# Open Learning Lab

## Transforming Learning. Together.

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COLLECTIVE

# About the LearningCITY Collective

The LearningCITY Collective is a collaboration of organizations and individuals engaged in Calgary's learning system, including learners, educators, employers, funders, and policymakers. The LearningCITY Collective is independent of government or civic entities. Below are the 2023-2024 LearningCITY Collective Board of Directors.

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Aniisa Allaher, Vice President, People & Culture at Shaw Communications

Jennifer Aubin, Chief People & Culture Officer at Attabotics

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Heather Robertson, Director, Service Design, Calgary Public Library

Rahim Sajan, Teacher and Off Campus Learning Coordinator, Calgary Board of Education

Rob St. Denis, Community Futures Treaty Seven

Alanna Wellwood, Head of Learning Innovation, Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School

D'Andre Wilson-Ihejirika, Executive Director, Calgary Work-Integrated Learning Consortium

Stephen Yu, Vice President, Technology Delivery Management @ Morgan Stanley

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# Executive Summary

## The Talent Challenge

Calgary, like many other cities, is facing revolutionary changes to how its people live, work, and learn. The city's economic plan, _**Calgary in the New Economy**_**,** set out an ambitious vision and framework to develop a future-proof, sustainable economy for our city. This plan is anchored to Calgarians adapting to meet new and dynamic demands. To meet this challenge, _**Calgary's Skills Development Framework**_ is a guide to empower Calgarians to learn, unlearn, and relearn new skills through an agile model of open learning.

## Open Learning – Accelerating Labour Force Development

Open learning recognizes learning is not limited to a classroom, rather, learning happens in an endless number of ways. In Calgary alone, there are over 30,000 different programs offered annually. If traditional closed learning resembles a ladder, open learning resembles a dynamic climbing wall. This climbing wall incorporates an infinite number of ways to learn, from traditional classrooms to employment, to volunteering, to an art class or playing sports, listening to a podcast and everything in between. Open learning empowers individuals to define their own destination and map their own path on the climbing wall. It also recognizes that employers must play a more active role in the learning journey of Calgarians. Finally, open learning recognizes that sometimes the most valuable learning is not scripted, rather, it is a spontaneous collision of new ideas and experiences.

## Three Integrated Initiatives

To explore the potential of open learning on Calgary labour market outcomes, we are executing three integrated initiatives in 2023/24:

### Initiative 1: The Open Learning Lab

Open learning demands a new mechanism to enable systematic harmonization, collaboration, and innovation across the learning system. In Calgary, this new mechanism is the LearningCITY Collective's 15,000 sq. ft. **Open Learning Lab** located in Bow Valley Square. The Open Learning Lab is designed to identify and pilot innovative approaches to enhancing skill development through increased collaboration between learners, employers, and educators. The Open Learning Lab opened in June 2023 and is home to a diverse range of learners, educators, and employers.

### Initiative 2: AccelerateU Pilot

In August 2023, the Open Learning Lab will host the Bissett School of Business **AccelerateU** program. AccelerateU is a pilot program delivering immersive experiential learning for up to 1000 senior Mount Royal University students studying entrepreneurship, social innovation, and marketing.

### Initiative 3: Downtown Learning Study

The third initiative is the evaluation of the impact of open learning on learning outcomes and labour force development. This evaluation is embedded in LearningCITY's **Downtown Learning Study**, being directed by a team of fifteen academic researchers in collaboration with Calgary Economic Development.

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# Calgary's Skills Framework

The future of Calgary will be defined by the ability of the city to develop, attract, and retain talented people. However, confronting this talent challenge extends beyond the capacity of any single level of government, educational institution, sector, or employer. For this reason, the *LearningCITY Collective* has developed a community-level solution - *Calgary's Skills Development Framework*. This framework is rooted in a vision for the city's learning system:

<span style="color:red">**Calgary's open learning system develops exceptional, creative, and adaptable talent, who thrive in a fast-changing world.**</span>

Today, Calgary's learning system is composed of 3,063 organizations, delivering 30,870 certified and non-certified programs, and 3.5 million learning experiences annually. Moreover, Calgarians have access to an infinite array of learning opportunities from across the globe. Therefore, the challenge today is less about capacity and more about how to optimize these isolated learning experiences into an open system that can support the unique goals of every Calgarian.

To deliver this, the framework defined four strategic drivers, each with defined specific goals, priority actions, and key performance indicators. Below are the four drivers: **adaptable**, **accessible**, **empowered**, and **open**.

### Driver 1: Adaptable
Calgarians embrace disruption and change as an opportunity.

### Driver 2: Accessible
Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion are embedded in the learning process and championed by all.

### Driver 3: Empowered
Calgary's learning system empowers personalized, purpose-based learning.

### Driver 4: Open
Calgary's learning system is open and drives performance and innovation.

**3,063**

Number of skill development providers currently in Calgary.

**30,870**

Number of skill development programs currently offered annually in Calgary.

**3.5 M**

Number of skill development experiences currently offered annually in Calgary.

# The Big Picture

The goal of unlocking the capacity of our learning system through harmonization, collaboration, innovation, and shared learning is a priority for many organizations and ongoing initiatives. **Examples** of ongoing initiatives that incorporate system-level collaboration at their core include:

**Collaborative Processes**

- Calgary in the New Economy
- LearningCITY Collective
- Calgary's Skills Development Framework
- Edge-Up
- TalentED YYC
- Innovation District Project
- ActiveCITY Playbook 2030
- CreativeCITY: Prosperity through the Creative Economy
- Downtown Postsecondary Study Team

**Collaborative Infrastructure**

- East Village
- Central Public Library
- Platform Innovation Centre
- Studio Bell
- University Innovation Quarter
- Arts Commons Transformation
- The Ampersand
- The Edison
- The Open Learning Lab

As a LearningCITY Collective initiative, the Open Learning Lab pilot is designed to complement and build on these existing initiatives by providing both a physical space and piloting processes to increasing our skill development capacity through harmonization, collaboration, and innovation.

## The Role Innovation Districts

An innovation district (or corridor) is a geographic area where organizations including educational institutions, start-ups, business incubators and accelerators, established companies, and civic bodies are clustered. This model leverages the principles of open innovation to drive maximum collision and cross pollination across organizations and people. **Mechanisms such as an Open Learning Lab are critical conduits for facilitating collisions.** Innovation districts are highly contextual to each community, but in general they tend to be physically compact, transit-accessible, and offer mixed-use housing, office, and retail. Leading examples of innovation districts in the US include Cambridge (MA); Atlanta; Durham (NC); and Seattle.

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# Transforming Learning

Imagine a Calgary where citizens view disruption as a chance to reinvent themselves. Imagine a Calgary with a dynamic and evolving talent pool. Imagine a city that attracts investment and talent from across the globe because it's known as a city that learns its way forward. To create this city, we need to rethink how we learn.

How we've learned for the past 170 years is rooted in the industrial revolution. For efficiency, time and place became the defining characteristics of learning. People studied a common curriculum from age 5 to 17 within the certified learning system. In their late teens and early twenties, people developed job skills that had economic value. Because these skills were relatively stable, they could then monetize these skills for the next 30 years of their lives.

However, the world is very different today. Today most job skills need constant updating to keep their economic value. Moreover, with the rapid extension of life expectancy, careers now exceed 50 years. These changes demand a radical redefinition of when and how people will learn. This redefinition will transition learning from a closed model, in which a small group of institutions controls learning, to an open model of continuous learning, unlearning, and relearning.

Open learning is based on the principle of open innovation. Open innovation empowers collaboration and co-creation by inverting the business model from being centred around an organization to focusing on the user. For example, Lego shifted to an open innovation design model and immediately scaled from seven Lego engineers to over 20,000 Lego consumers engaged in design co-creation. Similarly, Apple and Google opened their platforms to tens of thousands of individual developers, creating millions of new apps and redefining the industry's business model.

Following the principles of open innovation, open learning recognizes learning is not limited to a classroom, rather, learning happens in an endless number of ways. If traditional closed learning resembles a ladder, open learning resembles a dynamic climbing wall. This climbing wall incorporates an infinite number of ways to learn, from traditional classrooms to employment, to volunteering, to an art class or playing sports, listening to a podcast and everything in between. Open learning empowers individuals to define their own destination and map their own path on the climbing wall. It also recognizes that employers must play a more active role in the learning journey of Calgarians. Finally, open learning recognizes that sometimes the most valuable learning is not scripted, rather, it is a spontaneous collision of new ideas and experiences.

## Creativity and Innovation

Creativity is the capacity to generate new or novel ideas. Innovation is about taking this idea and creating value through delivering a new product, service, or process. Research shows that both creativity and innovation are highly social processes that are the outcome of the structured or unstructured interactions between people with diverse backgrounds. The Open Learning Lab is designed to facilitate spontaneous and curated collisions.

# The Open Learning Lab

This framework challenges us to re-envision the nature of learning by recognizing that traditional education systems, though essential, are only a small component of our city's rich learning system. In Calgary there are 3,063 organizations, delivering 30,870 programs and 3. 5 million learning experiences annually. In addition, Calgarians have access to an infinite array of learning opportunities from across the globe. Therefore, the framework recognizes that our core challenge is optimizing these isolated learning experiences into an open system that can support the unique goals of every Calgarian. This demands a new mechanism to enable systematic harmonization, collaboration, and innovation. This mechanism is the **Open Learning Lab**.

The Open Learning Lab is designed to identify and pilot approaches to talent development through increased collaboration between learners, businesses, universities and colleges, government, and non-profit organizations. The Open Learning Lab will complement and augment Calgary's learning system by focusing on three goals: harmonize, collaborate, and innovate.

Adapting these principles to be community-led, the lab will be removed and independent of the structures and cultures of the current learning system. To rapidly expand the culture of collaboration and innovation, the lab is open and accessible to a mix of innovators from across the system, including employers, skills developers, policymakers, and researchers.

## Pilot Priorities

The pilot lab is focusing on four questions:

1. How can we facilitate increased collaboration across the learning system?
2. How can we integrate formal and informal learning into a seamless learning experience?
3. How do employers transition from consumers to co-creators of talent?
4. How can we increase interdisciplinary skills development to drive increased career adaptability?

## Activating the Lab

Experiential learning is a circular model of education which integrates formal academic learning into a workplace or practice setting. Experiential learning has been shown to support employment readiness, improve student engagement, increase distributed and situational cognition and the rate of employment pre- and post-graduation. Today, experiential learning reflects a more traditional hierarchical model, leveraging mechanisms such as co-operative education, practicums, internships, apprenticeships, course-based projects, and field schools.

However, the rapid expansion of experiential learning through open learning requires the development of new delivery models that provide a path to scale. Building on the principles of open innovation, the Open Learning Lab is designed to explore and test new approaches to experiential learning by co-locating students, educators, and diverse community members in an open and collaborative environment.

# The Space

The Open Learning Lab is **15,000 square feet** in the city's busiest building - **Bow Valley Square**. Bow Valley Square is also home to 190 businesses across every sector, from technology to energy to professional services. The pilot lab will be open for members from **June 19, 2023, to April 27, 2024**. The lab is designed as a highly flexible space, for teaching, networking, and events:

- Two classrooms.
- Twelve boardrooms and meeting rooms
- Flex space to maximize collaboration
- Flexible event space, including 100 seats in theatre style configuration
- LED screens in all rooms

## Standard Configuration

## Event Configurations



100 seat theatre

50 seat theatre
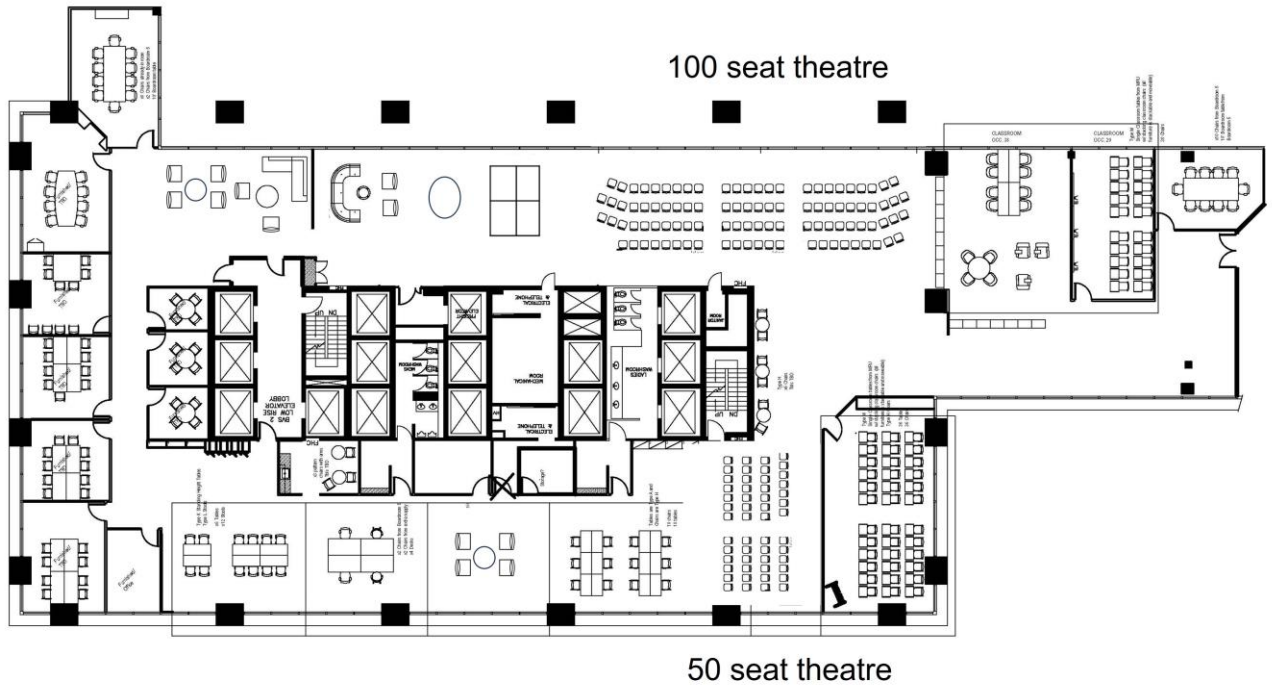
# Open Learning Lab Members

The Open Learning Lab is proud to be home to a diverse array of community members, actively collaborating with educators and learners. Our members include for-profit, not-for-profit and public sector organizations committed to providing transformative learning opportunities. Our plan is to cap membership at 40 for the pilot, however, we will monitor Open Learning Lab usage and demand through September, to ensure we find a balance. For a list of our current members please click **HERE**.

## What is *AccelerateU*?

AccelerateU is a multi-stage downtown pilot of the Bissett School of Business at Mount Royal University. The first two phases between September 2022 and April 2023 hosted nine senior classes in marketing, entrepreneurship, and social innovation at Platform Calgary. From September 2023 to April 2024, in partnership with The City of Calgary, the Calgary Downtown Association, and Oxford Properties, AccelerateU is expanding to over 30 classes and up to 1000 students **housed at the Open Learning Lab** in Bow Valley Square. AccelerateU is designed to allow senior business students to spend their final year embedded in a professional environment, with immersive experiential learning opportunities.

# Escape Your Echo Chamber

The echo chamber challenge is not new; however, the advent of social media and the affects of the pandemic is amplifying a risk to many organizations. There are a variety of causes of an echo chamber, including affinity bias, which naturally leads us to people who share a common view. Moreover, this can be amplified by the risk of groupthink and confirmation bias. To manage this risk, researchers identify several strategies:

1. Expose yourself and your organization to diverse and contrasting perspectives.

2. Be intentionally curious. This starts with being an active listener.

3. Be proactive and ask others for feedback and ideas.

The Open Learning Lab is intentionally designed to allow all of us, students, faculty, non-profits, start-ups, and mature companies to escape their echo chamber and engage with **young Calgarians.** This lab is designed as an inclusive and open space to curate structured and unstructured interaction. **Can the Open Learning Lab help you and your organization escape from the echo chamber?**

## Become an Open Learning Lab Member

Experiential learning is a collaborative process. The Open Learning Lab is pursuing organizations across the for-profit, non-profit, and public sector committed to bringing shared value to the lab. This means we want real professionals working and activating programming at the lab with educators and students. There are many ways members can collaborate to create shared value in the Open Learning Lab. Examples include:

**Student Projects**

The lab is hosting over 30 classes, and up to 1000 students in social innovation, marketing, and entrepreneurship from Mount Royal University's AccelerateU pilot program. As a member, there will be endless opportunities to collaborate with these students.

**Collaborative Research**

The lab will be facilitating collaborative research between our diverse members.

**Flexible Working Space**

The lab has flexible working space for learners and professionals.

**Event Space**

The lab can be configured to host professional development events from 10 people to 100 people.

If your organization is interested in exploring opportunities to participate in the Open Learning Lab, please complete this short membership application form by clicking **HERE**. Once you've completed the application, you will be contacted by the Open Learning Lab team to book a short discovery meeting to explore opportunities for collaboration. There is **No Cost** for the core Open Learning Lab membership, rather, we are seeking members who are committed to breaking down learning system silos by activating the space in a manner that will accelerate the development of the undergraduate students onsite.
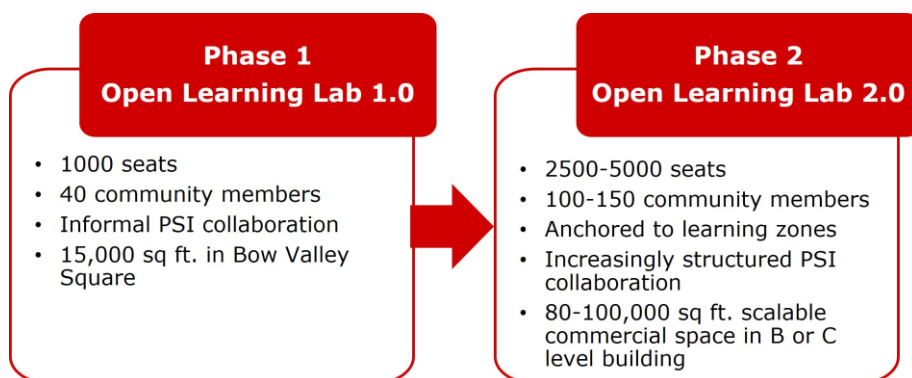
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# The Path Forward

The goals of the Open Learning Lab are shared by many organizations and ongoing initiatives. Therefore, it is imperative that the Open Learning Lab pilot be integrated as part of the big picture to maximize its impact. One of these initiatives is a LearningCITY Collective led study exploring whether expanding postsecondary programs downtown enhances learning and economic outcomes. A working model under evaluation envisions this downtown postsecondary strategy as a catalyst for increasing harmonization, collaboration, innovation, and shared learning. This model frames a path forward as incorporating three phases:

**Phase 1: Open Learning Lab 1.0**

The first phase is the current Open Learning Lab pilot, including 1000 seats for learners and up to 40 community partners in 15,000 sq. ft.

**Phase 2: Open Learning Lab 2.0**

The second phase expands the Open Learning Lab pilot, including 2500-5000 seats for learners and up to 150 community members, including multiple postsecondary institutions (PSI). During this phase, the lab could repurpose 80,000-150,000 sq. ft. of lower tier commercial space in downtown Calgary. To maximize collaboration between learners, educators, and community-partners, the lab is configured by learning zones. During this phase, Campus Alberta pilots a new flexible credit transfer model allowing learners to access diverse learning opportunities regardless of institution.

| Phase 1<br>Open Learning Lab 1.0 | Phase 2<br>Open Learning Lab 2.0 |
|---|---|
| • 1000 seats<br>• 40 community members<br>• Informal PSI collaboration<br>• 15,000 sq ft. in Bow Valley Square | • 2500-5000 seats<br>• 100-150 community members<br>• Anchored to learning zones<br>• Increasingly structured PSI collaboration<br>• 80-100,000 sq ft. scalable commercial space in B or C level building |

The Open Learning Lab pilot is designed to test the central tenants of this model, including the interest and impact of increasing collaboration between learners, educators, and employers. This evaluation is embedded in the Downtown Learning Study and the results will guide investment in Phase 2.

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