Summary of the Evaluation of the Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER)

(2019-20 to 2022-23)

OVERVIEW

BHER is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization that brings together the industry and post-secondary education (PSE) sectors across Canada to create work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities for young Canadians who have undertaken PSE, as well as boost innovation, and drive collaboration with industry and academia.

ISED funding to BHER supports two pillars of activities:



Create WIL Placements

WIL Ecosystem

Strengthen the

- Generate new partnerships
- Manage partnerships
- Develop new tools and resources for stakeholders
- Launching 5 virtual regional hubs

Budget 2019 committed \$17 million in funding to BHER over three years. The program was renewed in Budget 2022, which allocated an additional \$17.1 million over three years. Of the renewed funding, \$5.3M was disbursed in 2022-23 for a total of \$21.4M over the four-year evaluation period.

The evaluation was conducted using multiple methodologies and sought to assess program relevance, performance and efficiency

BHER funding helps generate uncompensated and compensated WIL:

Uncompensated

Students <u>are not financially compensated for their WIL experience</u> (e.g., industry projects).

Compensated

Students <u>are</u> financially compensated for their WIL experience by external funding sources (e.g., co-op).

FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

The evaluation found that since 2019, the ecosystem of WIL programs has expanded and become increasingly complex. Although other WIL programs were seen as complementary, the evaluation found that they had similar mandates and objectives, which some stakeholders found duplicative and confusing. Due to BHER's partnerships with employers, (e.g. the Business Council of Canada) and ties with academia, there is a strong potential for BHER to be a national convenor of employers, academia, and other WIL programs.

BHER is the only organization offering unsubsidized placements, and it addressed the needs of employers, PSE institutions, and students directly through programming and services or indirectly through WIL opportunities.



Due to changes in the WIL ecosystem and multiple contribution agreements (CAs), the evaluation noted challenges associated with BHER's performance measurement, data collection, and timeframes.

Performance Measurement

Data Collection

Timeframes

- Inconsistent use of definitions between CAs
- Lack of indicators to determine program impact in the medium and long term.
- An unclear 100% student response rate requirement resulted in undue burden on small businesses and withdrawal from ultimate recipient negotiations
- Three-year CA resulted in "startstop" cycle of WIL programming, (e.g., limited capacity building)
- Misalignment of federal fiscal year and academic calendar

PERFORMANCE

(2022-23)

During the evaluation period, a total of **42,391 WIL experiences** were completed through BHER partnerships. BHER experiences provided students with the opportunity to obtain valuable work experience and to develop in-demand technical, social, and professional skills.

WILs reported from Student Post-Survey

Innovative WIL & Other (i.e., industry projects, hackathons, micro-placements, bootcamps).

Top skills earned from 1) Critical Thinking (86%) 3) Communication (85%) **WIL experiences:** 2) Problem Solving (86%) 4) Creativity (84%)

72.8% Traditional WIL

Traditional WIL: (i.e., service learning, work experience, applied research projects, co-op, internship, field placements).

There was an uneven regional distribution of postsecondary BHER students reported compared to the total post-secondary student population representation in Canada and number of BHER employers.

	Canada	BHER Students	BHER Employers
Ontario	41.9%	65.8%	42%
Quebec	24.5%	10.6%	4%
Prairies	14.9%	13.4%	11%
ВС	13%	4.5%	31%
Atlantic	5.5%	5.3%	12%
Territories	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%

Overrepresented

Underrepresented

57.3%
of WILs committed
(i.e. planned) are
untraditional WIL
experiences

Though there is a greater number of traditional WIL reported, the number of planned untraditional WIL indicates that the ratio between traditional and untraditional WIL may change in the future.

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Opportunity

While capacity building with PSE institutions and employers is a key activity for BHER, the evaluation identified that there is an opportunity for BHER to further explore how to help PSEs and SMEs build better capacity for their ongoing WIL activities and collaborations. This is relevant as it was noted in some cases that capacity building in programs would not continue without ongoing funding from BHER.

EFFICIENCY

Overall, BHER's unsubsidized salary approach to WIL supports WIL ecosystem sustainability and demonstrates considerable value for money.



Supports the development and administration of the WIL program

Supports the development of WIL experiences

\$280.87

\$417.21

1st CA

2nd CA

(2020-2023)

(FY 2023-24)

The average cost per WIL experience is **below** \$500 whereas other subsidized WIL programs can be up to \$7K in wage subsidies for participants in structured WIL placements, i.e.,

Co-op and internships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ISED Industry Sector should:

Conduct an environmental scan of the WIL ecosystem in Canada to better understand existing WIL offerings, services and tools, including potential gaps, and areas for alignment of BHER activities within the ecosystem.

Explore mechanisms to improve performance measurement and monitoring to enable consistent medium and long-term analysis.

Explore approaches with BHER to enhance the organization's regional presence across Canada.