BC WIL Employer/Community Partner Survey Project Final Report

July 2021

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Project Overview

The BC Work Integrated Learning Council (formerly the Accountability Council for Co-operative Education and WIL BC) provides and encourages the adoption of consistent program guidelines and standards for quality Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning in BC's PSE system, and serves as a venue to discuss and promote institutional issues.

It is an independent council of the Association for Co-operative Education WIL (BC/Yukon) and is comprised of one member from each public, post-secondary co-operative education and work integrated learning institution in BC as appointed by the President of the institution.

In June 2020, the Council identified a need for a greater understanding of the labour market's ability to engage WIL students in next 6-12 months to help members plan their WIL programming in the coming 1-2 years and a greater understanding of employer/community partner experiences, interests and needs.

To collect data for this objective, a survey was launched between September-October, 2020, with follow-up focus groups and interviews running March-April 2021, and a final survey launched in May, 2021. These surveys and focus groups were designed and implemented by UBC's Office of Planning and Institutional Research and the project's Steering Committee:

- Ron Bowles, Interim Dean, Office of Applied Research & Graduate Studies at Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Andrea Giles, Executive Director, Co-operative Education Program and Career Services, UVIC, BC WIL Council Secretary
- Muriel Klemetski, Director, Work-Integrated Learning, SFU
- Stephanie McKeown, Chief Institutional Research Officer, UBC
- Andrea Sator, Curriculum Project Manager, Work-Integrated Learning Program, SFU
- Julie Walchli, Executive Director, Work-Integrated Education and Career Initiatives, UBC Arts, BC WIL Council Chair

BC WIL Council members (representing a BC Post-secondary institution) who volunteered to participate in the project distributed the surveys to their WIL partners. A total of 19 BC PSIs participated in the project:

- British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Camosun College
- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Emily Carr University of Art + Design
- Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College

- North Island College
- Royal Roads University
- Selkirk College
- Simon Fraser University
- Thompson Rivers University
- University of British Columbia
- University of Northern British Columbia
- University of the Fraser Valley
- University of Victoria
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Island University

Key Takeaways

Outlook

Overall, the results from the Spring 2021 Survey are more positive than the Fall 2020 Survey results, suggesting that the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have decreased for most WIL employers from September 2020 to April 2021. In fact, most employers agree that the outlook for WIL student engagements in their organization is promising in a post-pandemic world.

As part of their post-pandemic plans, most employers report they will have WIL students return to in-person (48%) or hybrid work (18%). Additionally, employers also acknowledge the benefits of remote work and will continue implementing some of the initiatives they developed during the pandemic - mainly new communication strategies. These communication strategies include the implementation of online tools such as Zoom, MS Teams, and Slack, which employers used for onboarding processes, regular meetings, and team building activities.

2020 vs. 2021 Surveys Comparison

In the Fall 2020 Survey, employers reported that remote work posed a great challenge for their WIL hiring/engaging for the next 6-12 months. By contrast, in the Spring 2021 Survey, challenges related to funding and finances were reported as the most impactful. In line with these challenges, employers also pointed out that the streamlining of funding and recruiting processes as well as receiving support in navigating and accessing subsidies were essential to increase their WIL hiring/engaging during the next 6-12 months.

Summary of Main Findings

853 total responses were obtained in the Spring 2021 Survey (compared to 1,494 in the Fall 2020 Survey).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a WIL hiring freeze of 3% was reported in the Spring 2021 Survey, decreasing by one percent compared to the Fall 2020 Survey. Similarly, employers reported 87% (compared to 74% in the Fall 2020 Survey) of usual WIL hiring from September 2020 to April 2021 and 98% (compared to 85% last fall) of usual WIL hiring expected for next 6 to 12 months. Additionally, 95% (compared to 81% last fall) of usual new-grad hiring is forecasted for the next 6-12 months.

The top three industries with the least expected WIL and new grad hiring for the next 6 to 12 months as a result of the pandemic are Accommodation and food services; Arts, entertainment and recreation; and Health care and social assistance (this last one substituting the Transportation and warehousing sector as compared to the Fall 2020 Survey).

The top factors reported as affecting WIL hiring/engaging for next 6 to 12 months were economic and financial issues (56% of respondents reported this will significantly or somewhat impact their WIL hiring); challenges in obtaining sufficient funding for student placements (51%) ; challenges in finding funding opportunities for student placements (50%); and recruitment challenges in finding students with the required skills and qualifications (49%). The last three factors replaced the remote work challenges reported in the Fall 2020 Survey, including the difficulty supervising, recruiting and onboarding students remotely, and the lack of staffing resources to supervise and mentor students.

Considering the aforementioned challenges, employers reported that the resources that would enable them to hire/engage more WIL students during next 6-12 months were access to wage subsidies to hire/engage students (64% of respondents thought this would be extremely useful or very useful); streamlining the funding application process (57%); help navigating various wage subsidies, grants, and submitting requests for funding (57%); and help navigating types of WIL programs (e.g., information toolkits, webinars, etc.) (37%).

Employers were also asked to indicate whether their WIL students were currently working remotely or in-person. According to the survey results, 35% of WIL students are currently working in-person, reducing in-person work by 5% compared to the Fall 2020 Survey; 33% are working remotely because of COVID; 28% are working part remote and part in-person because of COVID, increasing hybrid work by 6% compared to last fall; and 4% of WIL placements were already remote or partially remote before the pandemic.

Respondents also shared their plans for WIL placements after the pandemic is over. In this section of the survey, it was reported that 48% of employers plan to have WIL students work in-person after the pandemic is over, 18% plan to have WIL students work in a hybrid model (part

in-person and part remotely), 14% plan to return to pre-pandemic (or higher) numbers of WIL students, and 4% plan to maintain students' remote work. Moreover, employers pointed out some new initiatives that they implemented during the past year and plan to continue using after the pandemic is over. These include changes in communication strategies (26%), WIL student onboarding processes (13%), organizational structure (12%), and WIL student mentoring and supervising approaches (11%).
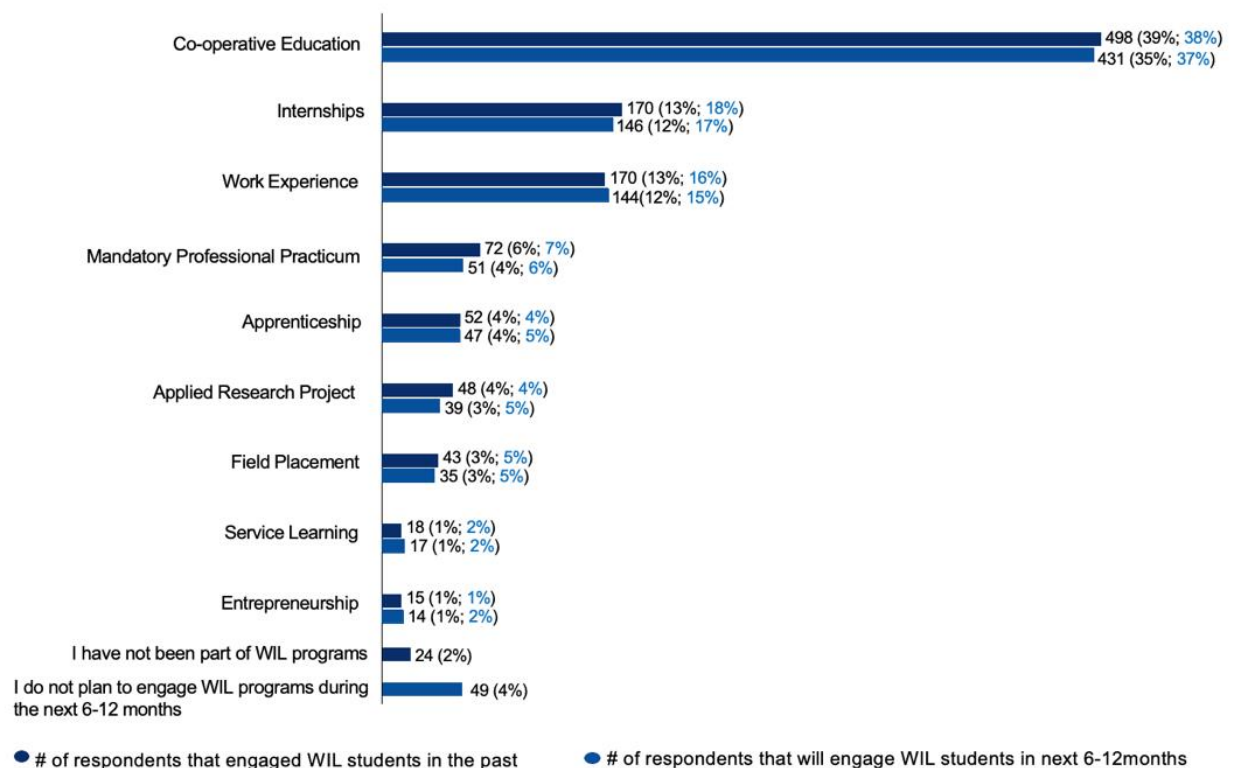
Finally, 90% of employers either strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed that the outlook for WIL student engagements in their organization is promising in a post-pandemic world. Only 6% of the total respondents either somewhat disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with this view.

Findings

In this section, the following items will be discussed: changes in number of WIL placements that were brought about by the pandemic, factors that employers reported as most impactful for their WIL hiring and engaging, and approaches that WIL employers implemented during the pandemic to counter issues related to remote work and lack of funds. The findings from the Spring 2021 Survey will also be compared with the findings from the Fall 2020 Survey in order to highlight how organizations' hiring processes have changed overtime. Additionally, partners' opinions about the future of WIL programs in their organizations will be shared.

For most WIL types, the percentage of respondents that engaged placements in the past and the percentage of respondents that plan to engage WIL placements in the next 6-12 months remained similar to last year. The largest variances were reported for Work Experience and Internships, which is illustrated in Figure 1.

Participating partners per WIL type* (past & next 6-12 months**)

WIL Type	# of respondents that engaged WIL students in the past	# of respondents that will engage WIL students in next 6-12 months
Co-operative Education	498 (39%; 38%)	431 (35%; 37%)
Internships	170 (13%; 18%)	146 (12%; 17%)
Work Experience	170 (13%; 16%)	144 (12%; 15%)
Mandatory Professional Practicum	72 (6%; 7%)	51 (4%; 6%)
Apprenticeship	52 (4%; 4%)	47 (4%; 5%)
Applied Research Project	48 (4%; 4%)	39 (3%; 5%)
Field Placement	43 (3%; 5%)	35 (3%; 5%)
Service Learning	18 (1%; 2%)	17 (1%; 2%)
Entrepreneurship	15 (1%; 1%)	14 (1%; 2%)
I have not been part of WIL programs	24 (2%)	
I do not plan to engage WIL programs during the next 6-12 months		49 (4%)

● # of respondents that engaged WIL students in the past   ● # of respondents that will engage WIL students in next 6-12months

*Respondents could have chosen multiple WIL types.
**The Fall 2020 Survey results are shown in blue for comparison. Different employers/community partners might have responded to the Spring 2021 Survey.

Figure 1: Participating partners per WIL type (past & next 6-12 months)

Changes in the Number of WIL Placements due to the Pandemic

On average, it was reported that WIL student placements have been reduced by 13% (compared to the 26% reduction reported in 2020), reaching a usual hiring rate of 87% (Figure 2). When these responses were filtered by WIL students from different types of institutions, however, there were some fluctuations. Specifically, employers who hire students from teaching-intensive universities report the lowest WIL hiring rate, at 75%, and employers who hire WIL students from institutes report the highest hiring rate, at 96%.

On the other hand, for the next 6-12 months, it was estimated that WIL student placements will be reduced by 2% (compared to the 15% reduction estimated in 2020). Therefore, overall, in the next few months, employers expect their hiring rates to increase by another 11%, reaching almost 100% of their usual WIL hiring.

Percentage* of usual WIL placements reported by employers**

*100% = No change

**The Fall 2020 Survey results are shown in blue for comparison. Different employers/community partners might have responded to the Spring 2021 Survey.
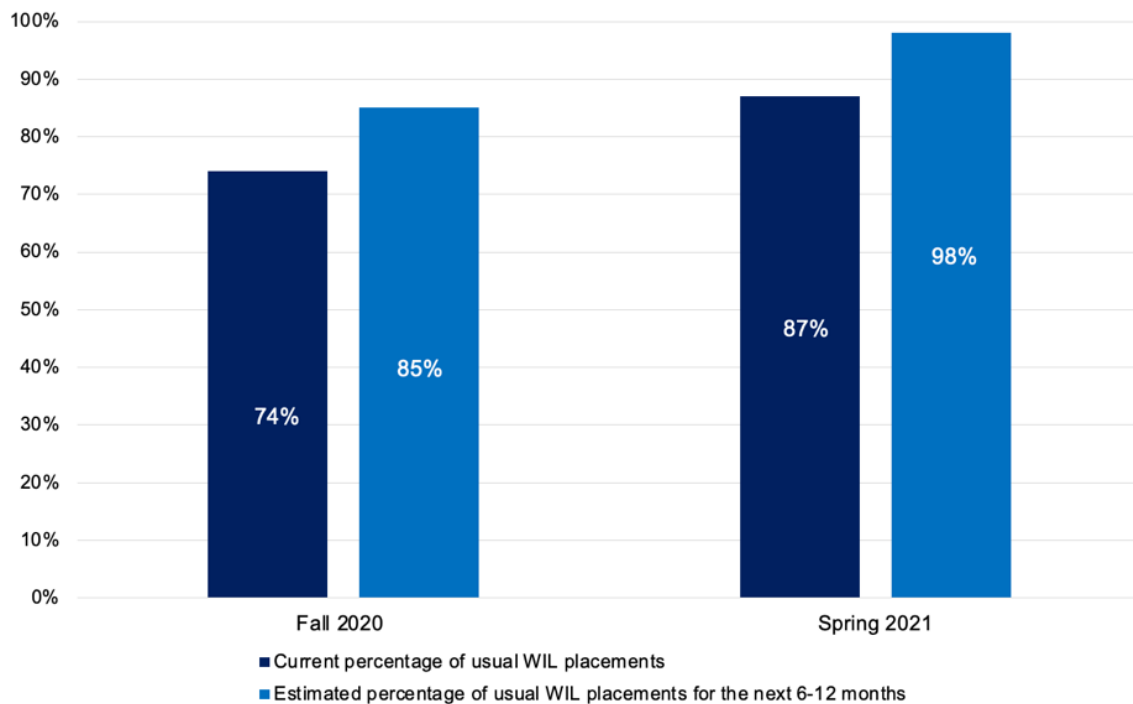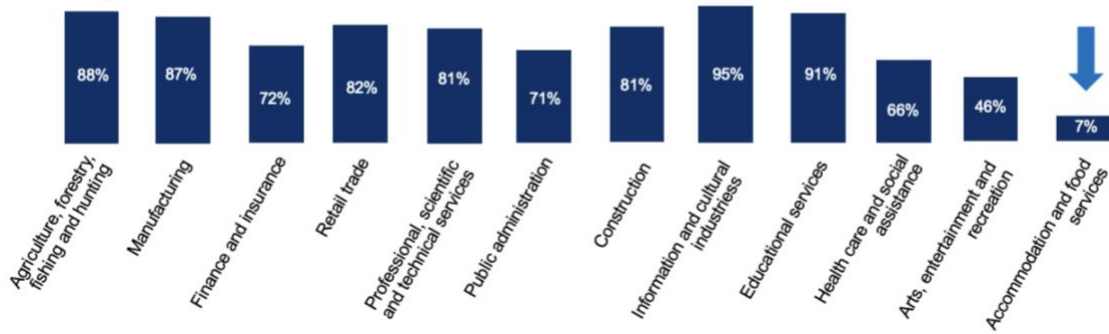
Figure 2: Percentage of usual WIL placements reported by employers

As shown below in Figure 3, the results from the Fall 2020 Survey were compared to the Spring 2021 Survey in terms of the percentual change in WIL hiring rate by sectors, and most sectors reported a higher rate of usual WIL hiring from Sept 2020 to Apr 2021, compared to last year since the onset of the pandemic.
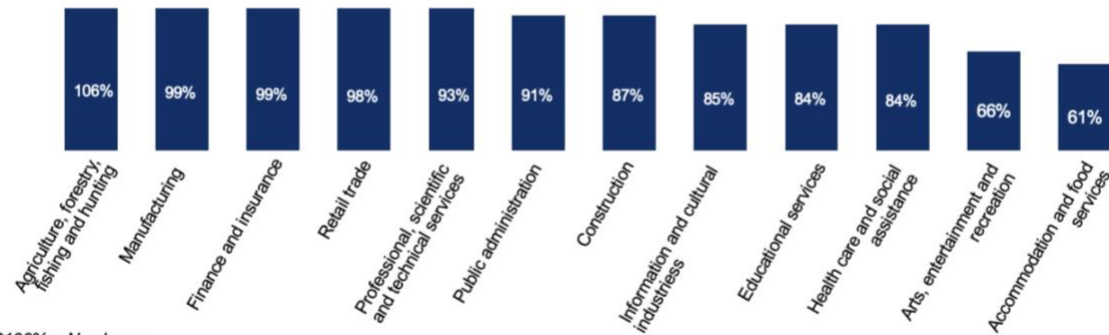
Percentage* of usual WIL placements by sector**

Example: If an employer from the "Accommodation and food services" sector usually hires 100 WIL students, this means that they have been hiring only 7 WIL students since the onset of the pandemic.

Fall 2020: Percentage of usual WIL since the onset of the pandemic (January to August 2020)

Sector	Percentage
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	88%
Manufacturing	87%
Finance and insurance	72%
Retail trade	82%
Professional, scientific and technical services	81%
Public administration	71%
Construction	81%
Information and cultural industries	95%
Educational services	91%
Health care and social assistance	66%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	46%
Accommodation and food services	7%

Spring 2021: Percentage of usual WIL from September 2020 to April 2021

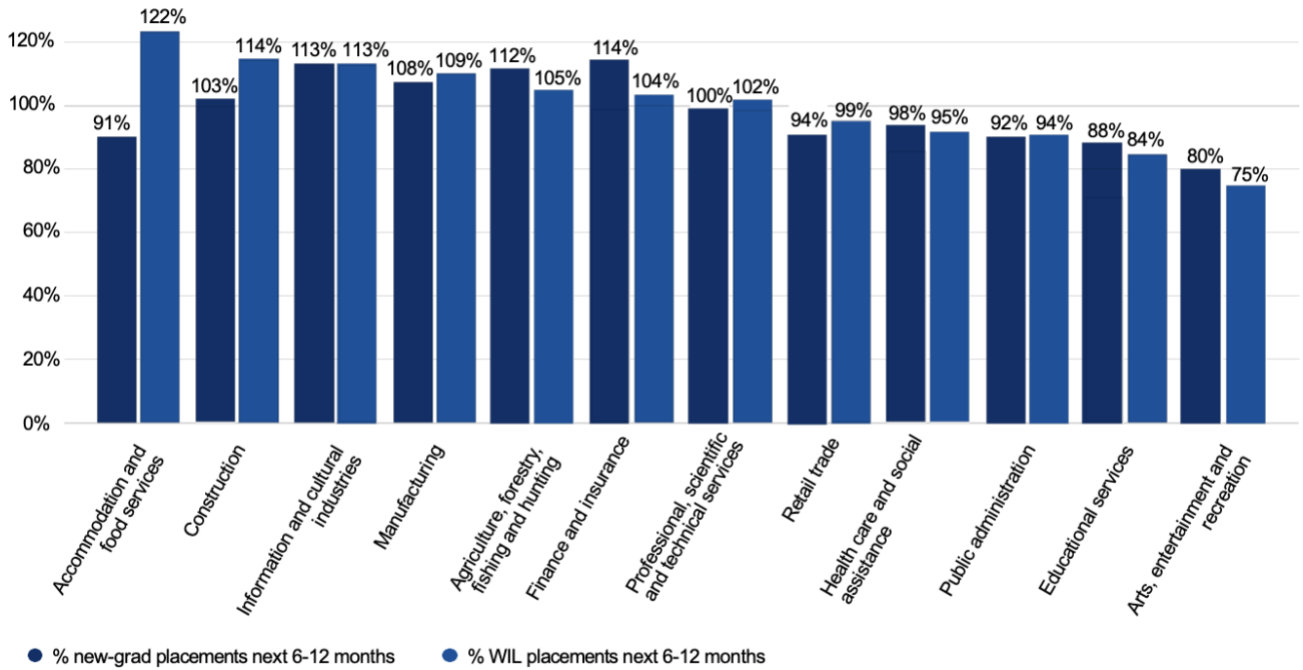| Sector	Percentage
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	106%
Manufacturing	99%
Finance and insurance	99%
Retail trade	98%
Professional, scientific and technical services	93%
Public administration	91%
Construction	87%
Information and cultural industries	85%
Educational services	84%
Health care and social assistance	84%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	66%
Accommodation and food services	61%

*100% = No change
** Only sectors representing over 1% of respondents

Figure 3: Percentage of usual WIL placements by sector

Additionally, all sectors estimate a further increase in the number of their WIL placements in the next 6 to 12 months as is shown in Figure 4. Most noticeably, the Accommodation and food services sector reported the lowest WIL hiring rate in the Fall 2020 Survey. However, in the Spring 2021 Survey, this sector estimates the highest WIL hiring rate for the next 6-12 months, at 122%, showing significant improvement.

Forecasted percentage* of usual WIL and new-grad placements for the next 6-12 months by sector**
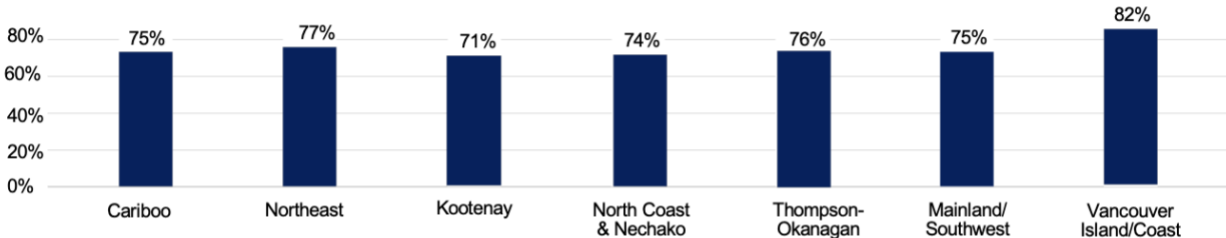

*100% = No change

** Only sectors representing over 1% of respondents

Figure 4: Forecasted percentage of usual WIL and new-grad placements for the next 6-12 months by sector

Figure 5 shows the changes in WIL placements by BC regions compared to last fall. As is clearly shown on the graphs, respondents reported a higher WIL hiring rate from September 2020 to April 2021 in all BC regions compared to the Fall 2020 Survey. Moreover, the regions that report the highest hiring rates are Cariboo, the Northeast and Kootenay. Meanwhile, at 89%, Vancouver Island reported the least increase in WIL placements as compared to the Fall 2020 Survey.

Percentage* of usual WIL placements by location: BC regions**

Fall 2020: *Percentage of usual WIL placements since the onset of the pandemic (January to August 2020)*

Spring 2021: *Percentage of usual WIL placements from September 2020 to April 2021*
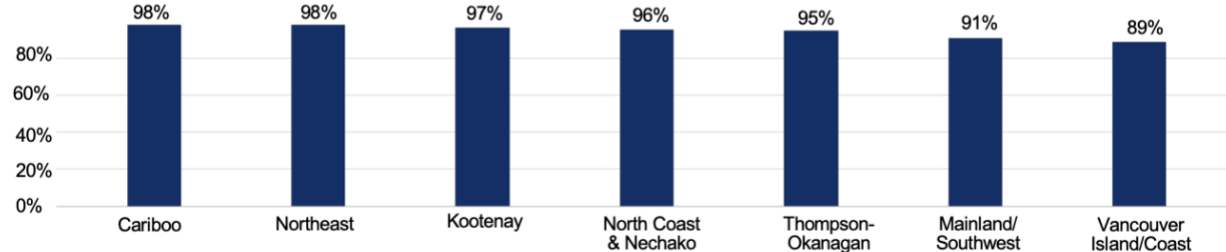
*100% = No change

**Respondents could have chosen multiple BC regions but could only report one hiring change. Assumption: that hiring change applies to all locations.

Figure 5: Percentage of usual WIL placements by location: BC regions

Similarly, while in the Fall 2020 Survey, all regions estimated hiring rates below their usual, in the Spring 2021 Survey, respondents estimate a WIL hiring rate higher than their usual for the next 6-12 months in all BC regions, except for Thompson-Okanagan, as shown in Figure 6. Additionally, employers expect their new grad hiring rates to be very close to or more than their usual for the next 6 to 12 months.

Figure 6: Forecasted percentage of usual WIL and new-grad placements for the next 6-12 months by location: BC regions

The next figure shows that Federal Agency and Municipal Government organizations reported a hiring rate above their usual in the Spring 2021 Survey, at 133% and 106% respectively (compared to 94% and 42% in the Fall 2020 Survey) (Figure 7). All other types of organizations also report increases in their WIL hiring rate compared to the Fall 2020 Survey. However, Provincial Government organizations report the least increase in WIL placements, at a hiring rate of 74% of usual.

Percentage* of usual WIL placements by type of organization

Fall 2020: *Percentage of usual WIL placements since the onset of the pandemic (January to August 2020)*

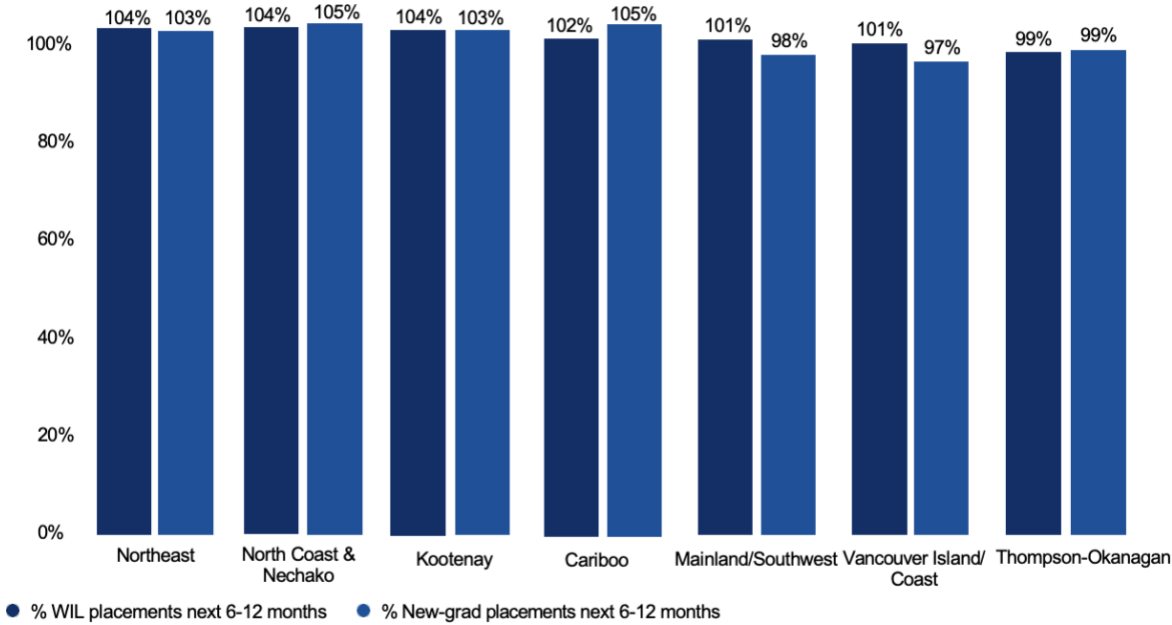**Spring 2021**: *Percentage of usual WIL placements from September 2020 to April 2021*
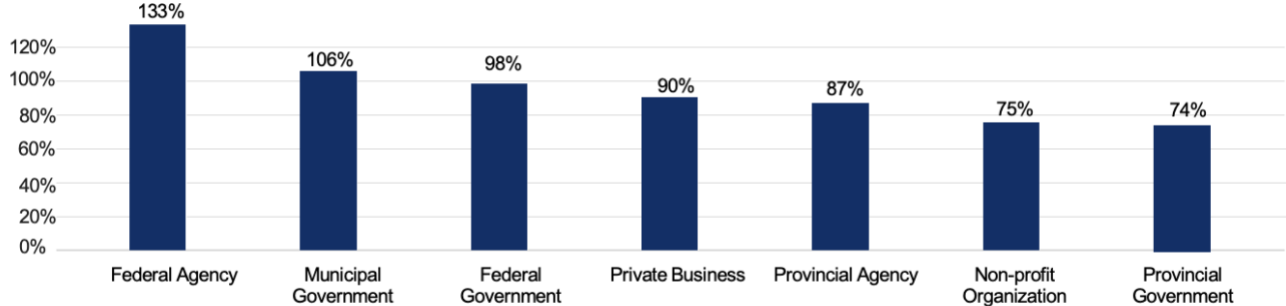
*100% = No change

Figure 7: Percentage of usual WIL placements by type of organization

However, Figure 8 illustrates that Federal Agency organizations estimate the lowest WIL and new grad hiring rates for the next 6-12 months, at 83% and 75% respectively. Compared to their estimations in the Fall 2020 Survey (106% of usual WIL hiring and 100% of usual new-grad hiring), these percentages show a decrease in the optimism shown by this type of organizations in terms of the number of WIL placements they will hire in the near future. On the other hand, Provincial Agency, Private Business, Federal Government and Municipal Government organizations expect both their WIL and new-grad hiring rates to be at or higher than their usual in the next 6 to 12 months.

Forecasted percentage* of usual WIL and new-grad placements for the next 6-12 months by type of organization
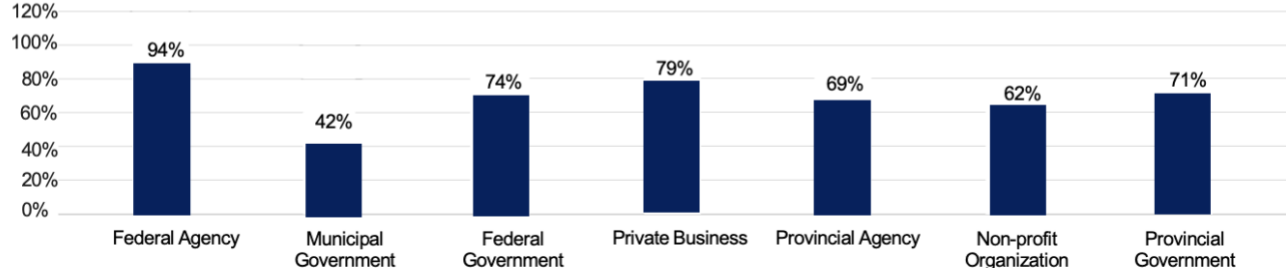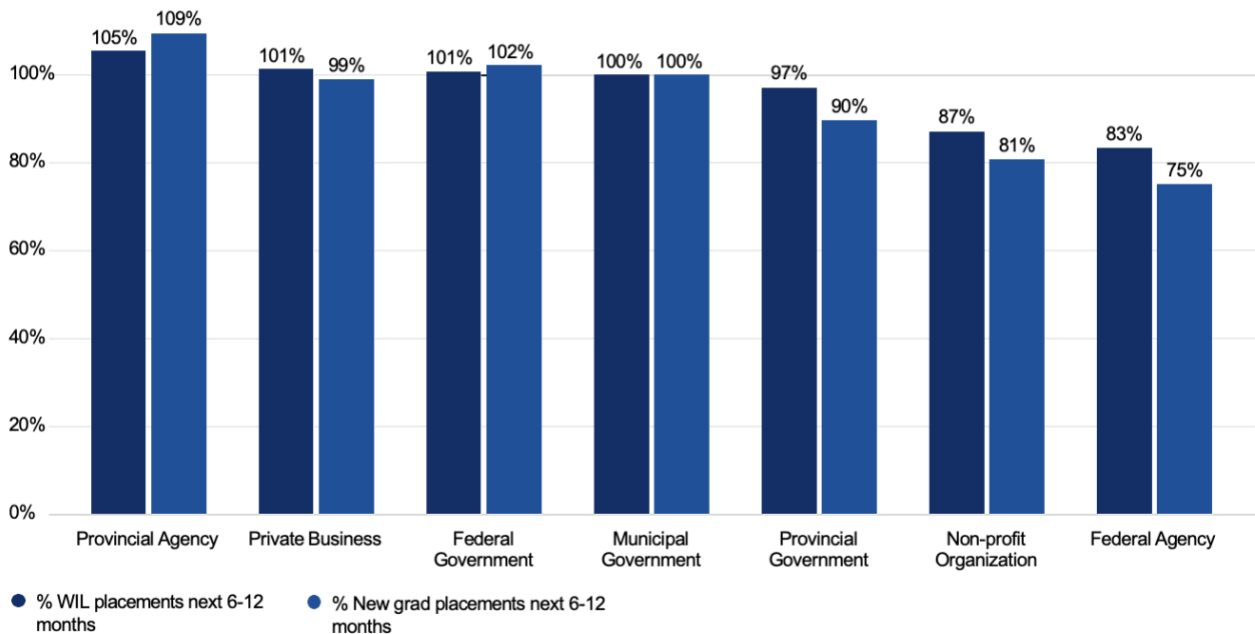

*100% = No change

Figure 8: Forecasted percentage of usual WIL and new-grad placements for the next 6-12 months by type of organization

In the Spring 2021 Survey, 70% of the employers who participated in the survey engaged paid WIL placements (Figure 9). Additionally, increases were reported for the hiring rates of paid, unpaid as well as both paid and unpaid placements. However, as shown in Figure 10, equivalent to the Fall 2020 Survey, organizations engaging unpaid WIL placements report the lowest hiring rates (at 67% of the usual hiring from September 2020 to April 2021 and 85% of the usual hiring forecasted for the next 6-12 months).

Number of employers by paid/unpaid WIL type

Paid WIL placements	**495** (70%)
Both paid and unpaid WIL placements	**98** (14%)
Unpaid WIL placements	**61** (9%)

Figure 9: Number of employers by paid/unpaid WIL type

Percentage* of usual WIL placements by paid/unpaid
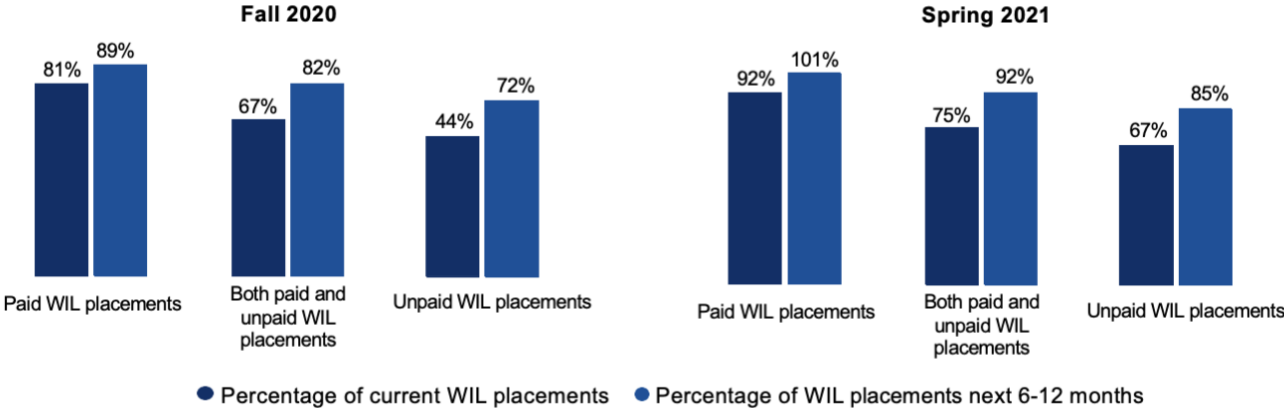
Figure 10: Percentage of usual WIL placements by paid/unpaid

On average, respondents forecasted an increase in placements for all WIL types for the next 6-12 months (Figure 11). Additionally, employers will be hiring four WIL types, namely Applied Research Project, Internships, Work Experience and Apprenticeship, at a higher than usual rate in the same timeframe. In the Fall 2020 Survey, employers estimated they would hire only two WIL types at a higher than usual rate, which shows a clear improvement in hiring rates since the onset of the pandemic.

Percentage* of usual WIL placements from September 2020 to April 2021 and forecasted for the next 6-12 months by WIL type**
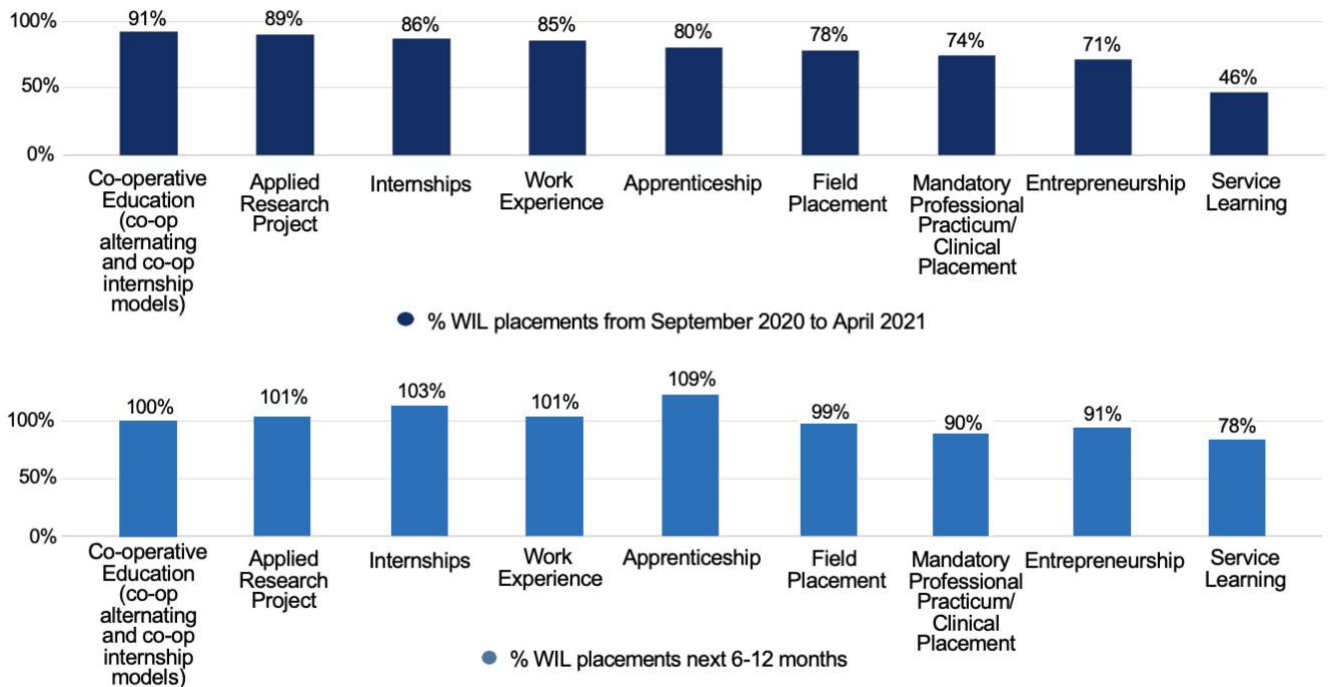
*100% = No change
**Respondents could have chosen multiple WIL types but could only report one hiring change. Assumption: that hiring change applies to all WIL types.

Figure 11: Percentage of usual WIL placements from September 2020 to April 2021 and forecasted for the next 6-12 months by WIL type

Finally, employers reported that more than 50% of the students they plan to hire in the next 6-12 months belong to the disciplines of Administration/Business, Computer Science and Engineering (Figure 12).

Discipline*	Number of respondents	%
Administration/Business	209	22
Computer Science	156	17
Engineering	141	15
Humanities/Social Science	86	9
Science	84	9
Technical/Trades	75	8
Health/Legal	75	8
Hospitality/Tourism/Recreation	46	5
Agriculture	18	2

Respondents could have chosen multiple disciplines.

Figure 12: Disciplines from which respondents plan to hire/engage WIL students in the next 6-12 months

Factors Impacting WIL Hiring/Engaging

Factors related to finances and funding hold the top three places in the list of factors that will affect WIL hiring/engaging for the next 6-12 months, differing from the Fall 2020 Survey, where factors related to remote work were reported as the most impactful (Figure 13). The main factors that employers believe will have a negative impact on their WIL hiring and engaging in the next months are challenges in obtaining sufficient funding for student placements, general economic and financial issues, and challenges in finding funding opportunities for student placements. These factors were also the most discussed by WIL employers in the focus groups and interviews imparted during the second phase of the project.

Some of the factors that partners predict will have a smaller negative impact on their WIL hiring and engaging for the next 6-12 months are geographic and transportation barriers, lack of information about different WIL options, and issues with human resource capacity and paperwork.

Factors affecting WIL hiring/engaging for the next 6-12 months

Factor	Significantly impact	Somewhat impact	Will not affect	Not applicable
Challenges in obtaining sufficient funding for student placements	27%	24%	37%	13%
Economic and financial issues	26%	30%	34%	10%
Challenges in finding funding opportunities for student placements	25%	25%	37%	12%
Recruitment challenges in finding students with the required skills and qualifications	18%	31%	43%	7%
Difficulty supervising students remotely (COVID-19 disruption)	15%	27%	42%	16%
Lack of staffing resources to supervise and mentor students	14%	29%	48%	9%
Difficulty recruiting and onboarding students remotely (COVID-19 disruption)	13%	32%	44%	11%
Insufficient workload for student placements to fill hourly requirements	9%	21%	59%	11%
Geographic and/or transportation barriers limiting students' access to work sites	7%	18%	60%	14%
Lack of information about different WIL options, programs, and/or students' skill sets	7%	16%	59%	17%
Issues with human resource capacity and paperwork involved in hiring/engaging students	7%	20%	63%	10%
Insufficient information about the return on investment from WIL programs	6%	13%	62%	19%
Misalignment between PSI timetables and your organizational cycle		19%	56%	22%

Legend: This will significantly impact my WIL hiring/engaging • This will somewhat impact my WIL hiring/engaging • This will not affect my WIL hiring/engaging • Not applicable
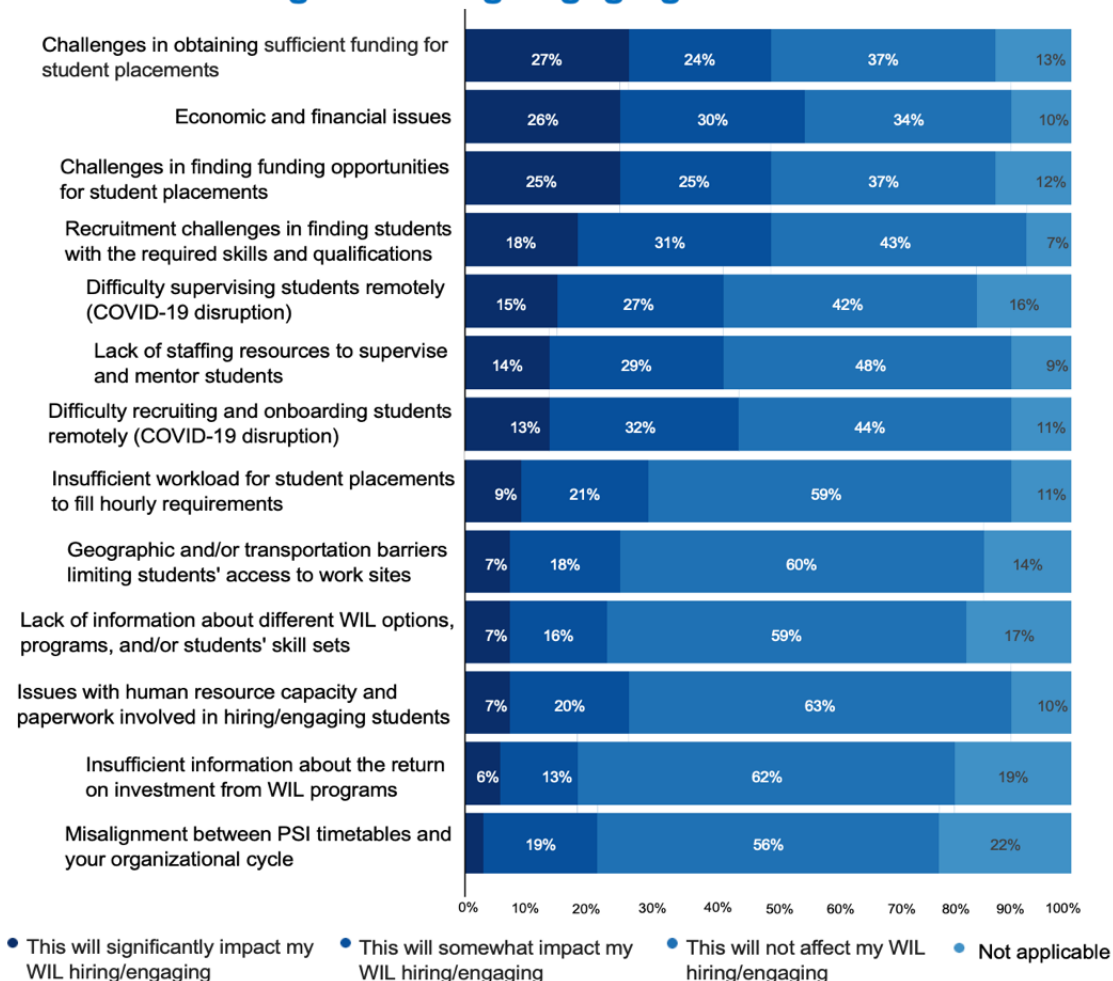
Figure 13: Factors affecting WIL hiring/engaging for the next 6-12 months

These results were also filtered by WIL students from different types of institutions, namely research-intensive universities, teaching-intensive universities, colleges, and institutes, and overall, the numbers were very similar. The most noticeable difference was that employers reported having more difficulties recruiting students from colleges with the required skills and qualifications.

In line with the aforementioned challenging factors reported by employers, the streamlining of funding applications and recruitment processes were reported as two of the top resources that will enable partners to hire/engage more WIL students during the next 6-12 months (Figure 14). These were new items added to the Spring 2021 Survey based on the focus groups' findings, demonstrating that the streamlining of these processes was not an isolated issue for focus group participants. Additional resources related to finances were reported, including access to wage subsidies to hire/engage students, and help navigating various wage subsidies, grants, and submitting requests for funding.
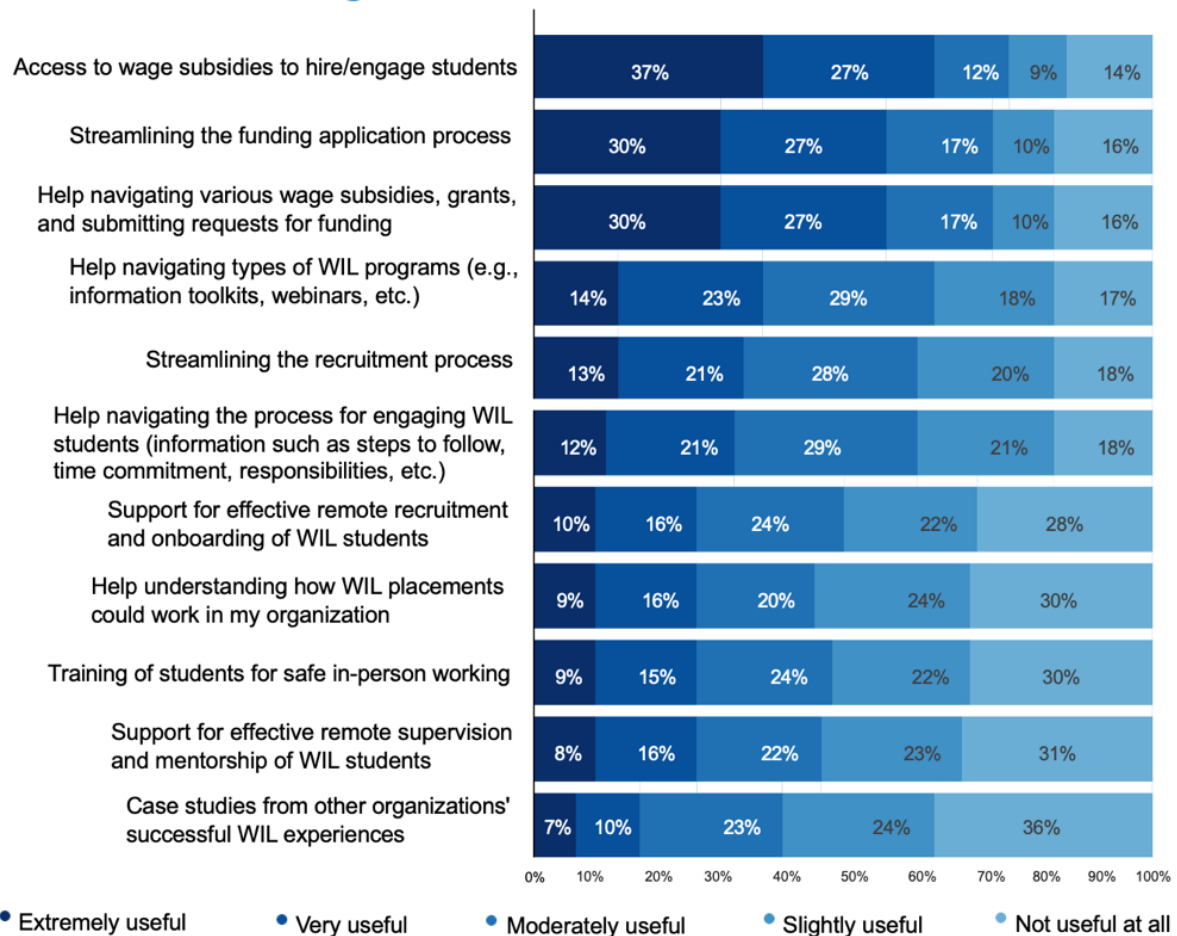

Figure 14: Usefulness of resources in enabling partners to hire/engage more WIL students during the next 6-12 months

Other resources that partners find useful to hire and engage more WIL students in the next 6 to 12 months include help navigating types of WIL programs and the process for engaging WIL students, support for effective remote recruitment and onboarding of WIL students as well as help understanding how WIL placements could work in their organization. For this question, responses were also filtered by WIL students from different types of institutions, and employers who hire students from colleges noted that they need more help with the remote recruitment and onboarding of WIL students.

Employers' Experience Navigating Grants and Funding Opportunities – Focus Groups

Employers had varied experiences dealing with grant and funding applications. Overall, their positive and negative comments revolved around the ease of use of specific forms and systems and how responsive the granting agencies were.

However, employers agreed that overall application processes for funding and grants need to be streamlined – for example, by centralizing all information and applications through one portal – for them to learn about and apply for grants and funding opportunities in an easier manner. Some employers argue that this lack of streamlining has taken too much time from them, since they are required to apply for several grants through different portals while fulfilling different requirements, which they would rather use in their actual job for the organization. In the words of one of the Focus groups' participants:
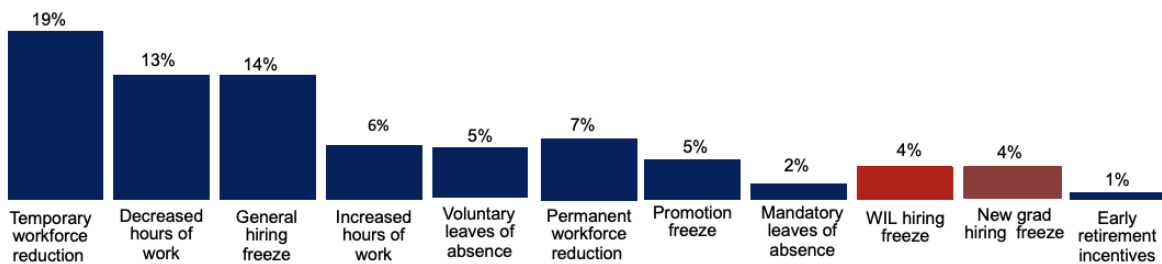
"I wish there was one portal for everything. Honestly, I am managing between ITAC, Career Ready, Magnet, which is the new name for things; I'm also working with the WIL digital program. I'm working with Innovate BC in terms of the international grant that they had. And there's so many more funding opportunities that are coming up […]."

Pandemic Approaches and Post-pandemic Plans

Similar to the Fall 2020 Survey, 3% of respondents (compared to 4% last fall) reported that their organizations had implemented a WIL hiring freeze and a new grad hiring freeze (Figure 15). Additionally, the approach that was most common among partners during the pandemic was the temporary workforce reduction, which 20% of employers implemented since the onset of the pandemic according to the Spring 2021 Survey.

Approaches taken because of COVID-19: 3% reported WIL hiring freeze

Fall 2020

Temporary workforce reduction	Decreased hours of work	General hiring freeze	Increased hours of work	Voluntary leaves of absence	Permanent workforce reduction	Promotion freeze	Mandatory leaves of absence	WIL hiring freeze	New grad hiring freeze	Early retirement incentives
19%	13%	14%	6%	5%	7%	5%	2%	4%	4%	1%

Spring 2021

Temporary workforce reduction	Decreased hours of work	General hiring freeze	Increased hours of work	Voluntary leaves of absence	Permanent workforce reduction	Promotion freeze	Mandatory leaves of absence	WIL hiring freeze	New grad hiring freeze	Early retirement incentives
20%	12%	10%	10%	6%	6%	3%	3%	3%	3%	1%

Figure 15: Approaches taken because of COVID-19

Also similar to the Fall 2020 Survey, respondents reported that more than 60% of their WIL students are currently working in-person or remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 16). However, in the Spring 2021 Survey, the number of WIL students working in a hybrid model increased from 22% to 28% compared to last fall.

Percentage of WIL students currently working remotely or in-person

Figure 16: Percentage of WIL students currently working remotely or in-person

Figure 17 below shows that there is not much variation across BC regions in terms of the number of students currently working remotely or in-person. In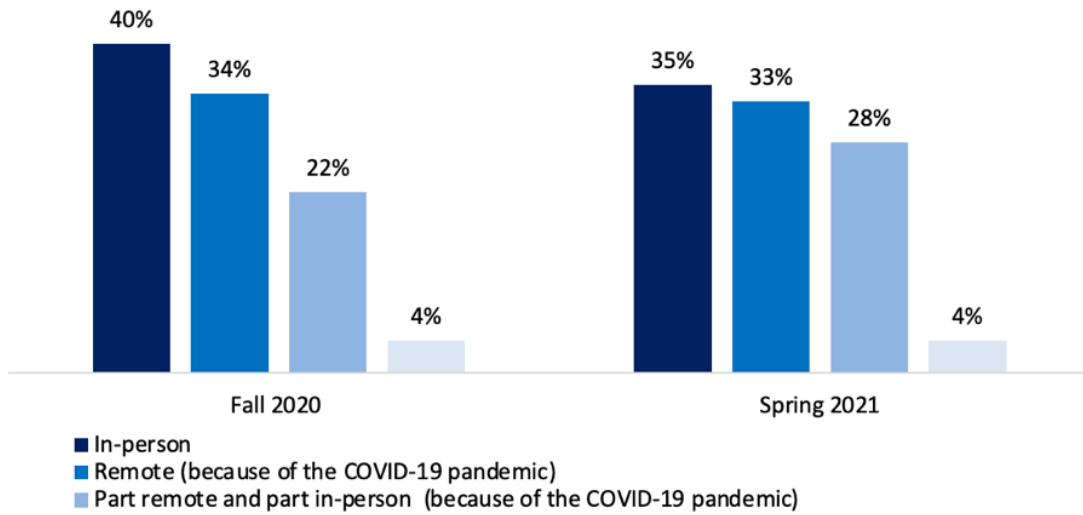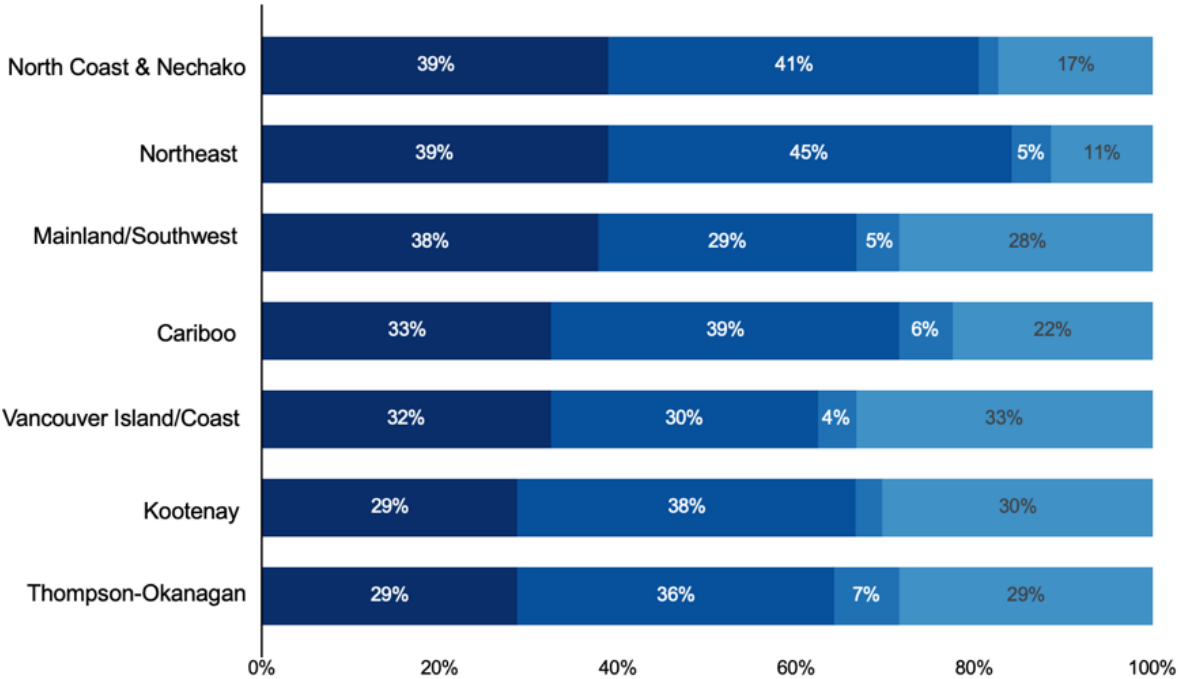 general, most WIL students are currently working remotely or in a hybrid model in all regions. Vancouver Island is the single outlier since it is the only region where most WIL students are working in person.

Percentage of WIL students currently working remotely or in-person by location: BC regions*

Region	Remote (because of the COVID-19 pandemic)	Part remote and part in-person (because of the COVID-19 pandemic)	WIL student positions were already remote (or partially remote) before the pandemic	In-person
North Coast & Nechako	39%	41%		17%
Northeast	39%	45%	5%	11%
Mainland/Southwest	38%	29%	5%	28%
Cariboo	33%	39%	6%	22%
Vancouver Island/Coast	32%	30%	4%	33%
Kootenay	29%	38%		30%
Thompson-Okanagan	29%	36%	7%	29%

● Remote (because of the COVID-19 pandemic) ● Part remote and part in-person (because of the COVID-19 pandemic)

● WIL student positions were already remote (or partially remote) before the pandemic. ● In-person

*Respondents could have chosen multiple BC regions but could only report one working modality. Assumption: that working modality applies to all locations.

Figure 17: Percentage of WIL students currently working remotely or in-person by location: BC regions

Figure 18 illustrates a disaggregation the data by sectors. In all sectors, most students are working remotely and in-person, and less students are working in a hybrid model. The sectors of Public administration, Educational services, and Information and cultural industries have the highest numbers of students working remotely. Contrastingly, the sectors of Accommodation and food services, Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting as well as Retail trade have students mostly working in person.

Percentage of WIL students currently working remotely or in-person by sector*

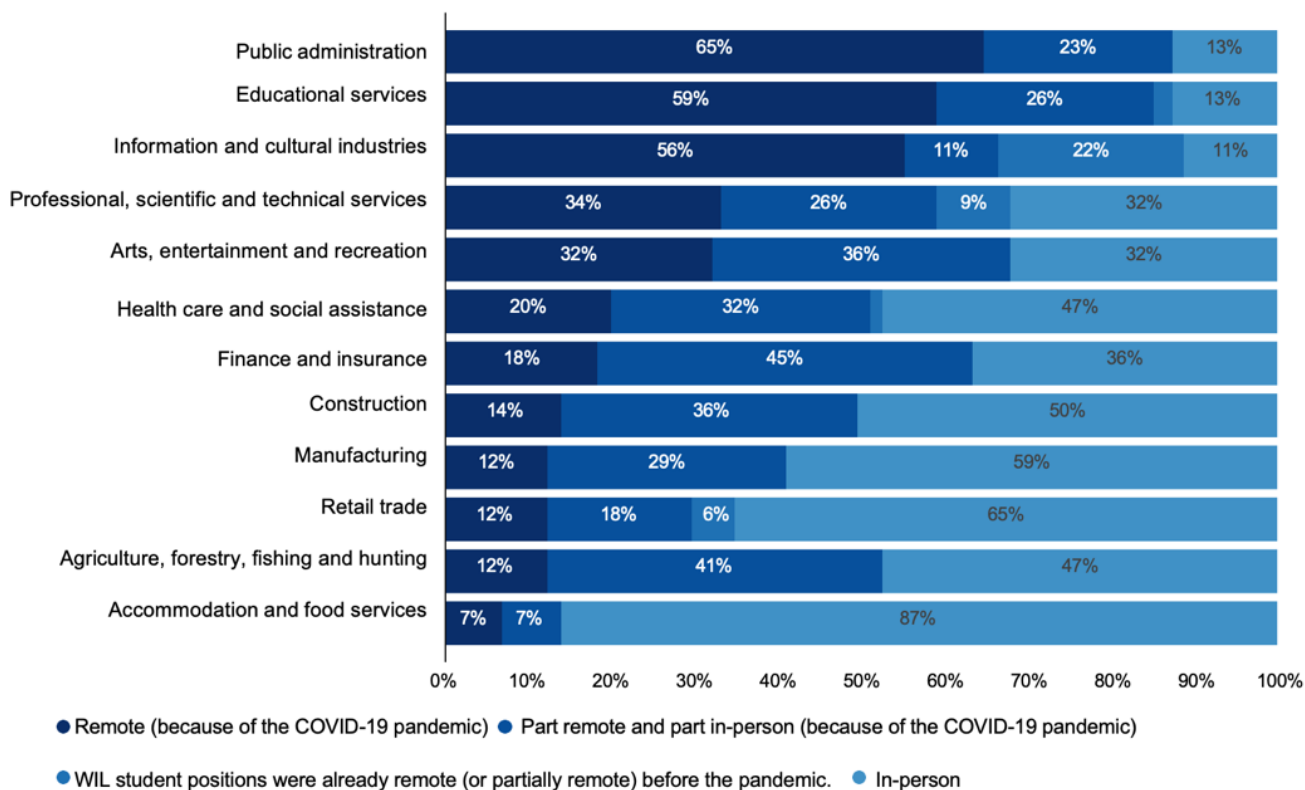| Sector	Remote	Part remote and part in-person	Already remote before pandemic	In-person
Public administration	65%	23%		13%
Educational services	59%	26%		13%
Information and cultural industries	56%	11%	22%	11%
Professional, scientific and technical services	34%	26%	9%	32%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	32%	36%		32%
Health care and social assistance	20%	32%		47%
Finance and insurance	18%	45%		36%
Construction	14%	36%		50%
Manufacturing	12%	29%		59%
Retail trade	12%	18%	6%	65%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	12%	41%		47%
Accommodation and food services	7%	7%		87%

● Remote (because of the COVID-19 pandemic) ● Part remote and part in-person (because of the COVID-19 pandemic)

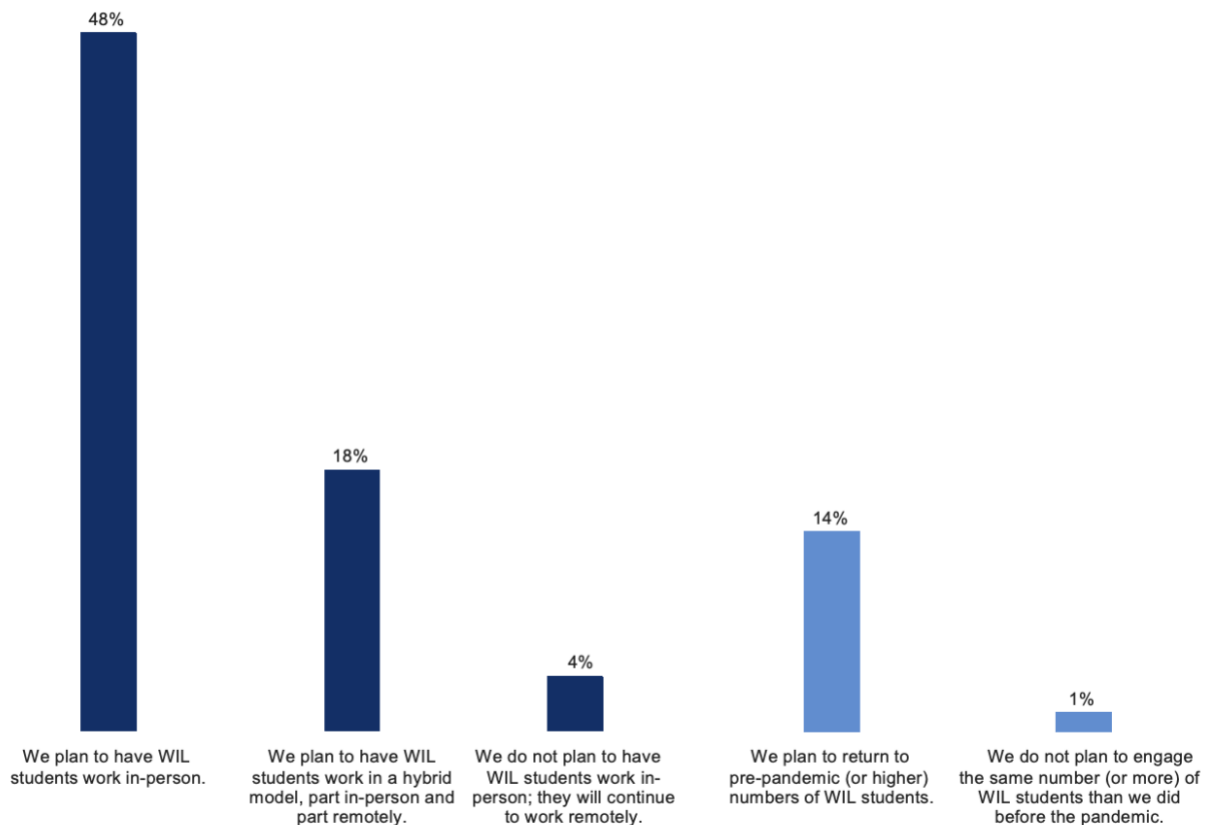● WIL student positions were already remote (or partially remote) before the pandemic. ● In-person

Only sectors representing over 1% of respondents

Figure 18: Percentage if WIL students currently working remotely or in-person by sector

In a forward-looking note, 48% of the survey respondents plan to have WIL students work in-person after the pandemic is over (Figure 19). Additionally, 18% report that their WIL students will work in a hybrid model, part in-person and part remotely. Therefore, overall, the number of students working remotely is expected to decrease dramatically in a post-pandemic world. Additionally, 14% of the participating partners plan to return to pre-pandemic (or higher) numbers of WIL students after the pandemic is over.

Percentage of respondents returning to pre-pandemic WIL approaches* after the pandemic is over

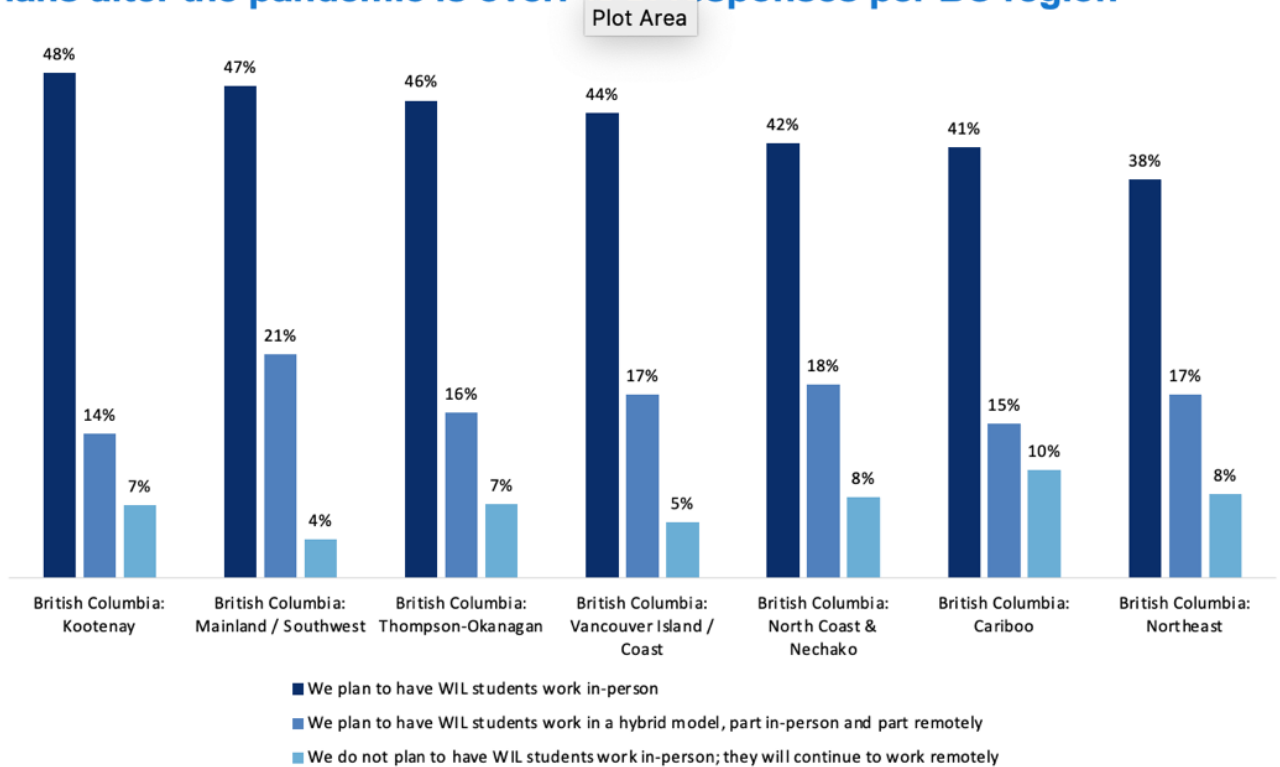|				
48%	18%	4%	14%	1%
We plan to have WIL students work in-person.	We plan to have WIL students work in a hybrid model, part in-person and part remotely.	We do not plan to have WIL students work in-person; they will continue to work remotely.	We plan to return to pre-pandemic (or higher) numbers of WIL students.	We do not plan to engage the same number (or more) of WIL students than we did before the pandemic.

*Respondents could have chosen multiple approaches.

Figure 19: Percentage of respondents returning to pre-pandemic WIL approaches after the pandemic is over

Figure 20 shows the information provided in the previous graph filtered by BC regions, revealing that most employers plan to have WIL students working in person or in a hybrid model in all BC regions after the pandemic is over. However, the Northeast is the only BC region where less than 40% of respondents plan to have WIL students work in person after the pandemic is over.

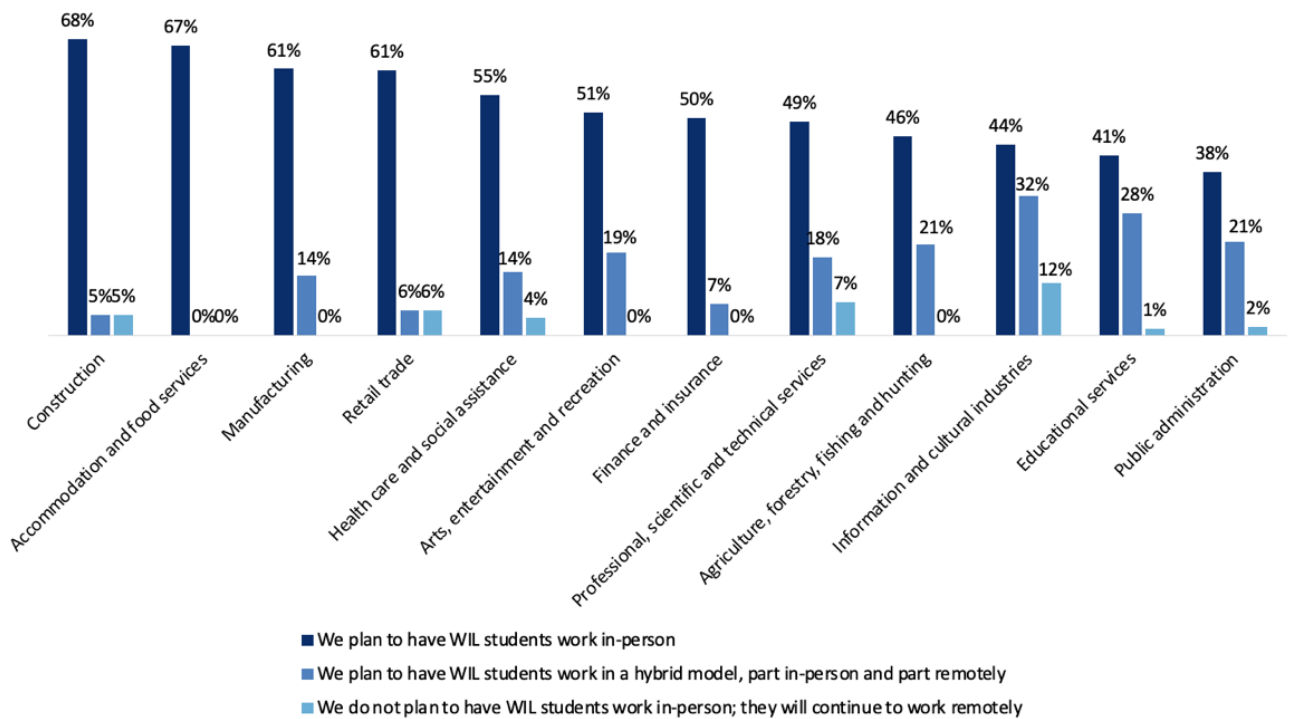Figure 20: Plans after the pandemic is over: % of responses per BC region

When filtering the same data by sectors, there are more notable differences (Figure 21). Although most employers plan to have most students work in person across all sectors, some partners plan to have more students working remotely or in a hybrid model than others. For instance, the Information and cultural industries sector plans to have similar numbers of students working in person and in a hybrid model; whereas the Accommodation and food services sector plans to have 0% of its WIL students working remotely or in a hybrid model.

Figure 21: Plans after the pandemic is over: % of responses by sector

Employers were also asked whether they plan to return to pre-pandemic or higher numbers of WIL placements after the pandemic is over, and most of them across all industrial sectors agree that this will be the case (Figure 22). In addition, 28% of Accommodation and food services respondents plan to return to pre-pandemic (or higher) numbers of WIL students, showing a noticeable increase in hiring rates compared to the Fall 2020 Survey.

Plans* after the pandemic is over: % of responses by sector** (cont.)

Sector	We plan to return to pre-pandemic (or higher) numbers of WIL students	We do not plan to engage the same number (or more) of WIL students as we did before the pandemic
Accommodation and food services	28%	0%
Retail trade	17%	0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	17%	0%
Finance and insurance	14%	7%
Construction	14%	5%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	14%	0%
Educational services	13%	0%
Public administration	13%	0%
Information and cultural industries	12%	0%
Professional, scientific and technical services	12%	1%
Manufacturing	11%	0%
Health care and social assistance	9%	1%

■ We plan to return to pre-pandemic (or higher) numbers of WIL students
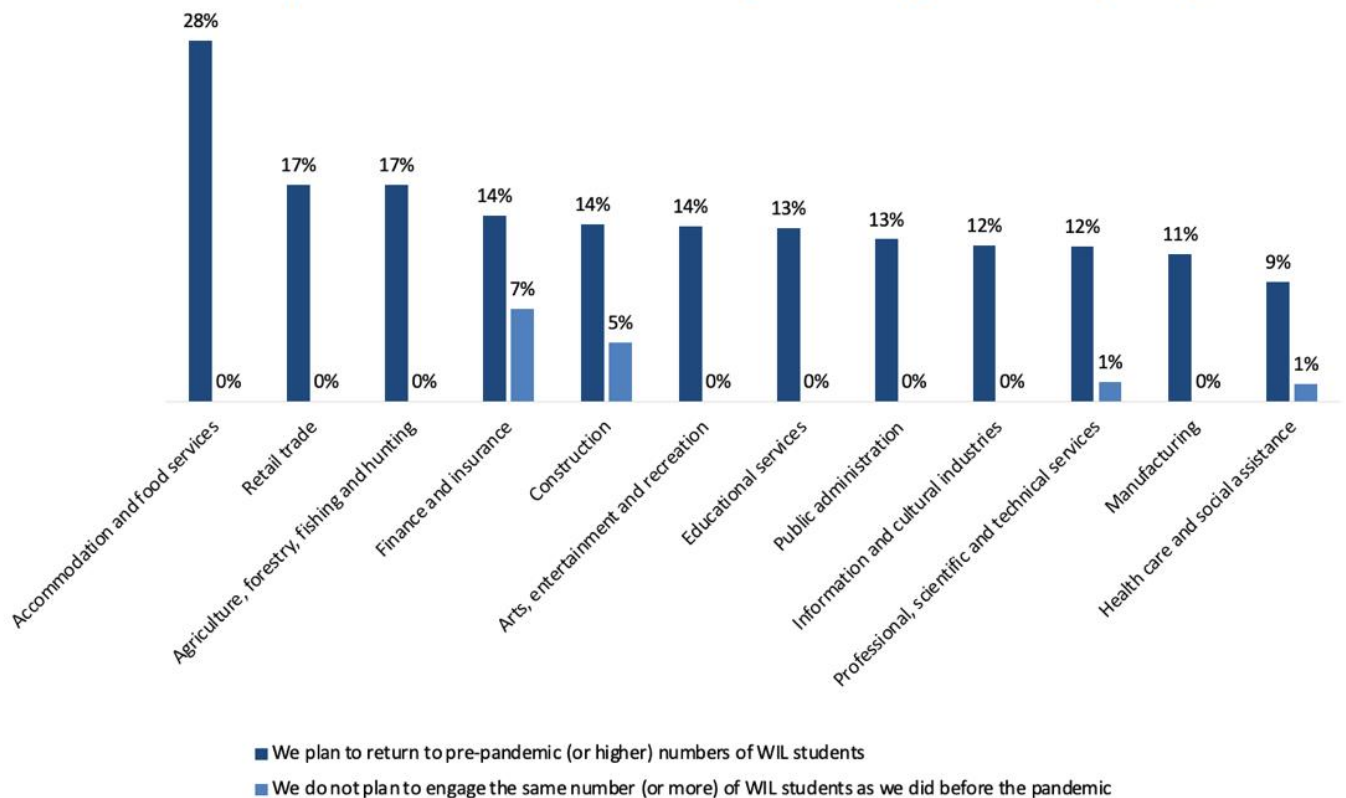■ We do not plan to engage the same number (or more) of WIL students as we did before the pandemic

*Respondents could have chosen multiple plans.
**Only sectors representing over 1% of respondents

Figure 22: Plans after the pandemic is over: % of responses by sector

When disaggregating the data by type of institution, namely research-intensive universities, teaching-intensive universities, colleges, and institutes, the results were similar across the board, with most employers planning to have students from all types of institutions working in-person after the pandemic is over. Most employers from all types of institutions also plan to return to pre-pandemic (or higher) numbers of WIL students in a post-pandemic world. Finally, a high percentage of the respondents also indicated that their students will continue to work in a hybrid model.

Plans after the pandemic is over: % of respondents by type of institution

Research- intensive universities

Teaching-intensive universities

Colleges

Institutes

● WIL students will work in-person.
● WIL students will work in a hybrid model.
● WIL students will continue to work remotely.
○ We plan to return to pre-pandemic (or higher) numbers of WIL students.
○ We do not plan to engage the same number (or more) of WIL students than we did before the pandemic.
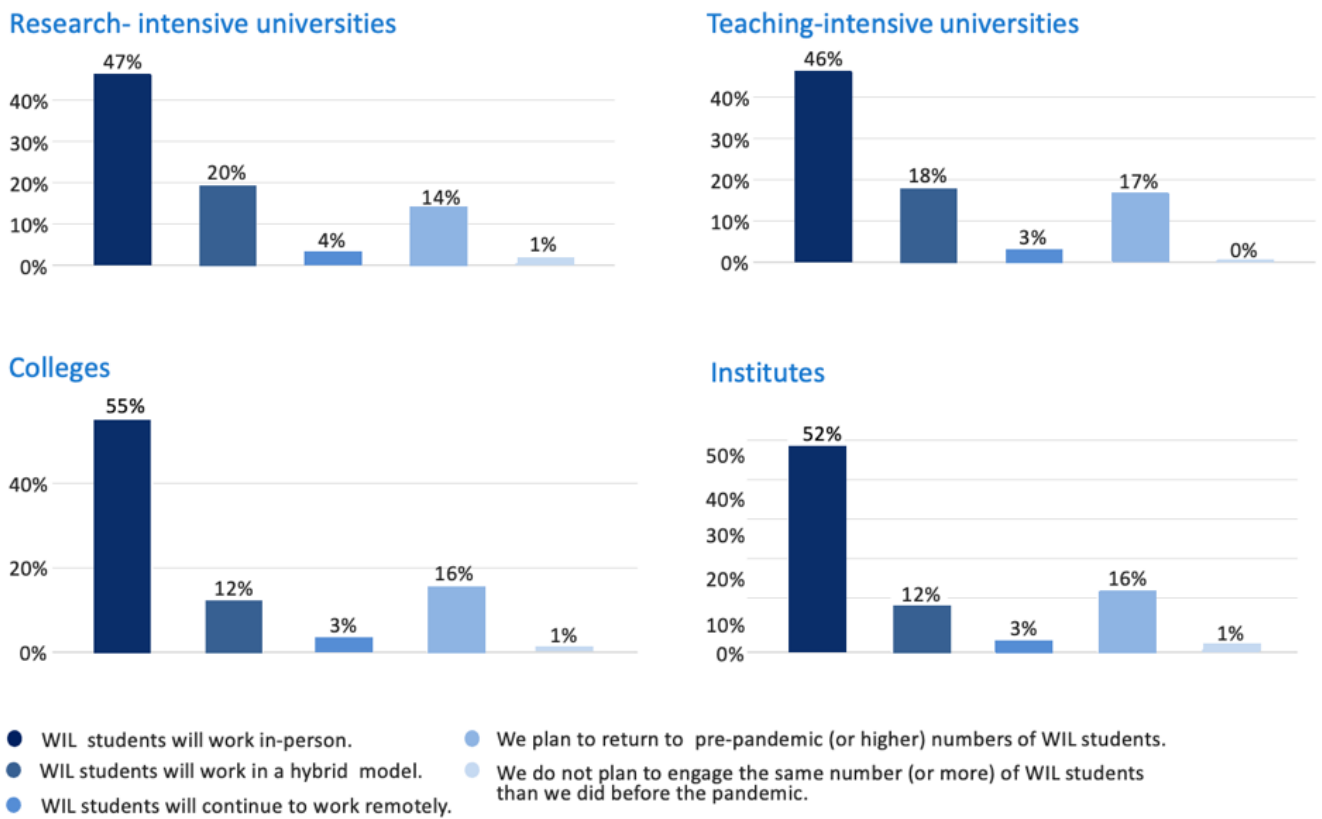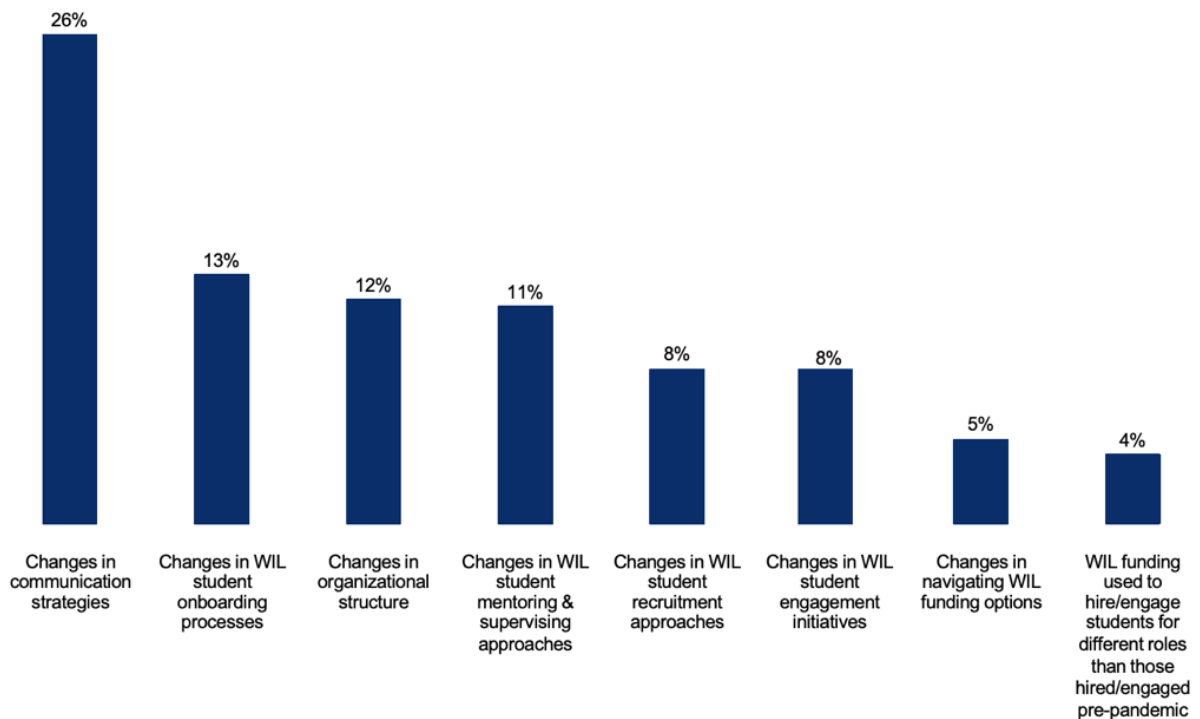
Figure 23: Plans after the pandemic is over: % of respondents by type of institution

In the spring 2021 Survey, employers were also asked about their pandemic initiatives, and it was reported that, throughout the pandemic, WIL employers implemented new protocols to adapt to the new remote work environment, and they plan to continue implementing some of these after the pandemic is over. Changes in communication strategies, WIL student onboarding processes and organizational structure were reported as the main initiatives developed during the pandemic that employers plan to maintain in a post-pandemic world (Figure 24).

New initiatives* implemented during the past year that employers plan to continue using after the pandemic is over

*These initiatives were based on the findings from survey #1 and the focus groups.

Figure 24: New initiatives implemented during the past year that employers plan to continue using after the pandemic is over

Additionally, during the focus groups, employers stated that despite the lack of in-person interactions and the shortage of informal exchanges that come with that, the series of initiatives shown in Figure 24, which included the use of various software and online communication tools, ensured students could develop good relationships and interactions with their organization's staff. These were some of the employers' comments regarding their remote work experiences with WIL students:

> *"[…] usually some of my colleagues in Ottawa would set up […] like a student mini session, so all students are encouraged to attend. So, there are some through virtual networks, Zoom, MS Teams, so the students can connect with other students on kind of similar topics of*

interest, could be [about] working permanent[ly] in the federal public service or learning about other programs [or] other initiatives that cater to students." – Focus group participant

"[…] we created a buddy system, based on what they were interested in, and that buddy helps them to, you know, [with] the orientation […] I would never do that in person […]." – Focus group participant

Post-pandemic Outlook

The last question asked on the Spring 2021 Survey was whether employers agreed that the outlook for WIL student engagements in their organizations is promising in a post-pandemic world. To this question, 90% of the participants responded that they either strongly agreed, agreed or somewhat agreed (Figure 25). And only 6% of the participants either somewhat disagreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Level of agreement with the following statement: "In a post- pandemic world, I think the outlook for WIL student engagements in my organization is promising"
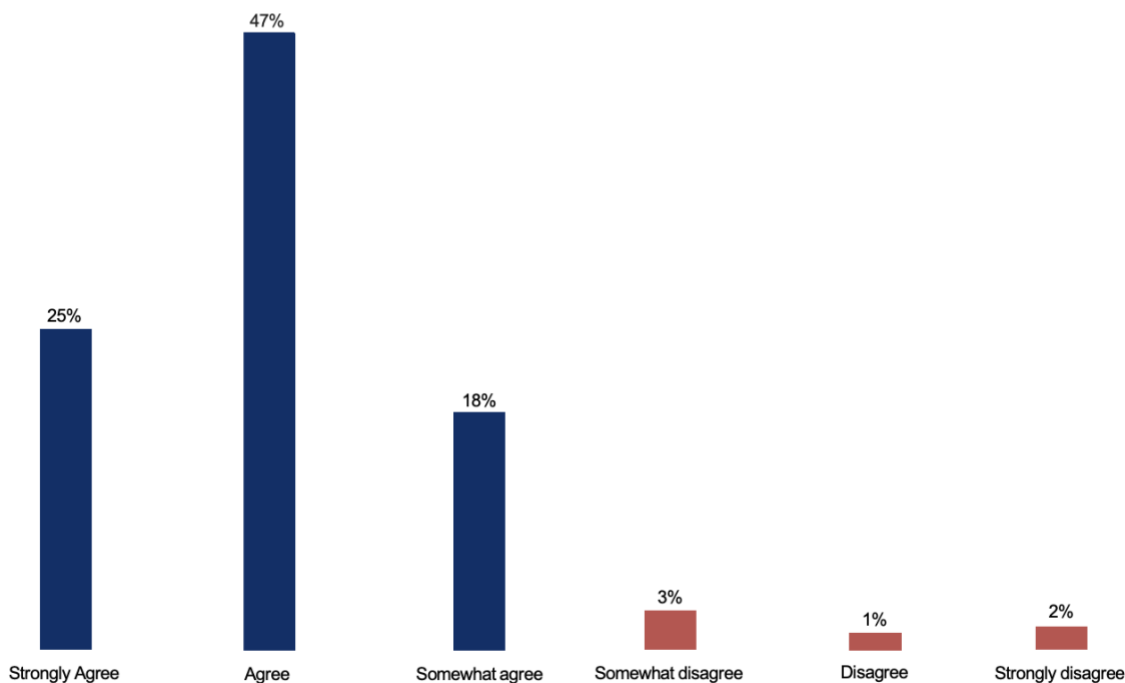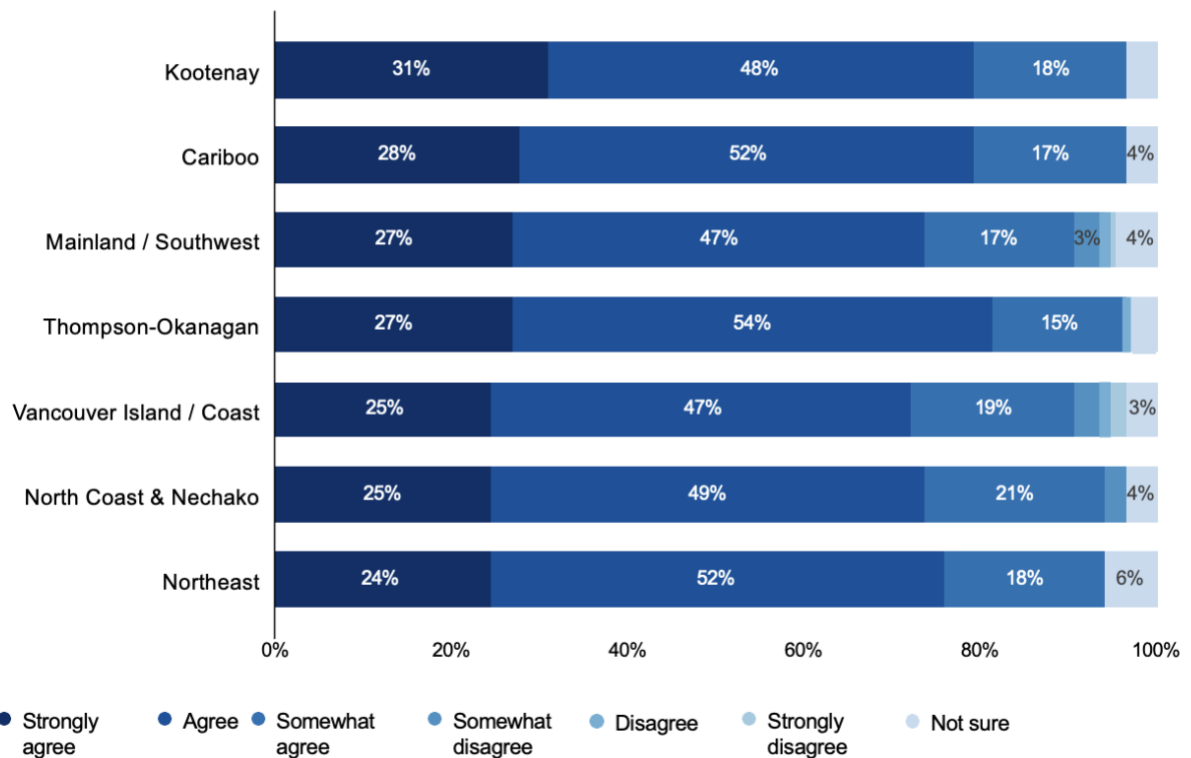
Figure 25: Post-pandemic outlook

Most survey respondents who disagreed with the statement shown in Figure 25 argued that they were facing issues related to budgeting, staffing and/or time constraints as well as general difficulties with remote supervision. On the other hand, some of those who agreed said that their organizations had been part of WIL in the past and acknowledge its benefits. Others noted

that their organizations are getting busier and see the future need of engaging more WIL students.

Figure 26 shows the level of agreement with the aforementioned statement by WIL employers of each BC region. As illustrated in the graph, there is no significant change from the overall results, since employers from all BC regions mostly agree that the outlook for WIL student engagements in their organizations is promising after the pandemic is over.

Level of agreement with the following statement: "In a post- pandemic world, I think the outlook for WIL student engagements in my organization is promising" by location: BC*
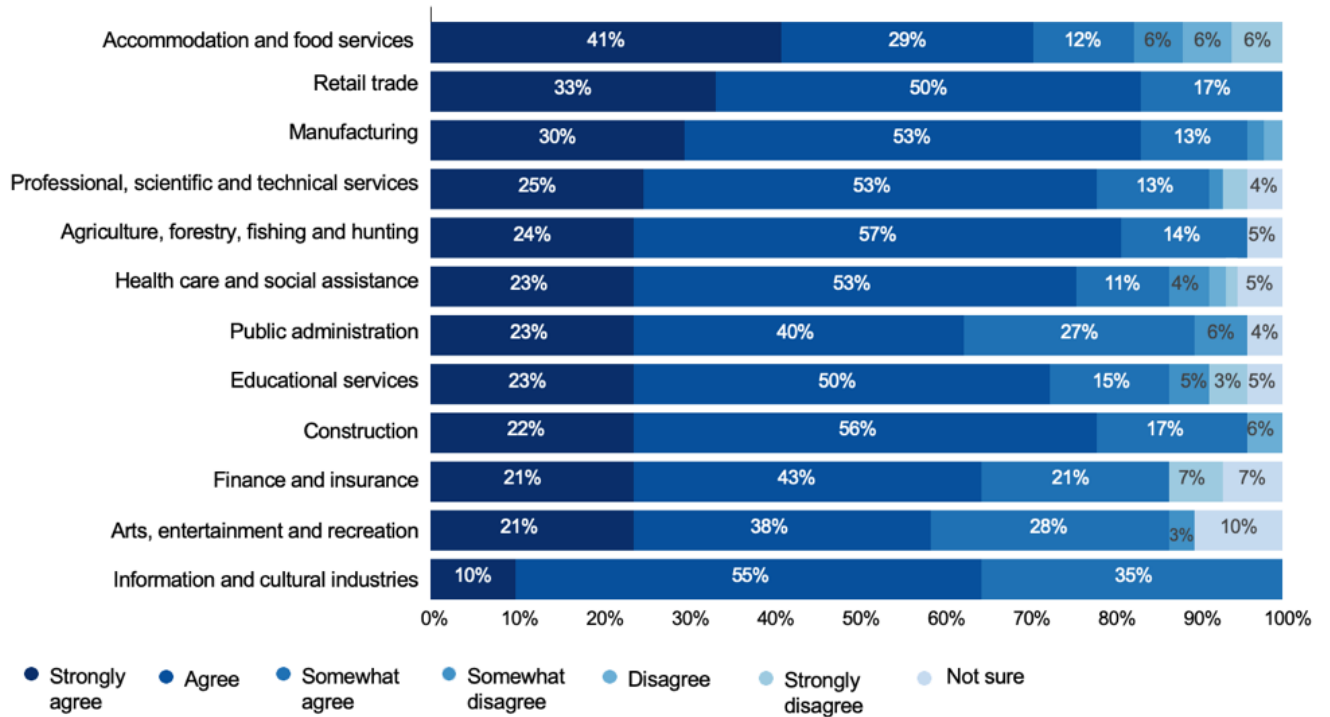
Location	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
Kootenay	31%	48%	18%				
Cariboo	28%	52%	17%	4%			
Mainland / Southwest	27%	47%	17%	3%			4%
Thompson-Okanagan	27%	54%	15%				
Vancouver Island / Coast	25%	47%	19%				3%
North Coast & Nechako	25%	49%	21%				4%
Northeast	24%	52%	18%	6%			

Respondents could have chosen multiple locations but only one outlook opinion. Assumption: that opinion applies to all locations.

Figure 26: Post-pandemic outlook by location: BC

The same post-pandemic outlook question was filtered by employers who hire students from different industrial sectors and types of post-secondary institutions, and, once again, the response was very positive across the board (Figures 27-28).

Level of agreement with the following statement: "In a post- pandemic world, I think the outlook for WIL student engagements in my organization is promising" by sector*
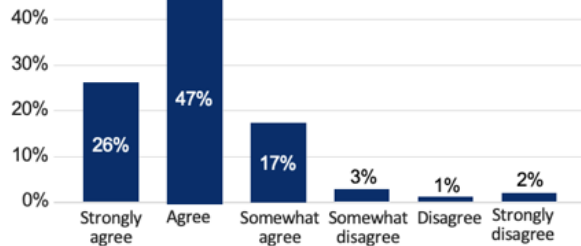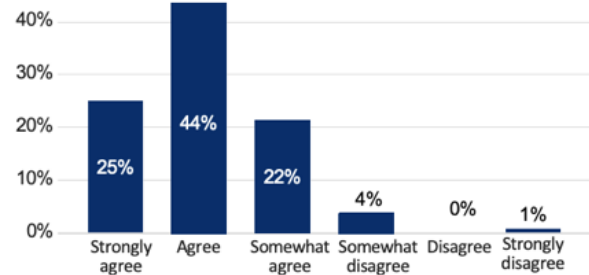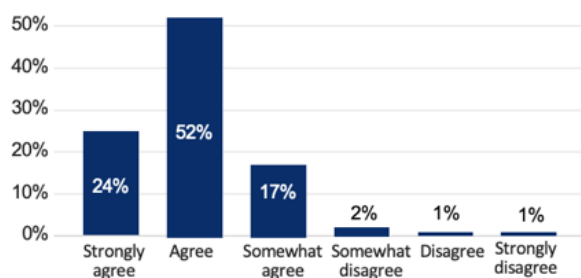
Sector	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
Accommodation and food services	41%	29%	12%	6%	6%		6%
Retail trade	33%	50%	17%				
Manufacturing	30%	53%	13%				
Professional, scientific and technical services	25%	53%	13%				4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	24%	57%	14%				5%
Health care and social assistance	23%	53%	11%	4%			5%
Public administration	23%	40%	27%		6%		4%
Educational services	23%	50%	15%	5%	3%		5%
Construction	22%	56%	17%				6%
Finance and insurance	21%	43%	21%		7%		7%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	21%	38%	28%		3%		10%
Information and cultural industries	10%	55%	35%				

*Only sectors representing over 1% of respondents

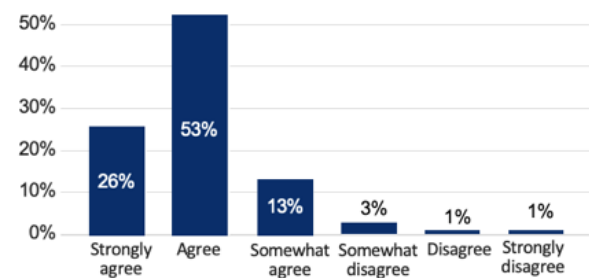Figure 27: Post-pandemic outlook by sector

Figure 28: post-pandemic outlook by type of post-secondary institution

Contact information

UBC's Planning and Institutional Research Office acted as the survey administrator. Under the direction of the Steering Committee, it provided methodological, analytical, logistical and technical support for the deployment of the two surveys and focus groups. It also acted as the data steward for the data collected from the three stages of the project. For more information, contact:

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Appendix #1: CEWIL Canada WIL Definitions Used in the Survey

The following definitions were included alongside each of the WIL types listed in the survey. A hyperlink to the original CEWIL definitions website was also included in the survey.

- **Apprenticeship**: Apprenticeship is an agreement between a person (an apprentice) who wants to learn a skill and an employer who needs a skilled worker and who is willing to sponsor the apprentice and provide paid related practical experience under the direction of a certified journeyperson in a work environment conducive to learning the tasks, activities and functions of a skilled worker. Apprenticeship combines about 80% at-the-workplace experience with 20% technical classroom training, and depending on the trade, takes about 2-5 years to complete. Both the workplace experience and the technical training are essential components of the learning experience.

- **Co-operative Education (co-op alternating and co-op internship models)**: Co-op alternating consists of alternating academic terms and paid work terms. Co-op internship consists of several co-op work terms back-to-back. In both models, work terms provide experience in a workplace setting related to the student's field of study. The number of required work terms varies by program; however, the time spent in work terms must be at least 30% of the time spent in academic study for programs over 2 years in length and 25% of time for programs 2 years and shorter in length.

- **Internships**: Offers usually one discipline specific (typically full-time), supervised, structured, paid or unpaid, for academic credit or practice placement. Internships may occur in the middle of an academic program or after all academic coursework has been completed and prior to graduation. Internships can be of any length but are typically 12 to 16 months long.

- **Entrepreneurship**: Allows a student to leverage resources, space, mentorship and/or funding to engage in the early-stage development of business start-ups and/or to advance external ideas that address real-world needs for academic credit.

- **Service Learning**: Community Service Learning (CSL) integrates meaningful community service with classroom instruction and critical reflection to enrich the learning experience and strengthen communities. In practice, students work in partnership with a community-based organization to apply their disciplinary knowledge to a challenge identified by the community.

- **Applied Research Projects**: Students are engaged in research that occurs primarily in workplaces, including consulting projects, design projects, community-based research projects.

- **Mandatory Professional Practicum/Clinical Placement**: Involves work experience under the supervision of an experienced registered or licensed professional (e.g., preceptor) in any discipline that requires practice-based work experience for professional licensure or certification. Practica are generally unpaid and, as the work is done in a supervised setting, typically students do not have their own workload/caseload.

- **Field Placement**: Provides students with an intensive part-time/short term intensive hands-on practical experience in a setting relevant to their subject of study. Field placements may not require supervision of a registered or licensed professional and the completed work experience hours are not required for professional certification. Field placements account for work-integrated educational experiences not encompassed by other forms, such as co-op, clinic, practicum, and internship.

- **Work Experience**: Intersperses one or two work terms (typically full-time) into an academic program, where work terms provide experience in a workplace setting related to the student's field of study and/or career goals.

Appendix #2: Methodology

Overview of Project

The project consisted of three main data collection phases:

Phase	Dates	Data collection method	Participant type	Number of participants
I	September – October, 2020	Survey	WIL employers and community partners working with the participating PSIs	1,494
II	March – April, 2021	Focus groups / Interviews	WIL employers and community partners from the 1st phase that volunteered to participate in the 2nd phase	29
III	May, 2021	Survey	WIL employers and community partners working with the participating PSIs	853

Both surveys were run anonymously, with each of the participating PSIs distributing them through their individual partner lists. UBC's Office of Planning and Institutional Research, the Survey Administrator, provided the templates and link for the email invitations and for two email reminders. Each PSI partner had the option to edit these templates and distribute them to their WIL partners.

The second phase of the BC WIL Employer/Community Partner Survey Project consisted of six focus groups and two one-on-one interviews with BC WIL employers/community partners, running between March and April of 2021. A total of 29 participants were part of this phase.

Survey Methodology

Both surveys consisted of four main sections: (1) demographics, (2) WIL participation, (3) WIL during COVID-19 and the coming 6-12 months, and (4) lessons learned and advice for the future. The final survey had additional questions and response choices that were informed by the findings of the 2nd phase (focus groups and interviews).

The main topics within each of the four sections included:

1. Demographics
   a. Organization's NAICS classification – sector/industry
   b. Type of organization – government, agency, non-profit, private business
   c. Full-time equivalent (FTE) employees – organization size
   d. Participant's role in the organization – president, vp, advisor, manager, supervisor…
   e. COVID-19 impact in organization – workforce reduction, hiring freeze…
2. WIL participation
   a. Provinces, territories, or countries where they hire/engage WIL students
   b. Paid vs unpaid WIL placements
   c. Time being a WIL partner
   d. PSI WIL partners
   e. Types of WIL programs they engage
3. WIL during COVID-19 and the coming 6-12 months
   a. Impact on number of WIL student placements due to the COVID-19
   b. Potential disruptions affecting WIL hiring in the next 6-12 months and level of impact
   c. Areas for which they plan to hire/engage WIL students in the next 6-12 months
   d. Resources that could enable them to hire/engage more WIL students during the next 6-12 months and their level of usefulness
   e. Shift to remote due to COVID-19?
4. Lessons learned and advice for the future
   a. If shifted to remote, what lessons could they share about having WIL students working remotely?
   b. If shifted to remote, what additional support could their WIL program have provided to support their students' transition to remote work?
   c. Further thoughts or concerns about their WIL hiring/engaging?

Both surveys were deployed using an anonymous link for all participating PSIs, generated by the Survey Administrator. The surveys were administered via the UBC Survey Tool, a cloud-based service provisioned by Qualtrics. This tool complies with the data residency restrictions of the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) as the data are stored and backed in Toronto, Ontario and backed up in Montreal, Quebec. The UBC Survey Tool has successfully completed UBC's Privacy Impact Assessment process, which assesses the privacy and security of UBC systems. Information collected using the UBC Survey Tool is kept secure using measures including data encryption.

For the analysis of survey data, Qualtrics, Tableau, and SPSS were used. A descriptive statistical approach was mainly used, to reflect the items that were most commonly selected across different types of respondents. This allowed for a comparison between different types of employers (e.g., by industrial sector, by region, by size, by WIL type) and between the two

surveys. The second survey analysis focused more on a comparative analysis, to highlight the key differences between employers' and community partners' experiences on the fall of 2020 vs the spring of 2021. Finally, open-ended responses were analyzed using NVivo and Excel. Themes were generated for every open-ended response and were then aggregated in similar groups. This qualitative analysis as well as the analysis of the focus groups and interviews from the second phase were included in this report alongside the quantitative findings. The qualitative findings of the first survey were used to both complement the findings of the survey quantitative/statistical analysis and to inform the design of phases II and III.

Focus Groups' Methodology

Focus groups and interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours. All sessions were implemented using Zoom, recorded, and then transcribed for further analysis. Each focus group started with a brief introduction of each participant and the facilitator followed by a summary of the project's context. After the introduction, participants were asked to answer and discuss six different questions:

1. What has been your experience working with students from BC post-secondary institutions since the pandemic?(Positive experiences? Barriers/challenges?)
2. What has your experience been like working with post-secondary institutions while recruiting and onboarding students?
3. What has your experience been like navigating grants and funding opportunities? (specific programs/grants)
4. What has your experience been like reporting to post-secondary institutions?
5. What has your experience been like reporting to funding agencies?
6. Finally, is there anything else that you would like to add or discuss here, with regards to your experience engaging students from BC post-secondary institutions?

Focus groups were facilitated using a funnel approach in which questions started with broad categories and terms (to elicit the topics that were at the top participants' minds). These were followed by more specific topics and follow-up questions that were added and adapted based on the idiosyncrasies of each session. Participants were encouraged to have open discussions amongst themselves and comment/build on each other's answers.

The findings were categorized into five main questions, using the five first questions discussed during the focus groups and interviews (the sixth question provided additional data that informed some of the themes found within the other five). Each question was assigned a set of main themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis. The analysis followed a method that included both structural coding–assigning conceptual phrases to segments of the interviews that relate to each of the five research questions –and concept/analytic coding– in which the analysis moves to the meso/macro level, suggesting broader interpretations that go beyond individual actions or behaviours[1].

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[1] Saldaña, Johnny (2016), *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE

The focus groups' findings were used to complement the findings of both surveys (as reflected in this report) and also to provide input about how to further edit the final survey launched on May 2021.

Appendix #3: Survey Demographics

Demographics of First Survey

Industrial Classification		
	Number	**%**
Health care and social assistance	278	19
Professional, scientific and technical services	232	16
Educational services	198	13
Public administration	115	8
Manufacturing	95	6
Arts, entertainment and recreation	91	6
Construction	53	4
Finance and insurance	43	3
Retail trade	38	3
Information and cultural industries	31	2
Accommodation and food services	30	2
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	29	2
Transportation and warehousing	26	2
Other services (except public administration)	23	2
Wholesale trade	14	1
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	8	1
Real estate and rental and leasing	8	1
Management of companies and enterprises	3	0
Utilities	2	0
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	2	0

Locations* Where Engaging WIL Students		
	Number	**%**
British Columbia	771	58
Ontario	117	9
Alberta	109	8
Outside of Canada	49	4
Quebec	47	4
Manitoba	45	3
Saskatchewan	41	3
Nova Scotia	36	3
Yukon	28	2
New Brunswick	25	2
Newfoundland and Labrador	21	2
Prince Edward Island	18	1
Northwest Territories	16	1
Nunavut	16	1

Respondents could have chosen multiple locations.

BC Locations* Where Engaging WIL Students		
	Number	**%**
British Columbia: Mainland / Southwest	672	42
British Columbia: Vancouver Island / Coast	471	29
British Columbia: Thompson-Okanagan	154	10
British Columbia: Kootenay	98	6
British Columbia: North Coast & Nechako	75	5
British Columbia: Cariboo	72	4
British Columbia: Northeast	70	4

Respondents could have chosen multiple locations.

Type of Organization		
	Number	**%**
Private Business	723	50
Non-profit Organization	306	21
Provincial Government	131	9
Federal Government	75	5
Provincial Agency	58	4
Municipal Government	30	2
Federal Agency	8	1

Organization Size		
	Number	**%**
Small (1-99 employees)	764	54
Medium (100-499 employees)	226	16
Large (500+ employees)	372	26

Respondent's Role		
	Number	**%**
Manager, Supervisor, or equivalent	551	40
President, CEO, Owner, or Executive Director	243	17
Coordinator, Supervisor, or equivalent	199	14
Coordinator, Assistant, or equivalent	113	8
Partner, Advisor, or Associate	65	5
Vice President or equivalent	49	4
C-Suite Executive(CFO, CMO, CTO, CXO)	39	3
Self-employed or contractor	27	2

Demographics of Final Survey

Industrial Classification		
	Number	**%**
Professional, scientific and technical services	142	17%
Educational Services	126	15%
Health care and social assistance	112	13%
Public administration	62	7%
Manufacturing	53	6%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	41	5%
Retail trade	31	4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	26	3%
Information and cultural industries	25	3%
Finance and insurance	23	3%
Accommodation and food services	21	2%
Construction	21	2%
Utilities	9	1%
Wholesale trade	8	1%
Other services (except public administration)	8	1%
Transportation and warehousing	7	1%
Real estate and rental and leasing	6	1%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	6	1%
Administrative and support, waste management & remediation services	4	0%
Management of companies and enterprises	3	0%

Locations* Where Engaging WIL Students		
	Number	**%**
British Columbia	739	68%
Alberta	84	8%
Ontario	83	8%
Quebec	39	4%
Saskatchewan	28	3%
Manitoba	27	2%
Nova Scotia	17	2%
Outside of Canada	16	1%
New Brunswick	12	1%
Newfoundland and Labrador	10	1%
Yukon	8	1%
Northwest Territories	8	1%
Prince Edward Island	7	1%
Nunavut	4	0%

Respondents could have chosen multiple locations.

BC Locations* Where Engaging WIL Students		
	Number	**%**
British Columbia: Mainland / Southwest	437	36%
British Columbia: Vancouver Island / Coast	355	29%
British Columbia: Thompson-Okanagan	176	14%
British Columbia: Kootenay	79	7%
British Columbia: Cariboo	60	5%
British Columbia: North Coast & Nechako	58	5%
British Columbia: Northeast	55	5%

Respondents could have chosen multiple locations.

Type of organization		
	Number	%
Private Business	433	57%
Non-profit Organization	164	22%
Provincial Government	64	8%
Federal Government	46	6%
Provincial Agency	33	4%
Municipal Government	18	2%
Federal Agency	3	0%

Organization Size		
	Number	%
Small (1-99 employees)	440	55%
Medium (100-499 employees)	114	14%
Large (500+ employees)	204	26%

Respondent's role		
	Number	%
Manager, Supervisor, or equivalent	339	46%
President, CEO, Owner, or Executive Director	142	19%
Coordinator, Supervisor, or equivalent	90	12%
Coordinator, Assistant, or equivalent	48	7%
Partner, Advisor, or Associate	44	6%
Vice President or equivalent	26	4%
C-Suite Executive (CFO, CMO, CTO, CXO)	34	5%
Self-employed or contractor	15	2%

Appendix #4: Focus Groups and Interviews Findings

Summary of Findings

In this section, the main findings for the questions asked during the focus groups and interviews are summarized.

When asked about their experiences working with students from BC PSIs, employers shared their concern for the new online work environment. They mentioned various issues related to remote work, including the difficulties and/or inabilities of students to perform the required work due to the nature of the same, the hardships in building relationships between students, co-workers and supervisors, and the complexities of remote supervision. Additionally, although some partners praised the commitment and discipline of some students, there was a consensus on the fact that remote work structures needed to be created, reconfigured and/or updated to make the online transition easier.

In terms of the recruitment and onboarding processes of PSIs, employers pointed out that having designated WIL departments in each PSI helps students be more prepared for resume and cover letter writing as well as the interview process. Additionally, employers commented that WIL departments ensure students are provided with relevant experiences according to their fields of study, given the correct amount of workload, and supervised and mentored as a way to foster better learning experiences. They also found marked differences in terms of preparation between students who were supported by a WIL department and those who were not.

Moreover, employers argued that there is a need for PSIS to have a centralized communication system for WIL programs since this helps to simplify the recruitment process (i.e., employers are able to send their available WIL placements to one individual who then shares the job postings with all the faculties and departments at each PSI, instead of having to upload the placements on each department's website themselves). Finally, they asserted that certain PSIs – especially institutions that are smaller and/or new to WIL engagements) need support in updating and streamlining their recruiting and onboarding processes.

Employers mainly expressed confusion and sometimes disappointment when asked about their experiences navigating grants and funding opportunities. Despite the fact that some positive comments arose here and there in the focus groups and interviews, most partners agreed on the fact that these opportunities are hard to learn about, access and apply for. Specifically, they mentioned that if they do not have particular contacts that inform them of certain grant opportunities, they would not be able to learn about them at all. Additionally, they argued that applications require too much data entry and are very strict in terms of wording, which decreases their chances of actually obtaining the funds. Furthermore, they commented on the need to streamline these applications in order for them to be less time-consuming.

Overall, PSIs are doing a great job with their reporting processes, since these are mostly clear and to the point, according to employers. Additionally, reporting to PSIs is mostly seen as necessary for the betterment of both students and employers, since they give students an opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences as well as provide feedback to partners, and employers have the chance to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of their student hires. However, some partners stated that not all PSIs use efficient reporting processes and, as a result, some of the reports are very time-consuming. Employers also noted that some PSIs do not require reports at all, which is counterproductive to both students and employers. Overall, these contrasting opinions suggest that perhaps those partners who are new to WIL engagements need support in adapting the mentioned streamlined and straightforward reporting processes to their institutions.

The feedback obtained from the fifth question was mixed. When asked about their experiences reporting to funding agencies, opinions of partners were evidently divided depending on the types of grants and funds they use the most. Some of them said that certain funding agencies' reporting processes were very straightforward, but others believe that reporting to funding agencies is too cumbersome. This is even reflected in a comment we recorded from one of the focus groups: "In terms of the financial, depends on which one you're talking about. Some of them are like here's your cheque. Did he work out? Thank you. Others are 'please write a 10-page report on everything he did'. So, it really, really depends on which one." In other words, there seems to be a pressing need to find ways for funding agencies to adopt similar and more varied reporting processes across the board in order to make it easier and less time-consuming for employers to report back, taking into consideration that each funding and grant opportunity has different requirements.

Detailed Findings from Focus Groups

In the following pages, the detailed findings are separated in tables by themes and sub-themes.

Employers' Experience Working with Students from BC PSIs

Major themes:
- Navigating online WIL experiences
- Independence and commitment of students

Navigating online WIL experiences
Partners shared different experiences around the new remote work environment and lack of in-person interactions. This theme can be categorized into the following sub-themes: • In-person work preferred or required • Establishing student-staff relationships • Remote onboarding initiatives

In-person work preferred or required
Some employers mentioned how they preferred in-person work and interactions because of the type of work and engagement they required from the students. Some partners even said they could not hire students to work remotely at all, given their industry/organization work requirements. **Verbatim examples:** "Well, we had a student, work experience student scheduled to join us in March of last year, and he came for a couple of days and then the pandemic hit, so then we shut down and then he came, I believe, for a couple days when we got fired back up. But everybody in the in the shop wasn't comfortable having him in our mobile, so I spoke to his teacher and said, you know, the guys aren't comfortable, we're trying to, you know, keep everything tight right now, and she totally understood and was like I get it. And so, since then, we haven't had any work experience kids come in at all because the guys just aren't comfortable having that extra person coming in and out. We haven't discussed moving forward if we want to start bringing in work experience people again because it, you know, we're all sort of used to this whole pandemic situation now […] Can't work remotely in our industry, it has to be hands-on. You know, they can't take a tire off of a car remotely, right." "So, nothing really started back up, and then went to virtual healthcare, and it's very hard to train somebody in practical hands-on applications through virtual healthcare. So, there is, I think there's positions starting up now that now that they figured out the systems, but they're still well below where they should be relative to previous years."

"And, definitely, the engagement from students and staff are quite different because it's live, and you get to see their body language, you get to see their facial expression, and you, you will know who's passionate and who's not by just their presence. Whereas being online, it's harder because there's so many elements that can go wrong."

"Because normally what we do is when we get student applications, we have in-person interviews, right? That's 95-97% of the time. The exception is when somebody like on a Co-op somewhere else in the world, and we can't talk to them face to face, but we do much prefer the face-to-face interviews because I don't think anything substitutes for that."

"And we're, we are very hands on, we do need to be in our in our office here because we're working in a facility. We've got warehousing people out there, and the HR jobs are very hands on when we're spending time out there, we're doing training, we're developing training."

Establishing student-staff relationships

Employers said that despite the lack of in-person interactions and the shortage of informal exchanges that come with that, they had started a series of initiatives to ensure students could have good relationships and interactions with their organization's staff, including use of various software and online communication tools.

Verbatim examples:
"And what has been really good is that we transitioned kind of midway for some students, and they were also able to adjust really well to the work from home situation. And we're even doing like virtual co-op socials now, that is planned and coordinated by our own co-op students, so we never had done before, and that was really, really great in terms of my experiences with them."

"Yeah so, we try our best to kind of get, because the department has the student network and usually some of my colleagues in Ottawa would set up, could be like a student mini session, so all students are encouraged to attend. So, there are some through virtual networks, Zoom, MS Team, so the students can connect with other students on kind of similar topics interest, could be working permanent in the federal public service or learning about other programs, other initiatives that caters to students."

"And the struggle that we had with her was that with the pandemic there was just no opportunity for her to meet people face to face. So, she ended up doing a lot of her presentations and interactions online, which was great, but would have been a completely different experience for her if she would have been able to do that face to face or in person."

"One thing that's worked really well is an online communications platform. So, we use Slack which, I'm sure you folks all know, and we have over 650 people on our network at this point, and I think it just comes down to how you make use of it. So, we have like channels, where people can just talk to each other and network, and people can just post things about

themselves, positive things to share with others, and that makes it really easy for people to connect with people higher up in the organization, such as staff, like myself, or the other program supervisors."

Remote onboarding initiatives

Employers acknowledged the need for different onboarding initiatives for the new remote work environment.

Verbatim examples:
"[…] we created a buddy system, based on what they were interested in, and that buddy help them to, you know, the orientation, I think it took them about a day to get through all the readings. And, you know, I would never do that in person; there's a binder there, kind of work away added over a couple of weeks, right, but I was so concerned that they needed to have that knowledge about what it is, what is the purpose, and what's our mandate […]"

"[…] we pivoted quite dramatically to how we onboarded staff to an approach where they had basically a document belt out on their first day that leads them to specific things that could read through on their own time to get acquainted with the business the projects that they were going to be working on, in addition to giving them an in person on zoom orientation. And ensuring they had a coffee shop set up with the team that the team is expected to self-initiate throughout the week."

"So, there are departmental huddles every day. Now they're virtual, right, but doesn't make a difference, or departmental huddles, and there's company huddles occasionally, and company meetings. So, they're fully a part of that of that rhythm from day one, and we have monthly virtual lunches and then the second month they're expected to make a presentation about themselves, right, and there's a template for them to, you know, talk about themselves, and so we all get to know them more. We use software, where we track everything, all the meetings, all the huddles, all the documents, right, and they get access to that, first the email, etc. So, by the end, they meet with at least every departmental head, so they have an idea of, you know, what each department does."

Independence and commitment of students

Overall, there were two sides to how employers view the need for student commitment and independence in a remote work environment: some mentioned how they needed to be more on top of students in terms of supervision and guidance while others said they preferred to have students that showed passion and commitment to the topic and this reduced the supervision and guidance required down the road. Finally, employers noticed some issues arising from the work and study commitments that some students have.
- Discipline and independence

- Passion and interest
- Studies-work balance

Discipline and independence

Some employers mentioned how the remote work environment pushed them to spend more time supervising and guiding students. Additionally, they also acknowledged that sometimes they had to prioritize a student's ability to work independently vs other skills.

Verbatim examples:
"The self-management, yeah. We agree. We've seen the same thing, so we find that we're having to be a lot more involved with them from a prioritization and to-do list template because they're not able to learn through osmosis quite the same way."

"I think, you know, naturally, younger people, students, you know, working remotely, you have to have a different level of discipline and perhaps one that they're not solely used to."

"I think, again, the only issue that we have had is in ensuring that the students that we're looking at really do work independently because in this environment we have now, even though there could be a lot of talent out there, part of the talent we really need to find are those who really are capable of working alone and independently, without having to bring them into the office (…)"

Passion and interest

Another set of employers prioritized students that were passionate about the topics they would be dealing with during their WIL engagement. In some cases, they mentioned how they approached students more like a customer (understanding their needs) and tried to tailor the WIL experience to the student's needs.

Verbatim examples:
 "So, they came to us with a passion for our cause. We were just offering, you know, what we do and seeing who was interested, but they came to us. And they are so passionate, and I think that, I would think of me and [*participant's name*], is probably the key is that they're driven to serve us, and so we have a very non-hierarchical organization as [participant's name] alluded to. Our culture is you have a passion for this, you have any ideas, then tell us how we can support you. And they have been extraordinary in coming up with ideas."

"We try to be open to them, we ask them what interests you the most, what do you want to get involved in, and then try to match them up with someone who is already in that role or who can answer their questions and help them grow and help us grow at the same time."

> "I think there needs to be a better vetting process at the college level too, in the sense that a lot of these kids are interested in mechanics, and they take the course, but they're not wanting to be a mechanic, you know, they don't see it as a career. So, I think there can be better education at the start, where you can better vet people to make sure that they're actually wanting to make a career of it, and not just a hobby."

Studies-work balance

Employers acknowledged that some students had trouble balancing their commitment to their WIL work and their studies.

Verbatim examples:

> "All I was going to say is I second the issue with our student coming to the end of her term. She's continued on in school. She's working 32 hours a week, and it has, she's run into some problems in terms of being able to balance her work and her schooling, and we're suddenly finding out about all this time that she needs to take off, of course, we're supporting her, but it was not exactly anticipated."

> "I have one student, my summer intern doing seven courses in September, and basically was overwhelmed. It was a serious issue with mental health."

> "I think, for me, I needed to be mindful that, you know, there's a balance, the students are in school, some of them working part-time, they're trying to do these practicums, they're trying to do it remotely."

Employers' Experience Working with PSIs while Recruiting and Onboarding Students

Major themes:
- Varying levels of recruiting per PSI
- PSI onboarding support before and during the process

Varying levels of recruiting per PSI

Employers shared their view on how different PSI recruitment processes and platforms worked for them. Some of the key takeaways from this discussion are:
- Overall, many employers shared the view that having a contact and knowing the right people at each institution made a big difference for their WIL recruiting experience.
- Furthermore, employers also noticed the difference when a PSI had a designated individual or department that took care of WIL for the institution.
- Employers would like more guidance and help in how to approach certain smaller PSIs that might not have all the WIL information readily available.

Verbatim examples:

"[PSI name], … So, it's all been fairly smooth and, you know, everyone is committed and dedicated. [PSI name], for the first time we're doing this with the Business School, it seems to be proactive and doing stuff online quite smooth. Second, I would say [PSI name], which is automated but not quite there yet, I think it could be more user-friendly for those who are using it and [PSI name], having used [PSI name] before for 18 months or so, seems much more manual. There's, you got to send emails to, you have to find the right person. So, whatever division or department, you want the have to find the right person, you have to email them to get things organized. On the other hand, I have found that [PSI name] has been the most interested in following up."

"[PSI name] overall, the recruitment has been really great. And I do agree that [PSI name] is much better in kind of pushing out the content, so pushing out the bundles to this specific person that posted it, versus with [PSI name], it's a little bit more difficult, you actually have to pull that information from their portal, versus I think [PSI name] does a great job, they send the full bundle out to the person who posted it, which is much more helpful, I think, at the end of the day. So, it doesn't mean that I have to log into something, pull it out, and then kind of look at it. It's actually much easier that way."

"[…] you need that specialized person that has that contact. You can't just rely on a general course instructor to create those links and find those work positions because that's just not their area of expertise."

"Dialogue and communications with the different educational institutions in my sort of experience over the last say 15 years is very interesting because I found that the relationship with the institution is very much dictated by certain individual staff or professors that are really actively looking out for their certain students, whether it's graduate students or it's fourth year students."

"So, I mentioned at the very beginning that we work with mainly [four PSI names] and we try to expand into [two PSI names]. So, we try to expand our network, but usually we get our students from the three main universities, [three PSI names]. And some of you, like [participant's name], mentioned about how I just had to send off like a statement of main criteria to the different institutions, and they will give me the resumes and a really fun package and before the packages, information. So, they've been very helpful."

"[…] I think that it can be more clear of how do we approach a [PSI name] or a smaller institution in some of these areas, like at [PSI name] and in Fort St. John to post and promote these positions. If that information was maybe more readily available, it'd just make it easier, but I also think that's probably a part of that is I'm just not up to date on it as much, that could be."

"We recently did a survey of 10 universities and colleges in BC that produce kinesiology graduates, and there's, of course, there's 5 major ones, [four PSI names], and then you've got

the smaller ones, like [participant's name] said, you've got [four PSI names]. So, the smaller ones don't have, they haven't got work integrated learning opportunities, whether it's practically or internships, they don't have those items, those opportunities set up yet or delivered. And so, it's very hard to work with them to get it set up. So, we did inquire with them recently and see which ones would like some assistance and the larger ones said they've got their act together, the smaller ones came back and said we'd like some help, but we don't know where to start. So, I think the work integrated learning, if you can reach out to the smaller schools and really help them get their program set up, that would be a big help for us."

PSI onboarding support before and during the process

This theme has been divided into two sub-themes:
- Pre-onboarding support
- Onboarding support

Pre-onboarding support

Employers appreciated PSIs that had taken the time to train and work with students on skills such as interviewing and CV preparation. According to them, they could tell the difference between students who had been through this sort of training versus those who did not. Nonetheless, they acknowledged that being good with interviews and resume writing did not always mean a student would be good for the specific job they were hiring for.

Verbatim examples
"So, we go all across Canada, so to [seven PSI names]. And I find that the universities that have solid, really good, organized co-op programs or intern programs, where they're working with the students to prepare them for interviews, you know, they prepare their resumes, so they're really working hand in hand with them, and they come really prepared for interviews. And they come across as much more confident. We've dealt with a couple of smaller campuses that maybe don't have that resource, and it's quite noticeable the difference."

"I would say some students are awesome at cover letters and resumes. Other students are not, and it's usually not correlated with their actual performance on the job, is my experience. So, coaching for them is something that's great, and I know Sauder does a good job of it, for example, but other faculties could probably support more in that area as well."

"Because they had the resume workshop, they had the social skills, […] the etiquette, we even had etiquette classes, and the whole forks and spoons and everything. So, that was what we went to in the health department at that time. But I'm just saying, even if some of these organizations, the PSIs have the capability, maybe the students aren't taking full advantage of it, maybe."

Onboarding support

For the onboarding process, employers noticed a difference between students that came from PSIs that offered additional support and guidance and those that did not.

Verbatim examples
"But one of the things that I've also observed is that different programs are involved into the internship in different ways. And the ones that are a little bit more involved on the back end with the students, the students seem to be really accountable. So, they have an academic counselor to sort out the hired, a couple of advanced students, so the business analytical students on grants through them. And we found that they were incredibly involved with those students on the back end. So, they did check in with them on how things were going, what they needed differently from a support standpoint, and that seemed to work really well for the students."

"They almost had a degree of mentorship through their academic advisor, whoever that was, and were held accountable to making sure they were achieving certain milestones because they had an academic submission requirement as part of the internship. They had to submit a final report to their professor, so that was quite interesting because it forced them to really complete a lot in the internship. They had something to show for it on their final report, so that led to a degree of innovation and ownership that we really observed with those two interns in particular, that was a little bit different from some of the other students we'd seen."

"So, but it was for the health care management program, and over there, we actually had a department coordinator. So, we even have, we'd also have co-op and everything and internships, but after the graduation, you also have to do a residency, a year-long to two year-long residency in the healthcare field. And they prepared us all, as student leaders, student organizations will help prepare for the classes, but the coordinators and the department took a huge interest in preparing us and keeping that level of maturity, that level of stamina, that high standard of professionalism basically to go out into the world, to go out into the professional world, to go out into the hospitals and clinics, the hospices, the NGOs, everything basically [...]"

Employers' Experience Navigating Grants and Funding Opportunities

Major themes:
- Ease of use and customer service
- Streamlining needed

Ease of use and customer service

Employers had various types of experiences dealing with grant and funding applications. Overall, their positive and negative comments revolved around the ease of use of specific forms and systems and how responsive the granting agencies were.

Verbatim examples:
"And I would say Venture for Canada, far and above, is the absolute easiest process. You apply once and you're forever approved. All you then do is submit your students, which is amazing. I think that something that's challenging is when they had eligibility criteria on their website, but then they ask you new questions that turned out to be must have eligibility criteria for your students, once you've already gone through all the work and process of finding and hiring your students. So, for example, Innovate BC was not transparent anywhere on their."
application or eligibility criteria that the student had to be located in BC. So, you only found that out when you'd already hired your students and went to submit them through the portal. So, stuff like that is incredibly challenging. I would say overall transparency is a massive issue in the grant space."

"[…] I agree, like iTech, or that's how I call it, the ITAC Program, they are so responsive. I love working with them. Thank goodness most of my roles are in there, but Magnet has been really slow. Certain ones just haven't been the best. I know a couple, like WIL Digital changed hands or changed platforms, and they've been a little bit more responsive, but it also is kind of a struggle as well."

"I don't know if any of you have used Venture for Canada. They have a weird application system, and it's done through Google Forms. It's not kept in one portal. I don't know what the status of my application is. I find it the most difficult one to deal with, and that's the one that has the most emails and, like, I have to connect with a specific person every time. Thank goodness I have a person to connect with every time, but that one, even though it's actually is quite beneficial […]"

[referring to Skill Source BC grant application] "It's government man, no, it was lots of paperwork, lots of, yeah, it took some time to fill out all the forms and that to get the funding. It wasn't easy."

"I found it so confusing, with the Canada Summer Job funding, we can apply for that, but if we apply for SWPP funding through another organization, you can't do that if you're with a Canada Summer Jobs, but it's really difficult to get that information. And then another one

that I found that [PSI name] had some funding for a summer student, for a co-op student, but it wasn't communicated very well that that was one time only funding, and it could never be applied for again. I mean, we found that out, not a problem, but it would have been nice to know that ahead of time, but the SWPP funding and the Canada Summer Jobs funding, that is so confusing, and I think I finally, after two years, figured it out."

Streamlining needed

Additional to ease of use and customer service, employers also agreed overall that application processes for funding and grants need to be streamlined – for example, by centralizing all information and applications through one portal – in order for them to learn about and apply to grants and funding opportunities in an easier manner. Some employers argue this lack of streamlining has taken too much time from them, which they would rather use in their actual job for the organization.

Verbatim examples:
"I've got too much information. How's that? I get links galore, and it's, let's put it this way, it sucks out so much time to fill these in, it's ridiculous. When I was a student, too many years ago now, we filled out one application, and it went to all the scholarships. And the ones that we were good at, and the ones that we fit in, then we could follow up on those. If we had a system like that here, it would be tremendous, where I would fill out one application, fire it off and then find out where I fit for that. Because, like I said, right now I have so many applications I have to fill out, that my time, which I'm kind of hoping to get to real work, is taken up. Anyways, that's my two bits. The accessing funding is good. We usually get some funding for students. Figuring out which ones to apply for, and which ones we can get in in time, and going through the list of them is a two-person job, and, like I said, it sucks up too much time for us."

"I would say, overall, and I would say this last year, and I think it's maybe more funding has been available through the pandemic to try and encourage people to…. So, that's where I'm seeing the streamlining is in the past year. Prior to that it, it took a lot of poking around to find different program would work for or not work, so it seems a lot easier now."

"I wish there was one portal for everything. Honestly, I am managing…between ITAC Career Ready, Magnet, which is the new name for things; I'm also working with the WIL digital program, I'm working with Innovate BC in terms of the international grant that they had. And there's so many more funding opportunities that are coming up, not just for co-op students but also for six months, new graduate interns and opportunities. I think the Youth Dividend Program was one of them. I think there was the ISI initiative from Innovate BC, and I've touched on all of them, and it has been varying degrees of ease. I would say the tech-inclined ones, thankfully enough. for my field have been really easy to use, you know, when you think tech-inclined grants, would also be user friendly, for the most part, but yeah. So, it has been quite difficult just managing it all, but I've had to build my own system for the entire company as to home managing it, tracking it, the time spent on it each month."

Major themes:
- The PSIs' reporting process is streamlined and straightforward.
- The PSIs' reporting process is time-consuming.
- Some PSIs do not require reports from partners.

The PSIs' reporting process is streamlined and straightforward.
Most partners approached during the focus groups described their reporting experiences with PSIs as positive. Specifically, they mentioned that the PSIs' reporting processes are: • straightforward, • streamlined and innovative.

Straightforwardness
The sub-theme that was referenced the most in this question was the straightforwardness of PSIs' reporting processes. Partners affirmed that reporting to PSIs is easy, since they are only required to share a brief recount of their main highlights of working with WIL students. **Verbatim examples:** "Well, we've had no issues reporting to the post-secondary institutions. It's usually a case of co-op term report, and then essentially filing how did you like your student? Was it good or bad? They really provided a wonderful list of things and how we rank them, so it didn't really require much in the way of effort on our part to answer their questions. So, for the post-secondary institutions, that was really nice. All we have to do is essentially fill out a premade form with a couple of comments and that sort of thing, which guided us towards the kind of information they wanted." "I mean, I agree, post-secondary institutions, it's a breeze." "Experience reporting to post-secondary institutions, not a problem. You know, sometimes it's a form. Sometimes it's a couple of questions to answer in email." "We always have the students do a what-have-I-learned student summary, and it's just a one-to-two-page document, and we just submitted it to the university, the specific department that funded the internship. That was all we did." "So, there's the formal reporting timeline, and we use a template, so I don't find it too onerous."

"I've never had too much of a, you know, I've never felt it too onerous for the little reporting that we do for co-op students from [PSI name]."

Streamlining and innovation

The second major sub-theme in terms of reporting to PSIs is the current streamlining and innovation involved with this process. Partners communicated that PSIs have been using new technologies to move to more efficient and concise modalities of reporting.

Verbatim examples:
"[...] just our experience working with the post-secondary institutions, because I've been doing this for a while, I've been able to see the streamlining, right? So, used to be quite cumbersome with, you know, yeah, just, you know, back and forth, back and forth, you know, looking at candidates' interviewing, but with the technology and the post-secondary institutions obviously knowing the value of having their students' work ready, that's where I see the streamlining, is the programs themselves have really, really been good. Some are way better than others, but generally they're really good."

"I'd say now it's moving almost to evaluation, is becoming more like a multimedia presentation. It doesn't anymore have to be this big written report. It may be just through pictures and quotes, a little video, and it's becoming a lot more relevant, I find, and impactful than another report to sit on a shelf that nobody will look at again. So, I think that we are finally moving to some innovation in terms of evaluation and reporting."

"So, I have to say that reporting to the schools has been no issue. It's very efficient."

The PSIs' reporting process is time-consuming.

Employers also mentioned that reporting processes can become time-consuming at times because some PSIs, mainly colleges, have different, more demanding reporting processes.

Verbatim examples:

"[PSI name] has the process where I had to fill out an online kind of midterm, both the student and I, online filled out the learning assessment, and then had a meeting with the co-op advisor, and then same thing happens at the end of the program. So, it's a little bit time consuming."

"I think the frustrating part for me was to out so much time trying to capture what was said, what was the experience from the clients' point of view because the demand for reporting it's

such that you have to be very calculating. So, that was one of my frustration and my experience."

"Our co-ops do have to do reports because of course that's part of science. So, their report has to document their journey, in a sense, because they're doing real work, you know, so their work may end up in a future Battery design. So, they're just kind of like a junior scientist, so they do have to do. It is a pain point for them for sure, sometimes they can be 50 pages, but it is kept on file, so it's kept as part of our library, like a lab book, and then it gets redacted a little bit, anything that's confidential, but that is turned into their co-op advisor as proof. So, it's a bit cumbersome, but […] we would like some content."

Some PSIs do not require reports from partners

A smaller portion of the partners argued that they are not required to report back to PSIs, a fact that some were indifferent to but that others found counterproductive since students are not able to receive constructive feedback, and employers do not get the chance to provide insights regarding their experiences with WIL students.

Verbatim examples:
"Quick note, we don't have much to report, except just the number of hours that the volunteers committed for our organization."

"We don't necessarily do a report back, but that data is available to all of the schools to look at, the number of students, the number of hours and all of that. So, we have a shared system."

"I don't recall ever being asked to even submit a quick, you know, review form or sheet on how was your experience with so and so, who came to you from fourth-year biology at [PSI name]or [PSI name] or someone, and asking me to spend even just an hour, which I would do willingly, to provide feedback back to that institution on how it went over the course of the year, what was good, what could be improved."

Major themes:
- The funding agencies' reporting process is straightforward.
- The funding agencies' reporting process is too cumbersome.
- Recommendation to use varied approaches

The funding agencies' reporting process is straightforward.

About half of the employers interviewed asserted that reporting to certain funding agencies was fairly simple and did not take away much of their time.

Verbatim examples:
"The reporting is quite easy, and I don't mean easy, it's straightforward. You have a set of outcomes that you predicted that you were going to do and then, you reflect on those outcomes and then, you report whether you achieved those outcomes. So, we were going to meet 10 people, the program was going to do X, Y and Z, and the student had to go through these levels, and so that's pretty easy."

"For the Canada-wide, so the Canada Student Grant, for instance, they list a series of questions, how many hours did they work, what was their job, what was the outcome, did you end up hiring them, and feedback on their system, did it work for you, and all that sort of stuff. So, that reporting is quite simple to use. So yeah, it's been great."

"It's pretty straightforward. It's online. They're pretty good at sending you email reminders. I haven't had any trouble with the Canada Summer Students at all reporting."

"Yeah, generally, it's been pretty straightforward. We've used MITACS, Venture for Canada, and Canada Youth Grant. And they were they were all pretty standard, both in terms of the application process, as well as any reporting that needed to be done wasn't labor intensive."

"I think MITACS is one of the easiest because with MITACS, you just pay an invoice, and they pay the students, so they're the employer on record."

The funding agencies' reporting process is too cumbersome.

The other half of the partners who attended our focus groups found that reporting to funding agencies was unnecessarily onerous. Additionally, they noted that although grant applications have similar requirements, the reports are very different across the board.

Verbatim examples:
"The other thing that's talking about grants sometimes is reporting. Like oh my God, they have got to streamline the reporting. That is brutal. You are doing syllable PDF, Excel doc, type

form, Survey Monkeys, and they all want the same thing, but they asked for it in a different way, and it is not remotely streamlined. So, that is brutal."

"That is every single hiring grant, requires you to report something, and the reporting is different for every single one. That makes it incredibly hard."

"But it is the financial institution, the financial part, the funding part that takes [too] long."

"When it gets difficult is when funders just want the numbers, and the numbers don't tell the story, or the numbers will…in one case, let's just say that, you know, during Covid, let's say that the project was set out, and the student was set out to meet 15 families a week in person. Well, Covid will restrict that, so if I was to just do the numbers, then it wouldn't work because it's in person, right? So, technically, in-person, that student met zero people, but through Zoom, they met 15 people. Do you see? Right? So, if there's no way for us to explain that, then technically, that student had met zero people, and then the outcome would not been successful. So, if there's the narrative, when organizations require just the numbers, we often bring in the narrative too to explain that. And often, they just, they don't want the narrative because they have to read through it, right? So, that's difficult. That's when it becomes difficult."

These components of the funding agencies' reports were found particularly cumbersome:

"So, at the end of the grant, you have to submit a whole bunch of things to get reimbursed. Often, it's things like pay stubs, fill in one or one to seven forms, in some cases. Sometimes you're submitting monthly. Sometimes you're submitting quarterly. It really depends on the grant, but they're all asking you for the same thing. And, for the most part, they're not asking for in a way that makes a lot of sense. So, for an employer that doesn't understand how to navigate a payroll system with any degree or certification, that's really overwhelming."

"It's when you're expected to be the employer on record that it seems to be more challenging."

"Yeah, and the financial, the financing or funding, I understand it's money involved, and they want to make sure it's all, you know, kosher. But it can be a pain, that can be a pain. And some of them require, I think, Magnet in particular, students to fill out stuff, and it's beyond my control, and you really can't see what's happening. And some cases with me, it's been chasing the students after they're done, and they've gone back to school, and just have to, you know, before we get all $5,000 or save $500, just have to go after them for them to log on and fill out something."

"The only thing I would say, because we hire so many students, it would be really, really helpful if there was a form where you have, there's a lot of repeated data entry, like a lot, like out of the 15 questions or whatever it is, 13 are repeated. Just do the data entry once and ask us the two or three questions that are different would be way better because I just find it's a

huge amount of work to do the data entry. And then, the other thing I would say, the reporting in general, like there's eight different forms for SWPP, and four of them have completely overlapping information. If there was a way to just enter that information once, have it follow the forms through the system, and then you're just filling in the things that are different, it would be much better."

Recommendation to use varied approaches

In an attempt to help solve some of the issues related to reporting to funding agencies, especially the time-consuming part, some of the employers recommended using more varied approaches such reporting through multimedia (i.e., images, videos, presentations, etc.) instead of writing large essays.

Verbatim examples:
"I don't think any of us like writing reports. So, if we can do away with that, and when we say get into the technology-focused, it just is current to the times."

"I guess they could have a choice, the multimedia video or the essays, you know."

"If they have an option with the multimedia, just taking the pictures, doing a little video, that might have been a lot less time consuming."