



# MANITOBA

## CEWIL CANADA REGIONAL CONVERSATION

November 6, 2024

Location: Manitou a bi Bii Daziigae, RRC , Winnipeg, MB

Number of participants:

116

(List in Appendix A)

Attendee demographics:

(i.e. % of each group)



Post-secondary: 57%



Students: 8%



Industry: 32%



Government: 6%



Other: 2%

NOTE: Additional conversations are captured from those that could not attend the Regional event (Appendix B)



## BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE REGION:

Manitoba emphasizes WIL to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical experience. The province's Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy highlights the importance of setting annual targets for WIL opportunities and increasing joint programs between colleges and universities to align education with industry demands.

Manitoba's has nine post-secondary institutions that offer various WIL options as part of their programming:

- University of Manitoba
- Red River College Polytechnic
- Assiniboine Community College
- Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology
- Brandon University
- Canadian Mennonite University
- University College of the North
- University of Winnipeg
- Universite de Saint Boniface

### Main Industries

Manitoba's diverse economy includes key industries such as agriculture, advanced manufacturing, aerospace, pharmaceuticals, heavy-duty vehicles and equipment, mining, and creative industries. These sectors provide a broad spectrum of opportunities for WIL placements, enabling students to gain experience in various fields.

### Government Involvement/Policy around WIL

Several ministries have a direct role in workforce development, work-integrated learning (WIL), and talent pipeline strategies. The **Ministry of Advanced Education and Training** is central to many workforce initiatives, working alongside other ministries to align education with labour market needs. Through a review of the Mandate Letters the following Ministries have an explicit priority of workforce development or WIL:

- **Advanced Education and Training** – Core focus on education, training, and workforce alignment.
- **Business, Trade, Mining and Job Creation** – Job creation, apprenticeships, economic development.
- **Innovation and New Technology** – Retaining Manitoba talent, supporting WIL, and fostering tech workforce.

- **Labour and Immigration** – Skilled worker protections, immigration retention, credential recognition.
- **Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care** – Expanding healthcare training, hiring more professionals.
- **Public Service Delivery** – Procurement policy prioritizing workforce development.
- **Transportation and Infrastructure** – Job creation through infrastructure and supply chain hubs.
- **Natural Resources and Indigenous Futures** – Indigenous workforce participation, economic reconciliation.
- **Education and Early Childhood Learning** – STEM expansion, educator training.
- **Agriculture** – Workforce development in sustainable agriculture.
- **Families, Accessibility, and Gender Equity** – Workforce accessibility for people with disabilities.
- **Housing, Addictions, and Homelessness** – Workforce reintegration for marginalized populations.

**Paid Work Experience Tax Credits:** These programs encourage employers to create work experience opportunities for students. The Co-op Students Hiring Incentive offers a 15% tax credit on salaries paid to co-op students, up to a lifetime maximum of \$5,000 per student. Similarly, the Co-op Graduates Hiring Incentive provides a 15% tax credit on salaries paid to recent graduates in their first two years of employment, with a maximum of \$2,500 per year.

**Manitoba Industry-Academia Partnership (MIAP):** This initiative, running August 2019-December 2022, aimed to enhance collaboration between industry and post-secondary institutions in Manitoba, focusing on economic growth, technology transfer, and work-integrated learning opportunities. MIAP was funded by Prairies Economic Development Canada (PrairiesCan) to support the initiative's goals of enhancing collaboration between industry and post-secondary institutions, promoting economic growth, and creating work-integrated learning opportunities. With a focus on three specific areas – enhance PSI and Industry Collaboration, Indigenous inclusion and work-integrated learning – MIAP provided students with valuable experience and connections to employers in their chosen field of study, while also giving employers access to new talent and innovative ideas.

### **iHUB, WIL, or Co-op Data Available**

In summary, Manitoba's commitment to WIL is evident through its supportive policies, active participation of post-secondary institutions, and collaboration with key industries, all aimed at enhancing student employability and meeting the evolving needs of the labor market.



## TRENDS & CHALLENGES:

### 1. *Do the challenges presented in the report reflect the realities in your region?*

The challenges outlined in the *Academica* report largely align with the realities of WIL in Manitoba. Barriers such as geographic disparities, limited employer engagement, and funding gaps resonate strongly within the province. The highlighted issues, including the ineligibility of international students for subsidies, insufficient inclusion for Indigenous students and students with disabilities, and the limited capacity of small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), are recurring themes echoed by stakeholders in Manitoba.

Additionally, administrative burdens, a decentralized WIL structure, and the limited job pool for certain specialized fields are pressing issues that mirror the lived experiences of students, employers, and post-secondary institutions (PSIs) in Manitoba. Funding concerns ranked number one in the conversations.

### 2. *What are the specific regional nuances to these challenges that need to be considered?*

While the *Academica* report is comprehensive, additional challenges specific to Manitoba include:

- **Cultural Awareness and Inclusion:** Beyond funding, there is a need to address systemic biases and ensure culturally safe environments for Indigenous and diverse students participating in WIL.
- **Retention of Local Talent:** A lack of robust WIL opportunities can lead to students seeking placements outside the province, exacerbating Manitoba's ongoing challenge of retaining young talent.
- **Limited Awareness and Advocacy:** Many students and employers are unaware of the benefits of WIL or the resources available to support participation, leading to underutilization of existing programs.
- **Rural and Remote:** These challenges exacerbate the already existing concerns and highlight the need for funding and wrap around supports for students.

### 3. *What are other regional challenges that aren't captured, but you feel are important to highlight?*

Manitoba presents unique regional nuances that exacerbate the challenges highlighted in the report:

- **Geographic Spread and Accessibility:** The vast disparity between urban centers like Winnipeg and remote northern regions significantly impacts WIL opportunities. Northern communities face additional challenges with infrastructure, transportation, and access to qualified mentors, making it difficult to establish meaningful experiences.
- **Economic Constraints:** Manitoba's small job pool, coupled with the limited presence of corporate head offices and specialized industries (e.g., biotech), creates a competitive environment for students seeking quality WIL

opportunities. This challenge is heightened for students in rural and northern communities.

- **Cultural and Community-Specific Needs:** Indigenous students often require culturally responsive WIL programs. Similarly, rural and northern communities may need customized solutions to address the unique socio-economic and logistical barriers students face.
- **Employer Limitations:** Many Manitoba SMEs and nonprofits struggle with resource constraints and may not have dedicated HR personnel to manage WIL placements effectively. The mismatch of expectations between employers and PSIs is further compounded by a lack of structured mentorship programs and training for supervisors.

#### 4. *What trends exist in your region that may not have been captured in the report?*

Several trends unique to Manitoba provide opportunities and considerations for addressing WIL challenges:

- **Growing Focus on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):** Institutions and employers in Manitoba are increasingly prioritizing EDI, creating opportunities to design WIL programs that better meet the needs of underserved populations.
- **Technological Advancements:** The rise of remote work and digital tools provides potential for virtual WIL placements, especially for rural and northern students who face geographic constraints.
- **Collaboration with Sector Councils:** Manitoba's reliance on sector councils as intermediaries in WIL delivery can be leveraged more effectively with adequate funding and streamlined processes.
- **Increased Collaboration Across Stakeholders:** Emerging partnerships between PSIs, employers, and government entities signal a shift towards more coordinated efforts to address systemic barriers.

#### **Challenges in the Region: Post-secondary Perspectives**

- Decentralized vs. Centralized WIL Models, resulting in inconsistencies in administration, policies, and branding across institutions and provinces.
- Lack of standardized processes for students, employers, and PSIs.
- Complexities in funding applications and reporting.
- Timing issues (e.g., placements coinciding with exams).
- Limited faculty resources for relationship-building with employers.
- Siloed budgets and research domains.
- Challenges with Data Collection: Survey fatigue and inconsistent follow-ups with students and alumni; need for strategic, thoughtful approaches to collecting and sharing data.
- Integration and Transparency: Gaps in information sharing between students, employers, and institutions; lack of coordination in identifying trends and addressing systemic issues.

### **Challenges in the Region: Students' Perspectives**

**International Students:** Ineligibility for funding and wage subsidies; challenges with work permits, driver's license requirements, and lack of confidence in showcasing skills; high costs associated with WIL, including unpaid placements and additional living expenses.

**Indigenous Students & Students with Disabilities:** Insufficient funding and resources to support participation in WIL; limited inclusion and targeted programs addressing unique needs.

#### **All students:**

- Financial burdens such as security checks and travel costs.
- Financial burdens such as unpaid work, tuition costs
- Geographic spread (urban vs. rural/northern communities) limiting opportunities.
- Employer capacity to onboard and support students.
- Fear of finding placements and lack of interest in WIL.
- Struggles with early preparation (e.g., resumes, interviews).
- Misperceptions of WIL as "cheap labor" with little value.
- Limited availability of quality placements.
- Need for better communication about the benefits and importance of WIL.

### **Challenges in the Region: Industry Perspective**

#### **Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SMEs):**

- Lack of time, resources, or HR capacity to participate in WIL.
- Need for guidance on hosting students effectively.
- Mismatched expectations between employers and post-secondary institutions (PSIs).

#### **Nonprofits & Arts Organizations:**

- Limited resources to host and mentor students.
- Difficulty in providing meaningful, longer-term placements.

#### **General Employer Issues:**

- Resistance to unpaid or short-term placements.
- Need for pre-training and structured mentorship plans.
- Confusion around WIL processes, roles, and benefits.

### **Challenges in the Region: Government Perspectives**

- Limited direct involvement in WIL programs.
- Reliance on sector councils to broker partnerships, but these councils face funding restrictions.
- Lack of monitoring and coordination to ensure consistency and quality in WIL programs.

### **Summary of Regional Trends & Conclusions**

#### **Manitoba-Specific Issues:**

- Small job pool with few corporate head offices.
- Lack of local employers in specialized fields (e.g., biotech).
- High proportion of students working to sustain themselves, leaving little time for WIL.
- Disparities between rural and urban opportunities, with rural communities lacking WIL infrastructure.

#### **Northern Challenges:**

- Additional financial barriers (e.g., housing, transportation).
- Lack of qualified staff and appropriate placements.

## **SOLUTIONS & ACTIONS TOWARDS THE CALLS TO ACTION:**

What are clear, actionable solutions for your region that address this call to action?

### **Call #1: Sustainable Predictable Funding**

There is clearly a need for equitable, accessible, and sustainable funding models for WIL, while addressing the unique needs of diverse stakeholders, from students to employers and government.

#### **Long-Term Sustainability:**

- Need for predictable and stable funding models to support WIL placements.
- Advocacy for sustainable funding that considers long-term benefits to industry and society.
- Bridge funding for smoother transitions from post-secondary education to employment.

#### **Inclusivity in Funding:**

- Addressing gaps in funding for international students and their relocation needs.
- Expanding eligibility for Manitoba (MB) tax credits to all employers or transitioning to wage subsidies.
- Ensuring all WIL students are paid for their work.

#### **Streamline Processes:**

- Streamlining funding application processes to make them more user-friendly.

- Increasing MB tax credit amounts or switching to wage subsidies to cover onboarding and other costs.

#### **Innovative Revenue Streams:**

- Exploring external funding sources, including partnerships with employers, associations, and government.
- Developing targeted programs like those in other regions (e.g., Canada-Japan model) for local adaptation.

#### **Northern, Rural and International Students:**

- Funding for student relocation and accommodations in northern or remote areas.
- Incentives for employers in these regions to create WIL opportunities.
- Understanding and addressing barriers that exclude them from funding opportunities.
- Creating tailored solutions to enable participation, including project-based alternatives.

#### **Additional thoughts**

- Collecting robust data to demonstrate the short- and long-term benefits of WIL to industry and the economy.
- Using data to support lobbying efforts for consistent government funding.
- Designing adaptable funding models that support coaching, mentorship, and varied WIL experiences.
- Balancing short-term goals with long-term sustainability.
- Lobbying government to bring back wage subsidies and address administrative inefficiencies.
- Engaging industry partners to align funding allocation with workforce needs and growth.
- Highlighting the importance of partnerships where all stakeholders are invested in the outcomes of WIL.

#### **Call #2: Better Data Collection**

There is a need for **unified, ethical, and actionable data systems** that align institutional, industry, and government priorities. Centralization, thoughtful engagement with students, and standardized reporting are critical for improving data collection and driving WIL success.

#### **Centralized and Simplified Data Systems**

- Need for a unified system to consolidate and streamline data (e.g., Salesforce, Razer's Edge, Orbis).
- Institutions like Red River College (RRC) are making progress but still face issues with integration and data silos.

- Calls for standardized, simplified datasets that enable consistent reporting across institutions.
- Alignment on criteria-based KPIs to ensure data relevance and usability.

### **Data Sharing and Collaboration**

- Sharing data between post-secondary institutions (PSIs), industry, and government, each with unique needs and KPIs.
- Reporting sector-specific and institution-specific data, such as entrepreneurship and skills tracking, to align with diverse audiences.
- Alumni data and existing datasets remain siloed, limiting collaborative efforts and insights.
- Building synergy between stakeholders, including mentors and SMEs, for better talent tracking and outcomes.

### **Data Accessibility and Permissions**

- Questions of who can access the data and how it is managed, emphasizing research ethics and data privacy.
- Infrastructure for holding and sharing data requires permissions and clear protocols.
- Ensuring equity in access to data, preventing restrictions that disadvantage certain groups or stakeholders.

### **Student-Focused Data Collection**

- Overcoming "survey fatigue" by being thoughtful and strategic in collecting input.
- Ensuring follow-ups and data transfer processes are consistent, reducing gaps for new students.
- Providing students with relevant and timely information, such as SME opportunities in Manitoba during their final term.

### **Measuring Outcomes and Impact**

- Gap analysis to align PSI offerings with labour market demands, improving WIL accessibility.
- Data-driven communication to identify and address mismatches in skills, opportunities, and placements.
- Balancing qualitative insights with quantitative metrics to capture a comprehensive view of WIL outcomes.
- Reporting transferable skills and measuring their long-term impact on career trajectories.

### **Institutional and Sector Reporting**

- Standardizing reporting practices, including Program Advisory Committee (PAC) reporting, across institutions.

- Developing sector-specific reporting metrics, such as ROI for SMEs involved in WIL projects.
- Addressing gaps in tracking and reporting data for post-graduate outcomes and resource use.

### **Resource and Capacity Constraints**

- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) often lack resources to participate in advisory committees or track outcomes effectively.
- Faculty and institutional research budgets are siloed, limiting relationship-building and data-sharing efforts.

### **Calls #3: Better Collaboration**

There is a critical need for **structured, student-centered, and tech-enabled collaboration**, driven by leadership, clear communication, and resource-sharing across PSIs, industry, and government.

### **Coordination Across Stakeholders**

- Increased collaboration between post-secondary institutions (PSIs) and industry to streamline WIL efforts and avoid redundancy.
- Promoting cross-institutional and cross-industry partnerships, including sharing networks and resources.
- Enhanced coordination in Northern Manitoba to improve access and opportunities, including overcoming barriers such as K-12 education credits and the digital divide.
- Importance of community liaisons and targeted supports for northern and underserved areas.

### **Centralized and Accessible Platforms**

- Call for a centralized hub or platform for job postings, data sharing, and employer-student connections.
- Consolidating resources and creating a provincial or prairie-level WIL association to coordinate efforts, share best practices, and manage relationships.
- Need for an ecosystem map of WIL programs, stakeholders, and opportunities to reduce duplication and improve transparency.

### **Leadership and Strategic Collaboration**

- Government-led initiatives to force collaboration, with examples from BC, Calgary, and New Brunswick as potential models.
- Strategic planning committees and formal professional associations to guide long-term collaboration efforts.
- Quarterly meetings between WIL coordinators, industry liaisons, and other stakeholders to foster stronger connections and regular communication.

- Targeted networking events to ensure meaningful engagement between PSIs, industry, and students.

### **Continuity and Succession Planning**

- Challenges arising from turnover in WIL coordinators, emphasizing the need for institutional rather than individual-based relationships.
- Succession planning to maintain connections with industry and provide consistent support for students.
- Train-the-trainer models and ongoing professional development for educators to ensure continuity in programs.

### **Digital Equity and Accessibility**

- Addressing connectivity and digital literacy gaps in northern and remote communities to provide equal opportunities.
- Ensuring access to equipment and technology as part of broader WIL support systems.

### **Student-Centered Collaboration**

- Focusing on keeping students in Manitoba post-graduation through better collaboration and targeted career opportunities.
- Providing steady flows of industry opportunities, including job fairs, internships, and employer information sessions.
- Addressing challenges where students are not directed to the right resources, leading to missed opportunities.
- Better use of shared resources to help students find placements and opportunities relevant to their field.

### **Industry Engagement and Value Demonstration**

- Industry feels PSIs hold the power in collaborations; there is a need for mutual engagement and shared ownership.
- Demonstrating the value of industry participation in events like career fairs and mentorship programs.
- Training programs for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to better understand and participate in WIL.

### **Clear Definitions and Shared Terminology**

- Need to push awareness of WIL terminology and establish a shared understanding among all stakeholders.
- Consistent use of language to align expectations and foster smoother collaboration.

### **Calls #4: Engage SME Participation**

How do we provide **financial support, capacity building, and relationship-driven collaboration** to empower SMEs to engage meaningfully in WIL while addressing unique regional and community challenges.

#### **Access to Predictable and Timely Funding**

- SMEs struggle with the financial burden of hosting students and require predictable, accessible, and timely funding for WIL opportunities.
- Funding should cover various expenses, including student wages, transportation, training, and mentorship support.
- Advocacy for government or academic subsidies to alleviate the financial pressure on SMEs.
- Calls for grants specifically for mentorship and capacity-building within SMEs.

#### **Strengthening SME Partnerships with PSIs**

- Information and collaboration gaps exist between PSIs, sector councils, and SMEs, particularly in understanding WIL opportunities.
- PSIs need to better market WIL programming and provide targeted outreach to SMEs, especially in smaller and remote communities.
- Post-secondary institutions should focus on equipping students with soft skills, transferable skills, and realistic expectations to meet SME needs.
- Improved alignment of WIL periods, programs, and student-employer expectations.

#### **Challenges for SMEs in Rural and Remote Communities**

- SMEs in northern and remote areas face challenges such as student isolation, lack of accommodations, transportation, and retention after graduation.
- Access to education and training for local talent is limited, requiring tailored solutions for these regions.
- Building stronger connections with First Nations and Indigenous communities, addressing their concerns transparently, and incorporating cultural awareness into student education.
- Learning from older SME models where employees integrated into and respected local communities.

#### **Support for SME Capacity Building**

- SMEs need capacity-building support to effectively mentor and manage students, including training programs and a vetting process to ensure students are a good fit for the role and community.
- Longer WIL placements are seen as more valuable for SMEs to justify their investment in mentoring and onboarding.

- Retirees could assist SMEs in training WIL students, addressing both mentorship gaps and capacity challenges

### **Addressing Retention and Workforce Gaps**

- SMEs are concerned about students leaving their communities after graduation, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- Suggested initiatives include promoting smaller communities to newcomers, conducting exit interviews to understand reasons for leaving, and emphasizing long-term opportunities in Manitoba.
- There is a need to prepare SMEs for working with international students, newcomers, and Canadians relocating to Manitoba.
- Focus on ensuring clear communication, transparency, and community engagement to support successful integration.

### **Alignment of WIL Opportunities with SME Needs**

- Misalignment between WIL timelines and SME business cycles creates challenges in hosting students.
- Calls for greater understanding of business seasons and flexibility in program structures.
- PSIs need to adapt their recruitment, programming, and messaging to better meet the needs of SMEs in diverse contexts, including smaller and remote communities.

### **Building Trust and Relationships**

- Long-term relationship building with SMEs, First Nations, and community organizations is critical for sustainable partnerships.
- Encouraging consistent messaging and communication between PSIs and SMEs to promote WIL opportunities effectively.
- Documenting and sharing success stories and testimonials to build trust and encourage more SMEs to participate in WIL programs.

### **Call #5: Deeper approaches to decolonization and EDIA**

The conversation emphasized the importance of separating decolonization from EDIA, while addressing systemic barriers, funding challenges, and the need for community-centered and culturally informed approaches to WIL.

### **Distinction Between Decolonization and EDIA**

- There is a strong call to treat **decolonization** as distinct from EDIA, with unique strategies and goals for each.
- Decolonization focuses on truth in academia, industry, and community, requiring land-based learning and Indigenous protocols.

- EDIA strategies address systemic barriers, cultural integration, and equity for all marginalized groups.

### **Indigenous-Centered Learning and Engagement**

- Expand WIL to include land-based learning activities (hunting, trapping, storytelling) as career development.
- Recognize and validate skills rooted in traditional Indigenous knowledge.
- Indigenous students benefit from visibility and mentorship by Indigenous professionals.
- Institutions must invite elders and knowledge keepers into classrooms and integrate Indigenous learning models into curricula.
- Institutions and industry must adopt trauma-informed approaches and respect Indigenous practices (e.g., fasting periods, storytelling-based assessments).

### **Equity in Access and Barriers to Engagement**

- Northern communities face challenges including limited connectivity, geographical isolation, and lack of access to resources.
- Initiatives like Starlink and culturally appropriate training can help level the playing field.
- Shift from traditional assessments (e.g., essays) to more inclusive methods like conversations or alternate evaluations.
- Support educators in adapting to student needs and empowering them with tools to create culturally responsive classrooms.

### **Mentorship, Community Building, and Empowerment**

- Support systems for workplace mentorship, including career exploration programs, transition pathways, and role models for students.
- Industries need training to become good mentors and provide trauma-informed, culturally appropriate support.
- Engage with local communities to build trust, capacity, and participation in WIL initiatives.
- Recognize the importance of lived experience advocates and transparent consultations.

### **Empowering Students and Communities**

- Help students understand their own needs and accommodations, teaching them to advocate for themselves.
- Pay students for engagement in WIL and ensure they have access to adequate funding and student aid during placements.
- Encourage confidence-building and capacity-building within Indigenous and underrepresented communities through leadership and mentorship.

### **Integration of Two-Eyed Seeing and Indigenous Knowledge**

- Incorporate two-eyed seeing (Indigenous and Western perspectives) into course design, learning outcomes, and assessments.
- Include Indigenous curriculum policies at institutional and national levels to standardize culturally inclusive practices.

### **Funding and Resource Gaps**

- Increase funding for non-tech positions and ensure students are financially supported in WIL placements.
- Simplify access to funding for employers and students, with predictable and consistent timelines.
- Train industry leaders to engage effectively with WIL initiatives and bridge knowledge gaps in accessing funding and resources.

### **Technology as an Equalizer**

- Embrace technology to improve accessibility and reduce barriers for students, particularly in remote or international contexts.
- Use technology to complement traditional methods and expand inclusivity in course design and delivery.

### **Call #6: DISRUPTOR (Additional Calls to Action):**

#### **Addressing Accessibility in WIL**

- Industries require education on WIL processes and better coordination with post-secondary institutions.
- Solutions like co-op placements and post-graduate programs are being explored to improve accessibility.
- Lack of consistent funding from government and industry perpetuates barriers to WIL participation.
- Institutions need to lobby for systemic change and partner with employers to champion WIL initiatives.
- There is a gap in transitioning students from WIL placements to continued employment.

#### **Challenges in Rural and Northern Communities**

- Northern and rural areas face difficulties attracting and retaining talent due to misconceptions, biases, and logistical challenges like transportation and accommodation.
- Better strategies are needed to "sell" the benefits of living and working in the North, such as higher salaries and lower costs of living.
- These areas lack resources, reliable connectivity, and mentorship on job sites, making it harder for students to thrive in WIL opportunities.

- Suggestions include providing more local education, apprenticeships, and micro-credentials tailored to rural and northern needs.
- Employers and institutions should explore incentives such as higher salaries, subsidized living costs, and longer WIL placements to attract students and instructors to rural areas.

### **Challenges Faced by International and Indigenous Students**

- International students experience unique challenges, including affordability, food insecurity, and limited support from institutions.
- Indigenous students risk losing band funding if they participate in WIL, and assistance programs may inadvertently discourage work due to fear of losing benefits.
- Employers often lack understanding of Indigenous and international student needs, leading to hesitancy in hiring and mentorship.
- A federal position focused on Indigenous students' educational needs in WIL was proposed to address systemic gaps.

### **Information and Coordination Gaps**

- Information gaps hinder WIL participation, potentially caused by resource shortages or gatekeeping.
- Students and employers often lack guidance in linking skills to job market opportunities or resume development.
- Credential recognition varies across regions, creating challenges for rural and northern students transitioning into industry roles. Initiatives like micro-credentials could bridge these gaps and better align training with industry needs.
- Employers and institutions should explore incentives such as higher salaries, subsidized living costs, and longer WIL placements to attract students and instructors to rural areas.
- Improved communication, infrastructure, and transportation solutions are essential for sustaining workforce development in rural and northern areas.

### **Pilot Programs and Experimental Approaches**

- Pilot projects with a small group of businesses or communities can provide data to scale up successful strategies.
- A unified provincial strategy could tie together rural and urban programs, streamline recruitment portals, and prioritize workforce development based on regional needs.

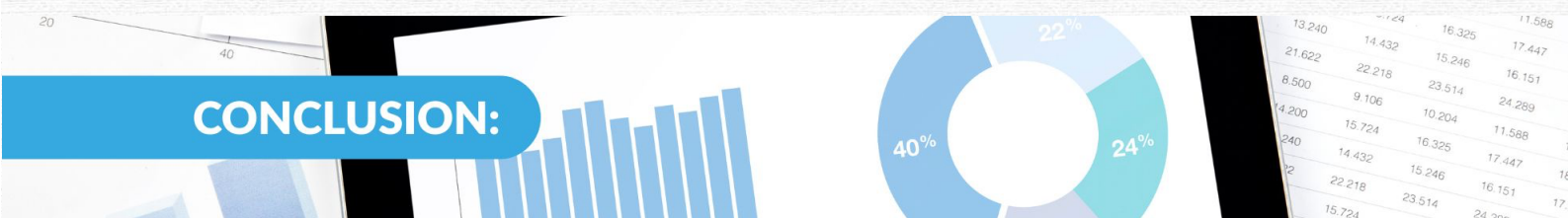
### **Institutional Role in Workforce Development**

- Post-secondary institutions must play an active role in mentoring students, building their skills, and connecting them to industry opportunities.

- Institutions should prioritize placements in students' home regions when possible and ensure accommodations meet industry standards without compromising validation or accreditation.

### **Summary of Top Solutions Proposed**

1. **Secure Sustainable Funding:** Advocate for predictable, inclusive funding models, including wage subsidies and expanded tax credits, to support all WIL stakeholders, especially SMEs and underserved regions.
2. **Centralize Systems and Partnerships:** Build unified platforms for job postings, data sharing, and collaboration among PSIs, industry, and government to streamline efforts and align with workforce demands.
3. **Empower SMEs:** Provide training, mentorship programs, and financial incentives to enable SMEs to host students, align placements with business cycles, and retain local talent.
4. **Expand Access and Inclusion:** Develop targeted programs to support rural, northern, and underrepresented students with relocation funding, culturally informed practices, and equitable access to opportunities.
5. **Leverage Regional Strengths:** Pilot tailored WIL initiatives in rural and northern areas to address local workforce gaps and scale successful strategies across the province.



The Manitoba regional conversation revealed a pressing need for systemic, inclusive, and collaborative approaches to enhance the WIL ecosystem in Manitoba. Sustainable and predictable funding models must address gaps for underrepresented groups, empower SMEs, and enable equitable access across rural, northern, and urban regions. Centralized data systems, streamlined collaboration, and targeted partnerships between PSIs, industry, and government are critical to aligning WIL initiatives with workforce demands.

To build a thriving and inclusive WIL environment, stakeholders must prioritize capacity building, long-term relationship development, and culturally responsive practices. By addressing funding inequities, enhancing accessibility, and leveraging regional strengths, Manitoba can position itself as a leader in preparing students for meaningful careers while fostering economic growth and community development.

## Appendix A: Attending Organizations and Institutions:

---

- Advanced Education and Training, Province of Manitoba
- Apprenticeship Manitoba
- Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba
- Assiniboine College
- BAM
- Birchwood
- Bison Transport Inc.
- Brandon University
- Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME)
- Canadian Mennonite University
- Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development., Inc
- CEWIL Canada
- City of Morden
- CME
- CMU
- Economic Development Winnipeg
- Government of Manitoba
- High School
- Hudbay Minerals Inc
- IDFusion Software
- Indigenous Chamber of Commerce
- Indigenous Health - Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
- Manitoba Aviation Council
- Manitoba Building Trades Council
- Manitoba Construction Sector Council
- Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology
- Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.
- Manitoba Music
- Manitoba Trucking Association
- MPIA
- Neeginan College of Applied Technology/CAHRD
- New Media Manitoba
- North Forge
- Northern Manitoba Sector Council
- On Screen Manitoba
- Parkwest Projects Ltd.
- Price Faculty of Engineering, University of Manitoba
- Price Industries
- Province of Manitoba Economic Development, Investment, Trade and Natural Resources
- Red River College Polytechnic
- Red River College Polytechnic Students' Association
- Steinbach Economic Development Corporation
- Supply Chain Manitoba
- Tech Manitoba
- The Business Council of Manitoba

- Thompson Regional Airport/Area 55
  - Tripwire Media Group
  - University College of the North
  - University of Manitoba
  - University of Manitoba, Faculty of Arts
  - University of Winnipeg
  - Vehicle Technology Centre
  - YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg
- 

## Appendix B: Additional Consultation

---

This appendix summarizes the key insights and actionable solutions from discussions that took place following the Regional event. These conversations involved representatives from sector councils, Indigenous non-profit organizations, political advocacy groups, business associations, and regional economic development organizations that could not attend. This appendix summarizes key insights and actionable solutions.

### 1. Discussion A: Key Insights and Actionable Solutions

#### Key Challenges & Needs:

- Indigenous communities want **PSI and WIL trainers to visit the communities** instead of requiring students to relocate.
- There is a critical need for **wrap-around supports** for students participating in WIL away from their home communities.
- Indigenous students **need job guarantees after WIL experiences** to ensure long-term career development.
- **Recruitment should happen in-community** so students understand employment and career options.
- **Apprenticeship challenges:** Many communities lack enough mentors for traditional 1-on-1 apprenticeships. **A 2-1 mentorship model is being proposed** to address this.
- **Sector-specific needs:** Northern communities require more trained personnel for fire-fighting, search and rescue, and First Nations safety officer roles.

#### Actionable Solutions:

- ✓ Develop **regional training hubs in Indigenous communities** to reduce the need for relocation.
- ✓ Support a **1-1 mentorship model** in apprenticeship programs for Indigenous students.
- ✓ Provide **targeted WIL funding for students from remote communities**, including travel, housing, and transition supports.
- ✓ **Expand training for emergency response professions** in northern and Indigenous communities.

---

## 2. Discussion B: Key Insights and Actionable Solutions

### Key Challenges & Needs:

- Trucking industry sees WIL as **critical** but notes a **disconnect between PSI-driven WIL models and industry needs**.
- **Lack of awareness:** Many students don't consider trucking as a viable career due to **limited exposure** to the industry in PSI programs.
- **Industry wants more direct engagement with students**, beyond PSI-led messaging.
- **Driver shortages** remain a major workforce issue, but **not all trucking companies participate in WIL**, leading to inconsistency in training quality.
- **Financial barriers:** Training costs are high, and companies struggle to pay both a mentor and trainee on the same run.
- **Gap in soft skills and workplace readiness** among new entrants, including communication and customer service skills.

### Actionable Solutions:

- ✓ **Create structured mentorship programs** for trucking companies, with financial support to offset training costs.
- ✓ Establish a **quality WIL framework** with national standards for training, mentorship, and safety in trucking.
- ✓ Increase **direct industry engagement with students** through career fairs, PSI partnerships, and targeted awareness campaigns.
- ✓ **Support onboarding & upskilling** for new drivers, including soft skills training.
- ✓ Build a **network of WIL coordinators** within PSIs and ensure industry has clear points of contact.

---

## 3. Discussion C: Key Insights and Actionable Solutions

### Key Challenges & Needs:

- BioTalent Canada has developed **53 national competency standards** but needs support integrating them into **post-secondary learning outcomes**.
- **Disconnect between PSI & industry:** Academics often prioritize broad education while industry requires **specific technical skills** (e.g., hands-on experience with industry technology).
- **PSI conversations tend to be top-down**, while industry prefers open, two-way dialogue to shape curricula.
- Manitoba has **growing demand for agriculture and veterinary professionals**, but PSI pathways are not aligning with workforce needs.

#### Actionable Solutions:

- ✔ Align **industry competency frameworks** with PSI curricula to ensure graduates are **job-ready**.
- ✔ Strengthen **PSI-industry collaboration** through roundtables and strategic dialogue.
- ✔ Expand **agriculture and veterinary WIL opportunities** in Manitoba.
- ✔ Develop **open discussions between industry & PSI** to ensure education programs remain adaptable.

---

#### 4. Discussion D: Key Insights and Actionable Solutions

##### Key Challenges & Needs:

- The **Indigenous Education Awards (IEA) program** has grown significantly and is now **the largest Indigenous workforce initiative in Manitoba**.
- Their WIL approach differs from traditional models—a **non-credit, employer-led model focusing on career readiness** rather than academic integration.
- Key barriers include **sustainable funding, data collection for long-term impact tracking, and SME engagement**.

##### Actionable Solutions:

- ✔ Secure **long-term funding** for Indigenous-focused WIL programs, ensuring sustainability beyond government cycles.
- ✔ Improve **data collection & impact tracking** to demonstrate the value of WIL for Indigenous youth.
- ✔ Foster **greater industry-PSI collaboration** to create **culturally safe workplaces** for Indigenous students.
- ✔ Expand **non-credit WIL models** to provide meaningful career opportunities.

---

#### 5. Discussion E: Key Insights and Actionable Solutions

##### Key Challenges & Needs:

- Rural communities face **workforce shortages** in key sectors, including healthcare, trades, and education.
- Indigenous **partnerships with PSI & councils** must expand to create **regional workforce development** programs.
- **Micro-credentials** could bridge **skills gaps** in agriculture, advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and renewable energy.
- Digital divide remains a **major challenge**, limiting access to online training and remote work opportunities.
- **Localized data collection** is needed to **track rural WIL success stories and challenges**.

**Actionable Solutions:**

- ✓ Invest in **micro-credential programs** tied to high-demand industries.
- ✓ Strengthen **regional partnerships between PSI, industry, and Indigenous councils** for workforce development.
- ✓ Support **broadband expansion & digital literacy initiatives** in rural areas.
- ✓ Develop **regional data collection systems** to inform WIL strategy & track economic

**Final Summary: Correlated & Expanded Solutions**

WIL Priority	Main Discussion Solutions	Expanded Solutions from Additional Conversations
<b>Indigenous-Led WIL</b>	Community-based training, wrap-around supports, mentorship models	Emergency response training, federal oversight, policy advocacy for band funding
<b>SME Support &amp; Industry Alignment</b>	Mentorship grants, PSI-industry collaboration, competency frameworks	Trucking-specific WIL structure, biotech competency models, expanded funding for SME training
<b>Rural &amp; Northern Development</b>	Incentives for rural placements, broadband expansion	Micro-credentials, rural instructor retention, localized career marketing
<b>Data &amp; Coordination</b>	Centralized WIL data system, standardized KPIs	Digitizing Indigenous WIL data, PSI-industry roundtables
<b>EDIA &amp; Decolonization</b>	Employer training, cultural awareness, Indigenous role models	Land-based learning as WIL, decolonizing workplace integration, cultural safety certification for employers

**Conclusion: What This Means for Manitoba**

- Many themes from the main discussion are now reinforced with more industry-specific, Indigenous, and regional perspectives.
- New solutions provide more targeted, policy-relevant strategies, particularly for workforce alignment, SME participation, and Indigenous inclusion.
- Expanding WIL beyond traditional placements into sector-specific, culturally aware, and regionally tailored programs is key to long-term success.