



# EDI in WIL: A Case Study of Matching International Talent to Canada's Digital Skills Needs

## AT A GLANCE

**PARTNERS:** Wayble, TELUS, EIM Technology

**REGIONS:** Canada-wide

**INDUSTRIES:** Digital economy, Technology

**WIL TYPES:** Industry projects, Mentorship

**TYPE OF LEARNING:** Co-curricular

**THEMES:** Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion,  
International Students, Technology

**SUMMARY:** This case study profiles an innovative approach to aligning international student training with Canada's rising demand for digital skills. Wayble's Career Pathway Program helps students gain hands-on Canadian experience while helping employers address current and emerging digital talent needs, access global perspectives, and cultivate leadership skills.

## Context

Canada's digital economy is expanding beyond traditional tech fields into sectors like healthcare, finance, and manufacturing.<sup>1</sup> This growth has increased demand for digital skills like data analysis, cybersecurity, and cloud computing. The digital economy is forecasted to employ 2.26 million workers in Canada by 2025, which means an additional 250,000 jobs that need to be filled with digital talent.<sup>2</sup>

1 Digital economy is defined as the sectors of the economy driven by data, digital technology, and advanced computing.

2 ICTC Labour Market Outlook. <https://ictc-ctic.ca/news-events/ictc-labour-market-outlook-additional-demand-for-digital-talent-to-reach-250000-by-2025>

International students can help fill those talent gaps. But Canada needs to do more to integrate new international grads into the labour market, including better preparing international students to meet targeted workforce needs.

To address both the digital talent demand and the need to better integrate international students, the Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) partnered with [Wayble](#) to launch the **Career Pathway Program**, with generous support from the Government of Canada.

The Wayble platform was founded in 2021 by former international student Pat Chaisang. It offers supports such as job matching, mentorship, career resources, and immigration guidance to international students already in Canada. Wayble's Career Pathway Program, launched in January 2024, has successfully enrolled nearly **1,000 international students** in work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities in the digital economy to date.

Not only does the Career Pathway Program fill a workforce skills gap with a population of students who need labour market-aligned work experience, it also caters to employers who have much to gain from international perspectives. The program's project streams focus on business consulting and marketing design. For SMEs trying to expand their reach into new global markets, Wayble's Career Pathway Program offers a valuable way to access the international talent that can help diversify their businesses.



## Student Experience

Students apply to join the Career Pathway Program, and those selected are put into small cohort groups that embark on a six-week journey consisting of:

### 1 INDUSTRY PROJECT KICK-OFF AND EXPERIENCE

During the first week, students are matched with an employer. Over the next two weeks, students work individually on their business projects.

At the end of the two-week work experience, students present their final deliverables in a Project Showcase Meeting. Students are encouraged to maintain connections with their employers and mentors beyond the program.

### 2 ONGOING MENTORSHIP

Throughout the entire program, students meet weekly with their industry mentors to build a professional network, gain insights into Canadian workforce culture, and receive career guidance.

### 3 SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

After finishing their industry projects, students complete workshops and use Wayble's portal for career development. Resources include job search training, resume building, video courses, document templates, and other tools to support their professional growth.

### 4 IMMIGRATION SUPPORT

Wayble provides students with not only technical and human skills training but also guidance on navigating Canada's immigration pathways, to ensure that students are equipped to secure future employment and residency in Canada post-graduation.



# Employer Engagement

Wayble offers two different ways for employers to engage according to their capacities and needs: A two-week industry project collaboration or a six-week mentorship collaboration. To date, there are nearly 500 employers active on the platform.

## 2-WEEK INDUSTRY PROJECT COLLABORATION

Employers attend a workshop delivered by Wayble knowledge partner the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) called **Empowering Workplace Success: Recruitment, On-boarding, and Engagement of International Students**. This workshop builds skills that help employers implement strategies to ensure the student project collaboration is as beneficial as possible, such as cross-cultural communication skills. The training also answers questions employers may have about hiring international students.

After this workshop, employers meet their student cohort and outline their project expectations.

During the two-week project period, employers provide guidance and feedback to each student.

Employers receive their final project deliverables at the Project Showcase Meeting, where they can evaluate the outcomes.

## 6-WEEK MENTORSHIP COLLABORATION

Employers provide six weeks of structured mentorship to students through the entire duration of the program.

Mentorship topics are designed around what students need to succeed in the Canadian workforce, such as understanding Canadian work culture, overcoming challenges international students may face, career guidance and success strategies.

Employer mentors gain access to Wayble resources such as comprehensive mentorship guidebooks, session plans, and worksheets.

Through mentorship, the mentors themselves also build their own skills in leadership, social-emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural communication.



# Value of the Model

## 1 THE CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAM HELPS EMPLOYERS LEVERAGE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TALENT FOR BOTH SHORT-TERM PROJECTS AND EMERGING TALENT NEEDS.

For many employers in the digital economy, the need for talent with technical skills and creative and analytical thinking is immediate.<sup>3</sup>

Working with international students on short industry projects allows employers to immediately ease capacity constraints and benefit from student insights. After the program, employers have the flexibility to stay connected with their preferred top performers and bring them into the organization as future needs arise.

“

Students tell us that the time we spend with them is meaningful, and we try to keep them in mind for future opportunities that may arise.”

– EIM Technology, employer participant

For example, one employer was so impressed by a Wayble student that they offered them a contract role to address digital marketing needs that couldn't be met in-house after the program.

In another example, an employer initially worked with a student on a graphic design project, but the student's coding skills and creativity led to an offer for a full-time software engineering internship.

Beyond receiving industry project deliverables, employers also benefit from the Career Pathway Program by building their brand recognition on campus among international student networks, and gaining skills for more effectively engaging international students through CACEE training.



3 See the most in-demand skills by 2027 in the World Economic Forum's The Future of Jobs Report 2023. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/in-full/4-skills-outlook/>

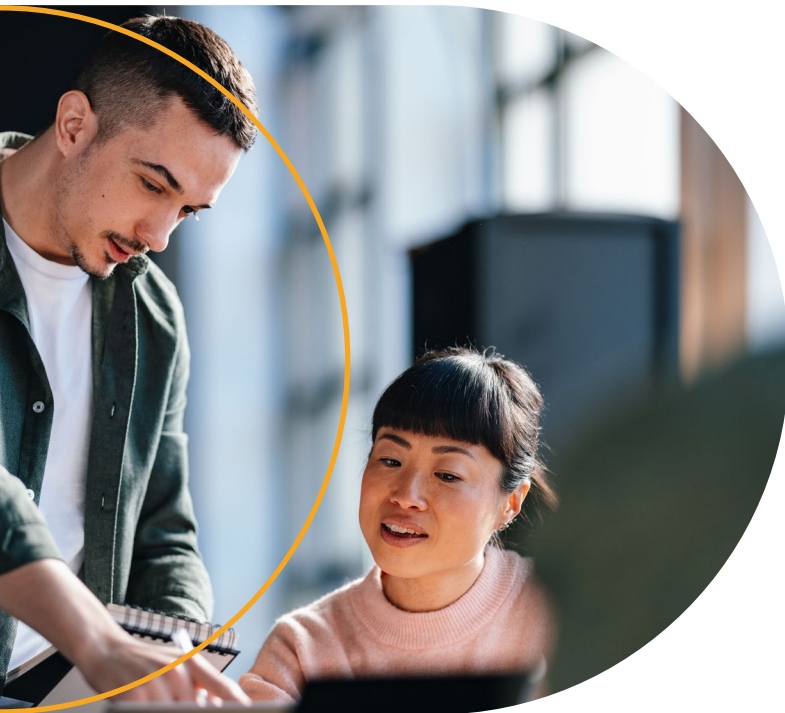
## 2 EMPLOYERS CAN DEVELOP GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND DIVERSE INSIGHTS FOR CANADA'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.

“

**If you only hire people you're familiar with, you're really limiting the breadth of your company. It starts to stunt the growth after a while.”**

*– Employer participant*

Today's digital economy is fast-paced and global, and Canada is already playing catch-up behind other peer nations when it comes to productivity and digital skills preparedness.<sup>4</sup> International students bring diverse cultural and market perspectives that can give Canadian businesses a boost.



### EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT: CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAM + EIM TECHNOLOGY

EIM Technology is a Canadian edtech company focused on making electronics and technology accessible for beginners through hands-on kits, tutorials, and resources. They retail to K-12 agencies as well as universities and colleges globally.

EIM has had great success with hiring international students for two-week industry projects through the Career Pathway Program. David Guan, EIM Business Developer, shared that students have been able to leverage their multi-cultural backgrounds and knowledge to help market EIM in foreign markets, such as in the Middle East and Asia.

***“That’s why I keep signing up for these Career Pathway cohorts - because I enjoy meeting people of all backgrounds. As an educational company, it’s important to know perspective not only in the Canadian educational culture. This gives us perspective on how we target our program to new audiences.”***

So far, EIM Technology has partnered with three cohorts of Career Pathway Program students, with no plans to slow down.

***“Each time I get a cohort of students, they provide me with a little bit of insight into something that we can do just a little bit better. And as a small business, accumulating these little improvements will snowball into something bigger.”***

4 Digital Skills for Today and Tomorrow. <https://fsc-ccf.ca/research/digital-skills-today-tomorrow/>



**3 | GUIDED MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES HELP  
EMPLOYERS BUILD INTERNAL CAPACITY  
FOR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS AND  
CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCIES.**

With newcomers expected to make up a third of Canada's workforce by 2036, cultural competency and social-emotional skills are essential for effective leadership in the digital economy.<sup>5</sup> Through partnering with CACEE, the program offers employers specialized training in cross-cultural competencies, student and early career talent management and engagement, and practical knowledge about employing international talent.

This training provides value to employers of all sizes. For small- to medium-sized businesses, it offers tools to develop these skills without the need for costly external consultants. Larger employers benefit from strategies to better understand and address their large teams' needs, and how to integrate cultural competency and social-emotional skills development into everyday management practices.



<sup>5</sup> Exploring Cultural Competence and Inclusion in the Workplace. <https://winnipeg-chamber.com/chamber-blog/exploring-cultural-competence-and-inclusion-in-the-workplace-an-in-depth-qa/>



## CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAM X TELUS: MINI CASE STUDY

BHER member TELUS is a Canadian technology company offering telecommunications, digital healthcare, and other services, is known for innovation and a strong commitment to employee satisfaction.

As part of this commitment, TELUS recognizes the importance of engaging and supporting newcomer employees and became the first Wayble employer partner to join the mentorship collaboration.

Throughout the six weeks of the Career Pathway program, TELUS mentors provide international students with firsthand knowledge of the Canadian digital and IT landscape, and Canadian workplace culture and norms. In return, mentors get the opportunity to develop cross-cultural competencies, build their communication skills, and develop inclusive leadership skills to strengthen the organization's culture. Mentors who were once newcomers also shared that this opportunity allowed them to “pay it forward” by sharing their own experiences and learnings to support the next generation of international talent.

*“The big thing for me is the learning part, the learning and reflection about yourself. The first thing I figured out was that I needed to learn how to listen more and hear their side of the story. That’s just one of the many learning experiences I’ve had.” –TELUS employer mentor*

Following TELUS's lead, other Canadian companies have started working with Wayble to provide mentors for the Career Pathway Program and take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen their cross-cultural skills and diversify their digital talent pipelines.



# Key Takeaways

## FOR EDUCATORS

- Enhance your institution's international student support by developing WIL opportunities that address the restrictions of the Student Work Placement Program (SWPP). Since employers are ineligible for wage subsidies for international students, you should focus on creating short-term WILs that mutually benefit employers and students – or partner with organizations like Wayble that can create these opportunities.
- Similar to Wayble's resources, you should equip employers with targeted information and short training models that address knowledge gaps and misconceptions about hiring international students. Develop these resources in-house or partner with organizations like CACEE to offer clear guidance on visa requirements, employer obligations, and the benefits of hosting international student talent. Proactively offering these resources helps open doors to WIL opportunities and increases the likelihood of employers considering international talent as a valuable asset.
- Make WIL more accessible for international students by adopting industry project models like the one used in the Career Pathway Program. These short projects provide Canadian industry experience while addressing common barriers such as visa restrictions on working hours and work-school balance. Time-limited, well-defined projects with clear outcomes are a manageable and impactful alternative to longer term internships or co-ops, creating more inclusive pathways to professional experience.

## FOR EMPLOYERS

- Short-term industry projects are a practical and cost-effective way to build a talent pipeline and increase brand awareness on campus, especially for SMEs with limited resources. Industry projects help you identify strong candidates for future roles while showcasing your organization to a diverse student pool, without as high of an investment as traditional internships.
- Short-term projects with international students are a low-risk way to accelerate digital innovation and global reach in your company. From market research to testing prototypes and improving processes, international students bring fresh perspectives shaped by their diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. This can spark breakthroughs that may not emerge in your usual workflows, and help you stay innovative and competitive in the digital economy.
- Invest in building or participating in a mentorship program for international students. Becoming a mentor allows staff to develop skills like cross-cultural communication and leadership, which are crucial for an organization's success in today's globalized digital economy. Mentoring helps employees strengthen their own professional development while also fostering a company culture that is more attractive to diverse talent.