

Excellence through innovation

The OntarioLearn Digital Strategy 2014–2017

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Message from the Executive Director

The only constant in today's world is change. This reality is built into the work of *OntarioLearn*. With the collaboration of our members, *OntarioLearn* supports digital innovation across post-secondary teaching and learning in Ontario.

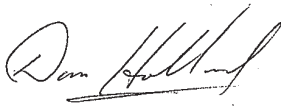
As a pioneer among online consortia in North America, *OntarioLearn* maintains a membership that includes all of the colleges across Ontario. Members gain efficiencies from shared contracts that uphold academic preferences, support professional development, monitor course quality, and facilitate teaching and learning experiences online. Learners registered with *OntarioLearn* benefit from the highest standard of help desk support: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year. With the participation of our membership, *OntarioLearn* offers the strongest inventory of shared online courses and shared online programs across Canada.

OntarioLearn responds to change in all its forms. We leverage our award-winning cooperative model to uphold the highest standards, share best practices and weigh-in with the strength of our membership to ensure the effective design, development and delivery of learner experiences online.

With this digital strategy, we build on the expertise we have developed over nearly two decades of cooperation to put the needs of learners at the centre. We introduce the ideas, processes, and services that will facilitate future learner access and attainment of Ontario post-secondary education online.

Our past points the way to a future of continued innovation in Ontario. Our organization aims to extend the reach of Ontario post-secondary education online by encouraging balanced participation among our members. *OntarioLearn* will collaborate with our stakeholders across the system to fortify Ontario's leadership position, providing students access to the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their careers, and to strengthen Ontario's economy.

Sincerely,



Dan Holland
Executive Director

METHODOLOGY

The consultative process to prepare this digital strategy relied on a wide range of research.

3562

ONLINE LEARNER DATA SETS

A quantitative survey with response from 3562 OntarioLearn registered online learners.

216

EXTERNAL REFERENCES

A scan of the environmental context with 216 references from industry, thought leaders and media.

134

ONTARIO COLLEGE STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

A review of 134 Ontario college published annual reports, strategic plans, strategic mandate agreements and select business plans.

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ONTARIOLEARN AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT REPORTS

An assessment of 73 OntarioLearn documents and provincial government reports.

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IN-DEPTH STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

One-on-one in-depth stakeholder interviews with 34 college member representatives, technology vendors, and industry leaders.

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ONLINE CONSORTIA

A comparison of 18 online consortia across North America (three in Canada, and 15 in the United States; among them, seven did not meet the criteria for inclusion).

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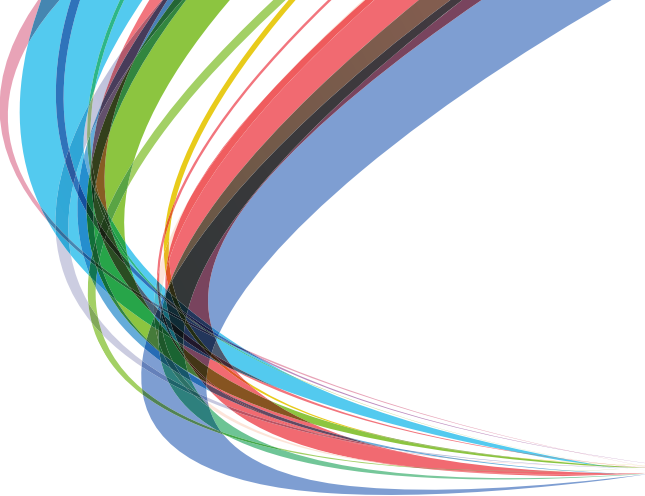
WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

The insight of 12 workshop activities conducted with OntarioLearn members that resulted in 45 top priorities.

4

ROUNDS OF COLLABORATIVE INPUT

Four rounds of collaborative input for a thorough review of the draft framework and overall approach of the strategy.



Defining the digital strategy

Technology on its own does not provide a blueprint for the future of post-secondary teaching and learning online in Ontario. The exponential growth of computing power and the rise of connectivity networks changes our relationship with technology day-to-day but our focus remains the same. At OntarioLearn, we are student-centred, expanding access to education in Ontario by addressing the diverse needs of online learners with flexibility, convenience and choice.

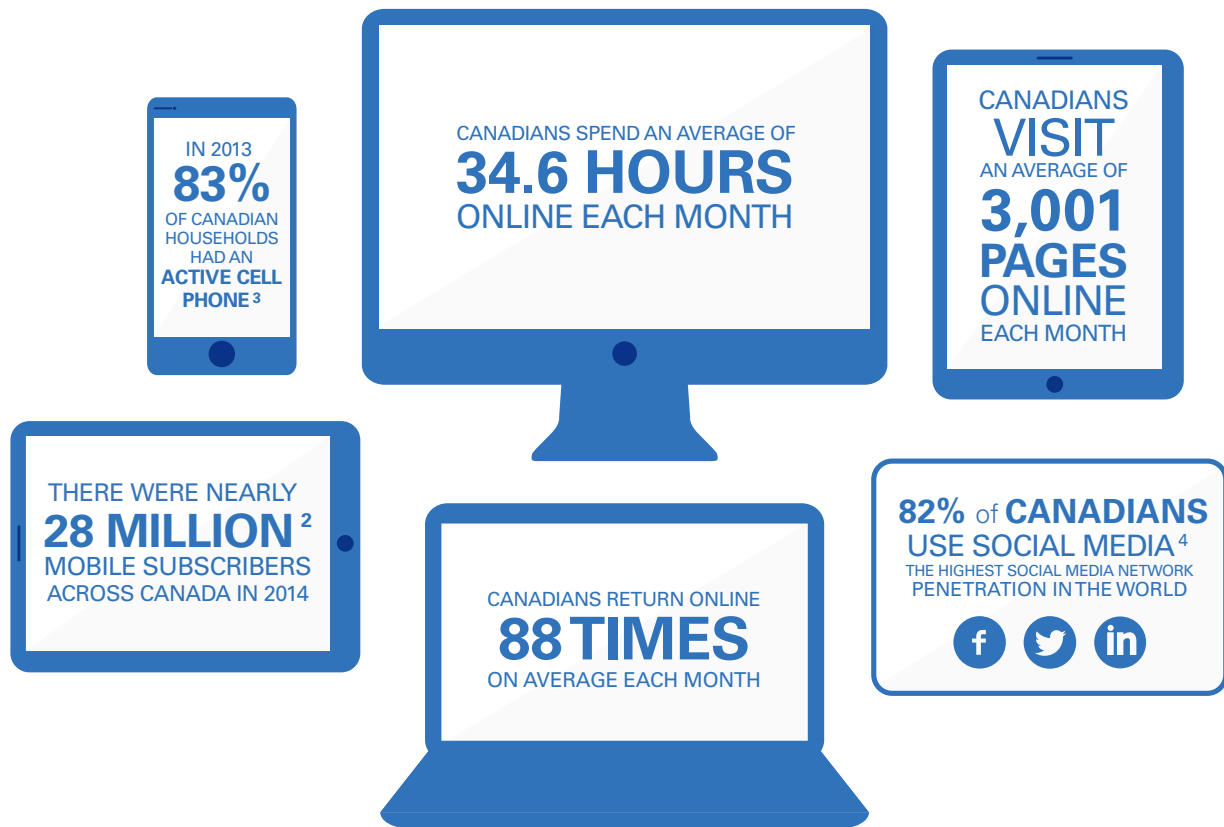
This document details the key elements of the OntarioLearn Digital Strategy that provide direction for the next three years. Our strategic pillars rest on a strong foundation on which we establish priorities for the years ahead. Upon this foundation, we plan quick-start and staged goals so that we may harness the power of innovations as they arise.

Our approach is evolutionary, building on our past achievements as a consortium and setting new goals for relevant, personalized learning experiences online. Our aim is not only to increase learner access but also to increase the attainment of post-secondary education across Ontario. This strategy is flexible and responsive to the new technologies and efficiencies that will facilitate our students' success. Future efforts will be evaluated for their scalability, to support a steady increase of our member colleges' participation in the design and delivery of high-quality learning experiences online.

This strategy was developed with extensive consultation and a keen eye on the circumstances in which the consortium operates, such as the governance and by-laws of our not-for-profit collaborative; the economic climate and fiscal constraints among member colleges; the abilities and capacities of OntarioLearn members and partners; and importantly, the learner preferences of our marketplace.

OntarioLearn is ready to extend its cooperative model with stakeholders across the system. As a result of this digital strategy, OntarioLearn will build on its past success to strengthen learner access and attainment of post-secondary education online for a stronger economy and a more vibrant society.

**CANADIAN INTERNET USERS CONTINUE TO BE AMONG THE MOST HIGHLY ENGAGED WORLDWIDE.¹
MORE THAN 25 MILLION CANADIANS ACCESS THE INTERNET EACH MONTH.**



**CANADIANS EXPECT TO SEE DIGITAL EDUCATION
IMPROVE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM.**

Help personalize learning, provide faster access to materials, and present learners with more flexibility.

Incorporate more digital tools and create more opportunities for collaboration.⁵

Improve access to education and understanding of technology, thereby better preparing students for their futures.

¹ ComScore. (2014) *Canada Digital Future in Focus 2014: The 2013 Digital Year in Review & What It Means for the Year Ahead*.

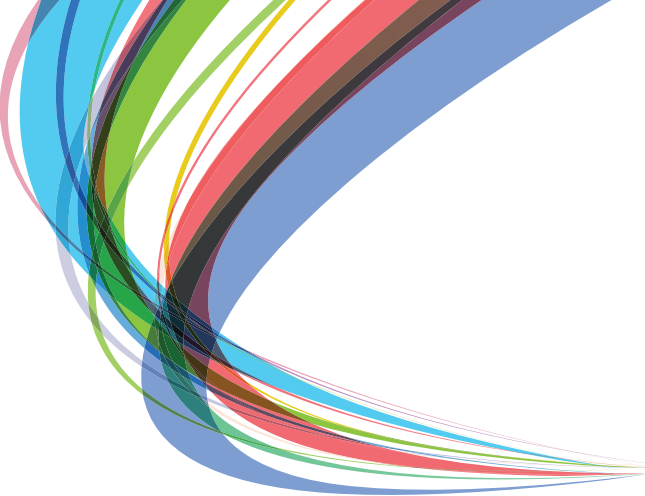
² Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association: Subscriber Stats 2014 Q2. (2014). Retrieved from <http://cwta.ca/facts-figures/>

³ Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association: Statistics Canada, Residential Telephone Service Survey. (2014). Retrieved from: <http://cwta.ca/facts-figures/>

⁴ Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association: We Are Social Singapore, Social, Digital & Mobile Around The World. (2014). Retrieved from <http://cwta.ca/facts-figures/>

⁵ PWC: The Connected Classroom: How Canadians see the evolution of education. (2014). Retrieved from www.pwc.com/en_CA/ca/public-sector-government/publications/pwc_citizencompass-theconnectedclassroom2014_june13.pdf

⁶ High, P. (2013). *Forrester Top Technology Trends for 2014 and Beyond*. Retrieved from www.forbes.com/sites/peterhigh/2013/11/25/forrester-top-technology-trends-for-2014-and-beyond/



Technology in today's classroom

Education in Ontario, from kindergarten through the post-secondary years, has been immeasurably enriched by the computing power achieved in the 1990s and the explosion of information available via the Internet.

In this decade, connectivity networks are widely available and mobile devices ubiquitous. Full feature phones, high functionality smartphones and tablets are used multiple times per day, keeping Canadians connected over WiFi networks while on-the-go. Canadians are joining social networks in record numbers to stay connected in groups online. Information is at the user's fingertips, with the ability to choose from a variety of custom apps, podcasts, videos and learning materials available anytime, anywhere.

“ Consumers are expecting uniform service whether they are in the physical world or if they are in the digital world. ”⁶

Canadians have become accustomed to extraordinary service levels for information exchange, creating new expectations of educational institutions. Unprecedented connectivity and emerging technologies are creating new teaching and learning experiences, increasing educators' ability to help learners achieve their goals and placing new demands on the front and back offices of institutions to keep pace.

Emerging tools and trends

Today's classroom has become an ever-changing digital environment with tools and trends that are invaluable to post-secondary education.

The classroom of the future will give educators the tools to learn about every student and provide them with a tailored curriculum from kindergarten through to employment.... Analytics delivered over the cloud will provide decision support to teachers so they can predict students who are most at risk and their roadblocks, and then suggest measures to help students conquer challenges based on their individual learning style.⁷

Electronic and digital resources

A wealth of electronic educational resources offer new opportunities for teaching and learning online. eTextbooks provide new interactions and functionality to engage with the material. Broadly available open educational resources (OER) such as online videos and web archived documents, highlight new challenges in assessing quality and verifying free licenses. Free massive open online courses (MOOCs) offered by large post-secondary institutions are increasingly complementing accredited learning online.

Personalized learning

Technology can be used to adapt the teaching and learning environment to suit individual learning styles. Adaptive learning engines use software to modify course material based on the needs of individual learners. Achievement can be measured by outcome or competency earned, rather than hours completed. Analytics of learner progress provide new opportunities for early intervention. The flipped classroom enables learners to attend lectures online and use class time for "homework" suited to their progress.

⁷ Elks, J. (2013). *IBM Reveals 5 Innovations That Will Change Our Lives Within 5 Years*. Retrieved from http://www.sustainablebrands.com/news_and_views/info_tech/jennifer-elks/ibm-reveals-5-innovations-will-change-our-lives-within-5-year

Social learning and engagement online

New communication channels and collaboration tools are supporting higher education teaching and learning communities online to increase engagement among peers, and the success of learners. Gamification is embedded to keep students interested, focused and learning. Simulations offer strikingly realistic exposure to actual situations and environments.

Mobility

With greater availability of broadband and WiFi connectivity, individuals may be using multiple devices for their communications, increasing the demand for online information, and the functionality of learning platforms, to adapt to mobile screen sizes and specifications. Where the digital divide persists, with a disparity in access to high-speed internet service between urban and rural environments, offline viewing, notifications, and “synch” capabilities attempt to ease the burden.

Quality review standards

Online offerings are reviewed for quality and consistency to assure they meet the high standards learners expect. Efficacy frameworks provide administrators and instructors processes for review and evaluation that are predictive, to improve learning outcomes using specific interventions.

Cloud storage and services

With extensive needs for storage, organizations are relying on cloud data centres to house data with the hardware (power servers), software, and managed services including disaster recovery, business continuity back-up plans, and security in compliance with legislation to keep data safe.

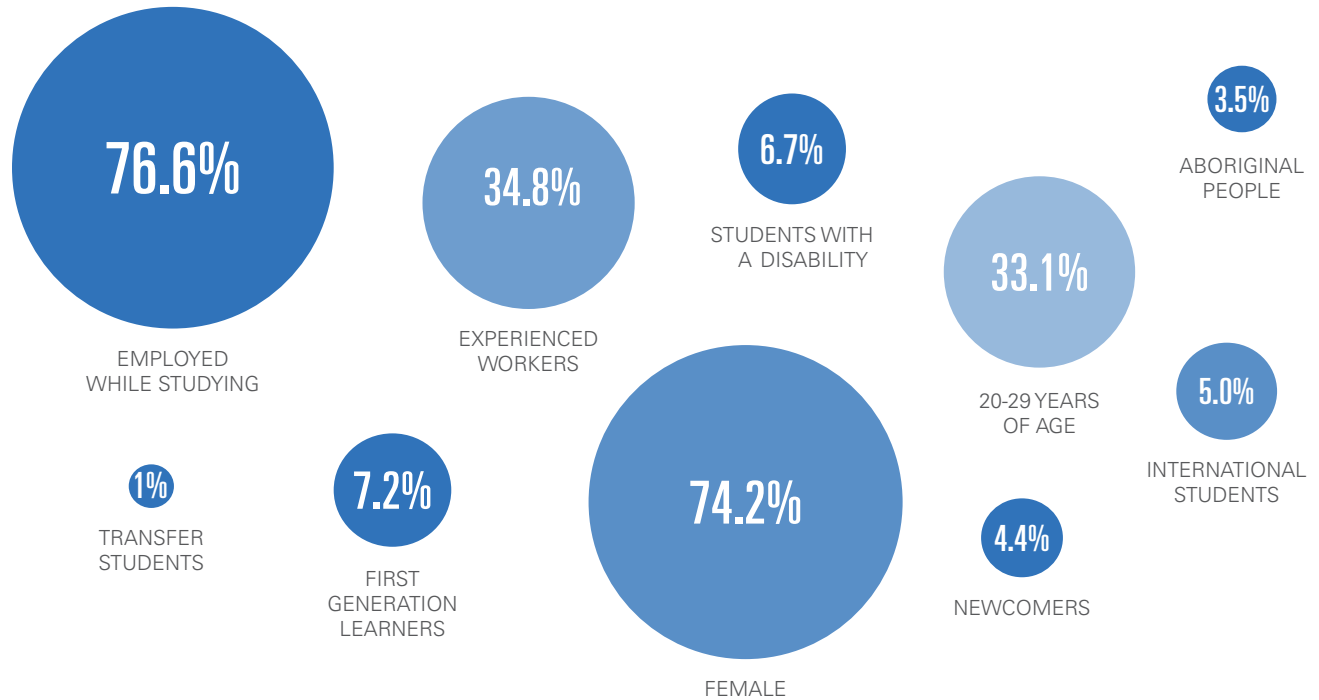
Outsourcing firms as partners

Vendors are offering more services to lower infrastructure costs while boosting performance. Outsourced firms provide secure hosting and storage in data centres; research and curriculum development services; course conversion services to comply with legislation (*Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, AODA*); and course migration services to transition learning platforms. Vendors also participate in industry steering committees and advisory boards.

Big data

Packaged, actionable analytics can be reported promptly with timely data and levels of service that are beyond lists of information. Dashboards can be accessed daily, even hourly, to provide current and predictive scenarios for informed decision-making in real-time.

ONLINE LEARNER SURVEY 2014⁸



88% WOULD RECOMMEND ONTARIOLEARN TO A FRIEND OR COLLEAGUE

86% ARE LIKELY TO STUDY WITH ONTARIOLEARN IN THE FUTURE

"I am very happy with Ontario online learning...I will continue doing more courses. Thanks."

"Love online learning, I can study at 5 in the evening or 5 in the morning!"

"Overall it's the best experience of learning."

"Felt there could have been information provided about materials required and how the site works..."

"As a first time student to studying an online course, I am lost."

"I am confused on what OntarioLearn's responsibility is and what the college's responsibility on the website is..."

"One course I am 100% satisfied with... the second course I would never recommend..."

"I would love to see more courses offered and more start dates."

"Having an online tutor i.e. Skype or some other conference would be extremely beneficial..."

⁸ echo marcom services. (2014). The OntarioLearn Online Learner Survey. Ottawa, CA.



The online learner

OntarioLearn serves a wide range of learners including students of all ages, busy lifestyles, local and remote geographies; they may come from Ontario, elsewhere in Canada or from anywhere in the world. Some have special needs and learning styles. Many work while they pursue their studies. These online learners form a diverse group with diverse needs; they may be pursuing professional credentials or specific skills.

The largest age cohort is 20-29 years of age, indicating that many learners register with OntarioLearn within a few years of leaving high school or in the first years of starting a career or family. Time is at a premium. With multiple intake dates to start courses (OntarioLearn offers up to 15 annually), the convenience of studying outside a physical location, the flexibility to complete course work on their own time, and a connection to the local “home” college, studying online is compelling and often the only avenue for their pursuit.

Online learner survey findings

The best people to provide direction for the future of OntarioLearn are the students who use it, which is why online learners were surveyed through July of 2014. Analysis of the 3,562 responses revealed helpful insights, and confirmed OntarioLearn is focusing on the areas of most concern to learners. Similarly, the largest cohort of respondents to the survey indicated they are 20-29 years of age (33.1%), corresponding to OntarioLearn demographic reports.

Trends apparent in the students’ responses have driven the creation of this digital strategy and its key pillars. Learners indicated they want reliable, consistent quality among courses offered, and that they are looking for a wider range of courses and programs online. They need greater support when it comes to the process of online learning, as well as access to tutoring and resource materials. They also want help with technical aspects of taking exams, navigating the portal, and the Learning Management System. Finally, respondents noted they would like OntarioLearn to make it clearer and easier to find information about course requirements, assessments and other basic elements of the courses they wish to take. The responses were categorized and found to align with OntarioLearn’s list of key priorities as opportunities dealt within this strategy.

Students are also interested in ways that their existing skills and competencies can be evaluated and accounted for in the courses they take. They are interested in access on a wide range of platforms and devices including cellphones and tablets. They also feel that professional development for online instructors is important. Overall, almost 86% of OntarioLearn survey respondents are likely to study with OntarioLearn in the future and nearly 88% will recommend OntarioLearn to a friend or colleague.

ONLINE CONSORTIA REVIEW RESULTS⁹

STEP 5

SHARED CREDENTIALS BEYOND STATE BORDERS

Institutions and regional systems create collaborative inter-institutional and inter-regional efforts that take all the components of previous steps and allow students to move freely beyond regional borders.

STEP 4

SHARED & ARTICULATED CREDENTIALS

Regional systems with fully articulated efforts that include easy transfer of credit among institutions and shared credentialing.

STEP 3

SHARED STUDENT SERVICES

Systems provide a variety of centralized online student support services for all institutions within the system.

STEP 2

SHARED CONTRACTS

Institutions join together to purchase shared contracts for resources such as a shared Learning Management System (LMS) across all campuses or faculty development resources such as Quality Matters (QM).

STEP 1

CLEARINGHOUSE

Regional institutions collaborate to provide a clearinghouse of courses and degrees for students to easily search.

STEP 3

- eCampus Alberta
- ◆ BCcampus
- Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative
- ◆ Mississippi Virtual Community College
- ◆ Washington Online

STEP 2

- eCampus Manitoba
- OntarioLearn
- ◆ Illinois Community Colleges Online
- ① Iowa Community Colleges Online
- ⊙ New Jersey Distance Education Affinity Group
- ▼ North Carolina Community College System Virtual Learning Community
- ▲ Virtual College of Texas

⁹echo marcom services. (2014).The OntarioLearn Online Consortia Review. Ottawa, CA.



Online consortia review

A scan of North American online consortia was undertaken to examine the comparative strengths of the OntarioLearn Online Collaborative. The research team analyzed published pages, posted materials and reports available online to categorize each group's level of collaborative practices.

The categories followed the standards outlined in the report *State U Online* by the New America Foundation and Education Sector (USA, 2013). The report classed online higher learning consortia in five steps, from Step One, in which courses and programs are simply published online; to Step Four, characterized by integrated systems and shared credentials that provide an ease of student mobility between institutions; through Step Five, which facilitates student mobility across borders.¹⁰

Of the 18 North American online consortia considered for the review, 15 were groups of institutions in the United States that grant two-year credentials, or single sector virtual college and university (VCU) consortia.¹¹ In Canada three consortia were included: BCcampus, eCampusAlberta, and eCampus Manitoba.

Seven of these 18 online consortia did not meet the criteria for inclusion. The online consortia included operate in Canada or the United States with a presence online, offer two-year credentials granted by a "home" or registering college (as a group, the consortia is not credential-granting on its own) and involve the cooperation of multiple colleges or universities (not operating as one institution).

A total of 11 online consortia were compared with the OntarioLearn consortium. Each group had successfully garnered resources to expand their inventory of shared courses and to showcase the course inventory online. Many of the consortia reviewed manage shared contracts to create efficiencies that benefit the institutions of their membership. Several online consortia offer shared student services for learners online. Reaching Step 3 in their level of collaboration, these groups have systems that provide a variety of student support services to online learners registered across the membership. Very few online consortia included in the comparison offer extensive shared programs among member institutions. Most of the online consortia in the study benefited from a group of full-time staff, an annual operating fund reviewed by a governing board or council, substantial membership fees and a curriculum development fund. The disbursement of funds differed but a common practice included awarding funding to member institutions via a formal selection process.

OntarioLearn is a forerunner among post-secondary online consortia across North America. In nearly 20 years of operations devoted to the development and delivery of high-quality, accessible, student-centred online learning, OntarioLearn has consistently shown growth in annual registrants and shared course offerings. Today, OntarioLearn boasts more than 70,000 registrants annually with an inventory of 1350 diverse courses across 985 unique subjects.

As online consortia add to the depth and breadth of their shared contracts and shared services, OntarioLearn will also need to fortify the benefits it offers to its members, diversify the support services offered to online learners, develop a robust inventory of shared programs among member institutions and monitor its progress to uphold its leadership position in teaching and learning online in Ontario.

¹⁰ Fishman, R. (2013). *State U Online*: New American Foundation and Education Sector. Retrieved from http://education.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/FINAL_FOR_RELEASE_STATE_U_ONLINE.pdf

¹¹ Epper, M., R., & Garn, M. (2003). *Virtual College & University Consortia: A National Study*. (2003). Retrieved from http://wcet.wiche.edu/wcet/docs/resources/Virtual_College_University.pdf

As a consequence of the increasing spread of online education, institutions are finding that the needs of the current mix of students differ from those in the past...Institutions that fail to prepare for these shifts and respond to the dramatically increased competition among online offerings risk losing relevance and overall market share. Those that adapt will discover huge untapped opportunities for growth, new platforms for innovation, and the potential to transform how future generations learn.¹²

¹² Bailey, A., Barton, C., & Mullen, K. (2014). The Five Faces of Online Education: What Students and Parents Want. Retrieved from https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/education_consumer_insight_five_faces_online_education_what_students_parents_want/



Transformation in Ontario

More than ever before there is a shared understanding that high-quality education drives personal, economic and societal growth.¹³ A skilled, adaptable workforce is essential to social and economic development in Ontario. Post-secondary education, in turn, is essential to the creation of such a workforce, something that has long been recognized by the province's publicly funded system. Indeed, efforts to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, to extend access to education and to help students succeed have been central to the work of the province of Ontario; the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; and to *OntarioLearn*. Results are visible when students achieve post-secondary credentials and move into employment, strengthening our economy through greater productivity and skills-based global competitiveness, but also becoming members of dynamic, prosperous communities that are well positioned to meet the future.

Innovation in post-secondary education

The province of Ontario recognized early on that technological innovation offered enormous advantages to post-secondary students, supporting the partnership established among Ontario's colleges to accelerate the development and delivery of online education through *OntarioLearn*. With retention rates (89.1% 2012) above system-wide averages (65% 2012)¹⁴, *OntarioLearn* is succeeding.

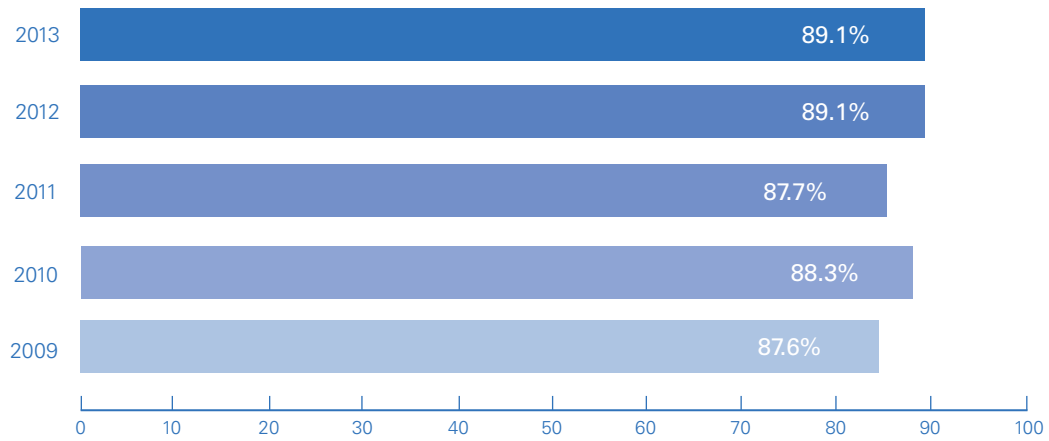
College commitments

Throughout its nearly 20-year history, *OntarioLearn* has been an outstanding example of collaboration among post-secondary institutions, which work together to provide high-quality, accessible, student-centred online learning opportunities. Once a small coalition known as Contact South, *OntarioLearn* has grown into a partnership of formal and informal sharing among all 24 colleges across Ontario, with many integrating *OntarioLearn* into their strategic planning and reporting.

¹³ Economic Modeling Specialists Intl.: Demonstrating the Value of the Ontario college sector: Analysis of the Return on Investment and Economic Impact of the Ontario College Sector. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.collegesontario.org/outcomes/return-on-investment-study/2014/Ontario_AGG_MainReport_1213_Final.pdf

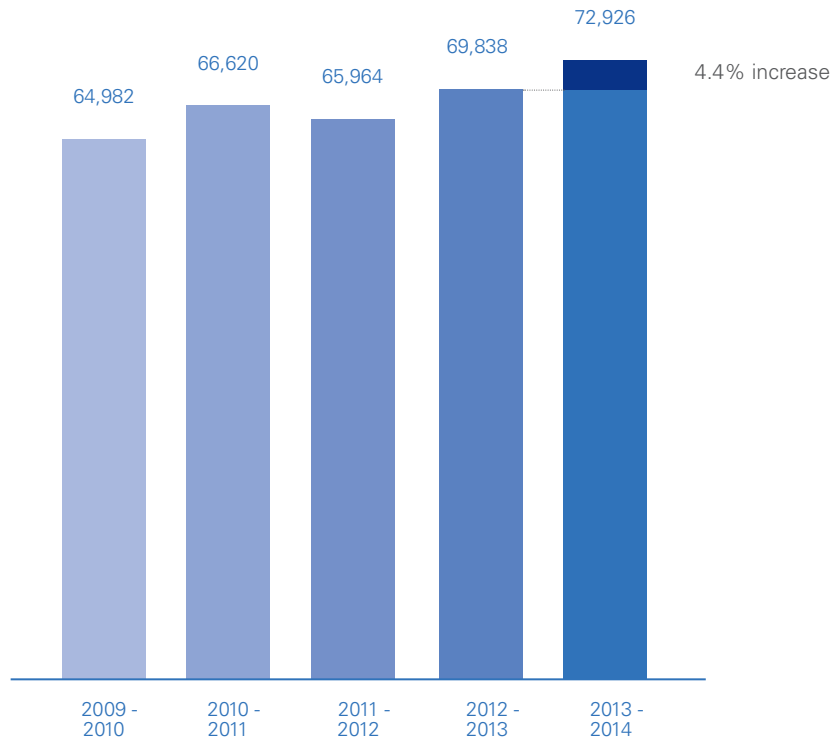
¹⁴ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities: Results-based Plan Briefing Book 2013-14, ISSN # 1718-7095. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/annualreport/2014RbP_En.pdf

ONTARIOLEARN RETENTION RATE ¹⁵



OntarioLearn retention rate is defined as the percent of students who were assigned a final grade.

ONTARIOLEARN ENROLLMENT ¹⁶



¹⁵ OntarioLearn 2013-2014 Year-End Summary Report (2014).

¹⁶ Ibid.



Strong foundations for the future

In nearly 20 years of operations devoted to the development and delivery of high-quality, accessible, student-centred online learning, OntarioLearn has seen annual growth in enrollment and course offerings. Although the growth in OntarioLearn registrations has slowed in recent years, year over year growth (4.4% growth reported in 2013-2014) is ahead of the rate of enrollment growth system-wide. Similar trends are reported across the United States, indicating a prevailing high demand among learners for post-secondary education online.^{17, 18}

Since 1995, OntarioLearn has shared best practices in online pedagogy and online resources, and provided learners access to courses online across Ontario, leveraging the strengths of its members. OntarioLearn chooses to let academic areas lead the decision for learning management platforms (LMS), choosing to be platform agnostic, providing services and supports to each of its members according to their preference. OntarioLearn has shared courses and shared contracts that are scalable and sustainable, extending access to online courses and help desk support, with minimal additional resources. OntarioLearn realizes savings from the reduced duplication of both courses and supporting activities, while benefiting the greatest number and diversity of learners.

With the collaboration of OntarioLearn, member institutions have been able to offer students a larger online course inventory than they could have developed independently. Colleges are able to develop courses online and realize economies of scale with learner access and interest that builds from across the province. OntarioLearn member institutions have been able to co-develop shared programs including: the Leadership Development Series Certificate (LDS), and the Human Resources Management Certificate (HRPM) programs. These programs have been developed in collaboration, leveraging the expertise and resources across the post-secondary system to create state-of-the-art online learning experiences, using evidence-based pedagogy that ensure consistent learning outcomes.

Students have benefited from greater choice and flexibility; they have had access to an inventory of online courses offered by Ontario institutions beyond their "home" college and, while undertaking their studies, students have benefited from centralized technical help desk support services, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year via telephone, email or online chat. With high attainment rates, students are completing their courses at a higher rate than on-campus alone. OntarioLearn has collaborated to offer a seamless learner experience across their online course inventory by establishing shared contracts with a lead outsourced firm (Pearson Embanet) that hosts multiple learning platforms (Blackboard, Moodle, Angel, and First Class), provides help desk support, and integrates with the cloud based services of another LMS firm (Desire2Learn).

The OntarioLearn model is successful, as the high rates of member participation and the success of students' illustrate. At this pivotal time for higher education, OntarioLearn is a mature organization ready to capitalize on its achievements and come together with colleagues across the system within the Ontario Online framework.

¹⁷ Allen, E., I. & Seaman, J. (2013). Grade change: Tracking Online Education in the United States. Retrieved from <http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/gradechange.pdf>

¹⁸ OntarioLearn 2013-2014 Annual Report (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ontariolearn.com/images/pdf/OL_AnnualReport%202012-2013-LowResol.pdf

90% OF ACADEMIC LEADERS

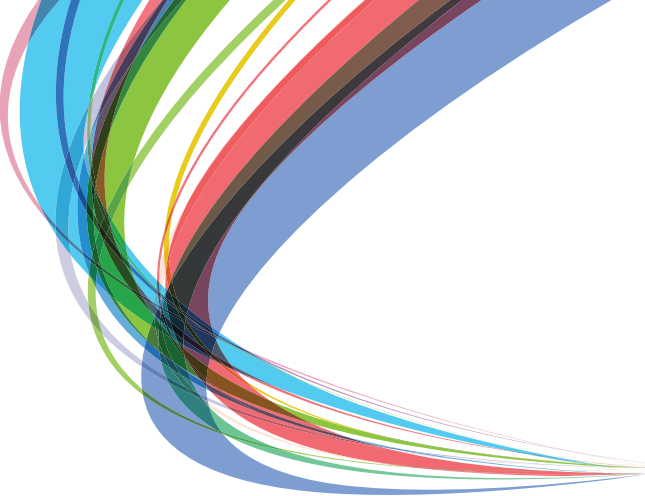
in the United States believe that it is “Likely” or “Very Likely” that a majority of all higher education students will be taking at least one online course in five years’ time.



Two-thirds of chief academic officers in the United States believe that there will be substantial use of student-directed, self-paced components in future online courses.

LESS THAN ONE-THIRD

of academic leaders in the United States believe that there will no longer be concerns about the relative quality of online courses.



Strategic pillars and priority goals

OntarioLearn will continue to increase access to high quality, student-centred online education in Ontario by building participation among its members to enhance the work done thus far, working together for greater and more balanced participation as hosts and registering colleges across the system.

With the growth of teaching and learning online across North America, OntarioLearn will have less competitive advantage; competition will intensify as the delivery of post-secondary online courses, services and student supports become increasingly widespread.

As a result, OntarioLearn plans to evolve its operations by delivering on the pillars of the strategy outlined here. The priority goals that follow will simplify decisions and facilitate efficiencies with the combined purchasing power of the consortium, supporting digital innovation to stay ahead of the curve, enhancing the profile of post-secondary education online in Ontario.

Expand access: Students will have greater choice and flexibility through greater access to a variety of exemplary online courses across the province.

Expand access

PRIORITY GOAL 1

Offer a variety of exemplary online courses toward universal course credit recognition, with flexible starting dates, based on learner demand.

- Validate shared courses, course equivalencies and courses with flexible starting dates that support learner mobility and credential attainment online.
- Publish the course-sharing protocol and promote an open list of the course and program inventory.
- Heighten transparency with a revitalized website and portal, showcasing inventory and recognition within Ontario Council of Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) standards.
- Identify complementary offline services to close the digital divide for remote, rural and/or northern populations.

**QUICK START****PRIORITY GOAL 2**

Assess ongoing learner behaviour, attitudes and preferences alongside sector demand to maintain, cull and augment relevant variety of online course offerings in Ontario.

- Develop a preliminary classification of learner demand using existing data (e.g. five-year trends).
- Design analytics to understand online learner enrollment behaviour, to tabulate projections and forecast participation among consortium members.
- Implement Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a qualified partner to assess sector needs (e.g. Integrated Local Labour Market Planning organizations).

PRIORITY GOAL 3

Evaluate the increased participation of Francophone colleges and access of online learners with analysis and projections to inform decisions for online learner supports in both official languages.

- Source funding options to enable greater participation across the OntarioLearn membership and to accelerate the effective transition of online learner supports in both official languages.
- Evaluate the growth trajectory of Francophone online learner demand.
- Estimate fees for technical help desk support in both official languages by email, chat, and telephone.
- Build the business case for a full review of the OntarioLearn web pages, ePortal(s) and technical help desk supports to identify levels of implementation and to prioritize key functionality for students, instructors and college staff in both official languages.
- With an approved business case, project a timeline with key milestones for implementation and the criteria to measure the effective transition from unilingual to bilingual support services.

QUICK START

Harness collaboration: The activities will be governed and operated by member colleges to leverage existing strengths in the system and allow institutions to share best practices in pedagogy used in course delivery; coordinate the offering of state-of-the-art courses that are recognized for credit across multiple institutions; improve efficiencies with shared services to realize economies of scale with reduced duplication of courses and supporting activities.

Harness collaboration

PRIORITY GOAL 4

Offer extended, centralized technical support services, 24 hours/7 days per week, to online learners registered with member institutions.

- Evaluate the growth trajectory of online learner demand for technical support services in both official languages.
- Develop a technical infrastructure that maintains support for multiple Learning Management Systems (LMS).
- Evaluate social media options to expand technical support services (e.g. Twitter feed).
- Identify service standards for extended, centralized technical support services, including response time, uptime, and off-peak scheduled maintenance in French and English.



PRIORITY GOAL 5

Expand the development and delivery of shared courses and shared programs online to maximize scale, realize efficiencies, and streamline the recognition of academic credit among institutions.

- Develop evaluation methodology to understand future sector needs and learner preferences across the system.
- Prioritize sectors to determine ten shared programs that will be developed collaboratively, by leveraging dedicated resources and capacity across member institutions.
- Evaluate the growth trajectory of online learner demand for French-language post-secondary education online.
- Take the lead with Ontario universities to add capacity, assist learner mobility and increase access to collaborative or joint programs prioritizing courses within sectors; common General Education courses; and Bridging courses.

PRIORITY GOAL 6

Leverage collective purchasing power through Request for Information (RFI) and Request for Proposal (RFP) procurement of services to streamline administration and improve levels of service.

- Establish a committee to identify the preferred model for the expansion of online learner support services; include a review of support services offered in Ontario (e.g. Ontario Colleges Library Services), Canada (e.g. BCcampus) and North America.
- Develop an MOU with municipal incubation centres to co-create opportunities for entrepreneurial youth to complement and grow Centre of Excellence support services.
- Draft the requirements of the RFI for technical support services; online invigilation of examinations; expanded student support services; and multiscreen communications.
- Showcase the shortlist of top RFI responses.
- Draft RFP requirements to proceed.

QUICK START

Deliver high-quality education and student support services online: Deliver student-centred online learning experiences supported by evidence-based pedagogy and effective student support services to ensure consistent learning outcomes.

Deliver high quality

PRIORITY GOAL 7

Monitor course reviews based on an enhanced course quality review, learner evaluations, and the escalation process for course and instructor review.

- Maintain the Course Standards Checklist quality review of online courses and programs inventory.
- Define a preliminary classification of online course relevance and renewal (e.g. review dates, survey metrics).
- Evaluate consortium capacity to in-source online learner course evaluation surveys as a core competency.
- Conduct in-depth analysis of data collected and set new standards for system-wide distribution.
- Issue annual standardized course report cards with recommended actions for improvements and attrition.
- Develop procedures for members to champion the revitalization of the online course inventory with agreed-upon optimal timelines for transition.



PRIORITY GOAL 8

Broaden the OntarioLearn Quality Framework to “raise the bar” in technology-enabled learning across Ontario, setting advanced standards for online teaching and learning using the best in online technology and pedagogy.

- With broadened quantitative and qualitative research methods: qualify online learner engagement and preferences for online courses and learner supports; and capture instructor and administrator feedback on the effectiveness of online pedagogy, engagement and assessment.
- Work with the Knowledge Hub to complete annual scan of literature, consortia and industry innovations pertaining to teaching and learning online.
- Document and share lessons learned with the Knowledge Hub communities of practice.
- In collaboration with the consortium Quality Review Committee, support continuous learning in course development and delivery.

PRIORITY GOAL 9

Bolster retention by centralizing and expanding online student services system-wide such as foundational digital literacy to reset expectations of learning online and library, tutoring and/or competency centre assistance.

- Deliver one-stop support services online as articulated in the RFI/ RFP process including: tutoring (e.g. math, writing competency centres), and library reference services.
- Establish a communications strategy to improve online learner experiences for log on, use of passwords and awareness of expanded services.
- Complete the RFP process to award and implement technical support services; online invigilation of examinations; expanded student support services; and multiscreen communications.

QUICK START

Enhance the national and international profile of online learning in Ontario: Raise the profile of Ontario*Learn* among stakeholders for the positive recognition, the sustainability and the promotion of Ontario online teaching and learning in the global online learning landscape with evidence of the organization's award-winning collaborative, adaptive leadership, performance, and scalability of online offerings across the system.

Enhance profile

<p>PRIORITY GOAL 10</p> <p>Maintain a collaborative, adaptive leadership model that prompts the participation of all 24 of Ontario's applied post-secondary learning institutions to optimize resources, avoid duplication and increase the availability of and access to Ontario online learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) with the Committee of Presidents (COP) reflecting the evolution of the consortium's cooperative model. • Draft a white paper to communicate the consortium's position within the new Ontario Online framework. • Formulate budget and business plan for review annually to procure, manage and support an evolving suite of digital tools and services selected by members. 	<p>QUICK START</p>
<p>PRIORITY GOAL 11</p> <p>Increase business intelligence based on system-wide research of online learning behaviours, attitudes and preferences; province-wide segmentation with representative sample sizes; year-over-year tracking; and comparable data to all members for evidence-informed decision-making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement annual measures to showcase the quality of OntarioLearn teaching and learning experiences online and the efficiency and effectiveness of the consortium. • Collaborate to collect comparable Ontario government-defined key performance indicator (KPI) data for online learners. • Develop real-time dashboard reports of comparable, consortium member data. • Identify funding envelopes and partnerships to support consortium evolution and infrastructure requirements. • Seek sustained funding to fortify Ontario's competitive position. 	<p>✓</p>
<p>PRIORITY GOAL 12</p> <p>Heighten communications among key stakeholders to build interest and understanding of the OntarioLearn value proposition and the consortium's potential to elevate Ontario's position in the national and international markets for online learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a positioning strategy, common to all participating post-secondary institutions, that meets the needs of stakeholders. • Develop an internal communications and marketing plan. • Develop a stakeholder relations strategy. 	<p>QUICK START</p>

Resources

OntarioLearn continually looks to the future, evolving not only to support the reach of its current operations but also to activate the next phase of post-secondary teaching and learning online in Ontario, adding value to the three inter-related hubs of activity described within the Ontario Online framework, and effectively supporting the system with an efficient use of funding allocations.

OPERATIONS

OntarioLearn has consistently grown its online learner registrations year over year reaching 72,926 in 2013-2014. OntarioLearn members remit a \$4 fee for each registration, totaling \$291,704 reflecting these learner registrations in 2013-2014. A matching investment to these funds would allow for strategic growth, ensuring OntarioLearn not only maintains its operations but also begins to explore new initiatives like those articulated herein.

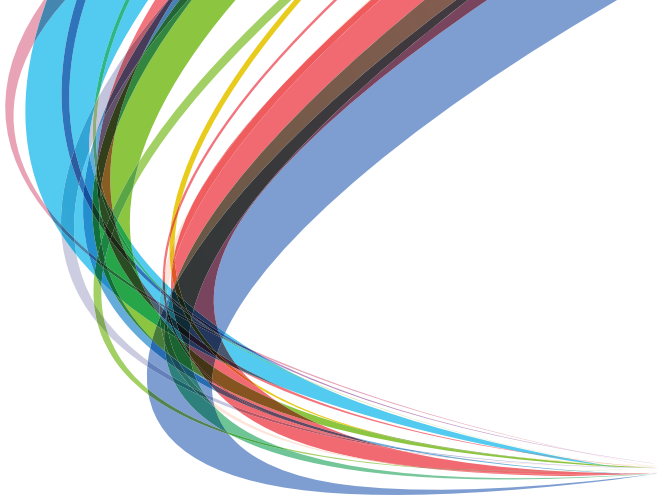
SPECIAL PROJECTS

To develop and implement the best models for teaching and learning online, OntarioLearn needs to stay at the forefront. OntarioLearn could kick-start innovation with funds for special projects each year. With \$1,000,000 of special project funds, OntarioLearn could accelerate the launch of pilot initiatives and set up the implementation and evaluation standards that will support the long-term sustainability of innovation across the system, building on the history of OntarioLearn's collaboration agreements, and resource sharing.

SHARED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Although OntarioLearn has shown growth in its inventory of shared courses online and online learner registrations, the consortium has developed only two online programs collaboratively. As other consortia in Canada and North America begin to develop collaborative programs for online delivery, and learner demand for programs online continues to rise, the time is right for OntarioLearn to build on the strengths of the organization and its members to further the collaborative development of post-secondary programs online across Ontario.

OntarioLearn estimates the collaborative development of one shared program could be completed with an investment of \$350,000 - \$750,000. This assessment assumes that the consortium could develop one shared program with ten new shared courses and ten shared courses from inventory. OntarioLearn members could collaboratively develop ten shared programs over three years with a timely, strategic investment of \$3,500,000 - \$7,500,000 to significantly bolster its inventory of shared programs online in Ontario.



Implementation

The OntarioLearn consortium started with little capital, building an organization with a collaborative financial model based on registering student fees distributed to: OntarioLearn administration, the college that developed the course, and the technical service provider of help desk support. The entrepreneurial infrastructure has accelerated learner access to Ontario curriculum online, sustaining operations to date. However, this form of financing introduces unnecessary financial risk by limiting investment and slowing the rate of success over time.

The strength of OntarioLearn member colleges uphold consortium operations with the in-kind contributions of space, time and human resources. At this stage in its lifecycle, increased funding of OntarioLearn operations could maintain current levels of service and support new collaborations to fortify Ontario's competitive position.

Human Resources

With staff contributions from member colleges, two full-time and three part-time staff, OntarioLearn has a virtual organization that supports its streamlined operations. To propel its future, OntarioLearn forecasts the need to increase its staff complement in order to maintain operations, renew stakeholder agreements and facilitate the discussions that will underpin future innovations. Building on capabilities existing within the organization, additional resources could support activities such as: finance/procurement, client service (bilingual), data analytics/research, and proposal/technical writing.

Infrastructure

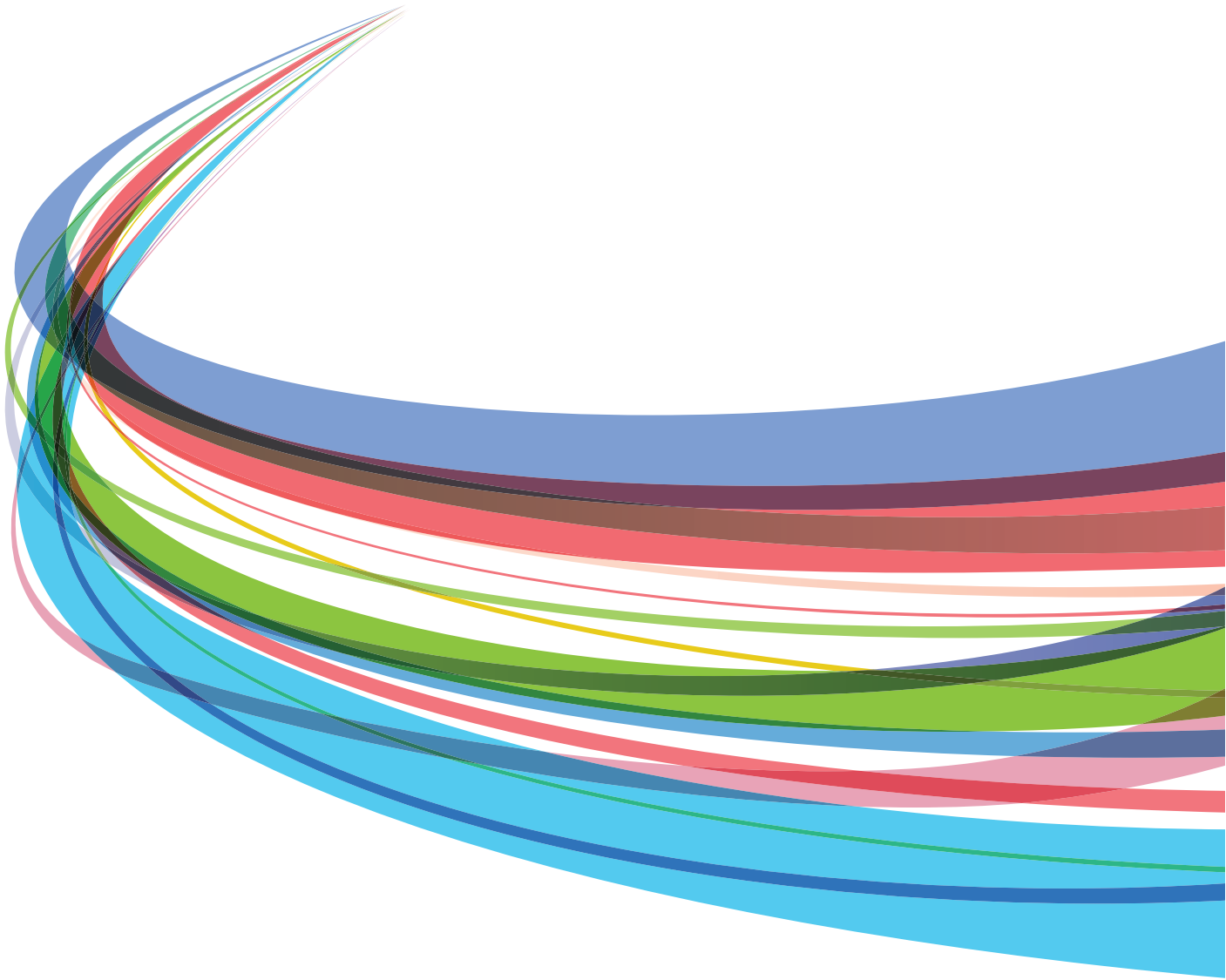
OntarioLearn began its operations with a shared services model managed from within the Information Technology (IT) department of a member institution. Without investment, activity levels pushed beyond the excess asset and resource capacity available at the college.

To align with the growth of course inventory and learner demand, OntarioLearn outsourced services with technology vendors who maintain user interfaces and data centre security protocols for archive, retrieval, back-up and recovery. To sustain its position, OntarioLearn will need to extend shared services online, considering outsourced and cloud-based service models, with pay-per-use fees and limited thresholds to mitigate risk.

OntarioLearn aims to continue the collaboration among its members with the development and delivery of ten shared programs online, leveraging expertise and capacity across the system, balancing member participation, and efficiently meeting learner demand.

Building on a history of success

OntarioLearn is a pioneer among post-secondary online teaching and learning consortia in Canada and across North America. With expertise developed over nearly two decades of facilitating access to online education, OntarioLearn will move into the future with the confidence of its past and point the way with continuous innovation.



OntarioLearn Online Collaborative, Inc.