



**TALENT  
FORWARD**

# **WORKING WITH CHAMBERS & EMPLOYERS**

**A toolkit for BC public post-secondary school looking to build stronger relationships with the BC Chamber Network**

  
BC Chamber of Commerce  
Know what's on BC's mind.



## WORKING WITH CHAMBERS

Across BC, local Chambers and Boards of Trade represent the interests and voices of numerous businesses, government, and not-for-profit organizations. Working with your local Chamber can be an effective way to connect your work-integrated learning students with local employers.

Through the Talent Forward program, we worked with Chambers across BC on various educational webinars and digital marketing strategies. Review these best practices for working with local Chambers or Boards of Trade in your area:

- 1. Determine the existing relationship:** Many Chambers are connected to their post-secondary institution(s) already. Determine who has been in touch with the Chamber in the past so that you can easily explain what your work-integrated learning role is and how it might be different from other PSI staff that have worked with the Chamber in the past.
- 2. Define your ask.** Before reaching out, outline what your ask is. Do you want to advertise? Participate in an event? Take part in a Facebook Live?

**TIP: Go where the members are engaging already!** If the Chamber has been successful in reaching members through networking events or social media platforms, look for ways to promote students through those channels. Getting attendance at a stand-alone event/webinar on WIL student talent can be challenging.

- 3. Do your research.** Before reaching out to a Chamber, try to get a sense of their priorities, approaches, and services by reviewing their digital presence to understand:

**Goals:** What issues or challenges does the Chamber focus on? How do they seek to help their members?

**Channels:** What ways does the Chamber use to communicate with its members?

- What events do they use to connect with members?
- Which social media platforms do their members engage on?
- Do they have other ways of communicating with their members? (Newsletters, website/blog, print, radio, or television)

**Voice:** Do you notice any consistent language that the Chamber is using? Are there any hashtags that give you clues as to what is important to this Chamber?



4. **Ask for information on the labour market:** Chambers have a strong sense of what is happening in their local labour market. It will be easier to pitch your idea if you understand the Chamber's community and membership. Ask these types of questions:
  - What types of businesses does the Chamber support? What percentage of their members are not-for-profits?
  - What are the challenges that their members face when finding labour?
  - What might be some of the barriers for their members when it comes to engaging with students?

5. **Set expectations.** If you are looking to partner on an initiative, it can be helpful to set expectations. What types of activities or actions do you want the Chamber to take? What will your post-secondary institution contribute in terms of promotions or cost?

It is helpful if you can put together a simple proposal document that clearly outlines the expectations of both your post-secondary school and the participating Chamber. (See the *Sample Expectations Document* in the Appendix below)

6. **Be prepared to pay.** Many Chambers are supportive of building stronger relationships with post-secondary institutions, but at the same time, they still need to ensure that they have the revenue to support their not-for-profit organization. Though not all Chambers will require payment, be prepared to offer some compensation for any initiatives you propose.
7. **Support the Chamber.** Many Chambers do amazing work on limited staffing. If you are asking a Chamber to work with you, offer to support the Chamber by providing some of the following:

- Draft content for social media/ press releases/ blogs/ newsletters, etc
- Images of employers/ students to support marketing
- Opportunities to cross-promote events or initiatives through your PSI channels



## COMMUNICATING WITH EMPLOYERS

As part of the Talent Forward program, we also offered advising to employers on how to access work-integrated learning in BC. Here are lessons we learned in communicating with employers about WIL during our project.

1. **Clarify what WIL is:** When employers think about hiring a student, they may just be thinking about hiring a post-secondary student for part-time or summer employment. They may not understand that work-integrated learning is a specific way to work with students in partnership with a post-secondary institution, focused on providing learning opportunities for the student.
2. **Make it easy to find your WIL opportunities online:** Finding the right work-integrated learning program can be challenging for employers who are often short on time.

Google your PSI's WIL programs to see how easy or hard it is to find information on WIL. Is it clear what WIL programs your PSI offers or how to connect with someone to ask questions?

3. **Treat employers like customers:** From the point that an employer reaches out to a PSI to the point that they bring a student onboard, create a positive, communicative employer-focused experience that builds a lasting relationship.

Even if your program doesn't have the type of WIL that the employer is initially looking for, still have a conversation with the employer to understand their needs and explain the types of WIL at your PSI. Sometimes, employers may come back to you in the future.

4. **Help employers understand the basics:** New WIL employers may not understand the basics of working with students so it is important to educate them on the WIL process from start-to-finish including roles & responsibilities, how to recruit students, hiring timelines, pay expectations, and onboarding. We highly recommend that this information is easily accessible on your PSI website.
5. **Translate academic jargon:** Employers may not care about the specific definition of WIL or program that the student is taking. They are often interested in the duration the student is available or if the student is available for full-time work or project-based roles. Consider using simple, business-focused language for employer-facing information and resources.



6. **Make it easy to connect:** When employers are looking to connect for the first time, make it simple for them. We found that scheduling a brief phone call was the best way to answer questions and provide resources. Also, employers appreciate a “*face to a name*” so having a direct contact person for them to reach out to is also helpful.
7. **Provide funding info:** Getting funding to hire a student is a major incentive for employers and something we found many employers reached out to us for. Provide links and resources to the employer that gives them up-to-date information on WIL-focused funding.
8. **Build in employer-focused stories:** Many post-secondary institutions share WIL-focused stories from the student’s perspective. While this can be inspiring, be sure to also highlight stories from employers that focus on the benefits to their organizations from bringing students onboard.
9. **Choose the right images:** Be sure to consider your local labour market when choosing images to support your employer resources. For example, employers in Northern BC (an economy that relies on a lot of primary resources) may not resonate with a picture of students dressed in business attire.
10. **Recognize that the process will take time:** For SMEs, the ramp-up to hiring a student may take some time. They may need to be reminded of how student talent can help multiple times before the timing is right for them to hire a student. Also due to the realities of running an SME, employers may have good intentions on hiring but can be sidelined easily due to other priorities.
11. **Design resources to support:** For a new WIL employer, having access to well-branded and organized resources can be beneficial to know what to expect and how to effectively work with a student.

Here are some examples of resources that we created for this project:

- [Recruiting Student Talent](#)
- [Onboarding Student Talent](#)
- [Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion when Hiring a Student](#)
- [What Can Students Do?](#)
- [What Work-Integrated Learning Can Do for You \(VIDEO\)](#)



## HOSTING WEBINARS

*Through the duration of our project, we planned and coordinated 6 webinars with Chambers and Boards of Trade across BC. Originally, we had planned to do in-person events but had to pivot due to COVID-19. Here is what we learned about doing webinars and what we would recommend.*

### **Insights:**

- Getting registration for a stand-alone webinar on WIL can be challenging. Be prepared to do a lot of promotions to get people to attend.
- Support the Chamber with promotions of your webinar as much as you can. Some Chambers have limited staffing and marketing support:
  - Provide promotional materials to help promote the event, especially if it's a stand-alone event (e.g. social tiles, social content, newsletter content, event banners)
  - Invite your PSI to support with promotions through their marketing channels
- Having an employer speak about working with students is powerful. Consider ways that you can highlight actual employers (e.g. an employer panel as part of the webinar).
  - Ensure your stories are employer-focused, not student-focused. How did the employer benefit from working with the student?
  - Make sure that the employer(s) that you highlight are representative of the Chamber members. Don't highlight a large corporation that hires students when the majority of Chamber members are SMEs.
  - Ideally, ensure that the employers highlighted are members of the Chamber.

### **Recommendations:**

- Instead of a webinar, consider being involved in other events that the Chamber already hosts such as networking events or other speaker panels.
- Consider incentives – for example, Chamber members may value networking opportunities or a free lunch as part of attending your event. Ask your Chamber what they think would bring their members out to your event.
- Repetition is key to keep WIL top-of-mind for employers. Instead of doing one large webinar, consider doing several smaller promos over several events.
- If you do a webinar, ask if the Chamber can record the webinar and host it on their YouTube channel for more longevity.

- Ask your Chamber if they can also do some promotions after the event to share the webinar recording with members who were unable to attend.

## Webinar Recordings

*Here are the links to the webinars that we coordinated as part of the Talent Forward program.*

- **Kootenay:** College of the Rockies and Columba Basin Trust, hosted by Cranbrook Chamber of Commerce: [Connecting College Talent to Your Business](#)
- **Kootenay:** Selkirk College, hosted by the Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce: [Boost Your Business with New Talent](#)
- **Lower Mainland:** BCIT, Douglas College and SFU, hosted by the Burnaby Board of Trade: [Accessing Talent for Your Business](#)
- **Lower Mainland:** Capilano University, BCIT, and Talent MATCH, hosted by the Whistler Chamber of Commerce: [Support Your Business with Student Talent](#)
- **Northern BC:** University of Northern British Columbia and College of New Caledonia (CNC), hosted by the Prince George Chamber of Commerce: [Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's Workforce](#)
- **Okanagan:** Okanagan College and University of British Columbia Okanagan, hosted by the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce: [Connect with Student Talent](#)

## Sample Webinar Agenda

*Here are a sample agenda for some of the webinars we coordinated.*

- Welcome from Chamber CEO (5 min)
- Overview of what WIL is and types of student talent program (<https://acewilbc.ca/what-is-wil/>) (5min)
- Specific PSI WIL programs (15 min)
- Specific PSI WIL programs (15 min)
- Funding resources (2 min)
- Talent Forward resources (1 min)
- Q & A (10 - 15 min)

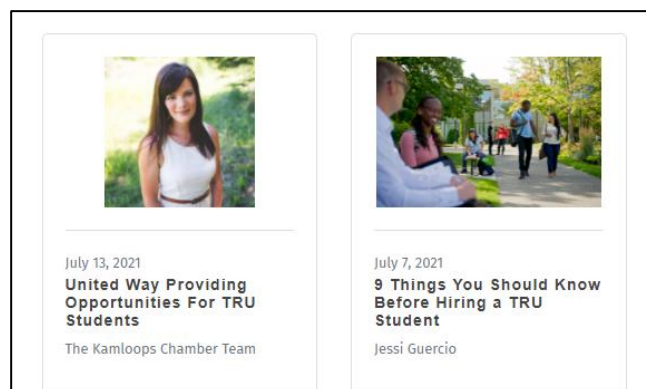


# RUNNING DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS

Over the summer of 2021, we worked with three Chambers to run customized digital campaigns to promote work-integrated learning students to their members.

## Insights:

- Each Chamber has a different method of reaching its members through digital channels. It was important to build a campaign that worked for their members. Some examples of digital strategies:
  - *Kamloops Chamber of Commerce:* Facebook Live, social media posts, and blog posts to their website
  - *Chilliwack Chamber of Commerce:* 1-min employer video spotlights, social media posts, and newsletter inserts
  - *Campbell River Chamber of Commerce:* press release, social posts, employer videos, radio, and TV
- Chambers generally wanted employer stories of “*real people doing real things*” so finding employer stories to highlight were key elements of each digital marketing campaign.
- Finding an employer to highlight for the campaigns took longer than expected. Be sure to give yourself a long lead-up time to find employer stories for your campaign.
- Generally, Chambers tended toward a more casual, community-focused tone in their digital channels. For example, we were advised against creating any graphics with text overlaid on the image (looks too much like an ad).



Examples of Blog Posts through the Kamloops Chamber

## Recommendations:

- Study the Chamber’s digital channels carefully to get a sense of how they communicate with their members and what types of channels/activities seem to work best.
- If you are writing marketing content for the campaign, try to match the Chamber’s tone and writing style.
- Doing a digital campaign will work well for a Chamber that is active in using its digital channels. If the Chamber isn’t very active, consider a different way of marketing.
- In some communities, digital channels may not be effective, and you may want to incorporate other more traditional types of media (e.g. newspaper, radio, etc)



## *Other Resources*

For Talent Forward, we developed a variety of resources to support our project.

### **Talent Forward Survey:**

[BC Chamber Member Survey](#): Work Integrated Learning in BC – Trends, Issues, and Business Perspectives, October 2020

### **Resources**

BC Business Articles:

- [Recover and Grow with Skilled Student Talent](#)
- [Students Play Key Role in Supporting BC Businesses through COVID-19](#)

[What Work-Integrated Learning Can Do for You \(VIDEO\)](#)

### **Handouts**

[Recruiting Student Talent](#)

[Onboarding Student Talent](#)

[Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion when Hiring a Student](#)

[What Can Students Do?](#)

## *Sample Expectations Document*

*This document was used when approaching Chambers about hosting a webinar to clearly articulate the webinar format and expectations from both Talent Forward and the Chamber.*

### **Webinar Purpose and Format**

The “Connect to Student Talent” webinar will be a one-hour session that will highlight how students can help businesses innovate, save costs, and increase capacity. Speakers will include representatives from local post-secondary schools, sharing on their student talent programs as well as businesses who have hired students in the past and possibly funding programs. From the webinar, attendees will:

- Understand their options for bringing student talent onboard through a variety of ways such as co-op, apprenticeship, practicums, projects, etc.
- Learn how student talent can help their business innovate, save costs, and increase capacity.
- Find out about specific student talent programs offered at local post-secondary schools
- Gain knowledge on funding incentives and subsidies offered for hiring student talent

The format will be a series of speakers (4-5 speakers) with a short amount of time allocated to questions at the end. We would hope to have your Chamber CEO welcome the attendees. We will provide a session facilitator from a post-secondary school or the BC Chamber who will introduce guests and topics.

### **Dates and Times**

We are hoping to run the webinar in late May or June. Please let us know what dates and times might work for your members.

### **Technology Requirements**

The webinar will be hosted be through your Chamber platform or the Zoom Webinar platform through the BC Chamber of Commerce.

We would like to record the session.

### **Compensation and Attendance Expectation**

We are offering \$XXX for hosting the webinar and we are hoping to see 50+ attendees per session.

## **Promotion Requirements**

You will receive a Chamber toolkit that provides visual assets to promote this event. We ask that you promote the webinar in advance in these ways:

- 3 social media posts per social media channel utilized by your Chamber. The BC Chamber of Commerce will supply social tiles and written content to support your promotion and can advise on posting timing if necessary.
- One or more inserts in your Chamber newsletter
- One dedicated e-blast to all Chamber subscribers
- Add event page or banner to your Chamber website
- One verbal promo/ reminder through a member meeting or townhall, if applicable
- Post the recorded webinar to your YouTube channel and/or website

## **Webinar Follow-up**

We would like to send a short survey to attendees after the webinar, asking for feedback. The follow-up will also ask attendees if they want more information on the Talent Forward program or the schools.

## **Sponsors**

If you wish to bring additional sponsors on board for this event, please connect with the event coordinator to discuss.

## **Event Coordination**

Name, Project Manager for the Talent Forward program, will be coordinating the logistics for this webinar. You can reach them at [email@email.com](mailto:email@email.com) or xxx-xxx-xxxx