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# Scan of WIL Types and Comparator System- Level WIL Initiatives:

The Calgary Work-Integrated Learning  
Project

Prepared for the Calgary Economic Development  
Secretariate

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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.

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# Introduction

*“Human capital development is both an academic and an applied learning process requiring many, and new, higher education institution and employer partnerships”*

– Peter J. Stokes (2015)

The overall goal of this first report is to inform the current process and direction of the CED WIL Project based upon early observations and field notes, learnings from comparable initiatives, and known challenges in the WIL space. It identifies pitfalls and opportunities that CED’s WIL Project Secretariate might wish to consider going forward to enhance the Project’s overall impact.

This Report provides early observations drawn mainly from HESA researchers through their attendance at related meetings and is informed by current WIL literature and practice. It begins with a brief overview of the six WIL Types that CED has identified as their primary focus, and highlights some distinct features of each and how those might impact the assessment and direction of the overall Project. Also included are contextual references to the ongoing definition and typology challenges in the WIL space, along with an alternative approach to reporting on WIL activities that is more directly linked to specific stakeholder/project purposes, goals and outcomes.

The report also presents a high-level review of five contemporary WIL Initiatives that have taken a consortium, partnership, or “system level” approach to designing and delivering WIL within a sector or region. This review focuses mainly on “lessons learned” to identify predictable problems and potential opportunities. This Report is presented in two main sections:

## 1. Overview of CED Project WIL Types

- a. The six WIL types
- b. Definitional Challenges:
  - i. The 2017 BC Provincial snapshot ([BCCAT 2017](#))
  - ii. The BC and National WIL Matrix projects ([ACE WIL 2017](#))
- c. An alternative approach:
  - i. Purpose and Outcome Driven (POD) Framework ([Johnson and Sator 2022](#))

## 2. Scan of and lessons learned from other WIL initiatives

- a. The **Vancouver Island WIL** partnership between VIU and North Island College (VIWIL)
- b. The **Future Wabanaki | Avenir NB | Future NB**’s provincial initiative
- c. **SUNY Works**, the State University system of NY (SUNY) initiative
- d. The **SAMUI Model** of WIL started by Walailak University and the Tourism and Hospitality sectors on Koh Samui Island in Thailand

- e. The **Global WIL Challenge** co-developed by the World Association for Co-operative and Work Integrated Education (WACE) and Practera WIL Learning Platforms and Programs

The report is followed by an addendum and an appendix. The addendum provides a summary review of several initiatives and research projects adjacent to this report's focus on WIL for post-secondary students. The appendix has two tables, each to provide a visual summary of the categories of WIL (Table 1) and an overview of lessons from other WIL initiatives (Table 2).

## Overview of CED Project WIL Types

CED and its key stakeholders are initially focusing on supporting the following WIL types as defined below using the Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning Association of Canada's definitions. Each type is offered under the auspices of a PSI. We have **bolded** the key attributes of each type for the discussion that follows and provided a chart for ease of reference below:

### 1. Co-operative Education (Co-op)

Students participating in co-operative education (co-op) gain experience in workplace settings. Students are **paid** for their work, and their experience is often related to their program of study. They are **fully engaged** in productive work in **an employment setting**. The timing of the experience can vary depending on the program: students in some co-op programs alternate between academic terms and paid work terms, while others complete co-op internships consisting of several work terms back-to-back. The number of required work terms can also vary by program; however, **the time spent in work terms must be at least 30% of the time spent in academic study** for programs over two years in length, and 25% of the time spent in academic study for programs two years and under.

### 2. Service Learning

Students participating in community service learning integrate **meaningful community service with classroom instruction** and critical reflection **to enrich their learning** experience and **strengthen communities**. In practice, students work in partnership with a community-based organization to **apply their disciplinary knowledge to a challenge identified by the community**.

### 3. Field Programs

Students participating in field placements gain **intensive, part-time/short-term, hands-on practical experience** in a setting relevant to their subject of study. Field placements **may not require the supervision of a registered or licensed professional**, and the completed work **experience hours are not required for professional certification**. Field placements account for work-integrated learning experiences not encompassed by other forms, such as co-operative education, mandatory professional practicums, and internships.

### 4. Practicums

Students participating in **mandatory professional practicums** gain work experience **under the supervision of an experienced registered or licensed professional** (i.e., preceptor). These practicums or placements are typically linked to disciplines that require practice-based work experience **for professional licensure or certification**. Practicums are generally **unpaid**. Because the work is conducted in a supervised setting, students don't typically have their own workload or caseload.

## 5. Internships

Students participating in internships typically complete a **single, discipline-specific, supervised, and structured work experience** or practice placement, for which they also **receive academic credit**. These internships may be **paid or unpaid**, and may be scheduled in the middle of an academic program or after all academic courses have been completed (but **prior to graduation**). Internships can be of any length, but **are typically 12 to 16 months** long.

## 6. Projects

Students participating in applied research projects solve workplace problems in partnership with community organizations or industry. Solutions to these problems are typically generated through **consulting, design, community-based research**, or some combination of all three.

## Limitations to Comparing WIL Types

Perhaps the most pervasive challenge in the field of experiential education in general, and WIL in particular, is the lack of shared, agreed-upon language and definitions. The above CEWIL-derived definitions serve as general “buckets” for WIL types, but a multiplicity of terms continues to be used in many different ways to describe various types of WIL, even within an Institution or Faculty. Because of this it is very difficult to compare and contrast WIL types as definitions vary and model attributes are not universal. While some countries such as Canada have tried to clarify this definitional challenge through national definitions, the general WIL research literature is not so clear. What constitutes co-op in one study may be quite different in a number of important ways from what constitutes co-op in another study.

A better approach to the often asked “what is the most effective type of WIL?” is to clarify “most effective to what end?”. Depending on who is asking the question, the response can vary from “applying the key concepts in the course to a real world context” to “enhancing a service orientation in students”, to “developing global citizenship skills”, to name a few. Historically, when co-op was the dominant WIL model, such a question usually sought to understand what was the best model for developing employability or “job readiness” in students. This was often linked to larger purposes such as enhancing such outcomes as the employability rates of graduates, getting early access to top talent, filling employment gaps, improving school-to-work transition rates, retaining graduates within a region, etc.

While each of the WIL types can contribute to many outcomes, each has typically been designed to have a *primary* purpose or outcome. To that end, based on the research literature linking WIL to employability outcomes, it can be stated that accredited co-operative education programs in Canada have proven to be an excellent WIL model. This would be due in part to the student’s full immersion (for between 25% and 30% of total time in studies) in a community of professional practice and their authentic engagement in productive work for which they are paid and responsible, and qualified oversight by the employer and institution. For CEWIL-accredited co-op programs, there is also assurance

that these programs are designed to include pre-employment preparation for students; defined learning outcomes; critical reflection; employer, self- and institutional assessments; and intentional meaning-making and connections between the experience and the student's program of study and/or professional goals. These are all attributes of high-impact WIL that have been noted in the literature and which are grounded in the models of experiential learning that underpin our understandings of WIL.

Developing co-op opportunities is typically a highly relational activity requiring significant knowledge of students' interests and abilities, program and course curricula (including content and learning outcomes) as well as employers' needs, timelines, budgets, and their willingness and capacity to serve as co-educators. Because co-op placements in Canada are required to be paid, new co-op job development can be challenging depending on the sector and economic conditions, and it often takes several successful iterations of a particular program before expansion occurs beyond that program. Co-op job development can be greatly aided by incentive programs, including tax benefits, salary stipends, wage subsidies, equipment subsidies, etc. which the primary job developer often facilitates with students and or employers through the institution. As well, due to the fully immersive nature of co-op placements, risk management measures must be ensured for all parties. Once all of these items have been addressed between the PSI and employer host, the hard work at the front end of the placement development is often rewarded with placements for which the details have already been sorted through and the trust between the institutional and employer primary contacts has been developed. These relationships, in some cases, are considered quite sacred.

## Moving Beyond Co-op

If the main goals of the WIL experience are more related to community development, developing student social responsibility, or the development of a service orientation through direct contribution, the **service learning** WIL type may be the best model. These experiences are typically shorter in duration and often embedded within a course, and focus on a challenge or problem that is outlined by the community host. Because these opportunities are often linked to a course, the instructor is the key person to determine what are appropriate opportunities to best reinforce the learning objectives of the course while also addressing the community's needs. Most of these experiences are unpaid and the students' participation in the WIL experience and related assignments/requirements typically contribute to the grade they receive in the course. Developers of course-based service learning experiences greatly benefit from fully understanding the course's learning outcomes and aligning those with potential hosts' needs as well as a clear understanding of the community host's abilities to serve as a co-educator. Service learning offerings are also often linked to not-for-profit organizations or relevant communities of practice with whom the course instructor is affiliated.

**Field placements**, according to the CEWIL definition, are a bit of a catch all for all other hands-on experiences related to a course of study that do not constitute formal professional requirements and are neither co-ops nor internships. They are typically unpaid but provide various levels of immersion into a community of practice related to their studies to explore professional applications and goals. These could be related to a

course or offered as co-curricular. Development of these placements is often tightly linked to a program of study and its existing connections within the various communities of practice. Many field WIL placement activities can also occur abroad.

**Practicums** are also very closely aligned with a course of study and generally take place under the auspices of a licenced or registered professional, so are strictly guided by professional requirements and regulations. Again, WIL placement development for field practicums requires connections to the relevant community of professional practice, knowledge of their requirements, and connections to their licensed professionals to assist. This is most often something that the responsible Faculty member or Program at an institution have in place, and the requirements can be very specific as they are often linked to accreditation or other professional requirements.

**Internships** are typically longer, so they require a program that allows for a 12-16 month break mid-studies or 12-16 months to be added to the student's tenure after course completion but before graduation. Because of the significant time commitment, students may need more lead time for their planning purposes, so positions often need to be developed quite a bit in advance. These may be paid or unpaid but need to be eligible for credit, so typically would need to be approved by the program faculty.

Classroom based WIL **projects** are often based on community/employer generated challenges or problems that can be addressed by students, sometimes in consultation with the community hosts, and linked to key concepts in their course of study. When designed to include WIL quality attributes<sup>1</sup> these less immersive experiences can also provide excellent learning opportunities that can both enhance the teaching of key course concepts as well as provide some authentic framework for their application.

All of the above WIL types, other than co-op, are very tightly aligned with an academic course that they serve to complement. Co-op tends to offer somewhat broader employment opportunities that align with either the program of study or the student's professional goals vs. course learning outcomes (e.g., a biology major who wants to be a teacher might take a co-op placement at the Museum of Modern Art leading tours in order to develop their communication and group leadership skills, which will in turn enhance their application to a teaching program). For these reasons, most WIL job/placement development requires significant student and course-level knowledge and understanding and established connections to the relevant field. These can be developed over time and often initially through existing personal and professional connections. For shorter-term placements (e.g., projects, practicums, and some service learning), the WIL offering is often developed as a "one off", specific to a course or student's learning objectives or current community issues. It might be a repeated opportunity in future terms but only once the WIL coordinator or instructor has ensured that it is still appropriate/relevant to their teaching goals, students' abilities and interests, and the employer host's needs. As WIL is an educational approach, each placement opportunity should be regularly reviewed by the institution to ensure it continues to meet student, course, and community hosts' needs, all of which can change over time. Because of this, job development is often more easily done by someone working at the institution. It is further facilitated when that person is deeply knowledgeable about the sector and discipline for which they are

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://cewilcanada.ca/CEWIL/CEWIL/Resources/Resource-Hub/CEWIL-Resource-Hub-WIL-Quality-Indicators.aspx>.



developing WIL opportunities, including but not limited to having experience and networks within the sector.

### Is There Another Way to Talk about WIL that Might be Useful to this Project?

Comparing and contrasting various WIL offerings by their type is not only challenging as they are not discrete (nor is there a shared understanding of each), but such clustering also has somewhat limited utility. As has been noted, WIL offerings can vary in many ways including (but not limited to) the commitment of time to the experience, the degree of immersion in the host learning environment, the primary purposes of the program, whether students are paid or not, what learning outcomes are sought, and the degree to which the institution is involved in design, integration, and assessment. However, these differences are also not universal across programs. While there are many differences which challenge our ability to generalize, the nexus of all these offerings, regardless of type, is the belief that *direct, immersive, and guided experiences* can provide powerful learning opportunities and develop useful transferable skills and knowledge (Itin, 1999). It is from this belief, and knowledge about what program attributes support high-impact WIL, that a different approach is suggested. This new way forward builds upon the *ACE BC Definitional WIL Matrix Framework*<sup>2</sup> and the significant work done with respect to describing the attributes of quality WIL. Instead of trying to define each different WIL type by their differences, this approach focuses on their shared purposes and outcomes, and herein is referred to as the Purpose and Outcomes Driven (POD) Framework.

The POD framework, described in more detail below, allows for the discussion to extend beyond the *names* of models and into what their *primary purpose* and outcomes are, and how those outcomes can then be linked back to specified goals of the programs they are intended to support (which could, in this case, be the goals of the CED Project stakeholders). This would assist in the development of different shared understandings about various WIL types without worrying about differently interpreted definitions. Clustered by shared purposes (e.g., enhancing student employability, enhancing the learning of course-related concepts, filling gaps in the labour market, bettering communities, enhancing WIL access for all employers and students, etc.), we can better map outcomes of those offerings to specific goals and objectives of interest (vs. simply as a report on participation by WIL type). Moreover, such an approach focuses on what attributes are *shared* (vs. different) across the various models, allowing for the development of one core set of resources that supports quality WIL design and implementation, regardless of WIL type (vs. multiple resources by type). These resources would be based upon those attributes known to lead to high-impact WIL outcomes. Also, being able to cluster WIL offerings by their various collective purposes allows for the creation of reports that can aggregate data across all WIL types that share a common primary purpose. This is helpful when demonstrating collective impact on any given goal or outcome. This would allow the Secretariate to support Quality Assurance for the core of all types and let the specifics rest within the domain of each institution, however they operationalize their WIL type. Further, the POD framework can help educators

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://acewilbc.ca/resource-library/what-is-the-comparative-matrix-of-work-integrated-education-and-learning/>.

operationalize the [AAA Quality Framework](#), particularly with respect to how institutions and practitioners may understand the aims of their experience-based programs.

### What Does a Purpose and Outcomes Approach Look Like?

As noted in the descriptor section, each of the six WIL types central to the CED WIL Project has some distinct attributes (e.g., some are paid, others not; some are short, others long term, etc.). They also have a number of shared attributes (they are workplace focused, they take place during a student’s academic career, they are supervised and assessed, reflection is embedded, etc.). These core quality attributes are represented by the shaft of the arrow in the model below and should be common to all quality WIL offerings. However, their specific primary purposes (e.g., developing citizenship, contributing to the community, enhancing regional recruitment and retention, addressing employment gaps, etc.) may be quite different. These are represented by the arrowhead in the model pointing to a particular outcome. As the primary purposes vary across models, one would then expect that there might be some specific/unique additional attributes of any given model that ensures its primary purpose and outcomes are met. These would be represented in the feathers or fletching of the arrow that guides it to its purpose (e.g., they are paid, they have an international component, they address current employment gaps, etc.).



**Custom Outcome Attributes**

**Core EE Attributes**

**Purpose**

**(Specific to each WIL type)**

**(Common to all Quality WIL types)**

**(Specific to each WIL type)**

Note: If this approach is of interest, HESA can provide further details on how this might be incorporated.

## Scan of and Lessons Learned from other WIL initiatives

The following comparators are presented briefly with a focus on lessons learned that could inform the CED Project going forward:

### 1. Vancouver Island Work Integrated Learning (VIWIL)

Vancouver Island Work-Integrated Learning (VIWIL) was a collaborative partnership between North Island College (NIC) and Vancouver Island University (VIU) created in the spirit of enhancing opportunities for work-integrated learning and connecting employers with students on Vancouver Island north of the Malahat.

This regional approach sought to connect local campuses and local employers in an effort to provide more opportunities for students from each campus and a greater chance of meeting employer needs. It also provided online resources for students and employers. This regional approach was taken in the hopes of gaining strength from collective effort, sharing and collaborating to better meet the needs of students and industry partners.<sup>3</sup>

The initiative shared a placement platform supported by Orbis and Magnet. It operated over the course of the early pandemic, when this online access should have provided important virtual connections. Partner institutions reportedly struggled to fully work together on a shared WIL placement site and process, and tensions around WIL placement development in particular were seen as challenging and ongoing. The last project-related events noted on the website occurred in April 2022, and the portal never fully launched as a single point of contact but rather re-directed users to each of the partner's separate sites. In June 2022, the portal itself was closed, approximately two years after it was launched. It was reported that at this time, some partnership activities including sharing resources that were developed as part of the process (and noted as being very good) and some joint activities continue on an ad hoc basis. The sense is that "the intention was good," but the operational culture was not yet ready to support it. It was reported to have "brought in a few WIL placement leads" while the portal was "live."

*What Can we Learn from This?*

- **Get written agreements between and amongst institutions (MOUs?) early** in the process.
- **Ensure the WIL placement development process is understood**, as there is a very strong culture of "ownership" of these relationships right down to the instructor level even within one institution.
- Institutional cultures may need to change with respect to truly sharing such a portal – and it would **need to do more than what their existing portal does**.
- Some good resources were developed and shared, especially for employers.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.viwil.ca/about-viwil>.

There is currently another regional WIL project underway in BC (“The Northern WIL Hub Project”) which is working together with local employer organizations and PSIs in the province’s North. This initiative could also serve to inform the CED WIL Project, though it is also in a relatively early stage as well.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Future NB/Future Wabanaki

This provincial initiative was launched by Future NB, a partnership between St. Thomas University, University of Moncton, Mount Allison University, UNB, NB Business Council, RBC Future Launch, the NBSA, FEECUM (Student Federation for University of Moncton), and the United Way, to help students and employers access hands-on learning opportunities and funding to help fill labour gaps and enhance student employability (<https://futurenewbrunswick.ca/>). The intent is to position New Brunswick as a “national leader in experiential education where partners across all levels of education, private industry, not-for-profit organizations and government are working collaboratively towards a shared vision. To achieve this, they are focusing on:

- Leveraging student talent to contribute to New Brunswick’s workforce while studying.
- Enhancing employer and student engagement in the future of work in New Brunswick.
- Increasing the number of skilled students ready to join the workforce, helping New Brunswick employers fill their labour market needs.
- Increasing the numbers of students staying and working in NB.

They have developed a three-year Strategic Plan that more specifically outlines their key initiatives.<sup>5</sup> Four strategic Goal areas are outlined below:

- SUSTAINABILITY: Secure a robust structure and resources to support the vision and long-term sustainability of Future NB.
- SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS: Create accessible and meaningful experiential learning opportunities for all students.
- SUPPORTS FOR EMPLOYERS: Educate and assist all employers in offering high-quality experiential learning opportunities to all students.
- COMMON PLATFORM: Leverage technology to support, inform and connect partners, students, educators, and employers. This Platform is also supported by Orbis and Magnet.

Each strategic area has specific articulated objectives which would drive the operational plan. Students and employers are identified as the key stakeholders requiring support,

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<sup>4</sup> More information is available at <https://acewilbc.ca/projects/interior-and-northern-work-integrated-learning-project-inwil/>.

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://futurenewbrunswick.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FNB-Strat-Plan-web.pdf>.

with the sustainability of the enterprise also clearly a priority. The common technology platform is noted as an important connecting mechanism in support of the overall goals.

*What can we Learn from This?*

- **Develop a strategic plan and flesh out CED WIL Project goals** and related objectives, identify accessible metrics for tracking the goals and objectives, and monitor progress.
- **Explore the metrics they are using** for the goals that overlap with the CED WIL Project goals, and explore **how they have resolved data sharing issues** with stakeholders.
- Get feedback from them regarding **their experiences with the Platform** and its customization to meet their needs.
- Learn more about their **financial sustainability model(s) and/or approaches**.

### **3. SUNY Works**

This initiative was designed as a system-wide project undertaken by the Chancellor of the largest college and university state system in the US. Its goal was to expand applied learning opportunities throughout the system, especially internships and co-op education, and provide support for WIL students, faculty, and employers. The broader goals of this initiative included various system level outcomes including enhanced student employability, improved credential completion rates for students, and easier access to students for employers, etc.. The SUNY Works project began in 2012 and was sponsored by the Lumina Foundation and Carnegie Corporation of New York. It included a series of pilot projects at 19 campuses focussing on using WIL to provide system-level support for students (with a focus on non-traditional), employers, faculty, and campuses. Benefits included shared resources through SUNY Learning Commons, collection of information about employer needs and reforming curriculum to see what works, with requirements for credit hours, pay, goals etc. While the funded project has ended, SUNY Works remains an active initiative at many SUNY campuses today providing a “one-stop platform for employers to engage with all 64 SUNY campuses to share meaningful and relevant internship and other applied learning opportunities” (see: <https://www.suny.edu/suny-works/partnerships/>).

In 2015 a review of the sponsored SUNY Works project was conducted with an eye to exploring any lessons that could be learned from the successes and challenges faced in implementation, to identify effective models that were emerging on the campuses, and to make recommendations for future directions.

*What Can we Learn from This?*

These are recommendations directly from the SUNY Works project Review that could serve to inform the CED WIL Project:

- **There are some real limits to the role/power of the central coordinating body.** In their case, this was the Chancellor’s Office; in the CED’s case, the Secretariate. They state: “It is clear that there needs to be a balance between the centralization of programming in a single office and decentralization to faculty coordinators... Currently, internships and other applied learning experiences vary widely across campuses and programs in terms of their content, requirements, and faculty and student engagement.”
- **Faculty engagement and ownership with respect to WIL are evident on all campuses but vary greatly in terms of knowledge, quality, compensation, and support.** To address these issues, they recommended that hiring a “high quality, seasoned WIL coordinator, preferably with some faculty experience” is critical. This observation is consistent with early observations from the CED WIL Project regarding the important institutional role with respect to WIL job development and ownership. It might be interesting to explore how/if such a role could be provided by the CED Process Enhancement Team at the Secretariate.
- **Resource development needs to focus on student preparation, especially for those students from a non-traditional or disadvantaged background as well as WIL faculty.** Making available such resources via the Secretariate could be very useful as there are currently very few resources specific to populations of interest (although Future Wabanaki is a good place to reference with respect to supporting First Nations students). The SUNY Works office had created some resources and forums for discussion amongst WIL staff and faculty, but the 2015 review stated that “more could be done to help facilitate those conversations, especially for the highly decentralized [read smaller, non-Orbis] schools.”
- **Outreach and collaboration to recruit employers and students requires significant financial and human resources.** They add that “some synergies could be accomplished if campuses had **some best practices or a collection of strategies they could refer** to, or even shared systems or software.” The CED WIL Project also seems well positioned to take advantage of such opportunities.
- **Tracking and evaluation are critical.** The SUNY Review underscores that “Resources are needed to encourage the identification and use of some basic standards for data collection, as well as tools for assessment that can be used with students, faculty, and employers.” The CED WIL Project is in the unique position of being able to support the identification of such markers now and to encourage consortium members to provide the relevant data necessary to generate regional level reports, sector specific reports, learning outcome reports, student demographic reports, transition to work reports, etc. These can form the beginnings of big data collection and reporting that will help direct the future of both this Project and the overall development of WIL in Alberta.
- **Professional development is highly beneficial and needs continued funding.** The Secretariate is well positioned to identify areas of and opportunities for WIL PD.

The existing Community of Practice could lead this if such PD work could be supported by the Project.

#### 4. The SAMUI Model

This unique partnership between Wailalak University in Thailand and the Tourism and Hospitality sectors on the Island of Koh Samui in Thailand provides an example of what can be done when the PSI and specific industry associations work together in creative new ways to address employment education gaps both for new hires and current employees.<sup>6</sup> With goals of improving post-graduation employment transition rates, graduate job readiness, industry employment gaps, and the upskilling of current industry professionals, WIL was seen as a strategic mechanism that could contribute to each, in a mutually reinforcing way. This unique partnership between one University's co-op program and several employers from the Tourism and Hospitality sectors has operated with success for most of the past decade, providing students with fully immersive work-integrated industry experiences while also upskilling industry managers through Masters programs that enable them to then serve as sessional instructors and deliver select university courses to students while on their work terms.

Subsequent to their studies, employers also extend offers of full-time work to their students (as merited), facilitating their transition to full-time work upon graduation and helping meet critical staffing needs with trained and educated personnel, something traditionally difficult to fulfil in this sector.

*What Can we Learn from This?*

- **Ensure key stakeholders see multiple value-adds for their active engagement with the proposed new model.** The SAMUI model shows a novel regional approach to multiple employment-related challenges, from addressing industry shortages to enhancing retention through upskilling, while serving as a co-educator of the students they eventually hire. From our discussions with the participating Industry Heads and Academic Administrators, this has required *substantial re-thinking of how each of their businesses were traditionally being managed* and a willingness to re-tool and commit to fully working within the new model.
- **Commitment to the new model must come from the highest levels of power and the resources needed for full engagement made available.** The SAMUI model concept was developed and facilitated by folks at the most senior levels of the University and Industry Associations who then provided the support needed to operationalize it, including from various levels of government. It also selected one sector (Tourism and Hospitality which had a high need) in which to start and test proof of concept. The Calgary Institutional Consortium leaders seem to share similar expectations and appreciate the potential for this regional collective approach to add value to their own institution's (and the Region's) WIL efforts. As with the SAMUI model partners, the EDMG was clearly very supportive at the

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<sup>6</sup> See press release <https://management.wu.ac.th/en/wailalak-management-school-hosted-the-2nd-work-integrated-learning-wil-conference-and-samui-model-sharing-day/>.

proposal stage of this concept, hence their notional agreement to work together. With the CED WIL project funding now secured and start up well underway, and with some changes to the EDMG participants, **there may be an opportunity to refresh the momentum generated at the conceptual stage and ensure that important pieces (such as the data sharing agreement) are signed off as soon as possible.** It would also be helpful to have the EDMG **signal to their staff and faculty at the operational level that this project is a priority for them and to provide any additional resources** that might be needed to ensure their institution's active participation.

- **WIL employer/host recruitment is challenging.** The comparative review of the SAMUI model with a large German Co-op University (DHBW) was conducted in 2016 (Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2016, 17(3), 227-247). It found that "Given that the relationship exists primarily between the Thai universities and industry, and not between industry and the students, as in the DHBW example, it is recommended that recruitment stay with the universities." This may be instructive for the Secretariate as it further refines its role going forward.
- **Think big and address what no single stakeholder can do on their own.** Finally, the SAMUI model created several value-adds for the industry, some of which extended beyond Co-op to innovatively extend WIL to current workers through continuing education opportunities. In the end, this provided an opportunity for industry employees to enhance their practice as well as providing an opportunity for co-op students to take some of their course work while working. This is not likely something the CED WIL Project could entertain *per se*, but the notion of developing opportunities that are "outside the box" of the traditional WIL space and that address multiple related challenges, has been key to the SAMUI model's success. Given the CED WIL Project's unique positioning with large business and industry organizations as well as the PSI Consortium, such out-of-the-box thinking could be productive: the collection of system/region/province-wide data would seem to be one such opportunity.

## **5. The World Association for Co-op and Work-Integrated Education (WACE) Global WIL Challenge**

Born out of a desire for greater participation in international WIL experiences, especially during the COVID global lock down, the WACE Global Challenge has harnessed Practera's WIL Learning platform to host international, multidisciplinary teams of students all focused on helping not-for-profit organizations from around the globe think about problems that connect their organizations' work to various UN Sustainable Development Goals. WACE has partnered with ed-tech start-up [Practera](#) to launch a Global Challenge student-industry project program. This program activates a global network of universities to assist organizations through international, multidisciplinary student teams working together on work-related issues and problems identified by the organizations. Each Global Challenge program is four weeks in duration, and includes:

- A cultural intelligence workshop and program orientation and induction



- A three-week virtual project where multidisciplinary teams of students work collaboratively to solve a challenge for a real organisation
- A review by the employer, presentation to WACE, and a reflection component

Through their participation in the Global Challenge students become better prepared for the dynamic global workplaces of the future by:

- Exposure to perspectives from multiple disciplines and cultures working on a shared problem
- Developing global networks of colleagues
- Enhancing their employability skills through industry-relevant experience
- Building their collaboration, cross-cultural communication, problem solving, innovation and presentation skills
- Gaining experience and confidence with the use of various online collaboration tools
- Better understanding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

WACE had long envisioned a single, global portal where International WIL placement opportunities worldwide would be made available to member institutions. During their extensive exploration of the concept, it became very evident that the differences in WIL types, world and local system academic calendars, institutional program requirements and variations therein, job development approaches and cycles, and student preparation and expectations were so large that a single portal was not the best way to proceed. While the technology could be there, the WIL educational systems were less likely to make the necessary changes quickly enough, if at all. The onset of the pandemic that eventually led to a global lockdown secured WACE's decision to abandon the one-stop placement portal idea for an approach to developing international WIL experiences that would be supported through new online technologies and would focus on two things of interest to member institutions: student learning and the provision of accreditable international WIL experiences, even in lockdown.

WACE was also interested in students developing their global thinking while working on specific problems and sought to partner with the not-for-profit sector in its initial offerings. The UNSDGs also provided a unifying framework that was understood globally, and with which Practera already had experience. Practera Learning provided a ready-to-customize LMS and connective meeting technologies (refined during the pandemic) that supported these virtual international experiences. Currently over 38 universities have participated and students and organizations from 41 countries have formed Challenge Teams. It is funded through participation fees paid for by PSIs that are shared with Practera, resulting in modest profits for each partner in the first two years.

### *What Can we Learn from This?*

- A single **point of contact portal has many limitations** when trying to manage the significant variability in the WIL space and the independence of the post-secondary institutions.
- There is a need for the offering or approach to **address multiple institutional needs** – in this case, it is accreditable (so opportunities can count as part of a course), meets international and WIL experience requirements, and costs institutions less per placement than it would to develop and administer the offering themselves.
- **Stay lean** in terms of the organizational infrastructure you create so that once start-up work is done, you can sustain a few key positions and **keep budgets nimble**, especially given that WIL Placements are very dependent on economic ebbs and flows.
- There is a need to **explore a financial sustainability/profit model** early.
- **You need to provide something unique** that fills a void and creates a new way to realize stakeholder goals.
- **Choose good partners** that are responsive and willing to take risks with you, then be clear on each of your roles and expectations.
- **Maintain good communication** with all stakeholders and **be quick to resolve issues** that arise, especially at the start.

### **Some Initial Observations**

Based upon the CED WIL Project types as described in this report, it is clear that the role of the employer specialists at the Secretariate will require very close work with, and knowledge about, their respective PSI's programs, protocols, and students. The consortium institutions, in the majority, have reported that the WIL types they would prioritize over the next 1-2 years are primarily those that are most closely linked to course or professional requirements and are traditionally managed wholly or in part by faculty members. These types would most often fall under service learning or field placements rather than co-ops or internships. There will need to be considerable thought given to what roles CED employer specialists will play in relation to the PSI WIL staff and how that will connect with any Faculty-driven WIL development at the course level.

The PSIs that already use the Orbis platform reported they would be using the CED WIL Portal as more of a "complement to their existing systems" than a replacement solution. At the time of these discussions, it was imagined that would take any leads from the CED Portal and follow up to refine them as a WIL placement. Any opportunities that were already a good fit would simply be posted once vetted. Given the aforementioned highly-relational and sometimes protective nature of WIL job development by universities, it is unclear how many of the opportunities they do develop from the CED WIL platform leads

that they would then re-post on the CED WIL Portal the next time around (a couple of PSIs indicated they would be hesitant to do so). It is also difficult to determine what WIL types will be developed as most employer needs are able to be filled by multiple types, and depending on who then connects with the employer to “refine the details” will determine the WIL types that result. The Project Secretariate will need to look more closely at how and what is measured around placement development, especially as increasing the diversity of WIL types is a stated goal.

Finally, early observations regarding the portal development also indicate that categorization by WIL type is difficult for employers and having them do so may provide poor data. If reporting out by WIL type remains a priority, this should not be done by employers, faculty members, students, or even WIL practitioners but perhaps by a trained staff person at the Secretariate, using a consistent set of criteria. This would also likely need to be done at the back end of the process, once the PSIs had finalized and posted the offering, as it may have evolved from the position initially posted on the CED portal.

## Going Forward

The observations and information in this report will be complemented with a second report providing additional qualitative feedback from Secretariate staff. That data and this initial report together provide the basis for a series of considerations and recommendations for the CED WIL Pilot Project intended to inform the project’s development going forward.

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## Addendum

The main body of this report has focused on WIL initiatives in the context of post-secondary education. While performing the scan of WIL types and comparable initiatives in Canada and worldwide, a few tangential initiatives and reports were reviewed. Below is a summary of five initiatives adjacent to the focus of this report, which may offer insight into the broader space of work-integrated learning in Canada.

### 1. Edge Up: Energy to Digital Growth Education and Upskilling Project

This project focused on providing upskilling opportunities to displaced mid-career energy sector workers in Calgary so that they could transfer into careers in one of three streams in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector: IT Project Management, Data Analytics, or Full-Stack Software Development.

**The key differences from this project to the CED WIL Pilot are:** 1) The learners were mid-career professionals, not post-secondary learners enrolled in degree programs. 2) Most of the learners (76%<sup>7</sup>) were previously employed in either the oil and gas sector or as engineers, not in various sectors distributed amongst an entire PSI's degree programs. 3) All the learners were being trained in the ICT sector, not in various sectors distributed amongst an entire PSI's degree programs.

**Relevant takeaways:** 1) Wraparound supports for learners were helpful, and markedly improved outcomes from cohort 1 to cohort 2 when the initiative added an induction session for learners and CV writing and interview prep workshops. 2) Boosting confidence and morale in the learners' ability to translate their previous sector knowledge and skills to a new sector proved necessary. There is a potential overlap here between the needs of mid-career professionals—who may know enough about professional expectations to be hyper-aware of what they do not know in new settings—and post-secondary learners—who are so new to professional settings that they may feel unsure of how to transfer their knowledge and skills to the new setting. 3) Some industry experts lacked the necessary pedagogical training to engage learners, and some teachers lacked up-to-date industry training. The Secretariate may find a similar disconnect among PSIs and employers, in which case it may be useful to host a workshop with the CoP which encourages cross-teaching and planning amongst PSIs and employers.

### 2. CAREERS Next Gen

This project focuses on providing secondary school students with paid internships in skilled trades, ICT, health, agriculture, forestry, energy and more in Alberta.

**The key differences from this project to the CED WIL Pilot are:** 1) The learners are secondary school students or recent secondary school graduates, not post-secondary learners enrolled in degree programs. 2) The internships are all paid and are all

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<sup>7</sup> Seventy-six percent of the learners who responded to the follow-up questionnaire (n=70), not of the total enrolment of the program (n=98).

internships, not a mix of WIL types or paid/unpaid positions. 3) The internships are within several select sectors, not in various sectors distributed amongst an entire PSI's degree programs.

**Relevant takeaways:** 1) The program has been operating since 1997 and spent several years establishing relationships with employers, unions, schools, etc. to result in a record 2470 internships in 2021-2022. This number of years active and number of internships per year may offer the Secretariate an idea of potential impact measures for the CED WIL Pilot project, though the differences between the initiatives is considerable. 2) The program does not focus on future skilling or upskilling nor is it centered on meeting current labour market demands. Most recently, it has shifted central attention to expanding the demographics and inclusion within its established, particularly to bring more opportunities to women, Indigenous youth, Black youth, and youth of colour.

### 3. Beyond the Classroom

This report comes out of a nation-wide research project to examine the future of post-secondary education in Canada and the changing expectations—from learners, society, government, and employers—of the roles post-secondary education plays in Canada.

**Relevant takeaways:** 1) Experiential learning opportunities can be envisioned as an avenue through which to bring PSIs and industry together to better prepare and funnel students into the labour market. Collaboration between PSIs and industry is essential for this outcome. 2) Efforts should be made to ensure experiential learning opportunities are rolled out with conscious consideration and mitigation of inequalities. For instance, low-income students and students with considerable financial responsibilities and pressures are less able to take advantage of unpaid positions. Students with disabilities may have less access to positions because of their accommodation needs, or at least enter the process with less clarity about whether they can be accommodated.

### 4. The Only Constant: The Changing Nature of Work and Skills

This report, based on the same data as *Beyond the Classroom*, comes out of a nation-wide research project to examine the future of post-secondary education in Canada and the changing expectations—from learners, society, government, and employers—of the roles post-secondary education plays in Canada.

**Relevant takeaways:** 1) Skills required for work continue to change at an ever increasing rate, in large part thanks to digital and technological changes across the country and globally. The resultant skills mismatch can be framed as a need to reevaluate PSI education and purposes. 2) More flexibility in education and hiring practices are needed to address these changes, with micro-credentialling as a potential way forward. 3) More collaboration between PSIs and employers is needed to make these changes effective.

### 5. Mitacs

Mitacs started in 1999 as a way to support applied and industrial research in STEM and has since grown to focus on facilitating knowledge transfer between PSIs and industry to solve business and societal challenges.

**The key differences from this project to the CED WIL Pilot are:** 1) Mitacs is nation-wide, operated at a federal level, and serves graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and budding entrepreneurs in addition to undergraduate learners. 2) There are four programs within Mitacs, each with slightly varying foci in stakeholders and missions.<sup>8</sup> 3) Mitacs continues to secure generous funding in the nine-digit range, primarily through federal government transfers.

**Relevant takeaways:** 1) Mitacs has been trying to do a better job of gathering, organizing, and using data about its programs and participants. A key learning in the 2022 evaluation of Mitacs stated that plans for how demographic data will be collected and disaggregated should be established early in the development of new programming. This is invaluable for establishing evaluation metrics, benchmarking, and to identify gaps in program reach. 2) Mitacs has prioritized minimizing administrative burden and using digital technology to modernize operations, particularly to optimize program delivery and facilitate data collection.

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<sup>8</sup> While the CED WIL Pilot project also has various stakeholders with distinct though overlapping missions, Mitacs has a clear delineation between programs and expectations within its central mission, something the CED WIL Pilot may consider developing much further into its existence.



## Appendix

**Table 1: Categories of WIL**

<b>Co-operative Education (Co-op)</b>	<b>Service Learning</b>	<b>Field Programs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• paid</li> <li>• part of a program</li> <li>• fully engaged in an employment setting</li> <li>• work terms = 30% or more in a 2 year program / 25% or less in a program under 2 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unpaid</li> <li>• part of a course (for credit)</li> <li>• enrich their learning experience and strengthen communities</li> <li>• apply disciplinary knowledge to a challenge identified by the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• typically unpaid</li> <li>• usually receive credit</li> <li>• may not require supervision by a licensed professional</li> <li>• not required for professional certification</li> <li>• intensive, part-time/short-term practical experience</li> </ul>
<b>Practicums</b>	<b>Internships</b>	<b>Projects</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• typically unpaid</li> <li>• mandatory in professional programs</li> <li>• work under a supervisor or a registered or licensed professional</li> <li>• for professional licensure or certification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• paid or unpaid</li> <li>• receive academic credit</li> <li>• single discipline-specific, supervised, and structured work experience</li> <li>• typically 12-16 months long, completed before graduation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specific to the CED WIL project</li> <li>• any other WIL offerings that do not fit in the other categories</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Overview and Lessons from other WIL initiatives**

<p><b>1. Vancouver Island WIL</b></p> <p><i>Partners:</i> North Island College (NIC) and Vancouver Island University (VIU)</p> <p><i>Scale:</i> Regional</p> <p><i>Objective:</i> Enhancing students' opportunities for WIL and meeting employer needs by connecting them with students on Vancouver Island.</p> <p><i>Overview:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner institutions did not have shared agreement on how to work together</li> <li>• Orbis and magnet platform capacity not fully realized               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Went live spring 2020</li> <li>○ Platform largely re-directed users to each partner's separate sites</li> <li>○ Shut down June 2022</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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- Some resource sharing between partners and some joint activities on an ad hoc basis still ongoing
- Provided online resources for students and employers
- “the intention was good” but operational culture not ready to support it

- Lessons:*
1. Establish MOUs early in the process.
  2. Ensure an understanding and buy-in to the WIL placement development process.
  3. The portal needs to do more than the institution’s individual systems to incentivise institutional full use and sharing.
  4. Developing resources for employers can be a useful part of a WIL initiative.

## **2. Future Wabanaki | Avenir NB | Future NB**

*Partners:* St. Thomas University, University of Moncton, Mount Allison University, University of New Brunswick, NB Business Council, RBC Future Launch, NBSA (New Brunswick Student Alliance), FEECUM (Student Federation for University of Moncton), and the United Way

*Scale:* Provincial

*Objective:* Position New Brunswick as a “national leader in experiential education where partners across all levels of education, private industry, not for profit organizations and government are working collaboratively towards a shared vision.”

- Overview:*
- Focus and goals clearly outlined in a three-year Strategic Plan created in 2021
  - Focus:
    - Leverage student talent to contribute to NB’s workforce while studying
    - Enhance employer and student engagement in the future of work in NB
    - Fill labour market needs in NB
    - Increasing the numbers of students staying and working in NB
  - Goals:
    - Secure a robust structure and resources to support the vision and long-term sustainability of Future NB.
    - Create accessible and meaningful experiential learning opportunities for all students
    - Educate and assist all employers in offering high-quality experiential learning opportunities to all students.
    - Leverage technology to support, inform and connect partners, students, educators, and employers.
  - Orbis and Magnet platform
  - Students and employers are the key stakeholders requiring support

- Lessons:*
1. Develop a strategic plan and flesh out CED WIL Project goals to ensure shared and clear vision.
  2. Explore the metrics this initiative is using for goals that overlap with CED WIL Project goals and explore how they resolved data haring issues with stakeholders.
  3. Connect with this initiative to get feedback about their experiences with the platform and its customization.

4. Learn more about the initiative's financial sustainability model(s) and/or approaches.

### 3. SUNY Works

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

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

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

*Overview:*

- Launched in 2012
- Connects all SUNY colleges and universities in facilitating WIL
- Benefits of participation:
  - Shared resources through SUNY Learning Commons
  - Collection of information about employer needs
  - Assistance in reforming curriculum to see what works
  - Established requirements for credit hours, pay, goals, etc.
- A 2015 review of the program offers insight into successes and lessons

*Lessons:*

1. There are some real limits to the role/power of the central coordinating body. Centralized practices can only go so far since many WIL types vary by faculty member, department, and institution, thus leaving much knowledge and power outside the central body.
2. Not all institutions nor faculty members will have the same level of knowledge or approach to WIL to each other. A seasoned WIL coordinator within the Secretariate may help smooth these differences.
3. Resources development needs to focus on student preparation, especially for those from populations of interest to the CED WIL Project and its funders.
4. Significant financial and human resources are required to conduct outreach and collaboration to recruit employers and students. A centralized collection of strategies could streamline this.
5. Tracking and evaluation are critical, and resources must be put towards this endeavour. Data can be tracked to generate:
  - a. Regional level reports
  - b. Sector specific reports
  - c. Learning outcome reports
  - d. Student demographic reports
  - e. Transition to work reports
6. Professional development is highly beneficial and needs continued funding.

### 4. SAMUI Model

*Partners:* Wailalak University and the Tourism and Hospitality sectors on the Island of Koh Samui (both in Thailand)

*Scale:* Regional and sector-specific

*Objective:* To address employment education gaps both for new hires and current employees.

*Overview:*

- In operation for the past decade or so
- Provides students with fully immersive work-integrated industry experiences
- Upskilling industry managers through Master's programs
- Opportunity for students to be hired full-time as merited, improving post-graduation employment transition rates
- Meeting critical staffing needs and employment gaps in the sector

*Lessons:*

1. Ensure key stakeholders see multiple value-adds for their active engagement with the proposed new model. The buy-in helps partners have the willingness to re-tool and commit to fully working within the new model.
2. Commitment to the new model must come from the highest levels of power and the resources needed for full engagement made available.
3. Choosing a specific sector with a high need (like Tourism and Hospitality in this case) was a manageable place to start and test proof on concept.
4. It is challenging to recruit WIL employers/hosts and this task should stay with the PSI partners.
5. Think big and address what no single stakeholder can do on their own. Offering upskilling for existing workers was one such way to bring new students to universities while benefiting the industry all the more.

## **5. The World Association for Co-op and Work-Integrated Education (WACE) Global WIL Challenge**

*Partners:* The World Association for Co-op and Work-Integrated Education (WACE) and Practera

*Scale:* Global

*Objective:* Increase participation in international WIL experiences, especially during the COVID global lock down.

*Overview:*

- Uses Practera's WIL Learning platform
- WACE utilized its network of PSIs to assist organizations through international, multidisciplinary teams of students
- Teams focused on helping not-for-profit organizations around the globe to address problems linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Each program is four weeks in duration, and includes:
  - Cultural intelligence workshop
  - 3-week virtual projects to work collaboratively
  - Employer review, presentation to WACE, and reflection component
- Variations in WIL types prevented the pursual of a single online portal for opportunities
- As of now, 38 universities have participated and students and organizations from 41 countries have formed teams

- Funded by participation fees paid by PSIs and shared with Practera

- Lessons:*
1. A single point of contact portal has many limitations when trying to manage the significant variability in the WIL space and the independence of the post-secondary institutions.
  2. Stay lean in terms of organization infrastructure to keep budgets nimble.
  3. Explore a financial sustainability/profit model early.
  4. Initiatives must provide a unique service that fills a void.
  5. Choose good partners that are responsive and willing to take risks with you, then be clear on each of your roles and expectations.
  6. Maintain good communication with all stakeholders and be quick to resolve issues that arise, especially at the start.



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