



ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

CEWIL CANADA REGIONAL CONVERSATION

October 28, 2024

Location: Emera Innovation Exchange, Signal Hill Campus Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Number of participants:

(attendee list in Appendix I)

56

Attendee demographics:

(i.e. % of each group)



Post-secondary: 29



Students: 4



Industry: 8



Government: 7



Other: 6



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE REGION:

Prominence of WIL in the region

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) has become an essential component of education and workforce development in Newfoundland and Labrador, fostering stronger connections between post-secondary institutions and employers. Given the province's unique economic landscape—dominated by industries such as natural resources, marine technology, and tourism—WIL initiatives provide students with hands-on experience that aligns with regional workforce needs. Institutions like Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic have robust co-op and internship programs, preparing graduates for careers in both local and global markets.

With growing emphasis on experiential learning, organizations such as *CEWIL Canada* and the provincial government actively support WIL opportunities through funding, partnerships, and employer engagement. This commitment ensures that students gain practical skills while addressing labor market demands. The province's remote and rural geography further amplifies the need for innovative WIL models, including virtual placements and community-based projects, making Newfoundland a leader in adaptive work-integrated learning strategies.

Post-secondary WIL landscape

Newfoundland and Labrador's post-secondary institutions, including Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic, offer strong work-integrated learning (WIL) programs that connect students with industry partners. Co-op placements, internships, and applied research projects help students gain hands-on experience in key sectors such as marine technology, natural resources, and healthcare. Supported by *CEWIL Canada* and provincial initiatives, WIL programs enhance graduate employability while addressing regional workforce needs. Given Newfoundland's geographic challenges, institutions also embrace virtual and community-based WIL models, ensuring accessibility and innovation in experiential learning. This dynamic WIL landscape strengthens both student success and economic development.

Main industries

Newfoundland and Labrador's economy is driven by key industries such as natural resources (oil, gas, and mining), fisheries and aquaculture, marine technology, and tourism. Emerging sectors like renewable energy and technology are also growing. These industries shape the province's workforce, driving employment, economic development, and work-integrated learning opportunities.

Government involvement/policy around WIL (definitions, tax credits, policies, funding)

Newfoundland and Labrador offers special co-op funding policies to enhance work-integrated learning (WIL) and support student employment. The **Job Creation Partnerships (JCP)** program funds experiential learning opportunities, particularly in non-profit and community-based organizations. Additionally, the **(GTEP)** helps recent graduates gain industry experience. Federal Programs like the **Student Work Placement Program (SWPP)** provide wage subsidies and tuition vouchers, making co-op placements more accessible. Post-secondary institutions

collaborate with *CEWIL Canada* helping students gain practical skills as they prepare to transition to the workforce.

Data available

Data on work-integrated learning (WIL) and co-operative (co-op) education in Newfoundland and Labrador is available from several sources:

- [IHUB Dashboard](#): Provides the data from the federally funded IHUB project by province and type of work-integrated learning.
- [Statistics Canada](#): Their 2020 report indicates that 58.5% of postsecondary graduates from Newfoundland and Labrador participated in WIL during their studies.
[Statistics Canada](#)
- [Open Government Portal](#): Provides datasets detailing WIL participation by province, level of study, field of study, and gender, offering insights into Newfoundland and Labrador's WIL landscape.
[Open Government](#)
- [College of the North Atlantic \(CNA\)](#): Offers co-operative education programs that alternate academic semesters with paid, program-relevant work experience, contributing to the province's WIL data.
[College of the North Atlantic](#)
- [Memorial University](#): Provides various WIL models, including co-op programs, internships, and field placements, enhancing students' practical experience.
[Memorial University of Newfoundland](#)



TRENDS & CHALLENGES:

Do the challenges presented in the report reflect the realities in your region?

The challenges highlighted in the Newfoundland Regional Conversation accurately reflect the realities of the region. These issues are amplified by the province's unique geographic, demographic, and economic circumstances. The following summary explores the challenges in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and highlights the region's distinct aspects.

Financial Barriers

- One of the most pressing challenges is the financial burden on students. Work terms come with significant costs, such as travel, rent, and professional attire, which can strain students' finances. International students face amplified barriers due to limited funding eligibility; federal funding is often restricted to permanent residents and refugees. These financial constraints disproportionately affect rural and remote communities, where the geographic isolation adds further costs and limits access to opportunities.
- Furthermore, paid vs. unpaid opportunities create inequities. Many students pay for work terms as part of their academic requirements but may not receive adequate compensation, exacerbating financial stress. This issue is more acute for students outside co-op programs, who struggle to access meaningful WIL opportunities without formal supports.

Regional Disparities and Limited Opportunities

- Newfoundland's regional disparity poses significant challenges. Most WIL opportunities are concentrated in St. John's and the metro area, leaving rural areas underserved. Transportation barriers make it harder for students to access placements outside metro hubs, and questions remain about who is facilitating opportunities in less populated areas.
- The small employer pool in rural areas limits networking and natural connections for students, particularly international students who may lack local contacts. Reverse recruiting, where students' interests do not align with available opportunities, is another hurdle, further reducing meaningful placements.

Institutional and Structural Issues

- Post-secondary institutions (PSIs) face resource challenges in supporting students' placements. There is no standard model to calculate faculty workload for placement support, leaving career offices and faculty under-resourced. Additionally, traditional co-op models dominate, and emerging, diverse forms of WIL are underutilized.
- Employers, too, are often short-staffed and lack the resources to provide adequate supervision or meaningful work experiences. Many struggle to meet funding guidelines, creating further mismatches between student needs and employer capabilities.

Gaps in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

- There are significant gaps in EDI training for students, employers, and institutions. International students, in particular, face challenges in accessing work terms, navigating cultural differences, and finding equitable support. A lack of funding and structural support for international students further widens these gaps.
- Employers often overlook the soft skills critical to students' success, such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability. There is a need for greater emphasis on career development within curricula, equipping students with autonomy and confidence to pursue and negotiate opportunities.

Employer Engagement and Systemic Issues

- Employer participation is limited by misconceptions about students' abilities and structural constraints. Employers often focus on technical skills, undervaluing the importance of soft skills that students bring to the workplace. International students face additional hurdles, such as managing their 20-hour work permits, which employers could leverage more efficiently.
- Volunteer opportunities are also scarce in specific fields, forcing students to wait for formal co-op programs to start. This delay hinders their ability to gain experience and make early career connections.

Proposed Solutions:

1. **Financial Support for Students**
 - Introduce more paid WIL opportunities, especially in rural areas.
 - Expand funding eligibility for international students to ensure equitable access.
2. **Expand Regional Opportunities**
 - Facilitate better transportation options to reduce geographic barriers.

- Develop partnerships to create opportunities outside metro areas, ensuring regional integration.
- 3. **Diversify WIL Models**
 - Encourage non-traditional WIL programs and flexible formats, such as externships and virtual placements, to meet the diverse needs of students and industries.
- 4. **Strengthen Institutional and Employer Collaboration**
 - Incorporate career development and industry perspectives into curricula.
 - Engage employers in classrooms and workshops to build relationships with students early.
- 5. **Address EDI Gaps**
 - Implement mandatory EDI training for employers and PSIs to support international students and underrepresented groups.
 - Develop mentorship programs to foster inclusion and help students navigate workplace challenges.

What are the specific regional nuances to these challenges that need to be considered?

Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) faces unique regional challenges that significantly impact its ability to address workforce integration and education issues effectively. These nuances are deeply rooted in the province's geography, economic structure, and demographics, necessitating tailored approaches to overcome barriers and leverage opportunities.

1. Geographic Challenges

NL's vast and rugged geography is a significant obstacle. The lack of public transportation within and between communities makes it difficult for students and workers to access educational and employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, the high cost of air travel within the province exacerbates isolation, limiting mobility and access to resources. Housing availability is another critical issue, with shortages in both rural and urban areas, creating barriers for individuals seeking to relocate for education or work.

2. Economic and Industry Limitations

The provincial economy lacks diversity, relying heavily on a limited range of industries. This economic structure restricts the variety of work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities available to students. For example, apprenticeships, particularly in skilled trades, are challenging to secure due to the limited presence of related industries. This issue is further compounded by a declining population, which reduces the pool of both workers and employers.

3. Social and Demographic Considerations

NL's declining population presents a long-term challenge to sustaining a vibrant economy and workforce. Despite the relative ease of obtaining permanent residency in the province, retention of newcomers remains a concern. Xenophobia, although not universally present, can create a less welcoming environment for immigrants, further complicating retention efforts. Establishing touchpoints to integrate and support newcomers is essential for fostering inclusion and encouraging long-term settlement.

4. Educational and Programmatic Constraints

Students in NL often juggle full-time studies with part-time work, typically limited to 20 hours per week. This balance can restrict their ability to participate fully in experiential learning opportunities. Certain programs, such as those in the healthcare sector, face inherent challenges in incorporating flexibility to accommodate WIL due to the rigorous and structured nature of training. Additionally, while global WIL opportunities are highly regarded, ensuring the quality of these experiences and monitoring their outcomes pose significant challenges.

Key Considerations for Policy and Program Development

To address these challenges, a multifaceted approach is required:

- 1. Transportation Solutions:** Enhancing transportation infrastructure, including subsidized travel options, could improve access to education and employment in rural and remote areas.
- 2. Housing Initiatives:** Addressing housing shortages through targeted policies in both rural and metro areas is critical.
- 3. Economic Diversification:** Encouraging investment in diverse industries would expand the scope of employment and WIL opportunities, particularly in high-demand sectors like technology and renewable energy.
- 4. Retention Strategies:** Establishing robust support systems and cultural touchpoints can improve newcomer integration and retention, countering the effects of population decline.
- 5. Program Flexibility:** Adapting educational programs to accommodate WIL opportunities, even in rigid fields like healthcare, can enhance practical learning experiences.
- 6. Quality Assurance in Global WIL:** Developing monitoring frameworks for international WIL experiences ensures they meet educational and professional standards.

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

- Healthcare access remains a persistent concern, particularly in rural areas, where services are often limited or unavailable.
- Emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), present both opportunities and challenges. Policies around AI training and workforce integration are still underdeveloped, leaving a gap in ensuring that local talent is equipped to meet the demands of this rapidly evolving sector.
- Another significant challenge is the gap between post-secondary institutions (PSIs) and the barriers international students face in accessing work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities. Issues such as work permits and visa restrictions create significant obstacles, limiting international students' ability to gain meaningful Canadian work experience.

What trends exist in your region that may not have been captured in the report?

- 1.** Imposter syndrome is a notable psychological trend impacting students and professionals in the region. This challenge often undermines confidence, particularly

for those entering new roles or industries, and can affect performance and career progression.

2. Language barriers for international students during placements are another significant trend. Communication challenges can negatively affect evaluations and professional growth, particularly in placements where language fluency is critical.
3. Placement availability in NL is closely tied to contracts secured by institutions or organizations, making it a fragile system that can limit opportunities for students.
4. The province's geography, characterized by a sparse population across vast areas, further complicates accessibility to placements and resources.
5. While there is a high emphasis on immigration to counter the declining and aging population, the lack of sufficient supports and resources for newcomers diminishes the effectiveness of these efforts.

SOLUTIONS & ACTIONS TOWARDS THE CALLS TO ACTION:

Proposed Solutions Calls to Action #1

Sustainable and Predictable Funding for Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

Ensuring sustainable and predictable funding for WIL in Newfoundland and Labrador requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving industry, government, post-secondary institutions, students, and other organizations. The key themes identified in the discussions emphasize long-term commitments, diversified funding sources, and improved processes.

1. Government and Institutional Support

- There is a strong call for increased government funding, with stakeholders advocating for multi-year agreements to improve financial stability and better alignment with academic timelines.
- Government accountability for WIL is unclear, and funding mechanisms need to be more transparent and accessible.
- Federal funding for international students is limited, even though they contribute significantly to the workforce.

2. Diversification of Funding Sources

- Funding should not rely solely on federal sources; provincial, municipal, and private sector contributions should be explored.
- Alumni sponsorships, hybrid funding models, and corporate partnerships should be encouraged to provide additional financial support.
- Municipal investment in WIL would help local businesses and communities benefit from student engagement.

3. Reducing Barriers for Students and Employers

- The cost of unpaid WIL experiences (such as travel, visas, relocation) is a significant barrier for students, particularly international students.
- Strategic collaborations (e.g., Indigenous partnerships, social enterprises) can expand WIL opportunities and ensure broader access to funding.
- There is misalignment between academic and fiscal calendars, making it difficult to plan funding allocations effectively.

Proposed Solutions and Actions

1. Advocating for Long-Term Government Commitments

- Stakeholders must push for multi-year, stable funding that aligns with academic planning cycles rather than government fiscal years.
- Policies supporting paid work experiences should be strengthened to ensure all students benefit from WIL.

2. Expanding and Diversifying Funding

- Encourage corporate sponsorships and private industry contributions to fund WIL placements.
- Develop hybrid funding models that allow for a mix of government, employer, and alumni funding.
- Advocate for federal financial support for international students, particularly through SWPP (Student Work Placement Program).

3. Enhancing Funding Access and Transparency

- Redesign funding application processes to reduce administrative burdens on employers and post-secondary institutions.
- Improve communication between funders and recipients to ensure transparency in how funds are allocated and used.
- Standardized reporting mechanisms will help track the effectiveness of WIL funding.

4. Strengthening Employer and Institutional Partnerships

- Facilitate industry advisory meetings to discuss funding needs and policy improvements.
- Foster regional and national collaborations to create consistent WIL funding frameworks.
- Increase non-traditional WIL placements (e.g., social enterprises, small businesses) by making funding more flexible.

Proposed Solutions Calls to Action #2

Improved Data Collection and Reporting for Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

Effective data collection and reporting are essential to strengthening Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in Newfoundland and Labrador. Stakeholders—including government, industry, post-secondary institutions, students, and other organizations—highlight the need for a more consistent, transparent, and actionable approach to gathering and utilizing WIL-related data.

Key Challenges and Needs

- **Inconsistent Data Collection:** There are gaps in provincial data, with survey inconsistencies and a lack of standardization across programs. Government and post-secondary institutions must collaborate to define what data should be collected, ensuring it tracks WIL trends, outcomes, and skill development.
- **Unified and Accessible Data Systems:** Stakeholders call for a unified regional database (e.g., HSPnet, Orbis) to streamline data access and improve reporting. Additionally, data-sharing processes between institutions and industry should be formalized to align collection methods and reporting standards.
- **Measuring Impact:** A critical focus is determining what data should be measured—such as employment rates, post-graduate outcomes, and WIL's direct impact on skills development. This will help assess WIL effectiveness and inform policy decisions.

Proposed Solutions

- **Community of Practice:** Establishing a regional data-sharing initiative for Newfoundland and Labrador will support better collaboration across stakeholders.
- **Improved Feedback Mechanisms:** More robust methods are needed to collect qualitative and quantitative feedback from students and employers, ensuring data-driven improvements in WIL programs.
- **Privacy and Transparency:** Addressing concerns around data privacy and ensuring transparency between funders, post-secondary institutions, and employers is essential.

Key Challenges in Data Collection and Reporting

1. Inconsistent and Missing Data

- WIL programs lack standardized provincial data, making it difficult to evaluate trends and outcomes.
- There is no unified system to track participation, employer engagement, and student employment post-graduation.
- Existing data systems, such as HSPnet and Orbis, are not effectively integrated across institutions or employers.

2. Lack of Clarity on Data Objectives

- Stakeholders need to define what data should be collected and why, focusing on employment rates, skill development, and program impact.

- There is no clear framework for qualitative and quantitative data sharing among post-secondary institutions, employers, and government.
- Privacy and data security concerns need to be addressed to facilitate cross-sector data exchange.

3. Limited Feedback Mechanisms

- Employers and students lack structured opportunities to provide feedback on their WIL experiences.
- The process of collecting feedback is inconsistent and often disconnected from decision-making processes.
- More robust feedback mechanisms are needed to assess employer satisfaction, student learning, and placement quality.

Proposed Solutions and Actions

1. Standardizing and Centralizing Data Collection

- Develop a unified WIL database at the provincial level, integrating existing platforms (HSPnet, Orbis) into a regional reporting system.
- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) such as employment rates, program retention, and skill acquisition.
- Improve data extraction processes to ensure institutions, government, and industry have access to reliable, actionable information.

2. Creating a Community of Practice for Data Sharing

- Establish a regional WIL data-sharing network to facilitate collaboration between government, employers, and post-secondary institutions.
- Host an annual data summit to align reporting practices and share best practices for data collection.
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration to create more efficient and transparent reporting structures.

3. Enhancing Employer and Student Feedback Collection

- Implement structured employer and student check-ins to gather qualitative insights on WIL effectiveness.
- Develop new mechanisms to collect feedback from international students, ensuring their unique challenges are addressed.
- Reduce administrative red tape in funding applications and placement reporting to improve industry engagement.

4. Aligning Data Collection with Workforce Planning

- Improve long-term planning for international students, including immigration, housing, and employment support.

- Ensure WIL data is used strategically to inform policy decisions and funding allocations.
- Address transportation and accessibility challenges for students participating in WIL placements.

Proposed Solutions Calls to Action #3

Enhancing Collaboration and Coordination in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

The call to action for greater collaboration and coordination in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) highlights the need for improved communication, alignment of expectations, and strategic partnerships among stakeholders, including government, industry, post-secondary institutions, students, and other organizations.

Key Challenges and Barriers

1. Misaligned Expectations

- There is a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of students, employers, and post-secondary institutions (PSIs). Better communication is needed to ensure alignment.
- Within PSIs, coordination between multiple campuses and faculties is insufficient, limiting effective collaboration.

2. Employer-Student Connections

- Students face challenges connecting with employers due to **lack of networking opportunities** and **unclear pathways for placements**.
- Employers often find unpaid work terms difficult to implement, limiting options for students to gain experience.

3. Data Sharing and Management

- Stakeholders highlight the need for a centralized database to manage and share information, which could help address challenges such as managing problematic employers and tracking placements.

4. Transactional Relationships

- Many WIL experiences feel transactional, with limited focus on meaningful engagement and professional growth.

Proposed Solutions

1. Clarify Roles and Expectations

- Establish a framework to clearly define expectations and responsibilities for all stakeholders, enhancing coordination between students, employers, and PSIs.
- Develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between PSIs and organizations like the Halibut Nation to formalize partnerships and enhance WIL opportunities.

2. Strengthen Networking and Mentorship

- Facilitate networking events and conferences to provide students and employers with opportunities to engage meaningfully.
- Establish advisory committees with representatives from key sectors to strengthen collaboration and advocate for collective efforts.

3. Promote Inclusive Work Environments

- Introduce structured meetings between students and employers to create safe environments for feedback and program improvement.
- Encourage training programs for employers to understand the value of WIL and invest in student development.

4. Encourage Collaboration Through Data and Resources

- Create a community of practice to address gaps in information sharing and resource allocation.
- Implement a centralized information management system to facilitate communication and support decision-making among stakeholders.

Proposed Solutions Calls to Action #4

Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face unique challenges in participating in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) programs in Newfoundland and Labrador. To enhance their involvement, stakeholders, including government, industry, post-secondary institutions, students, and other organizations, emphasize the need for better communication, streamlined processes, and tailored support.

Key Challenges for SMEs

1. Resource Constraints

- SMEs struggle to compete with larger companies in funding, hiring, onboarding, and providing guidance to students.
- Funding obligations and processes are complex and difficult to navigate for both employers and students.

2. Lack of Awareness and Preparedness

- Many SMEs lack awareness of how WIL can benefit their organizations and need digestible information about supports and funding.
- Employers often require training and mentorship resources to create positive experiences for students.

3. Communication Gaps

- There is insufficient dialogue between employers, students, and institutions to clarify expectations and align goals for work terms.

- Transparency in job descriptions and roles is often missing, leading to unmet expectations.

4. Access to Funding and Support

- Existing funding programs like SCPAP and SWPP are underutilized by SMEs due to lack of clarity and complexity in application processes.
- Employers require guidance on integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion (EDI) principles to better support students.

Proposed Solutions

1. Streamlined Processes and Toolkits

- Develop a comprehensive toolkit or roadmap for SMEs that includes funding access, hiring best practices, onboarding guidance, and job description templates.
- Establish a "one-stop shop" to help SMEs navigate WIL resources, funding programs, and institutional contacts.

2. Improved Communication and Networking

- Facilitate information sessions where SMEs can learn about WIL-related supports, access, and benefits.
- Build connections between SMEs and students through partnerships with organizations like the Board of Trade to create better job matching systems.

3. Enhanced Training and Awareness

- Provide mentorship training for supervisors to help SMEs create welcoming environments for students.
- Develop educational content to highlight the benefits of WIL, emphasizing that it's more than administrative tasks like photocopying.

4. Targeted Funding Support

- Simplify funding processes and ensure SMEs have access to clear, actionable information about programs like SWPP.
- Explore funding models that allow employers to apply for resources that include recruiting and training students.

Proposed Solutions Calls to Action #5

Advancing Decolonization and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

To foster meaningful inclusion in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in Newfoundland and Labrador, stakeholders from industry, government, post-secondary institutions, students, and other organizations emphasize the need for deeper approaches to decolonization, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). These approaches require targeted training, shared accountability, and strategies to address systemic barriers.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

1. Awareness and Training

- Many organizations lack resources and knowledge on implementing EDI practices effectively. A remote toolkit and tailored resources are needed to guide businesses in creating inclusive environments.
- Mandatory or voluntary EDI training for employers and employees in hiring practices is essential, particularly to address unconscious biases and systemic inequities.

2. Embedding EDI-AR (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Reconciliation)

- Stakeholders advocate for integrating EDI-AR into shared missions and values within funded organizations, ensuring accountability through reporting and outcome measurement (KPIs).
- Training and resources must extend beyond compliance, focusing on fostering a genuine sense of belonging for all participants.

3. Mentorship and Support Systems

- Informal and reverse mentoring programs can help bridge gaps between diverse groups, creating mutual learning opportunities.
- Faculty and student council initiatives should support marginalized students in feeling a stronger sense of belonging.

4. International Students and Immigration

- Employers need education on supporting international students and newcomers, particularly those with extensive experience abroad, to integrate into the Canadian workforce.
- Addressing barriers such as language, cultural differences, and pathways to permanent residency (PR) will encourage employers to invest in global talent.

Proposed Solutions and Actions

1. Enhanced EDI Training and Resources

- Develop and distribute a remote EDI toolkit for employers, including resources on translation technology, cultural sensitivity, and myth-busting common biases.
- Mandate or strongly encourage EDI-AR training for organizations receiving funding, facilitated by industry associations and aligned with broader organizational goals.

2. Accountability Through Shared Metrics

- Establish KPIs to measure EDI-AR outcomes, such as representation, employee/student satisfaction, and inclusion efforts.
- Promote transparent reporting and sharing of best practices among organizations.

3. Cultural and Structural Support

- Encourage mentorship programs and faculty initiatives to strengthen belonging among diverse students.
- Provide targeted support to international students through guidance on Canadian market integration, immigration pathways, and employer partnerships.

4. Collaborative Committees and Community Engagement

- Create committees or forums where stakeholders can observe, share, and collaborate on EDI initiatives without mandatory participation.

Disruptor

Disruptor Insights: Transforming Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

The disruptor approach to Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in Newfoundland and Labrador calls for rethinking traditional models, removing systemic barriers, and fostering innovation to create inclusive, flexible, and forward-thinking experiences for students, employers, and post-secondary institutions (PSIs).

Key Disruptor Themes

1. Reimagining WIL Models

- Stakeholders advocate for more diverse forms of WIL beyond traditional co-op and work term models, encouraging flexibility and multi-disciplinary opportunities that expose students to various fields and pathways.
- Empowering students to “choose their own WIL” allows them to personalize their experiences and engage with unique professional interests.
- Faculty engagement is essential, with WIL opportunities as professional development for educators to innovate and embed experiential learning into curricula.

2. Breaking Down Administrative Barriers

- Eliminating red tape in funding programs and placement processes is critical to reduce administrative burden on PSIs and employers.
- Streamlined co-op work permits and improved communication with government agencies are needed to minimize placement delays and reduce student stress.

3. Supporting International Students

- Enhanced collaboration on funding opportunities for international students is essential to help them integrate into the Canadian workforce, particularly for those who wish to stay long-term.
- Program planning must account for immigration, housing, and instructor preparation to ensure a smooth transition for international students.

4. Enhancing Feedback Mechanisms

- Employer and student feedback loops must be strengthened to identify what works well and where improvements are needed. Providing employers with resources and tools can enhance their ability to support students effectively.

5. Addressing Practical Barriers

- Transportation issues remain a key challenge, particularly in rural areas. Accessible, reliable transportation solutions must be integrated into WIL planning.

Proposed Solutions

1. Expand and Diversify WIL Models

- Introduce innovative WIL opportunities that allow students to explore diverse career paths, contribute to interdisciplinary projects, and learn from unconventional experiences.

2. Streamline Administrative Processes

- Simplify funding and work permit processes to make WIL programs more accessible for students and employers.

3. Enhance Collaboration and Resource Sharing

- Strengthen partnerships between PSIs, government, and industry to coordinate pre-planning efforts for placements, ensuring readiness before students begin.

4. Support Students and Employers

- Provide accessible resources, mentorship, and actionable feedback systems for both students and employers to enhance engagement and outcomes.

CONCLUSION:

The challenges presented in this report reflect Newfoundland and Labrador's realities. The province's unique geography, regional disparities, and reliance on traditional WIL models exacerbate barriers for students and employers. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach that prioritizes financial equity, geographic accessibility, innovative WIL models, and enhanced employer engagement. By addressing these systemic barriers, Newfoundland can create a more inclusive and effective WIL ecosystem, supporting both student success and regional economic growth.