WIL.
5. Serves as a one stop hub for WIL external stakeholder information.
6. Positions the needs of employers and PSIs in its activities and outreach.
7. Objectively reports to funders, governments, and others requiring current system-level data regarding the effectiveness of WIL programs and policies with respect to their needs.

As there is a documented lack of both qualitative and quantitative data in support of these key stakeholders' goals, this gap is waiting to be filled by an appropriate group. An agency of the provincial government (analogous to HEQCO in Ontario) could fill such a role powerfully, especially with its partnership with CED.





With an expanded mandate to do this work at a provincial level, CED may also wish to extend such a partnership to other municipal organizations within the province. The work undertaken through this pathway would likely dovetail well with some of the work that BHER is doing at a national level and Alberta could be the first province to launch a business and PSE partnership that is informed by some of the work BHER and CEWIL are doing together.

It is therefore recommended that both these lanes be considered in tandem, with the concurrent goals of:

1. Helping to establish a strong regional WIL membership-based organization to eventually be fully led and operated by members of the post-secondary sector.
2. Building on and growing the employer, government, and funder-facing work of TalentED YYC and expanding it to focus on their needs across all of Alberta.

Such a direction for TalentED 2.0 would ensure a sustainable legacy for its inaugural successes as well as serve as a unique example within Canada of the two stakeholder sectors working intentionally and strategically together for the development of WIL within the province of Alberta. A close eye should also be kept on the successes and challenges experienced by the Future Wabanaki/NB initiatives as they are revealed so as to inform the progress of both these pathways.

Considerations to Inform Strategic Planning

The TalentED YYC pilot project provides valuable information that the TalentED team can utilize to make evidence-based decisions during its strategic planning activities for a sustainable, scaled TalentED 2.0. Below is a non-exhaustive list of questions the team may ask itself to gather relevant evidence from the pilot project to determine strategic directions.

The pilot project was conceived and funded in part to provide lessons that could inform future work in this space. Applying these lessons to the establishment of a sustainable and scaled TalentED 2.0 reflects well on the value of the pilot project and demonstrates to pilot partners, funders, and stakeholders that their contributions to the project were worthwhile and productive.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. Which project elements and activities have been the easiest, simplest, or generally most straight-forward? Which have been difficult, complex, or generally obstructive?
2. Which project elements and activities demonstrate the highest ROI, in terms of impact, positive feedback, and labour costs to date? Which demonstrate the lowest ROI to date?
3. Considering each of these project elements and activities individually...
 - a. If funding for this specific project element or activity remains stable, will the ROI increase, decrease, or remain the same over time? Why?
 - i. What evidence informs this response?
 - ii. What assumptions inform this response?
 - iii. How might an increase in scale impact the ROI assuming stable funding?
 - b. If funding for this specific project element or activity is reduced, will the ROI increase, decrease, or remain the same over time? Why?
 - i. What evidence informs this response?
 - ii. What assumptions inform this response?
 - iii. How might an increase in scale impact the ROI assuming reduced funding?
4. What internal processes, structures, and policies developed by the TalentED YYC team could be carried into TalentED 2.0? (i.e., what start-up work has already been done, meaning 2.0 will not need to start from scratch)
 - a. Which of the above will need to be adjusted for scaling?
 - i. How considerable are the adjustments? e.g., minor (changing language), moderate (adding steps or branches), heavy (re-thinking feasibility), total (will need to start fresh)
 - b. Which of the above will need to be adjusted for sustainability?
 - i. How considerable are the adjustments?




Endnotes

- 1 HESA planned to include Insights from current funders in this section but due to scheduling challenges only one funder could be interviewed before the deliverable deadline.
- 2 Based on 2023 data: <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/sme-research-statistics/en/key-small-business-statistics/key-small-business-statistics-2023>
- 3 Based on 2020 data: <https://businesscouncilab.com/insights-category/analysis/jobs-and-job-growth-in-alberta-by-business-size/>
- 4 As HESA's 2023 Annual Report notes, the purpose, quality, and value of "Innovative WIL" or "iWIL" is a point of contention for some PSI WIL practitioners. Concerns around iWIL -- specifically around students' understanding of what iWIL is and is not -- were also expressed in stakeholder feedback that was gathered for this report in spring 2024. If TalentED 2.0 continues with iWIL, further socialization of what this activity is and is not may be needed amongst PSI WIL practitioners and students.
- 5 <https://ewo.ca/>
- 6 Determined through publicly available data. This may not represent total funding from all sources.
- 7 <https://acewilbc.ca/>
- 8 <https://waceinc.org>
- 9 Membership fees are designed to ensure accessibility for all and based upon OECD vs non-OECD country status. They vary from \$150-\$300 Cnd/year for an individual and \$250 – \$4, 000 for institutions. Global partnerships are \$10, 000/year (for more details see <https://waceinc.org/member-types>).
- 10 <https://cewilcanada.ca/>
- 11 Foci include: Accreditation, Quality Assurance, Research, Learning and Development, Data, Awards, International WIL, Communications, Government and External Relations, and Membership.

- 12 Based on the latest website information here: <https://cewilcanada.ca/CEWIL/Resources/IWIL-Hub/iHUB-Team.aspx>.
- 13 <https://cewilatlantic.ca>
- 14 CEWIL Atlantic is currently on hiatus while undergoing restructuring.
- 15 <https://www.alberta.ca/work-integrated-learning-pilot-program>
- 16 <https://futurenewbrunswick.ca>
- 17 <https://futurenewbrunswick.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FNB-Strat-Plan-web.pdf>
- 18 In providing a common platform, they expect to provide a systemic approach to recording students' experiential learning activities, allow students to connect with employers from NB and outside of the province, enable employer access to current and future talent pools more efficiently, and use data to make better informed decisions regarding quality and effective development of WIL.
- 19 <https://www.bher.ca/work-integrated-learning>
- 20 <https://www.bher.ca/news/government-canada-renews-its-investments-business-higher-education-round-table>
- 21 <https://heqco.ca>
- 22 All information in this section was found in the HEQCO 2024-2027 Business Plan unless otherwise noted. It is available here: <https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Business-Plan-2024-to-2027-Final-for-submission.pdf>
- 23 This budget allocation demonstrates a 58% increase from its start-up funding in 2006, when The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities approved \$1,800,000—equivalent to \$2,591,934 in 2023 dollars—of annual funding for HEQCO's first year: <https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/HEQCO-Annual-Report-2006-07-EN.pdf>, Statistics Canada. Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted <https://doi.org/10.25318/1810000501-eng>.
- 24 https://higheredinsight.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/suny-report-aug-2015_final.pdf
- 25 <https://www.bher.ca/news/bher-and-cewil-announce-grant-funding-create-new-work-integrated-learning-opportunities>





20 Maud Street
Suite 207
Toronto, ON
M5V 2M5
Canada

+1 (416) 848-0215
info@higherstrategy.com

higherstrategy.com



Higher
Education
STRATEGY ASSOCIATES