

The Messy Value of Researching Diverse WIL:

Practical Findings and Lessons Learned from the BC WIL
Impacts Framework Survey Project

ACE-WIL x CACEE Conference – May 2026

Presenters

Julie Walchli – UBC

Rachel Warick – VCC

A project of the BC WIL Council

BC WIL Council is an independent council of the Association for Co-operative Education and
Work-Integrated Learning (ACE-WIL BC/Yukon)



acewilbc.ca

Acknowledging the Unceded Lands

We are gathered during this session on T̓k'emlúps te Secwépemc territory, situated within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation.

We also acknowledge that the work of this project took place on the unceded and traditional territories of many First Nations whose peoples have been stewards of the lands currently known as British Columbia from time immemorial, including the territories we call home – those of the x̓m̓əθk̓w̓əy̓əm (Musqueam), S̓k̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



BC Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Council

The BC WIL Council provides and encourages the adoption of consistent program definitions, guidelines and standards for quality Co-operative Education and all forms of work integrated learning in BC's Public Post-Secondary system. It serves as a venue to discuss and promote institutional and provincial WIL issues, as well as the collection and dissemination of standardized statistic data and act as a collective voice for accountability issues related to WIL in BC.

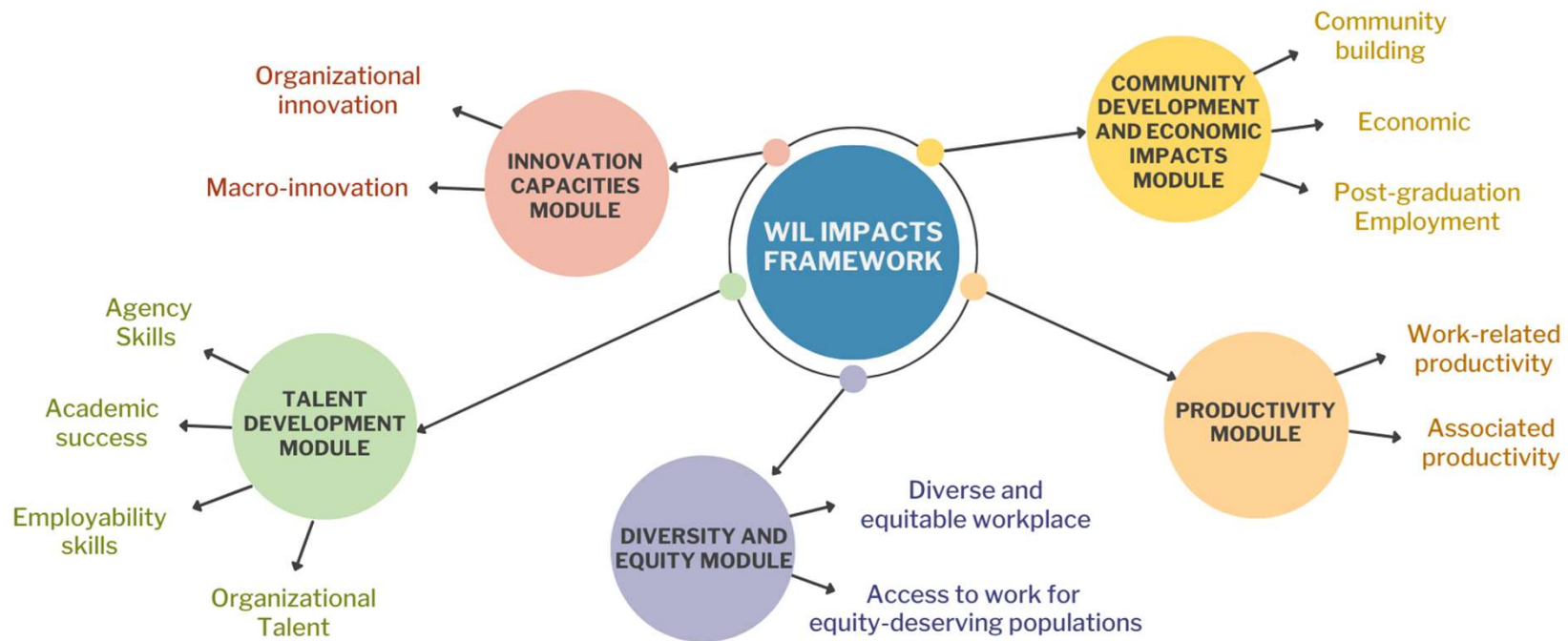
The Council is an independent council of the Association for Co-operative Education WIL (BC/Yukon) and is comprised of one member from each public, post-secondary WIL institution in BC as appointed by the President of the institution.

WIL Impacts Framework Survey Project Steering Committee

- Andrea Giles, Executive Director, Co-operative Education and Career Services, University of Victoria
 - Stephanie McKeown, Chief Institutional Research Officer, UBC
 - Julie Walchli, Executive Director, Work-Integrated Education and Career Initiatives, UBC Arts
 - Rachel Warick, Program Coordinator, Partnership Development Office (CareerLAB), Vancouver Community College
 - Kamali Pahwa, Graduate Co-op Student, WIL Impact Framework Research Analyst
- **Funded by the BC Provincial Government, StrongerBC: Future Ready Action Plan.**



WIL Impacts Framework – 5 Socio-Economic Domains Measured



2024-2025 Survey Project Deployment

21 public post-secondary institutions participated in the project by:

- sending the WIL Host Organization survey to their WIL host contacts
- sending the PSI survey to internal representatives

1189 WIL host organizations responded to the survey

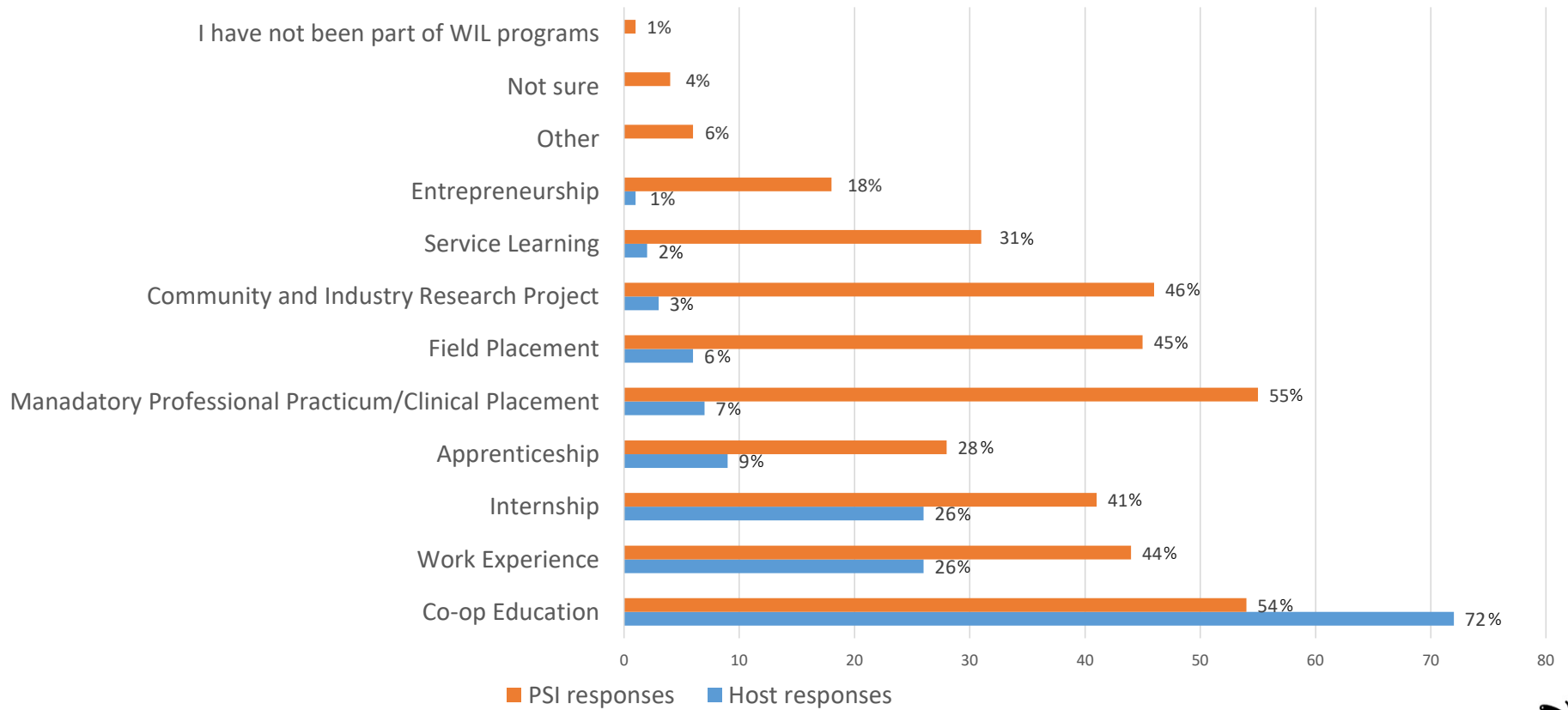
272 WIL professionals responded to the survey

Participating PSIs

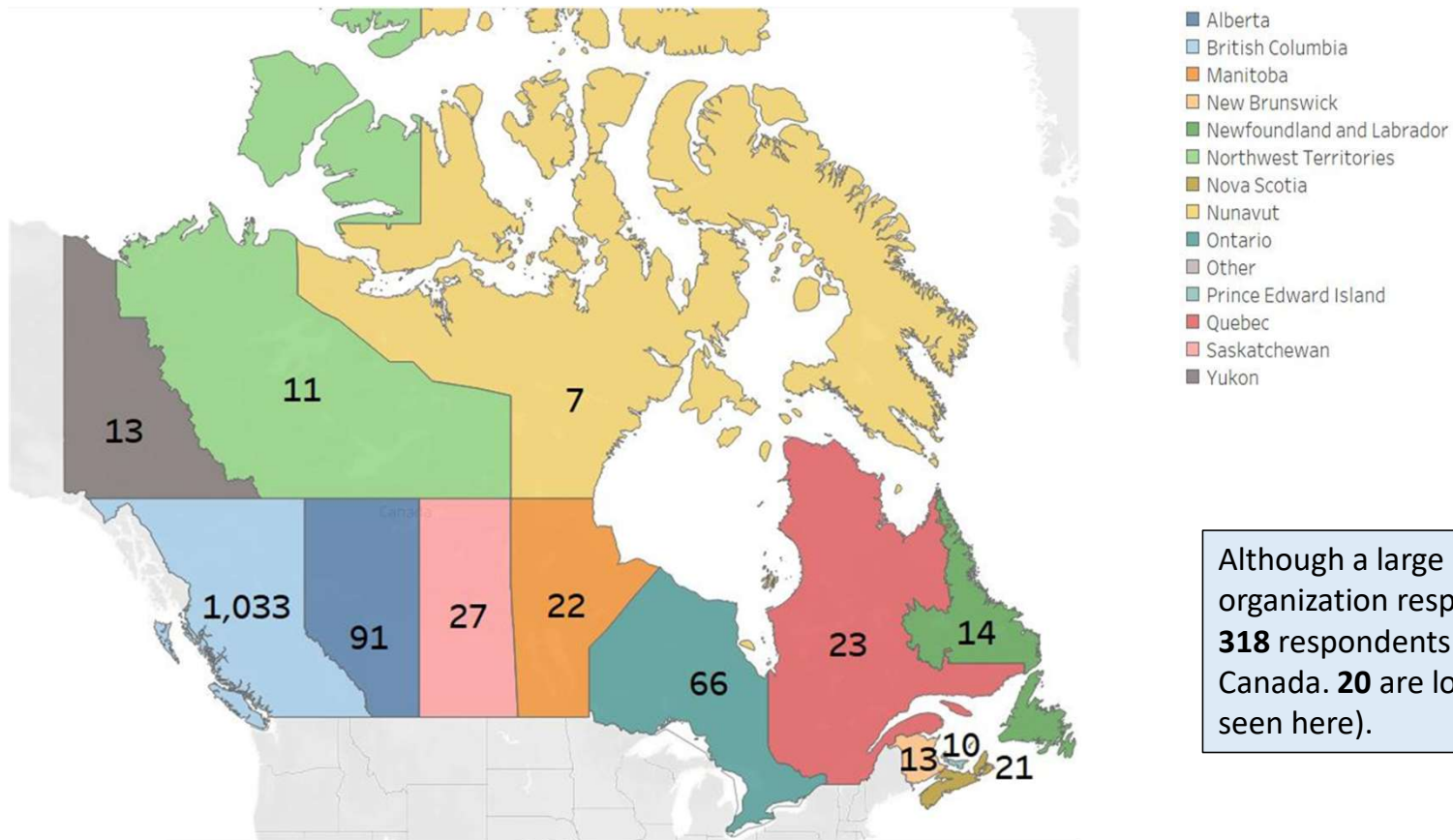
- British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Camosun College
- Capilano University
- Coast Mountain College
- College of the Rockies
- Emily Carr University of Art and Design
- Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College
- North Island College
- Okanagan 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



Types of WIL that Respondents Engage with – PSI and WIL Hosts



Location of Responding WIL Host Organizations

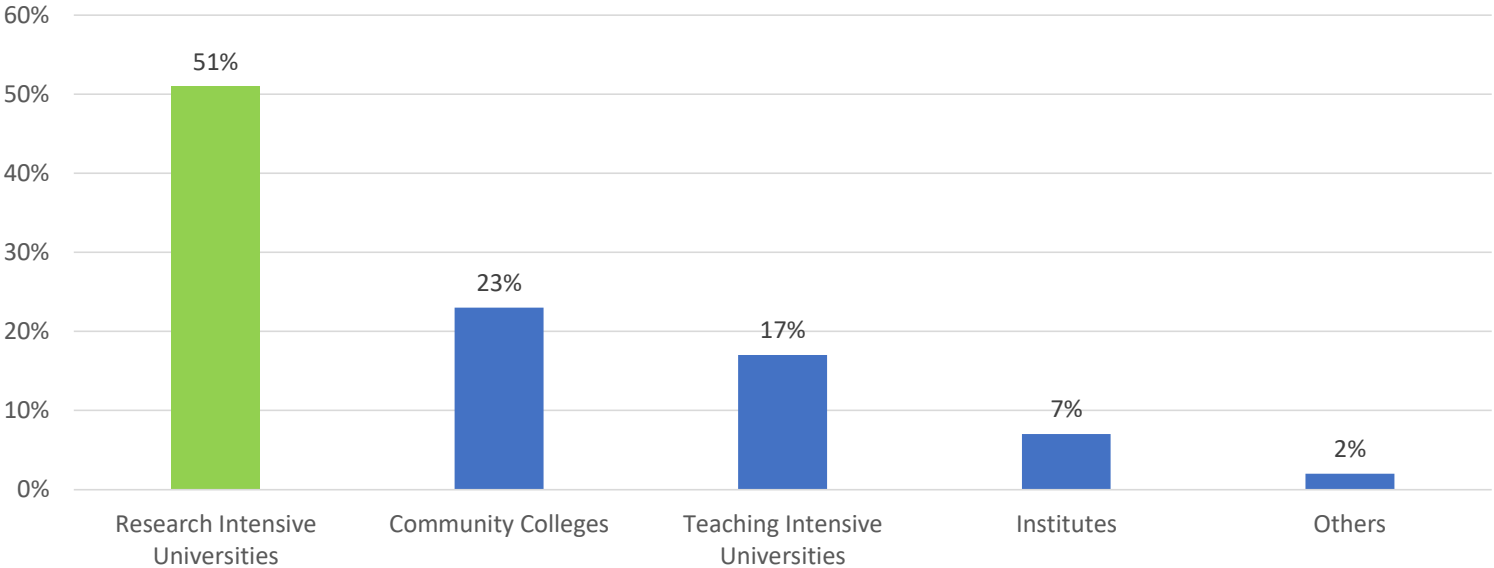


Although a large majority, **1,033**, of WIL host organization respondents are located in BC, **318** respondents are located elsewhere in Canada. **20** are located internationally (not seen here).

*Respondents could select multiple locations.



WIL Host Organization Responses by Post-Secondary Institutional Type



The largest number of WIL host organization respondents report working with **Research-Intensive Universities**, accounting for **51%** of the total responses. **Community Colleges** were second highest at **23%**.

*Respondents could choose more than one option.



Key Implementation Outcomes



Aligns with the call to action to improve data collection and reporting “...beyond counting WIL experiences, to focus on outcomes” from the CEWIL Canada | Academia Group March 2024 Report - [Navigating New Ground: Perspectives From Canada’s WIL Ecosystem](#).



Data provides a province-wide baseline that can be used to benchmark progress and determine trends over time.

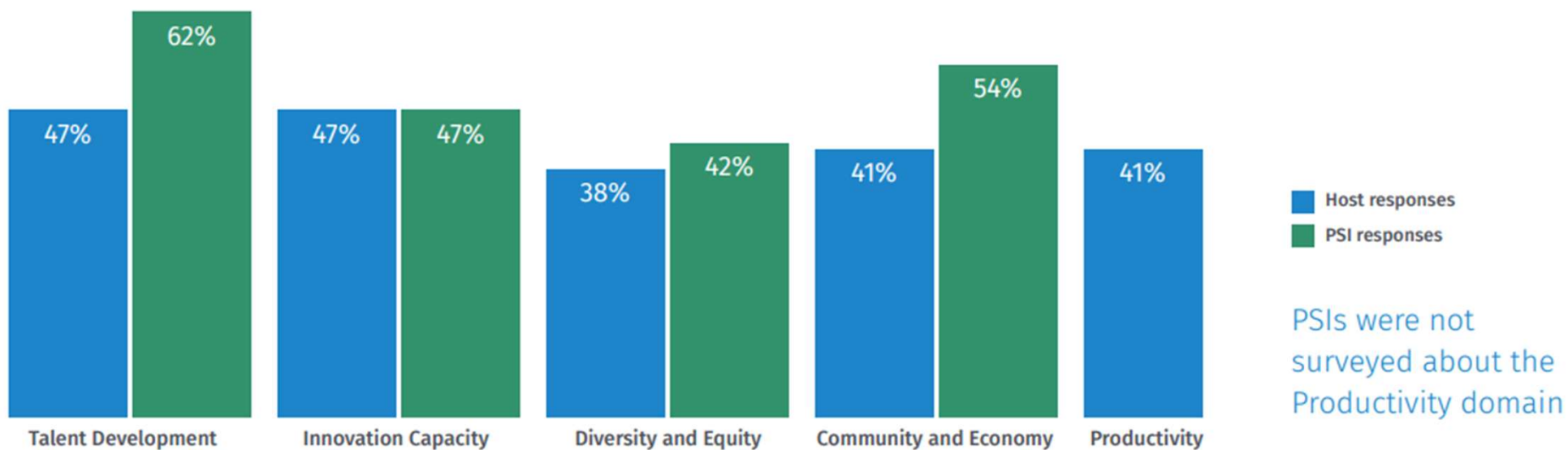


Demonstrates that WIL has impact across all 5 socio-economic domains, with levels of impact varying based on WIL type and employment sector.



Impact of WIL on host organizations

Percentage of host and PSI responses indicating WIL student experiences were **very impactful**



Top impacts of WIL for top three host industry types

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services



Talent development: For host respondents in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, 34% indicated talent development as the top impact of WIL

Healthcare and Social Assistance



Innovation capacity: For host respondents in Healthcare and Social Assistance, 57% indicated innovation capacity as the top impact of WIL

Educational Services



Talent development: For host respondents in Educational Services, 54% indicated talent development as the top impact of WIL

Approximately **30%** of reporting WIL host organizations are in **three** key industry classifications (out of 20 possible industry selections) :

- Professional, scientific and technical services – **16%** of respondents
- Healthcare and social assistance – **11%** of respondents
- Educational services - **9%** of respondents.



Top impacts for top three WIL types engaged

Co-operative education



Talent development: For co-operative education engagements, 62% of host respondents indicated talent development as the top impact of WIL

Internship



Innovation capacity: For internship engagements, 62% of host respondents indicated innovation capacity as the top impact of WIL

Work experience



Innovation capacity: For work experience engagements, 57% of host respondents indicated innovation capacity as the top impact of WIL

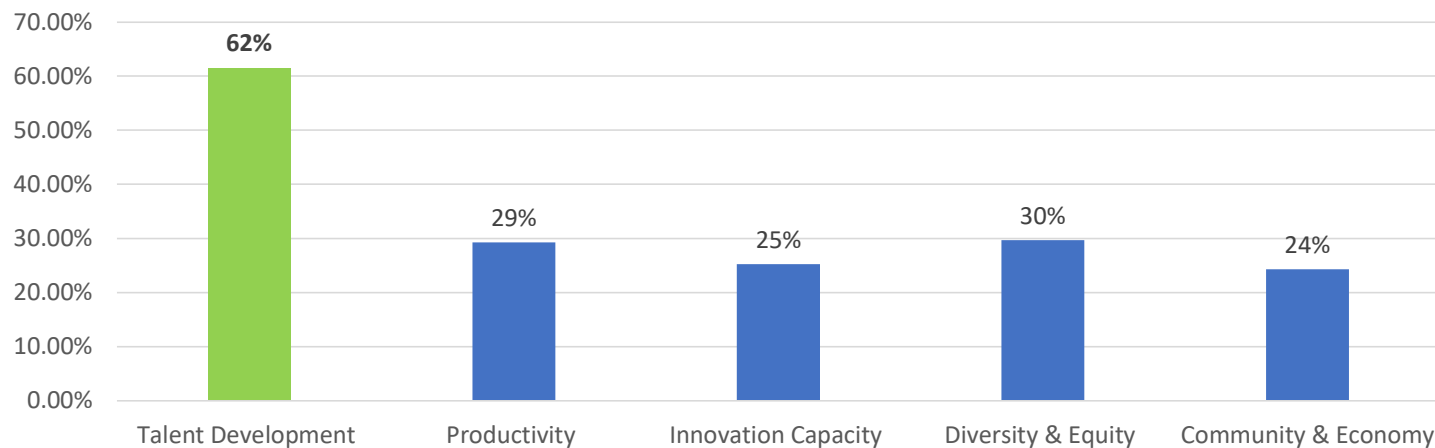
Percentage of WIL host respondents who selected the top 3 reported types of WIL:

- Co-operative Education – 72% of respondents
- Internship – 26% of respondents
- Work Experience - 26% of respondents.



Co-operative Education: Domain Analysis of the Top 3 Reported WIL Types

Co-operative Education: Consists of alternating academic terms and paid work terms which 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.



The greatest impact of Co-operative Education is in assisting with the organization's **Talent Development (62%)**. The talent development domain measured both impacts on the WIL host organization and on the individual WIL student.

It is possible that Co-op is seen as having the greatest impact on Talent Development because Co-op students are in positions for longer duration and have multiple experiences, compared to many other WIL types. Further research would be valuable to verify these assumptions, particularly as Talent Development does not appear as the top domain for the other 2 top types of WIL reported.

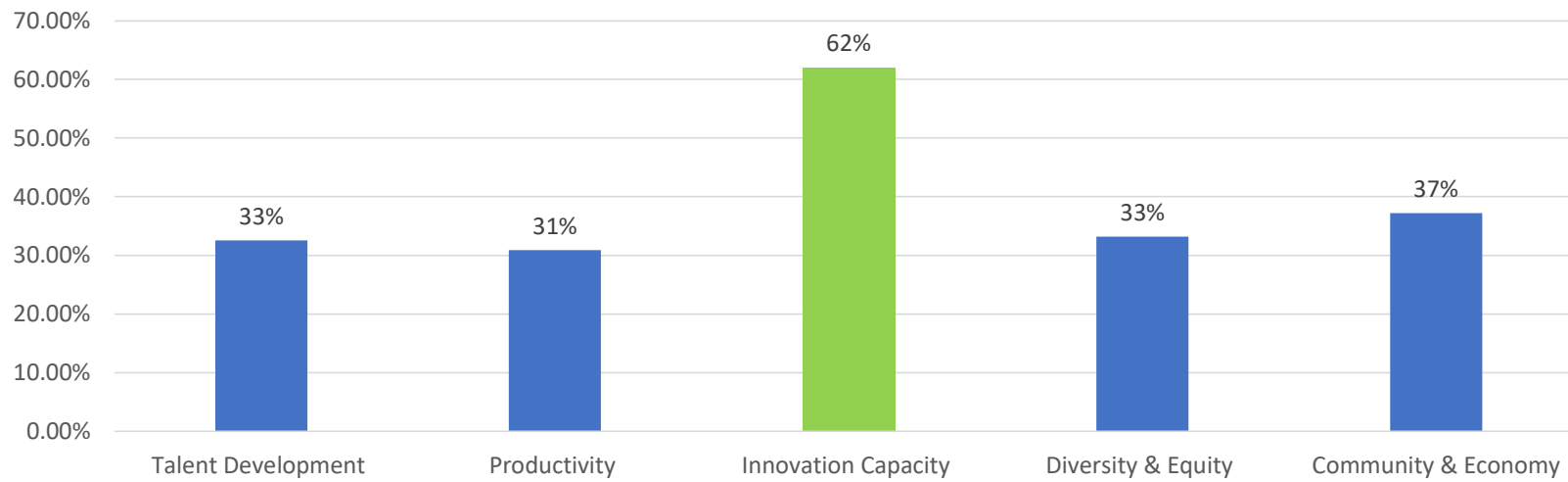
*Each domain was segmented into multiple sub-domains, where respondents selected a single importance rating for each listed sub-domain within each domain.

**Cross analysis was formed by combining the "very impactful" and "somewhat impactful" ratings.



Internship: Domain Analysis of the Top 3 Reported WIL Types

Internship: Offers usually one discipline-specific, supervised, structured paid or unpaid, and for academic credit work experience or practice placement. Internships can be of any length but are typically 12 to 16 months long.



The greatest impact of Internship is in enhancing the organization's **Innovation Capacities (62%)**.

Internships are typically singular experiences and are industry/academic discipline specific. Students are often focused on a singular project at a deeper level. This may be why host organizations view WIL as having the biggest impact on the domain of Innovation Capacities.

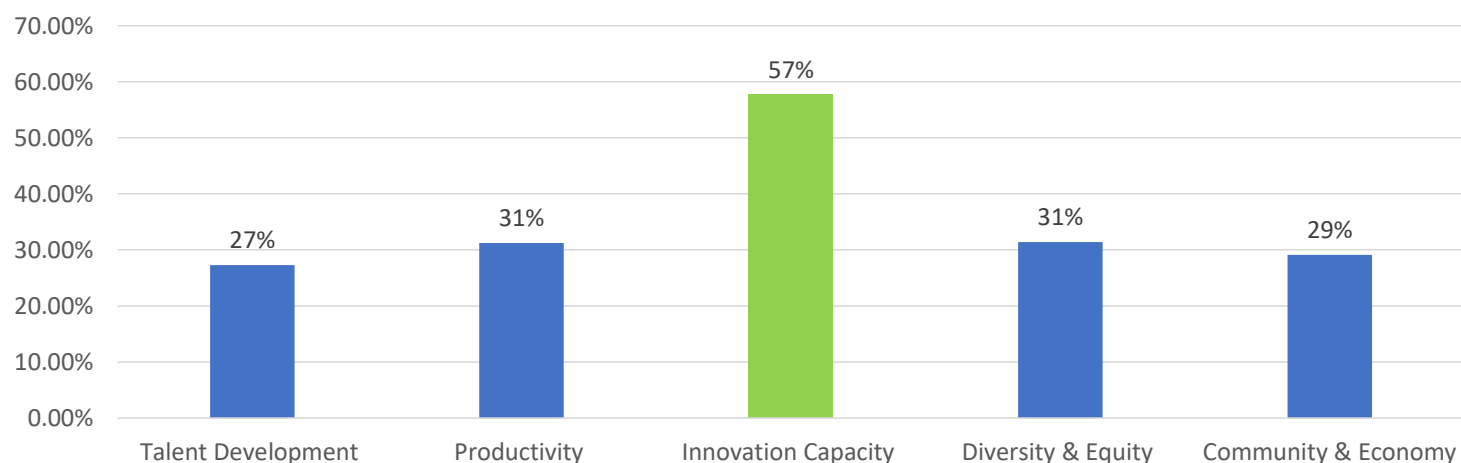
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Work Experience: Domain Analysis of the Top 3 Reported WIL Types

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.



The greatest impact of Work Experience is in enhancing the organization's **Innovation Capacities (57%)**. As with Internships, work experiences are typically singular and shorter than Co-op or Internship.

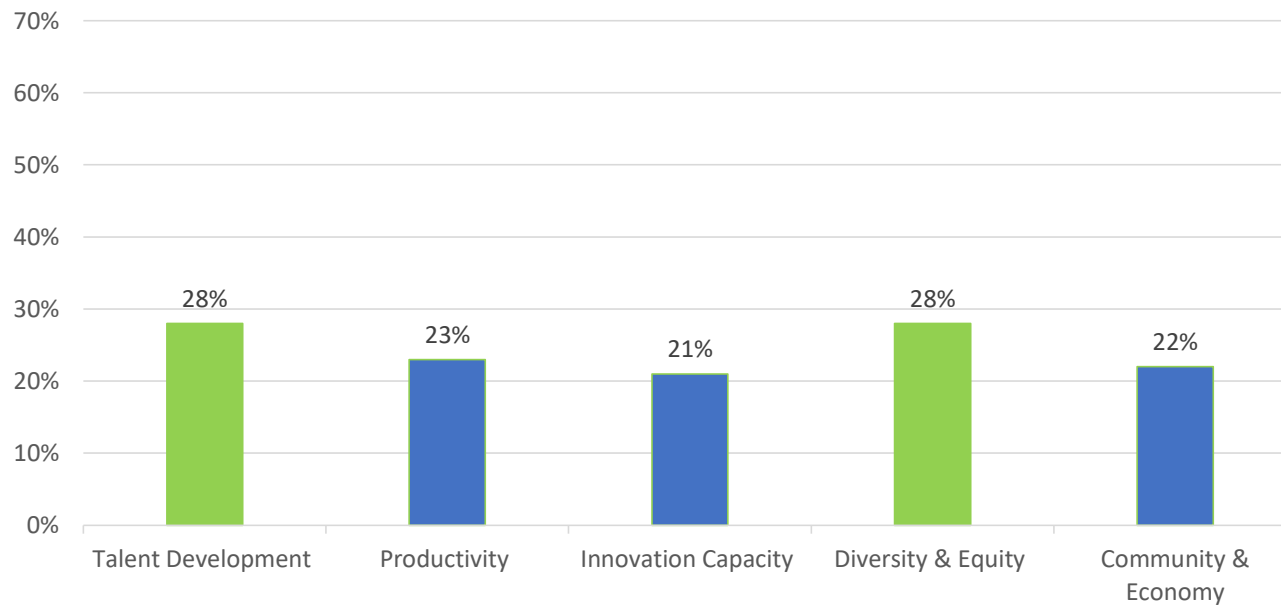
Further investigation is recommended as PSIs often view work experience as helping host organizations with talent development, particularly in filling skills shortages, yet the data from hosts indicate that work experience has the least impact on talent development.

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**Cross analysis was formed by combining the "very impactful" and "somewhat impactful" ratings.



Federal Government: Domain Analysis by Host Organization Sector



WIL has the greatest impact on **Talent Development (28%)** and **Diversity and Equity (28%)** according to Federal Government WIL host organization respondents.

It is possible that the relatively higher rating for the domain Diversity and Equity may be because many government mandates often include increases to workforce diversity.

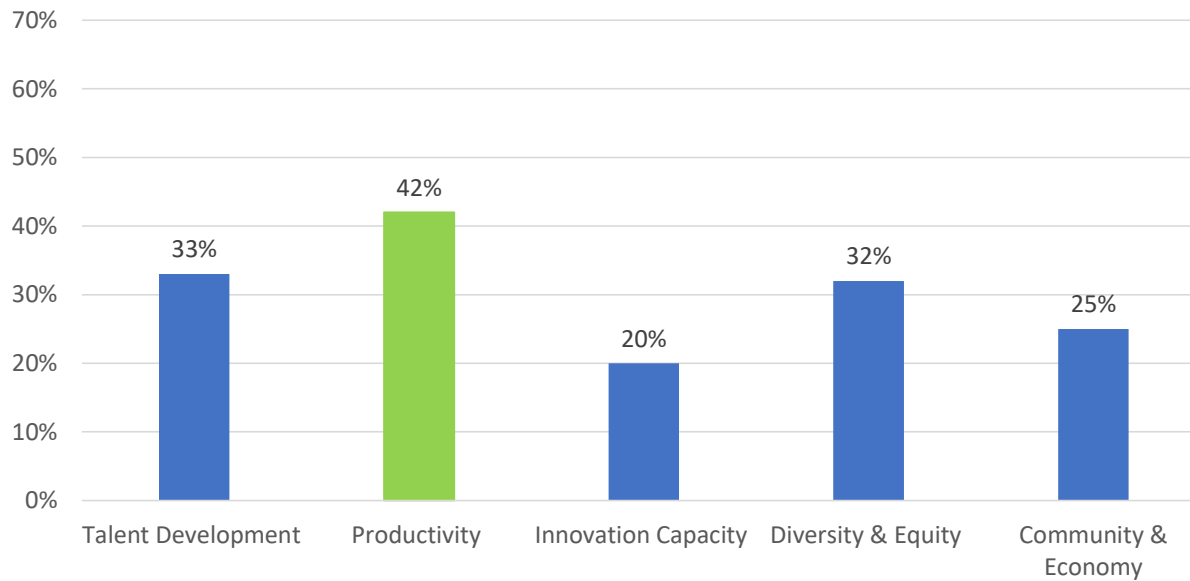
*Each domain was segmented into multiple sub-domains, where respondents selected a single importance rating for each listed sub-domain within each domain.

**Cross analysis was formed by combining the “very impactful” and “somewhat impactful” ratings.



Federal Agency: Domain Analysis by Host Organization Sector

Federal Agency: A Canadian federal agency is a government organization that assists the Canadian government in carrying out its responsibilities to the public. Federal agencies can be administrative, regulatory, advisory, or quasi-judicial.



WIL has the greatest impact on **Productivity (42%)** according to Federal Agency WIL host organization respondents.

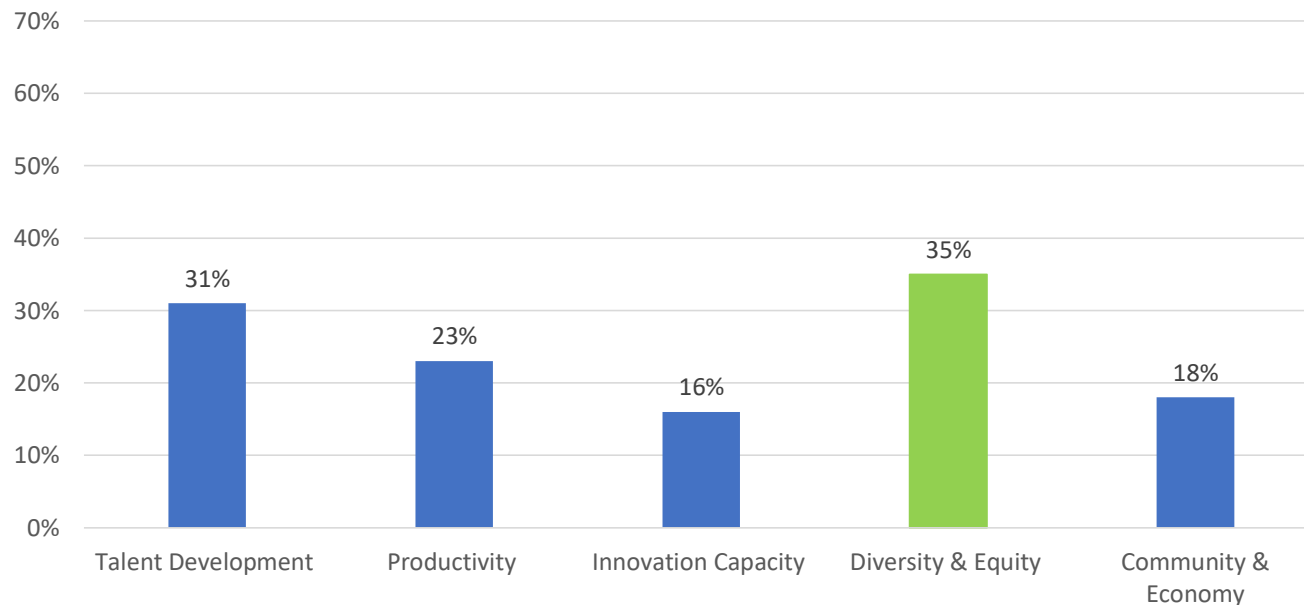
It is possible that Productivity rates higher for Federal Agencies than for Federal Government hosts as agencies tend to be more business-oriented.

*Each domain was segmented into multiple sub-domains, where respondents selected a single importance rating for each listed sub-domain within each domain.

**Cross analysis was formed by combining the “very impactful” and “somewhat impactful” ratings.



Provincial Government: Domain Analysis by Host Organization Sector



WIL has the greatest impact on **Diversity and Equity (35%)** according to Provincial Government WIL host organization respondents.

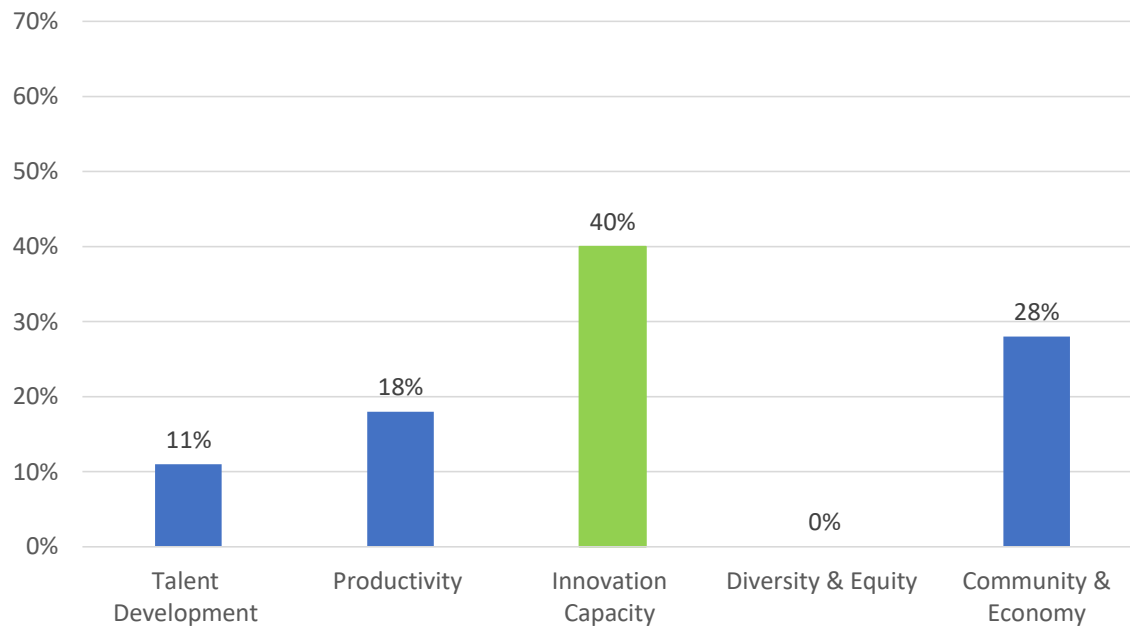
*Each domain was segmented into multiple sub-domains, where respondents selected a single importance rating for each listed sub-domain within each domain.

**Cross analysis was formed by combining the “very impactful” and “somewhat impactful” ratings.



Provincial Agency: Domain Analysis by Host Organization Sector

Provincial Agency: A Canadian provincial agency is a government-established organization that provides services or goods to the public. Provincial agencies are not part of a ministry but are led by government appointees. They are accountable to a minister for their actions.



WIL has the greatest impact on **Innovation Capacities (40%)** according to Provincial Agency WIL host organization respondents.

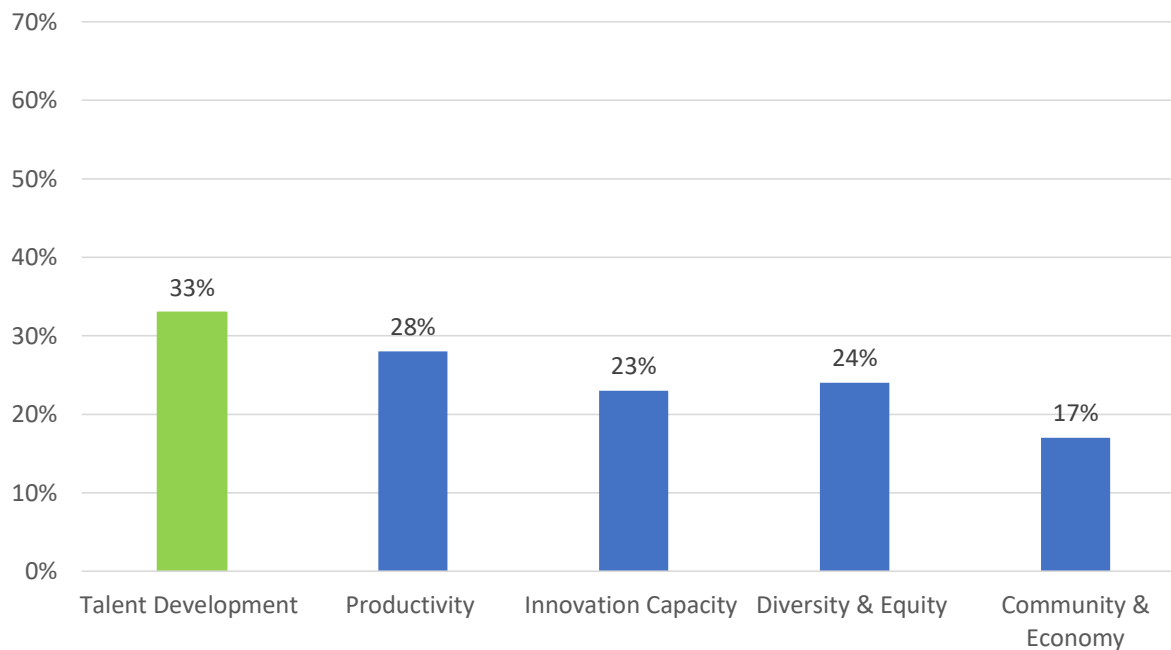
No respondents indicated impact of WIL on **Diversity and Equity (0%)** which is notable given that the domain was the highest rated response among Provincial Government hosts.

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Municipal Government: Domain Analysis by Host Organization Sector



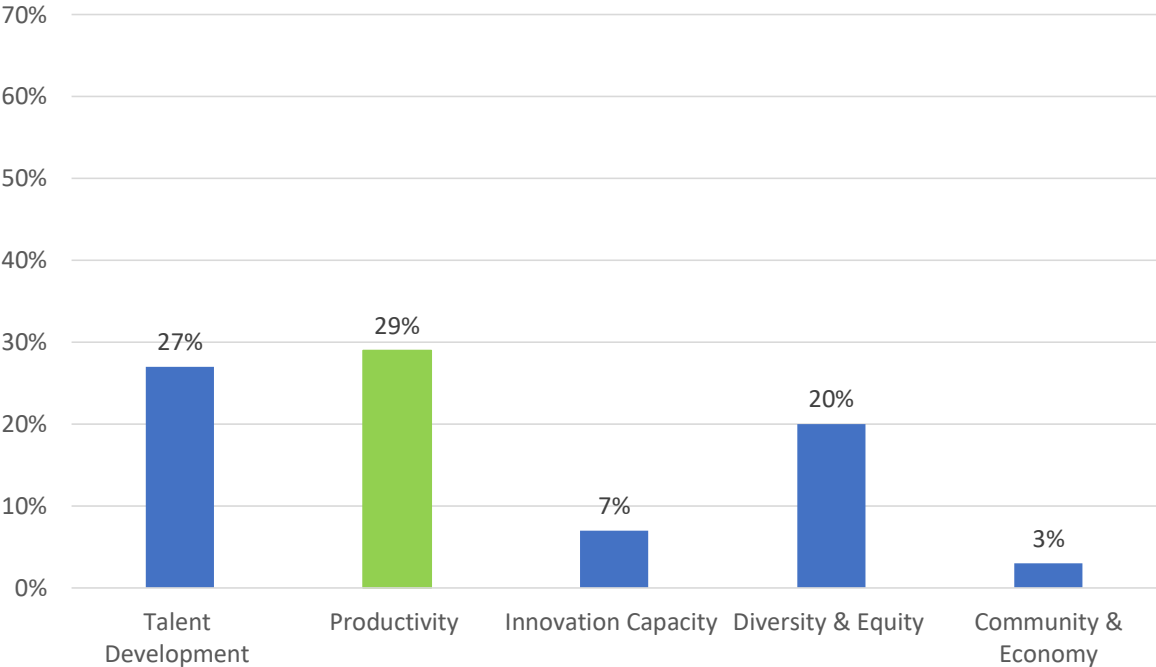
WIL has the greatest impact on **Talent Development (33%)** according to Municipal Government WIL host organization respondents.

*Each domain was segmented into multiple sub-domains, where respondents selected a single importance rating for each listed sub-domain within each domain.

**Cross analysis was formed by combining the “very impactful” and “somewhat impactful” ratings.



Non-Profits: Domain Analysis by Host Organization Sector



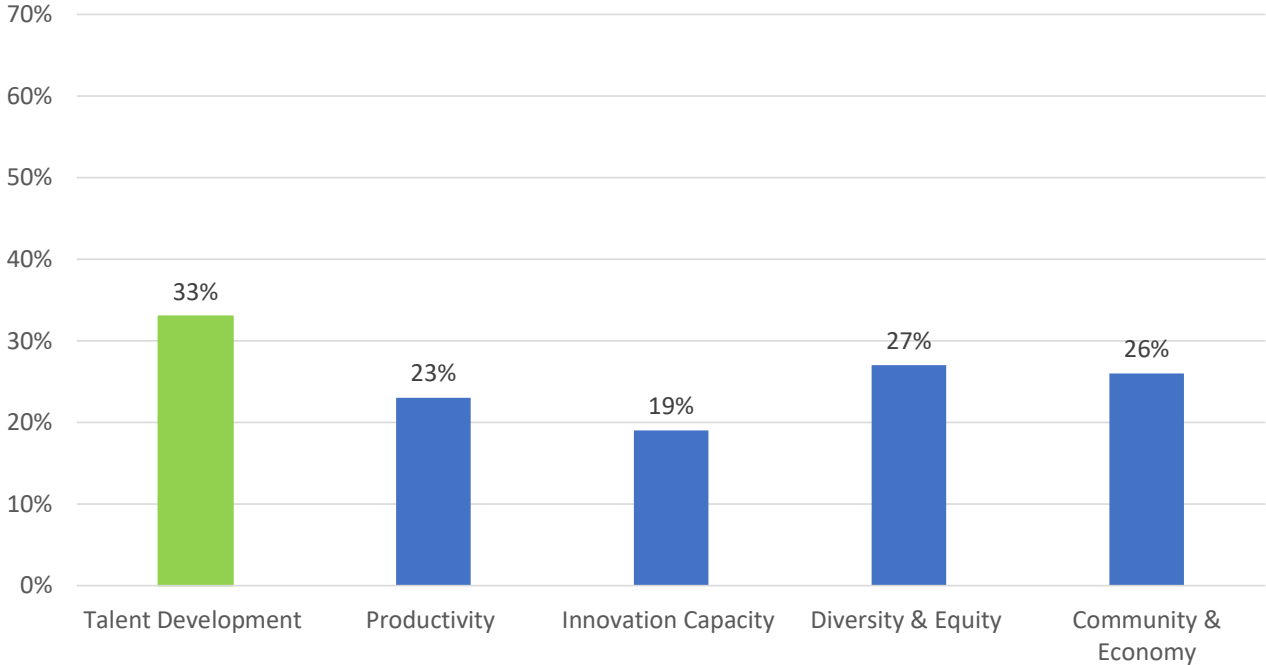
WIL has the greatest impact on **Productivity (29%)** according to Non-Profit WIL host organizations, with **Talent Development (27%)** being a close second.

Further investigation is needed to better understand the low impact rating of WIL in the domain of **Community Development and Economic Impact (3%)**, from the non-profit perspective.

*Each domain was segmented into multiple sub-domains, where respondents selected a single importance rating for each listed sub-domain within each domain.
**Cross analysis was formed by combining the “very impactful” and “somewhat impactful” ratings.



Private Organizations: Domain Analysis by Host Organization Sector



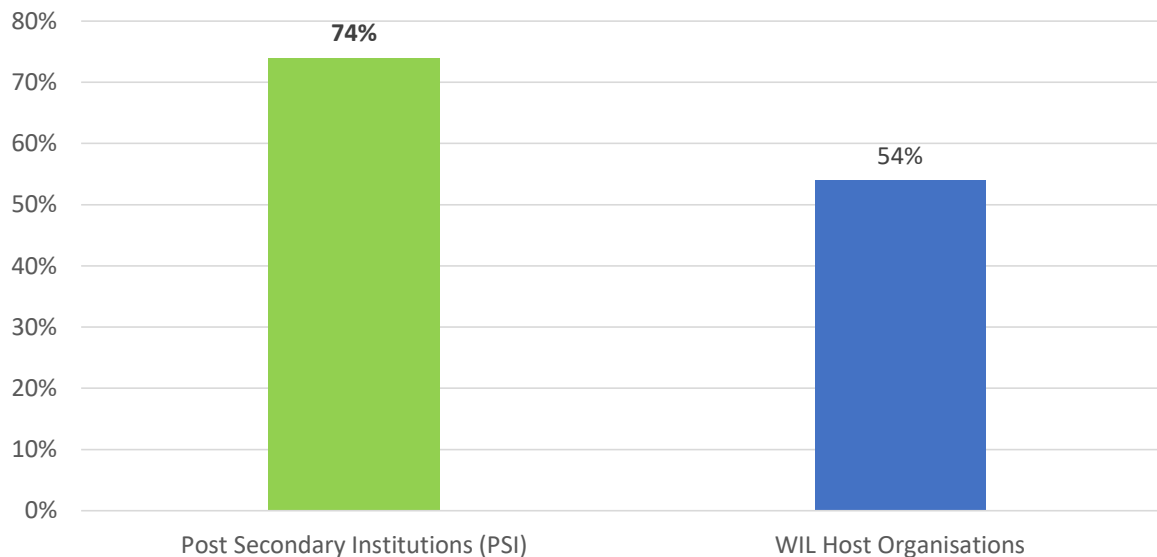
WIL has the greatest impact on **Talent Development (33%)** according to Private Sector WIL host organization respondents.

*Each domain was segmented into multiple sub-domains, where respondents selected a single importance rating for each listed sub-domain within each domain.
**Cross analysis was formed by combining the “very impactful” and “somewhat impactful” ratings.



Overall Post-Graduation Student Hiring:

Comparison of Hiring Frequency for WIL Activities between Host and PSI Survey Responses:



PSI respondents reported that **74%** of WIL students are hired post-graduation whereas only **54%** of WIL host organization respondents reported they hire students, post-graduation.

Future research is needed to determine the reason for the discrepancy between the PSI and host organization ratings.

It may speak to the accuracy of PSI knowledge of WIL students career paths post-graduation and the challenges of capturing data. Individual institutions may find it valuable to investigate options to follow their WIL graduates more systemically .

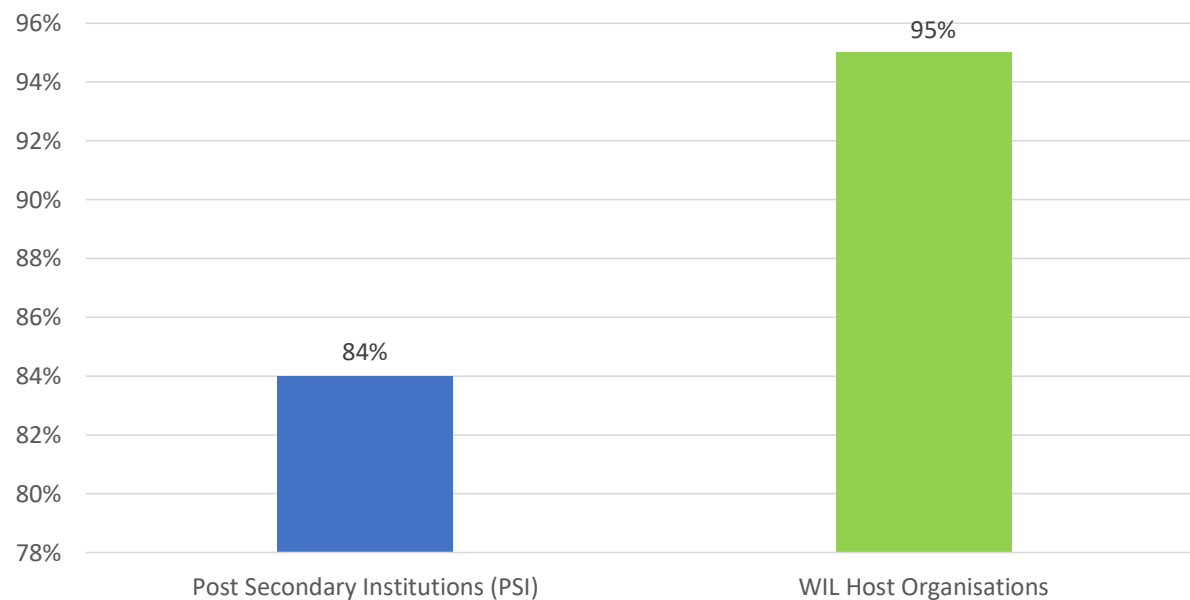
*Respondents could choose only one option

**The somewhat often and very often response rates were combined for this analysis



Post-Graduation Student Hiring from Program of Study:

Comparison of Hiring Frequency for WIL Activities between Host and PSI Survey Responses



Only **84%** of PSI respondents reported that students are hired into positions related to their program of study compared to the **95%** reported by WIL host organization respondents.

Future research is needed to determine the reason for the discrepancy between the PSI and host organization ratings. It may speak to the knowledge host organizations have about the programs from which students graduated.

*Respondents could choose only one option

**The somewhat often and very often response rates were combined for this analysis



Small Group Discussion – 15 minutes

Q1. How might these findings influence our communications with external partners, such as employer hosts or other organizations?

Q2. How might they inform our internal discussions with other colleagues in our institutions, such as faculty or leadership?



Final Thoughts

How might this data inform our work as WIL and Career professionals, if at all?

If this research were able to continue, are there additional things you would like to know about the socio-economic impact of WIL?



Contact Information and Thank you!

- Julie Walchli – Executive Director, Work-Integrated Learning Education and Student Engagement, UBC Faculty of Arts julie.walchli@ubc.ca
- Rachel Warick – Program Coordinator, Partnership Development Office, Vancouver Community College rwarick@vcc.ca