



ALBERTA

CEWIL CANADA REGIONAL CONVERSATION

October 29, 2024

Location: MacEwan University

Number of participants:

(attendee list in Appendix I)

53

Attendee demographics:

(i.e. % of each group)



Post-secondary: 41.5%



Students: 17%



Industry: 32.1%



Government: 3.8%



Other: 5.7%



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE REGION:

There are a number of WIL initiatives currently underway in the province of Alberta.

- [AB WIL Practitioners](#), founded in 2022, "is a supportive learning community for post-secondary WIL practitioners with a focus on building relationships and learning with and from each other." The groups meets virtually on a monthly basis to discuss practices, ideas, and trends in work-integrated learning, and to share their work. Membership is comprised of WIL Practitioners in Alberta at accredited post-secondary institutions.
- [TalentED YYC](#), was a collaboration of 10 partners (including the seven Calgary based post-secondary institutions) working to build Calgary's skilled talent pool by supporting employers to engage post-secondary students in relevant work experiences. The pilot program created by Calgary Economic Development ran from 2022-2025. The program aimed to streamline the process for employers to engage post-secondary students through meaningful work integrated learning opportunities including internships, co-ops, field placements, community service learning opportunities, projects, and practicums.
- NorQuest College plans to host [WIL Symposium 2025](#), on June 10th. The event will be a partnership with AB WIL Practitioners, CEWIL Canada, and the Alberta Chamber of Commerce. The theme of the event will be *Connecting WIL Excellence to Industry Readiness*, and will bring together WIL practitioners and leaders from post-secondary institutions to share best practices, explore innovative approaches, and discuss the future of WIL in Alberta.

There is strong support for work-integrated learning from Alberta Advanced Education, the provincial ministry responsible for post-secondary education. Their [2025-2028 Business Plan](#) identifies the outcome that all "Albertans have the education and skills required to secure rewarding careers in the current and future labour market." The first objective aligned with this outcome is to "strengthen the alignment of post-secondary programs to employment and expand innovative learning opportunities, such as work-integrated learning and apprenticeship learning models, to meet Albertans' skills development needs and enhance education opportunities for in-demand industries."



TRENDS & CHALLENGES:

Post-secondary Perspectives

Post-secondary work-integrated learning faculty and staff felt the challenges presented in the report reflected the realities at their institutions in Alberta. Two key areas identified by PSI WIL practitioners were:

1. Communication and Industry Supports for WIL

- PSIs are challenged with communicating the unique value of WIL placements to both students and employers, and there's a need for tools to help supervisors support students effectively.

2. Partnerships and Community Resources

- PSIs need a shared database of community partners to streamline outreach and avoid multiple requests to the same organizations. Partnerships with industry are crucial but require more alignment and resource sharing. Post-secondaries need to move from a competitive model to a shared model of industry/community contacts.

Additional challenges that aligned with the realities working with WIL initiatives at the institutions included:

3. WIL Supply and Demand

- There is an imbalance between the number of WIL opportunities and student demand, which creates challenges in finding placements, especially in regions with limited options.

4. Industry Fatigue and Location Constraints

- Certain industries face "fatigue" from continuously hosting students, and some areas lack accessible placement locations, leading to long commutes for students or a shortage of available positions.

5. Funding and Flexibility in Programs

- SWPP and Mitacs funding requires more flexibility and clearer guidelines, as inconsistencies cause difficulties for PSIs and students, especially international students balancing other commitments.

6. Canadian Workplace Culture and International Student Support

- International students face challenges in adapting to Canadian workplace norms and ineligibility for certain WIL programs. There is also a lack of standardized processes and limited subsidies for employers, which can hinder WIL access for international students.

7. Unexpected Financial Costs and Rural Limitations

- Costs related to travel and relocations are significant barriers for students, particularly those in rural areas with fewer local opportunities.

8. Government Mandates and Accessing Funds

- PSIs struggle with the complexities of accessing government-mandated funds for WIL placements, which lack clear processes and centralized support.

9. Standardization and Cultural Safety in WIL Programs

- There is a limited understanding of what constitutes a "culturally safe" experience, and PSIs face challenges in standardizing language and processes across institutions.

10. Industry Standards and Employer Education

- Some industry standards do not serve students well, and there is a need for more employer education on how industry and PSIs can collaborate effectively to enhance WIL programs.

Students Perspective

Students felt that the challenges presented in the report reflect the realities they face in Alberta, and noted the following primary challenge for students engaging in WIL in Alberta:

1. Low Pay and Financial Strain

- Students face issues with inadequate pay for WIL placements, particularly with non-profits, where there is uncertainty in job opportunities and payment delays. International students face additional financial strain due to limited access to support and competition for placements.

Additional challenges and trends identified by students included:

2. Workplace Discrimination and Exploitation

- Students report workplace discrimination, including being unpaid for placements that should be compensated. This issue is compounded for international students who often cannot seek help regarding placement-related concerns.

3. Lack of Clarity and Streamlining in Communication

- Communication lines within WIL programs need to be clarified and streamlined. Students are often uncertain about whom to approach for specific needs or issues within their placements.

4. Insufficient Funding and Resource Allocation

- Not all WIL programs receive adequate funding, which disproportionately affects international students. Funding gaps limit the availability of placements, with some students unable to afford class fees associated with WIL programs.

5. Relocation Limitations

- Relocation requirements for WIL placements present challenges, especially for students (domestic and international) who face logistical and financial limitations when moving for placements.

6. Lack of Opportunities and Avenues for WIL Placements

- There is a reported lack of available WIL placements and opportunities for students. This shortage results in some students missing out on co-op experiences entirely or being unable to find relevant WIL placements.

7. Scope of Work and Mentorship Issues

- The scope of work between students and mentors within WIL placements is often unclear, leading to challenges in setting expectations and achieving educational goals. Students also seek better opportunities for relocation as part of these placements.

Industry/Community Partner Perspective

Industry and community partners highlighted two challenges and trends in their discussions:

1. Funding and Resource Limitations

- A significant challenge is the lack of funding for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). There are limited resources, including financial and human resources, especially for SMEs supporting WIL initiatives. Additional funding complexities exist, such as annual versus multi-year funding structures and the need for tax incentives or breaks to support students.

2. Quality and Preparation in WIL

- Not all WIL experiences are equal, with concerns that neither employers nor students are always adequately prepared. There are communication issues, and there is a need for empathy and supportive supervision in WIL placements. Smaller employers often focus more on revenue than teaching, creating a gap in WIL quality.

In addition to these challenges and trends they also noted the following perspectives that they feel impact WIL in Alberta:

3. Complexity and Process Challenges

- Industry partners face complex processes and coordination issues with multiple partners, such as financial and HR processes, which add to the challenge of effectively managing WIL programs. Reporting WIL activities to government entities can also be challenging.

4. Regional Nuances

- Regional variations affect challenges; for instance, there are differences between urban and rural areas, as well as between industries like energy versus others. In Alberta, competition among PSIs and the rural-urban divide create unique dynamics. There's also a need for region-specific support systems to address these local challenges.

5. Community and Partnership Challenges

- Partners require better role clarity and expectations, as multiple organizations often lack a clear understanding of each other's needs and commitments. There's a need for accessible databases to share community partners among PSIs to avoid duplicate requests. Language and accessibility remain important to support a diverse student population, including neurodivergent individuals and immigrants.

6. Trends in Industry and Community Partnerships

- There is a trend towards valuing "quality" in WIL, balancing industry needs with academic goals. Non-profit visibility among students is also a priority, focusing on sector credibility and providing competitive opportunities. Additionally, there's a growing focus on EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) in partnerships, emphasizing the need for a culturally safe and inclusive environment.

Government Perspective

There were two Government of Alberta representatives at the regional conversation in Edmonton from Alberta Advanced Education and Alberta Labour and Immigration. They were invited to discuss the topics with the table group (students, post-secondary institutions, industry/community partners) they most felt their portfolio aligned with.

SOLUTIONS & ACTIONS TOWARDS THE CALLS TO ACTION:

Call to Action # 1 - Proposed Solutions

The top three solutions identified as solutions to ensure sustainable, predictable and inclusive funding were:

1. Clear Information for Employers on Funding Access

Employers need accessible and clear information on how to apply for WIL funding. Providing transparent guidance on available funding sources and the application process would increase employer participation and help sustain funding support for WIL programs.

2. Government Reforms and Tax Incentives

Solutions included advocating for government reforms at the federal level and introducing tax credits at the provincial level to encourage employer participation in WIL programs. This would create more incentives for businesses, particularly SMEs, to invest in WIL opportunities.

3. Per Student Funding for Post-Secondary Institutions

Inflation, enrollment pressure, and changes to student immigration policy have put intense pressure on post-secondary budget. To continue to increase the number of high quality WIL experiences post-secondaries require per student funding dedicated to resourcing WIL offices and staffing required to engage both students and industry and community partners.

Additional solutions proposed included:

4. Increased and Targeted Funding

Participants emphasized the need for more funding opportunities to support students in managing the costs associated with living, studying, and surviving in Canada, especially for international students. They noted existing inequities in funding access and suggested additional support specifically tailored to these students to promote equity in WIL access.

5. Identifying and Engaging Funding Partners

Participants highlighted the need to identify reliable funding partners to ensure sustainable support. They pointed out inconsistencies in existing funding programs (e.g., SWPP and Magnet) and called for clearer roles among partners, employers, and government entities to ensure streamlined and cohesive funding opportunities.

6. Simplifying Funding Processes

Participants called for simplified processes for funding access, including reducing the steps and levels of approval needed to disburse funds. They suggested that current systems, such as wage subsidies paid through institutions, often delay timely payments to students. Streamlining these processes would ensure quicker access to funds, benefiting both students and employers.

7. Consistency Across Funding Programs

There was a call for consistency across funding programs, particularly in aligning processes between different funding bodies like SWPP partners. Clear and consistent guidelines across programs would ease navigation for institutions and employers, promoting more effective participation in WIL funding programs.

8. Aligning Funding with Program Timelines

Participants emphasized the importance of aligning funding notifications with WIL program start dates. By synchronizing funding approval with program timelines, institutions can better plan and execute WIL initiatives without interruptions or uncertainty.

9. Provincial Tax Credits for Employers

Some participants suggested provincial tax credits for employers that support WIL programs, particularly for those committed to supporting underrepresented groups in WIL. This initiative would encourage employer engagement and enhance inclusivity in the WIL ecosystem.

10. Inclusive Funding for International Students

Including international students in funding programs like SWPP remains a priority. Participants noted the importance of equitable funding access to enhance the quality and availability of WIL experiences for international students, recognizing their potential contributions to Canada's labor market.

These solutions reflect a commitment to creating a stable, predictable, and inclusive funding environment for WIL programs, addressing both current gaps and long-term needs in the Canadian WIL ecosystem. Let me know if further analysis or details are needed!

Call to Action #2 – Proposed Solutions

The two primary solutions highlight to improve WIL data collection were:

1. Enhanced Competency Assessment Tools

Participants proposed using competency assessment tools to measure students' progress in relation to program goals. This could involve self-assessments, supervisor feedback, and tools to compare student growth to specific competencies, providing a more holistic view of WIL outcomes.

2. Clarity in Processes for Handling Placement Issues

There was a call for clear policies to handle issues such as discrimination or harassment that might arise during placements. Establishing transparent protocols would ensure students feel safe and supported, and it would facilitate more accurate data collection on placement challenges.

Additional solutions to improve WIL data collection included:

3. Continuous and Structured Feedback Collection

Participants expressed a need for opportunities to provide feedback beyond end-of-term surveys. They suggested implementing structured reflection points throughout WIL experiences to capture feedback on various aspects of the placements. This includes gathering feedback on both the student experience and WIL partners.

4. EDI Data Collection for Diverse Student Populations

Participants emphasized the importance of collecting equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) data on student populations. This data is crucial for ensuring equitable access to WIL opportunities and understanding how different groups experience WIL placements.

5. Consistency in Data Collection Across Decentralized Programs

For institutions with decentralized programs, participants noted challenges in collecting data consistently. Standardized processes for data collection would enable better reporting across all WIL programs, making data more reliable and useful for analysis.

6. Automating Data Collection and Quality Measurement

There was a need to move away from manual processes for measuring WIL quality. Tools like Ripen and PeopleSoft were suggested to streamline and automate the collection of quality metrics, making it easier to track WIL experiences and their outcomes over time.

7. Longitudinal and Representative Data Collection

Participants called for longitudinal data to track WIL outcomes over time. Consistent data collection with representative samples would help identify key issues and measure outcomes, supporting evidence-based improvements and demonstrating WIL's impact on the economy.

8. Rewards for Long-Standing Partnerships

Offering incentives to long-standing WIL partners could encourage consistent engagement and quality. Rewards might include career development opportunities or other organizational benefits, motivating partners to provide high-quality WIL experiences and participate in data collection efforts.

9. Clear Success Metrics and Incentivizing Survey Participation

Participants suggested defining success metrics for WIL programs, such as employee retention, client satisfaction, and student placement rates. To encourage survey participation, institutions could tie rewards or recognition to the completion of feedback reports by partners and students.

10. Alignment of WIL Practices Across CEWIL

Establishing consistent practices across CEWIL would enhance quality assurance in WIL. This could involve multi-faculty WIL projects with clearly defined roles and objectives, as well as established measures for program success.

11. Collect Student Data about Effectiveness of Placement

Many students don't have the opportunity to provide feedback about their placement. How do PSIs know how effective these placements are if students are not providing first-hand information about their experience.

These solutions focus on creating a robust data collection framework to accurately track and report on WIL outcomes. This includes continuous feedback, EDI considerations, consistency across decentralized programs, and clear metrics to measure success, ensuring sustained support and quality improvement in the Canadian WIL ecosystem.

Call to Action #3 - Proposed Solutions

The top two solutions to increase involvement from small and medium enterprises in WIL were:

1. Supporting SMEs with Limited Capacity

Recognizing that many SMEs have fewer than 20 staff members, participants recommended more coordinated efforts to educate and support SMEs on how to participate in WIL. Associations could play a key role in providing resources and bridging the gap between academia and SMEs.

2. Inter-PSI Collaboration and Shared Resources

Participants highlighted the importance of collaboration between postsecondary institutions (PSIs) to reduce competition and share resources. For instance, a shared database could help avoid duplicate outreach to employers and enable institutions to coordinate their WIL initiatives effectively.

Additional solutions proposed to increased involvement from small and medium enterprises in WIL included:

3. Enhanced Communication and Transparency

Participants recommended setting up group chats or communication platforms to enable transparent, real-time communication among all parties supporting a student in WIL. This approach would reduce delays, confusion, and ensure that all stakeholders—students, institutions, and employers—are informed and aligned.

4. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

There is a need for clarity on how each group contributes to WIL, to avoid overlap and ensure that all stakeholders understand their roles. Institutions should define the expectations and responsibilities for each partner involved in WIL to foster success.

5. More Preparation Time for WIL Processes

Participants suggested increasing the time between application acceptance and the start of the WIL experience to allow institutions and employers to better prepare. This would contribute to a more sustainable and effective onboarding process.

6. Centralized Coordination and Support

A central coordination system, potentially within institutions, could streamline administrative tasks related to WIL and support specific needs, such as subject matter expertise. This would ensure consistent and efficient processes across different faculties or schools within an institution.

7. Flexible Policies and Adaptable WIL Structures

Institutions should consider flexible policies to address the needs of both employers and students. This might include flexible scheduling or adaptable program structures that cater to the diverse requirements of various industries and student backgrounds.

8. Cross-Institutional and Cross-Sector Collaboration

Cross-institutional efforts, such as shared databases and collective outreach, would prevent multiple contacts with the same employers, who may otherwise become overwhelmed. Collaborating across sectors and institutions would also make it easier for employers to understand WIL programs and simplify their engagement.

9. Tax Incentives and Long-Term Partnerships

Participants proposed advocating for tax credits (similar to the Ontario model) for organizations that participate in WIL, specifically SMEs. Establishing long-term partnerships with funding in place would further incentivize consistent participation and build capacity within organizations.

10. Open Avenues for Action Committees and Advocacy

Creating action committees dedicated to advancing WIL collaboration, such as an Alberta WIL (ABWIL) committee, would drive coordination efforts. Participants also highlighted the need for advocacy to improve policies, such as tax credits and funding models, and to include diverse voices, including students, in decision-making.

11. Developing a WIL Directory for Employers and Partners

A directory of WIL opportunities for employers and community partners could streamline matching strategies and simplify the process for organizations to connect with students and institutions.

12. Establishing Consistent Policies Across Institutions

Participants noted discrepancies in policies between institutions, such as refund policies for students unable to find WIL placements. Establishing consistent policies across institutions would reduce confusion for students and employers alike.

These solutions emphasize streamlined communication, role clarity, cross-institutional collaboration, and flexible policies to support effective WIL coordination. Participants also recommended structural support, such as centralized databases, action committees, and tax incentives, to drive greater alignment and cooperation across the WIL ecosystem.

Call to Action #4 - Proposed Solutions

Consistent funding support for SMEs to better access WIL were the top three solutions proposed:

1. Funding Support for SMEs

Participants highlighted the need for dedicated funding to help SMEs cover costs associated with hosting WIL students. SMEs often face limited resources and capacity, which can hinder their ability to fully engage in WIL opportunities. Additional funding would alleviate these constraints, enabling more SMEs to participate.

2. Tax Credits for Employers

Introducing tax credits for SMEs that participate in WIL, similar to models in certain regions, would offer financial incentives and help mitigate costs. Tax credits would make it more feasible for smaller businesses to host students and gain access to emerging talent.

3. Consistency and Duration of Funding

Ensuring consistent and long-term funding for WIL programs would support SMEs in planning and participating in WIL. Predictable funding cycles would enable SMEs to engage in WIL more confidently without fearing sudden changes or interruptions in funding.

In addition to funding, supports that help SMEs understand the WIL ecosystem, structure and support WIL experiences, and market themselves and the benefits for students:

4. Marketing the Diversity of WIL Experiences

Increased marketing on the diversity and flexibility of WIL experiences would help SMEs understand the various ways they can participate. Many SMEs are unaware of the range of WIL formats and options, so targeted marketing could clarify how they can get involved.

5. Organizational Support Systems

Establishing support systems for SMEs to better understand and navigate WIL processes would enhance their participation. Many SMEs are unfamiliar with the benefits of hosting students or lack the knowledge of available supports. Structured resources and guidance would help SMEs leverage WIL for their organizational growth.

Additional solutions proposed included:

6. Incentives and Awareness for SMEs

SMEs often refuse WIL assistance because they do not understand the benefits. Providing information on incentives for participation, such as the value that students can bring to their businesses, could encourage more SMEs to engage in WIL. Effective marketing and communication from PSIs can showcase the potential advantages.

7. Institutional Engagement and Clear Communication Channels

Institutions need to establish clear communication lines with SMEs to foster understanding and collaboration. Coordination between program areas, marketing, and student services would help streamline communication, making it easier for SMEs to engage with WIL programs.

8. Early WIL Integration in Education

Participants suggested incorporating WIL earlier in education to set expectations for both students and SMEs. Early engagement could familiarize SMEs with the process and prepare students with the foundational skills necessary to contribute effectively to SMEs.

9. Industry Associations as a Bridge

Industry associations could act as a bridge between government, industry, and SMEs to facilitate WIL involvement. Associations can provide valuable connections, resources, and advocacy to support SME engagement in WIL.

10. Organizational Upskilling

Participants recommended upskilling within SMEs to better equip them for hosting students. Organizational development training could enhance SMEs' capacity to integrate students effectively, maximizing the benefits of WIL for both students and host organizations.

These solutions focus on providing financial support, clear guidance, and practical incentives to help SMEs overcome barriers to WIL participation. Coordinated efforts between PSIs, industry associations, and government bodies would ensure SMEs are well-equipped to offer meaningful WIL opportunities, ultimately expanding the WIL ecosystem.

Call to Action #5 - Proposed Solutions

The top three solutions for deeper approaches to decolonization WIL and equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility of WIL experiences included:

1. Redesigning Programs with Universal Design for Learning

Participants suggested designing new WIL programs with principles of Universal Design for Learning to make them more accessible and inclusive. This involves creating multiple pathways to WIL, allowing for flexible, personalized approaches that can accommodate diverse needs.

2. Increasing Intercultural and Decolonization Opportunities

Creating intercultural learning opportunities within WIL would help promote inclusivity and diverse ways of learning. Participants advocated for a systemic approach to support intercultural and decolonized learning environments across all WIL programs, beyond isolated efforts by individual organizations.

3. Funding for Underrepresented Groups and Rural Placements

More funding should be allocated to support students placed in rural or remote locations, as well as to ensure underrepresented groups have equitable access to WIL experiences. This would reduce barriers for students who might otherwise be unable to participate.

Additional approaches included:

4. Knowledge Mobilization and Practical Implementation

Participants called for moving beyond conversations to action on decolonization within academic programs. This includes formalized processes for addressing harassment, discrimination, and accessibility in WIL, as well as developing standard practices for accommodation requests.

5. Education and Support for Both Students and Partners

Providing education and support for students on self-advocacy and rights is crucial, along with training for partners on EDIA principles and labor rights. Workshops could help students articulate their needs without specifically requesting accommodations, promoting a more inclusive environment.

6. Inclusive, Person-Centered Approach

Shifting from a purely learner-centered model to a "person-centered" approach was suggested to recognize students as whole individuals beyond just their academic roles. This could foster a more respectful, inclusive experience and better accommodate individual needs.

7. Greater Student Involvement in Policy Development

Participants recommended increasing student involvement in developing policies, processes, and systems related to WIL. This could ensure that WIL programs are designed with a clear understanding of the barriers students face and incorporate solutions tailored to diverse student populations.

8. Clear Expectations for Community Partners

Setting clear expectations and providing a toolkit to community partners on how to operationalize EDIA principles would help ensure alignment with WIL program goals. This includes ensuring that partners understand the importance of safe, supportive, and inclusive environments for students.

9. Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

It was noted that students need to feel secure in their placements. Providing proper resources and protocols to address safety concerns, as well as ensuring clarity on available supports, would help students feel protected and valued in their WIL experiences.

10. Enhanced Shared Learning Opportunities

Participants encouraged creating opportunities for shared learning, where both community partners and students can learn from each other. This reciprocal learning approach could enhance understanding of diverse perspectives and foster stronger relationships.

These solutions emphasize systemic changes to make WIL more inclusive, culturally responsive, and accessible. By embedding EDIA principles into the structure of WIL programs and involving students in policy development, institutions can build a more equitable and welcoming environment for all participants.

Additional Calls to Action & Proposed Solutions

1. Addressing Rural Accessibility and Intersectionality:

- Participants highlighted the unique challenges faced by rural populations, including fewer opportunities, less diversity, and limited capacity to support students.
- There is a need for support structures that consider different cultural needs, communication styles, and recruitment methods.
- Funding and the high cost of living in some rural areas make it difficult for students and workers to live and work in these locations.
- A shift to remote WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) opportunities was suggested to improve accessibility and overcome physical limitations.

2. Remote and Flexible WIL Options:

- Participants suggested encouraging and supporting remote WIL experiences rather than solely in-person options.
- Developing partnerships with the right organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, to drive change in hiring practices and increase SME (Small and Medium Enterprise) engagement in WIL.
- Empathy mapping and an understanding of students' financial challenges were recommended to better design inclusive and accessible recruitment processes.

3. Future of Work and Relevant Skills Development:

- Emphasized the importance of aligning WIL with the evolving future of work, ensuring that curriculum development reflects current and future industry needs.
- Implementing mandatory program advisory committees to align post-secondary outcomes with industry requirements.
- Encouraging incentives, like tax credits, for employers engaging in WIL to better prepare students for future work.

4. Career Development and Individualized Learning Pathways:

- Suggested providing flexibility in post-secondary education to allow students to define their own career paths.

- Advocated for mentoring and coaching to support skill and competency development, alongside leveraging AI for matchmaking and onboarding support in WIL placements.
- Recognized the value of non-traditional educational sources (e.g., Google, YouTube) for diverse learning needs, making learning accessible for various neurodiversity and learning styles.
- These additional calls to action emphasize creating adaptable, flexible, and accessible pathways for students in the WIL ecosystem, considering diverse needs, and preparing for the future of work through relevant skills and career development opportunities.



CONCLUSION:

Three main themes emerged when reviewing the solutions to the five calls to actions:

Financial Support and Incentives

This theme emphasizes the importance of sustainable funding, tax incentives, and targeted financial support for employers (particularly SMEs), students, and institutions. Proposed solutions include providing clear information on funding access, creating tax credits, and ensuring consistent and dedicated financial resources for both WIL programs and students, especially those from underrepresented groups or rural areas.

Collaboration and Coordination

Many proposed solutions highlight the need for better collaboration across institutions, industry and community partners, and government entities. This includes inter-institutional cooperation, developing centralized databases, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and creating partnerships with industry associations. A coordinated approach helps to streamline communication, reduce overlap, and improve the overall efficiency of WIL programs.

Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Addressing barriers to WIL participation, particularly for marginalized or underrepresented groups, is a central theme. Solutions focus on creating more inclusive, culturally responsive, and accessible WIL experiences through measures like Universal Design for Learning, intercultural learning opportunities, funding for rural or underrepresented students, and ensuring safe and supportive learning environments. There is also an emphasis on involving students in policy development to ensure that programs meet their diverse needs.

Attendees welcomed the opportunity to provide their perspectives and ideas when reviewing the findings of the two Academics reports and suggesting solutions to the calls to action. They also found it very valuable to hear the perspectives of the other groups represented at the event. A number of attendees noted that it's easy to only focus on your own perspective of WIL challenges, so to hear the diverse perspectives at the regional conversation was valuable and allowed a better understanding of the challenges facing the WIL ecosystem.