



Funding Mechanisms in Postsecondary Education:

A Catalogue of Ideas

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Introduction

This resource was developed by the eCampusOntario Research and Foresight (REF) Team to help postsecondary institutions ideate and explore innovative approaches to funding. It responds to the shifting landscape the sector finds itself in, marked by policy change, demographic transitions, and evolving learner expectations. This time calls for new thinking about how to sustain postsecondary education. This resource does not offer definitive solutions but presents a curated set of potential funding models designed to spark conversation, inspire experimentation, and be a launch pad for strategic planning. Some models are already in use within and outside of higher education, while others are more speculative or emerging. The goal is not to replace traditional funding, but to expand the possibilities for what funding can look like in a future-ready postsecondary system.

Methodology

This resource was developed through a multi-stage, collaborative process. Our goal was to surface a wide range of funding models that could support and provoke Ontario's postsecondary institutions to think big while navigating the evolving financial landscape.

The process included:

- **Reviewing existing models:** Funding mechanisms currently in use across Ontario, Canada, and internationally were examined, with attention to both mainstream and niche approaches.

- **Scanning for emerging practices:** Environmental scans were used to identify speculative, experimental, or underexplored ideas that could shape the future of postsecondary funding.
- **Internal consultation:** Research and foresight practitioners and eCampusOntario staff reviewed and discussed the ideas and assessed relevance, novelty, and potential impact.
- **Tagging and sorting:** Each model was categorized to support flexible navigation and alignment with institutional and individual priorities.

This methodology reflects our commitment to both evidence and imagination. It blends research with foresight to offer a resource that is grounded, generative, and adaptable.



What This Catalogue Is. And What It Is Not.

This resource is a collection of funding models intended to expand the conversation about how postsecondary institutions in Ontario might sustain and evolve their missions. It includes ideas that are:

- In practice at institutions in Ontario and around the world,
- Emerging from foresight research and environmental scanning, and
- Speculative and designed to provoke new thinking about what could be possible.

This is not a list of recommendations or ready-made solutions. There is no single model that will “fix” the funding challenges facing higher education.

Instead, this resource invites institutions to:

- Rethink relationships with learners, communities, governments, and external partners,
- Explore new forms of value creation and exchange, and
- Consider how funding models might evolve alongside broader shifts in policy, demographics, and learner expectations.

The goal is not to replace traditional funding, but to imagine how it might be complemented, restructured, or reimaged to meet the needs of a changing sector.



How to Work with this Catalogue

This resource is designed to support exploration, reflection, and strategic planning. It offers multiple entry points depending on your role, goals, and available time. You don't need to read it cover to cover. **Browse, filter, and follow your curiosity.**

To help you get started, we've included a visual table to showcase all of the funding models. It offers a quick scan of the ideas included in this resource. Each model is hyperlinked to a Model Card that describes its features, opportunities, and context. For readers navigating with screen readers, we recommend starting with the Table of all Funding Models or browsing the individual Model Cards.

Table of all Funding Models				
01	02	03	04	05
Freemium/Subscription Model	Pairing Work Integrated Learning with Micro-credentials	Platform Pays/Advertising Revenue	Crowdsourced Donation	Stackable Degree
06	07	08	09	10
Required Continuing Education for Regulated Professions	Accumulating Data Sets	Revenue Share Partnership	Training Programs Designed for Private Companies	Researchers and Facilities for Rent
11	12	13	14	15
Postsecondary Institute Lottery	Server Hosting and Power Plant Hosting	Excess Electricity: Distributed Energy Resources	Higher Education and Retirement Home Crossover	Newsletters
16	17	18	19	20
Crowd Funding	Meeting Students Where They Are, Geographically	Standards Development and Compliance Assessment Systems	Beyond Mentors, Fostering Champions	Learn about the Land: Sustainable Practices
21	22	23	24	25
Social Innovation Finance Tools	eSports and Betting as Funding	Supersizing Advertising	Sustainable Expert-Led Tourism	Unseating Academic Journals
The full list of funding models starts on page 9 . Hyperlinks will take you to the respective model cards.				

Three Routes to Explore:

Route 1. Browse the Model Cards

Use the table's hyperlinks to jump into any model that catches your interest. Each card includes lead organizations, a description, opportunities, and tags.

Route 2. Use the Tags to Navigate

Each model is tagged in three ways: Relational, Thematic, and Contextual. These tags help you find models that align with your context or strategic priorities. You can find the [tag descriptions here](#).

Route 3. Answer Guiding Questions

To support a different method of discovery, we've included a set of guiding questions. The funding model cards are sorted to answer questions, and you are given a short list that best fits your answers to:

- Evidence: Prevalence of idea.
- Role: Kind of influence you have.

Your responses will help narrow the list to a manageable, meaningful subset of models tailored to your needs.

Number - Title

- **Lead Organizations:** Where this idea has been successfully implemented.
- **Description:** Key features of this idea.
- **Opportunities:** Areas in postsecondary institutions where this idea might work best.

Tags

Related Tags

Helps You Answer...

Who is involved?
(e.g., learners, alumni, external partners)

Thematic Tags

Helps You Answer...

What kind of innovation is this?
(e.g., micro-credentials, open education, shared services)

Contextual Tags

Helps You Answer...

What kinds of institutional features does this model effect?
(e.g., large, metropolitan)

Citations: Sources

Route 3: Question 1

Do you prefer ideas with proven examples from other institutions?



Widely adopted — Yes, I want to see what others have done.



Emerging Practice — Maybe, but I'm open to new ideas.



Speculative or Novel — No, I'm looking for bold or experimental approaches.

Table of all Funding Models

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06	07	08	09	10
<u>Required Continuing Education for Regulated Professions</u>	<u>Accumulating Data Sets</u>	<u>Revenue Share Partnership</u>	<u>Training Programs Designed for Private Companies</u>	<u>Researchers and Facilities for Rent</u>
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<u>Postsecondary Institute Lottery</u>	<u>Server Hosting and Power Plant Hosting</u>	<u>Excess Electricity: Distributed Energy Resources</u>	<u>Higher Education and Retirement Home Crossover</u>	<u>Newsletters</u>
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<u>Crowd Funding</u>	<u>Meeting Students Where They Are, Geographically</u>	<u>Standards Development and Compliance Assessment Systems</u>	<u>Beyond Mentors, Fostering Champions</u>	<u>Learn about the Land: Sustainable Practices</u>
21	22	23	24	25
<u>Social Innovation Finance Tools</u>	<u>eSports and Betting as Funding</u>	<u>Supersizing Advertising</u>	<u>Sustainable Expert-Led Tourism</u>	<u>Unseating Academic Journals</u>

The full list of funding models starts on [page 9](#). Hyperlinks will take you to the respective model cards.

Route 3: Question 2

What level of change are you working toward?

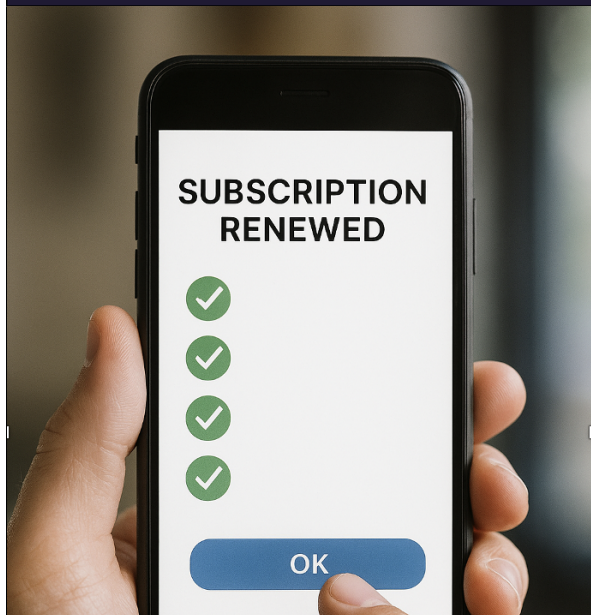
-  **Initiative Driver** (e.g., Solo explorer or Team steward in the role of individual researcher, instructor, innovator or someone leading a small group or initiative).
-  **Cross-functional collaborator** (e.g., someone bridging roles or units).
-  **Institutional change agent** (e.g., influencing policy, strategy, or cross-unit transformation).

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The full list of funding models starts on page 9 . Hyperlinks will take you to the respective model cards.				

Model Funding Cards



01 - Freemium/Subscription Model



Lead Organization

- Treehouse (*Private Sector – EdTech*)
- New York University (NYU) (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)
- Arizona State University (ASU) (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)

Description:

The freemium model provides users with access to basic content for free (freemium), while premium features, such as advanced courses, or certifications require a subscription fee. Often referred to as “all you can learn,” this model offers unlimited access to a wide range of resources. It relies on a robust digital infrastructure and ongoing content updates to maintain learners’ engagement and justify premium features.

Opportunities:

- **Tuition growth through appealing to new audiences:** Attracts broader student groups, especially lifelong learners, by offering free entry-level content and charging for advanced learning.
- **New subscription-based course packages:** Enables recurring revenue through subscriptions, particularly when bundled with micro-credentials for professionals and educators.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Community • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Open • Teaching Modality Marketing	• Infrastructure • Teaching-Focused

Citations:

- Shangalall, A. (2024, January 8). *How Subscription-Based Learning Is Changing Education*. Classter. <https://www.classter.com/blog/edtech/how-subscription-based-learning-is-changing-education/>
- Mitrovic, S. (2024, August 7). *Elearning Pricing Model: Key Insights And Best Practices*. Create Ai Course. <https://www.aicoursify.com/elearning-pricing-models>
- Treehouse. (n.d.). *Choose your learning path*. Treehouse. <https://teamtreehouse.com/plans>
- New York University. (n.d.). *Free online courses from New York University – NYUx*. edX. <https://www.edx.org/school/nyux>
- Arizona State University. (n.d.). *ASU Universal Learner Courses*. ASU. <https://ulc.asu.edu>

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What intrigued you about the models? Tell us more: research@ecampusontario.ca

02 - Pairing Work Integrated Learning with Micro-credentials



Lead Organization

- Saskatchewan Polytechnic
(Postsecondary Institution - Canada)

Description:

This model integrates micro-credentials with real-world projects through work-integrated learning (WIL). At Saskatchewan Polytechnic, learners complete Microsoft-focused micro-credentials and apply their skills in a 20-hour employer project facilitated by Riipen software. The involvement of private sector partners introduces a revenue stream and validates learner competencies through practical application.

Opportunities:

- Tuition growth through appealing to new audiences:** Appeals to non-traditional students and working professionals by offering short, skill-based learning with immediate workplace relevance.
- New employer-supported learning packages:** Creates revenue opportunities through partnerships with employers who co-fund or sponsor WIL experiences tied to micro-credential programs.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
- Learners - Community - Government - External Partners	- Micro-credential - Work-Integrated Learning - Shared Services - Community Engagement - Interdisciplinary	- Research-Intensive - Teaching-Focused

Citations:

- Saskatchewan Polytechnic. (2022, August 25). *Riipen and Saskatchewan Polytechnic create work-integrated learning opportunities*. <https://saskpolytech.ca/news/posts/2022/riipen-sask-polytech-create-work-integrated-learning-opportunities.aspx>

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03 - Platform Pays/Advertising Revenue



Lead Organization

- University of California, Berkeley (*Postsecondary Institution– U.S.*)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) (*Postsecondary Institution– U.S.*)
- Harvard University (*Postsecondary Institution– U.S.*)
- Stanford University (*Postsecondary Institution– U.S.*)

Description:

This model involves institutions uploading educational content to platforms like YouTube, which then generate advertising revenue based on viewer engagement. It supports open access to learning while creating a monetization pathway for institutions that produce high-quality, high-traffic content. Success depends on strong brand recognition, consistent content production, and platform algorithms that favor educational material.

Opportunities:

- **Tuition growth through broader visibility:** Expands reach to global learners and prospective students by offering free educational content that builds institutional visibility and trust and drives more uptake in paid course offerings.
- **New advertising-based revenue stream:** Generates income through platform monetization, especially for institutions with strong media presence and high engagement rates. Offers potential monetization path for Open Educational Resources.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Marketing • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

Citations:

- Harvard Online. (2017, March 27). Harvard Online - YouTube. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKJyv_uNh3LhYFKmwaB63bA
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (n.d.). MIT OpenCourseWare. Retrieved Feb 14, 2025, from: <https://ocw.mit.edu/>
- Stanford Online. (2009, March 9). Stanford Online - YouTube. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/stanfordonline>
- University of California, Berkeley. (2013, December 12). UC Berkely Extension. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC20sZe5RHww1skkZmDdHC-w>

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04 - Crowdsourced Donation



Lead Organization

- Wikipedia (*Nonprofit Organization – Open Knowledge*)

Description:

Wikipedia operates as an open-source platform funded primarily through small reader donations, with an average contribution of \$15. While it receives some large gifts, its sustainability is largely driven by broad-based public support. This model demonstrates how open-access educational resources can be maintained through community-driven funding, often supported by endowments that provide predictable revenue.

Opportunities:

- **Community-backed tuition alternative:** Offers a funding pathway for Open Educational Resources by engaging learners and supporters directly, reducing reliance on institutional budgets.
- **Donation-based sustainability model:** Enables predictable revenue through small, recurring contributions and endowments, especially for institutions committed to open access and public good.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Other PSI • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Marketing • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

Citations:

- Wikimedia Foundation. (2024, May 21). *What we do*. Wikipedia. <https://wikimediafoundation.org/what-we-do/>

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05 - Stackable Degree



Lead Organization

- Western Governors University (*Postsecondary Institution– U.S.*)
- State University of New York (SUNY) (*Postsecondary Institution– U.S.*)
- University of Wisconsin (*Postsecondary Institution– U.S.*)

Description:

This model allows learners to build a degree by accumulating stackable micro-credentials across institutions. In the U.S., universities like WGU, SUNY, and UW offer programs where learners earn credentials that can be combined into full degrees. In Ontario, micro-credentials are often targeted at learners with prior education. Implementing stackable degrees would require investment in technology and changes to certification frameworks such as Postsecondary Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB).

Opportunities:

- **Tuition growth through new offering appealing to new audiences:** Attracts learners (such as mature, working, or part-time students) not currently served by offering flexible, modular pathways to a degree.
- **New credential-based tuition streams:** Enables institutions to generate revenue through micro-credential programs that stack toward formal qualifications, appealing to learners seeking incremental progress.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Shared Services • Teaching Modality • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

Citations:

- University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. (2023, October 23). *Micro-credentials Toolkit*. https://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/current_projects/microcredentials/microcredentials-toolkit/
- Western Governors University. (2024, December 10). *About Western Governors University*. <https://www.wgu.edu/about.html>
- SUNY. (2025). *Micro-credentials – SUNY*. <https://www.suny.edu/microcredentials/>
- Pichette, J., & Courts, R. (2024, March 26). *Postsecondary-offered Microcredentials in Ontario: What does the Evidence Tell Us?* Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. <https://heqco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Microcredentials-report-FINAL.pdf>

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06 - Required Continuing Education for Regulated Professions



Lead Organization

- Monash University (*Postsecondary Institution – Australia*)
- Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)

Description:

This model involves postsecondary institutions offering continuing education (CE) courses required by professional organizations for license maintenance. While CE is often delivered by associations or private providers, institutions like Monash and SNHU have developed short courses for professionals in fields such as healthcare. This model is applicable to regulated professions such as doctors, nurses, and professional engineers, where ongoing education is mandated. To be competitive, institutions must align offerings with regulatory requirements and provide added value, such as transcript services or automated reminders.

Opportunities:

- **New continuing education credential-aligned course offerings:** Enables institutions to generate revenue by developing CE programs tailored to licensing requirements, potentially in partnership with professional bodies.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Alumni • Community • Government • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

Citations:

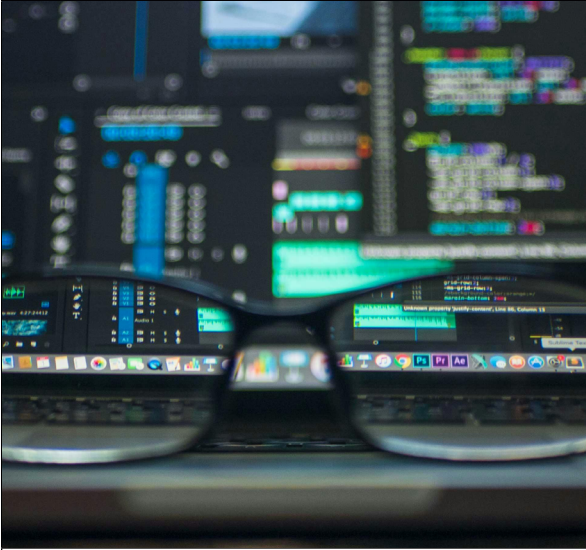
- Coursera. (2024, June 12). *What Is Professional Development and What Are the Benefits?* <https://www.coursera.org/enterprise/articles/what-is-professional-development>
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- Monash University. (2025). *Professional Development Short Courses.* <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/study/professional-development>
- Parsons, L. (2022, August 23). *Why is Professional Development Important.* Professional & Executive Development: Harvard Division of Continuing Education. <https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/why-is-professional-development-important/>

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07 - Accumulating Data Sets



Lead Organization

- UK Biobank (*Public Sector – Health Research*)
- CRC Research (*Private Sector – Consumer Research*)

Description:

This model draws inspiration from large-scale data initiatives in other sectors, such as the UK Biobank and CRC Research, which collect and monetize data for research and commercial use. Postsecondary institutions could apply similar approaches by systematically gathering data on student and instructor behaviors. These datasets could be sold or licensed or used to develop AI tools that personalize learning and improve outcomes. Implementation would require strong data governance, ethical safeguards, and institutional capacity for analytics.

Opportunities:

- **New audience for tuition:** Enables institutions to better understand and serve diverse learner needs through data-informed program design, potentially attracting more students.
- **New data-set sale revenue stream:** Creates opportunities to monetize educational datasets through subscriptions, licensing, or partnerships, while also supporting internal innovation through AI and analytics.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Marketing • Interdisciplinary	• Size Large • Research-Intensive

Citations:

- American Psychological Association. (2025). *Links to datasets and repositories*. <https://www.apa.org/research-practice/conduct-research/data-links>
- CRC Research. (2020). *CRC Research*. <https://crcresearch.com>
- Florida State University, San Diego State University, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, & Georgia State University. (2016, May). *Using Data to Improve Student Outcomes: Learning from Leading Colleges*. https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/HigherEdPG2_UsingDataToImproveStudentOutcomes.pdf
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- Innovare. (2024, May 2). *7 Examples of Student Data, and What They Tell Us*. <https://innovaresip.com/resources/blog/examples-of-student-data-and-what-they-tell-us/>
- Innovare. (2024, December 27). *The Different Types of Data in Education: A Complete Guide*. <https://innovaresip.com/resources/blog/types-of-data-in-education>
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- Woolf, B., I. Arroyo, A. Lan, Gaj, M., & C. Dede. (2022, October). *Data-Directed Education: The Future of AI in Education*. [https://nsf.gov/resources/nsf.gov/2023-03/Data-Directed Education The Future of AI in Education Workshop Report_2230697_October 2022_Final.508.pdf](https://nsf.gov/resources/nsf.gov/2023-03/Data-Directed%20Education%20The%20Future%20of%20AI%20in%20Education%20Workshop%20Report_2230697_October2022_Final.508.pdf)

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08 - Revenue Share Partnership



Lead Organization

- Wake Forest University (Postsecondary Institution – U.S.)

Description:

Wake Forest University partnered with Handshake, a job-matching platform, to support learners who require employment during their studies. The partnership targets mature and non-traditional students who may have limited time on campus and fewer social connections to bridge them to post-graduation employment. Through this collaboration, Wake Forest provides enhanced digital services while receiving a share of the revenue generated by the platform.

Opportunities:

- New audience for tuition:** Appeals to working and mature learners by offering employment-integrated support services that make education more accessible and relevant.
- New vendor-supported revenue stream:** Generates income through partnerships with technology providers and a fee for use from employers posting jobs, while expanding institutional offerings to meet evolving learner needs.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
- Learners - Alumni - Community - External Partners	- Work-Integrated Learning - Shared Services - Community Engagement - Teaching Modality - Marketing - Interdisciplinary	Infrastructure

Citations:

- Wake Forest University. (n.d.). *Handshake – Job Search Sites*. Retrieved Oct. 31, 2025, from: <https://alumni.opcd.wfu.edu/job-search-sites/handshake/>

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09 - Training Programs Designed for Private Companies



Lead Organization

- Arizona State University (ASU) (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)
- InStride (*Private Sector – Public Benefit Company*)

Description:

Arizona State University is a minority owner in InStride, a public benefit company that partners with private firms to design professional development programs delivered by academic institutions. The Rise Fund, a social impact investment firm, is the majority owner. In this model, InStride acts as a broker between companies and universities, facilitating training programs that generate shared tuition revenue. It expands the university's financial ecosystem and introduces social impact capital into the education space.

Opportunities:

- **New audience for tuition:** Attracts working professionals through employer-sponsored training programs, expanding institutional reach beyond traditional student populations.
- **New brokered training revenue stream:** Generates income through partnerships with intermediaries like InStride, enabling scalable delivery of custom training aligned with workforce needs.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Community • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

Citations:

- InStride. (2025, January 2). *InStride*. <https://www.instride.com/>
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10 - Researchers and Facilities for Rent



Lead Organization

- eCampusOntario (*Sector Support Organization – Ontario*)
- TrentUniversity (*Postsecondary Institution – Canada*)

Description:

This model involves institutions monetizing their physical and intellectual assets by offering access to researchers, labs, and specialized facilities. eCampusOntario's Ontario Collaborative Innovation Platform (OCIP) connects private industry with institutional collaborators. At an institutional level, Trent University have also made their facilities available for external use. This approach leverages existing infrastructure and expertise to generate revenue while fostering cross-sector collaboration.

Opportunities:

- **New audience for tuition:** Engages external partners and professionals who may later pursue formal education or research partnerships, expanding institutional reach.
- **New asset-based revenue stream:** Generates income by renting out facilities and expertise, turning underused institutional resources into active contributors to financial sustainability.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Other PSI • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure

Citations:

- Ontario Collaborative Innovation Platform. (2024). *OCIP*. eCampusOntario. <https://ocip.ecampusontario.ca/>
- Trent University. (2025). *Services – Water Quality Center*. <https://www.trentu.ca/wqc/facilities-services/services>

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11 - Postsecondary Institute Lottery



Lead Organization

- Princess Margaret Home Lottery (*Healthcare Sector – Canada*)
- Nesta (*Innovation Agency – UK*)

Description:

This model explores the use of lotteries to generate funding for postsecondary institutions. The Princess Margaret Home Lottery raises substantial funds for cancer research and care through prize-based draws. Nesta, a UK innovation agency, was originally funded through a one-time lottery endowment. Postsecondary institutions could adopt similar approaches to create endowments or support underfunded areas, though implementation would require regulatory alignment and public trust.

Opportunities:

- **New lottery-based funding stream:** Offers a mechanism to generate predictable revenue or build endowments, especially for initiatives that lack stable funding.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Marketing • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

Citations:

- Nesta. (2025). *Nesta | UK innovation agency for social good*. <https://www.nesta.org.uk/>
- Princess Margaret Lottery. (2025, January 29). *The Princess Margaret Home Lottery*. <https://princessmargaretlotto.com/>

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12 - Server Hosting and Power Plant Hosting



Lead Organization

- Cornell University (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)
- Iowa State University (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)

Description:

This model involves postsecondary institutions hosting server farms or power plants on campus to generate revenue and support technological infrastructure. Cornell University operates the Cascadilla Community Solar Farm, which spans 125 acres and generates significant clean energy. Similarly, Iowa State University has partnered with Alliant Energy to create a solar farm on its campus. The increasing demand for technology and data processing has led to a rise in the need for server farms and energy-intensive infrastructure. Institutions with extensive land holdings and central locations, are well-positioned to host server farms or power plants. This can provide a dual benefit of generating revenue and supporting the institution's technological needs.

Opportunities:

- **New infrastructure-based revenue stream:** Generates income through leasing agreements or direct operation of server farms and power plants, with added potential for sustainability branding and energy cost savings.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

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13 - Excess Electricity: Distributed Energy Resources



Lead Organization

- New York University (NYU) (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)
- Stanford University (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)

Description:

This model involves postsecondary institutions generating excess electricity through on-campus power plants or renewable energy installations and selling it back to the grid. NYU's cogeneration natural gas plant has resulted in \$5 million in savings, while Stanford has developed solar energy facilities and long-term power purchase agreements with photovoltaic companies. As electricity demand is expected to increase significantly over the next 20 years, institutions with energy infrastructure are well-positioned to reduce operational costs and create new revenue streams through grid contributions and private investment.

Opportunities:

- **New energy-based revenue stream:** Generates income through grid contributions and PPAs, with potential for private equity investment in infrastructure projects.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • Government • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

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14 – Higher Education and Retirement Home Crossover



Lead Organization

- Arizona State University (ASU) (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)
- University of Guelph (*Postsecondary Institution – Canada*)

Description:

This model integrates retirement living with university campuses, creating intergenerational communities that support lifelong learning and social engagement. ASU's Mirabella retirement community allows residents to participate in campus life, while the University of Guelph has explored similar crossover initiatives. Seniors, often financially secure and seeking intellectual stimulation, can contribute to campus culture and potentially support institutions through tuition, philanthropy, or service-based exchanges.

Opportunities:

- **New residential revenue stream:** Generates income through retirement housing and related services, while creating opportunities for cross-sector partnerships and philanthropic support.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Alumni • Community • Government • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Marketing • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive • Teaching-Focused

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15 - Newsletters



Lead Organization

- MIT Media Lab (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)
- 1440 (*Private Sector – Newsletter Publisher*)
- Beehiiv (*Private Sector – Newsletter Platform*)

Description:

This model explores newsletters as a monetization strategy for postsecondary institutions. Revenue can be generated through ads, sponsorships, affiliate marketing, and paid memberships. Institutions can use newsletters to share research, updates, and thought leadership, building engagement with alumni, prospective students, and the broader public. Success depends on producing high-quality, consistent content and cultivating a loyal subscriber base.

Opportunities:

- **New content-based revenue stream:** Generates income through newsletter monetization strategies, while strengthening brand identity and stakeholder relationships.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Community Engagement • Marketing • Interdisciplinary	• Research-Intensive

Citations:

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16 - Crowd Funding



Lead Organization

- Kickstarter (*Private Sector – Crowdfunding Platform*)
- Experiment.com (*Private Sector – Academic Research Crowdfunding*)

Description:

This model uses crowdfunding platforms to support educational initiatives, including tuition assistance, classroom resources, academic research, and institutional projects. Platforms like Kickstarter and Experiment.com enable individuals and institutions to raise funds from a broad base of small donors. While crowdfunding can democratize access and build community engagement, it also requires strong storytelling and marketing and may raise concerns about equity and sustainability.

Opportunities:

- **New donor-driven revenue stream:** Generates income through small contributions from a wide audience, supporting research, innovation, and institutional development.
- **New development connections:** Builds funding coalitions among dispersed individuals and communities aligned with institutional research or innovation goals, enabling grassroots support for targeted projects.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • Government • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Marketing • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure

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17 - Meeting Students Where They Are, Geographically



Lead Organization

- Athabasca University (*Postsecondary Institution – Alberta*)
- Open University (*Postsecondary Institution – UK*)
- Western Governors University (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)

Description:

This model focuses on expanding access to education by offering fully online, asynchronous programs to learners regardless of location. Open University in the UK has successfully implemented this approach, serving hundreds of thousands of students across Europe. It is worth noting that Athabasca University (Alberta) and Western Governors University (Utah) are established, online institutions that already offer this, at least to domestic students. This strategy is especially relevant in the context of international student caps and increasing digital transformation across postsecondary institutions as these students don't move geographically to the institution.

Opportunities:

- **New online program revenue stream:** Supports tuition growth through scalable, location-independent course offerings that appeal to remote, working, or non-traditional students.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Policy & System Level Innovation	• Infrastructure

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18 - Standards Development and Compliance Assessment Systems



Lead Organization

- B Lab (*Nonprofit – Social and Environmental Certification*)
- ORCAA (*Private Sector – AI Risk Assessment*)

Description:

This model proposes that postsecondary institutions leverage their academic expertise to create proprietary standards and compliance systems. These could reflect institutional values such as sustainability, equity, or lifelong learning, or be based on the institutions subject expertise. Institutions would then assess external organizations against these standards for a fee, similar to how B Lab certifies companies for social and environmental performance. This approach positions institutions as thought leaders and trusted evaluators in emerging fields. The benefit of certification would be the same as from B-Corp as a shorthand in a world increasingly affected by misinformation.

Opportunities:

- **New evaluation against standards-based revenue stream:** Generates income through compliance assessments and certification services, especially in areas where academic expertise aligns with industry needs.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • Government • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Research-Intensive

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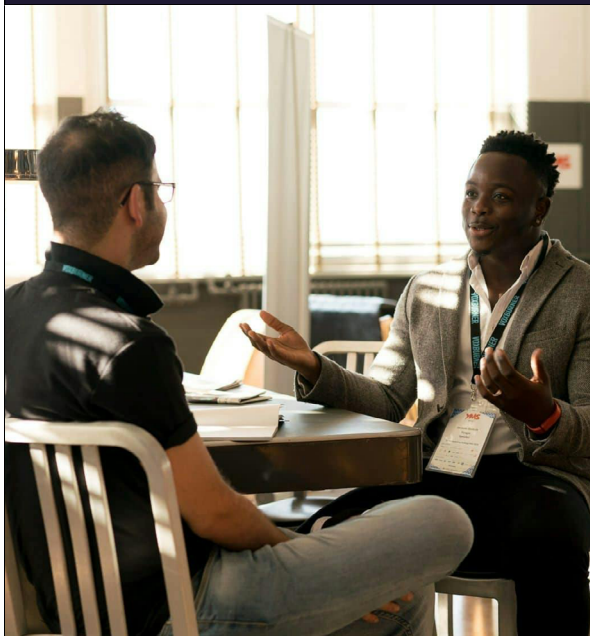
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19 - Beyond Mentors, Fostering Champions



Lead Organization

- Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN)
(Postsecondary Institution – Canada)

Description:

This model expands traditional mentorship by fostering “champions.” Champions are experienced professionals who actively advocate for and support students in deeper, more sustained ways. MUN’s “Aunties and Uncles” program exemplifies this approach, connecting students with elders and alumni who provide guidance, encouragement, and access to networks. Champions are particularly impactful in work-integrated learning environments, where they can help bridge learners to employment and community opportunities. While promising, this model may raise equity concerns if access to champions is unevenly distributed.

Opportunities:

- **New development connections:** Builds funding coalitions among dispersed individuals and communities aligned with institutional research or innovation goals, enabling grassroots support for targeted projects. Funding for service would be paid by both the employer and the student.
- **New alumni giving pathways:** Strengthens alumni connection and sense of ownership by showcasing direct impact of support, encouraging donations tied to visible student success and community engagement.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Interdisciplinary	• Teaching-Focused

Citations:

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20 - Learn about the Land: Sustainable Practices



Lead Organization

- None yet

Description:

This model encourages postsecondary institutions to reimagine their land holdings as sites for environmental stewardship and education. Campuses could host carbon-sinking installations, air purification systems, or food production initiatives. These efforts support sustainability goals, enhance air quality, and provide hands-on learning opportunities. While no institution has fully implemented this model yet, it aligns with growing interest in climate action and community engagement

Opportunities:

- **New land-based revenue stream:** Generates income through partnerships, grants, or product sales tied to sustainable land use, while reinforcing institutional leadership in climate innovation.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • Government • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Research-Intensive

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21 - Social Innovation Finance Tools



Lead Organization

- Centre for Social Innovation (CSI), (Nonprofit – Canada)

Description:

This model explores the use of social finance tools to fund institutional initiatives. CSI successfully raised \$2 million through a Community Bond, an RRSP-eligible investment opportunity supported by its community, to purchase and renovate a building. Postsecondary institutions could adopt similar tools to fund infrastructure, sustainability, or community engagement projects. These mechanisms allow institutions to tap into values-aligned investors and supporters while retaining ownership and control.

Opportunities:

- **New community-backed finance stream:** Generates funding through innovative investment tools like community bonds, enabling mission-driven development without relying solely on government or philanthropic sources.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Open • Community Engagement • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure

Citations:

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22 - eSports and Betting as Funding



Lead Organization

- NCAA (*Postsecondary Athletics – U.S.*)
- Georgian College (*Postsecondary Institution – Canada*)
- Ontario Post-Secondary Esports (OPSE) (*Sector Network – Canada*)

Description:

This model explores the potential of eSports and regulated betting as funding mechanisms for postsecondary institutions. Inspired by the U.S. NCAA system, which generates significant revenue through varsity sports, Canadian institutions are beginning to integrate eSports into their athletics programs. Georgian College and OPSE are leading efforts to formalize eSports in the postsecondary sector in Ontario. Betting, particularly in regulated formats, could provide additional revenue streams while enhancing student engagement and institutional identity and is a growing field with recent high profile sports expansion, particularly in women's sport.

Opportunities:

- **New entertainment-based revenue stream:** Generates income through eSports events, sponsorships, swag, and regulated betting partnerships, while fostering community and institution loyalty.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Marketing • Interdisciplinary	• Size Large • Infrastructure

Citations:

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23 - Supersizing Advertising



YOUR
BRAND
HERE

Lead Organization

- None yet

Description:

What if pay for naming and product placement was supersized? This speculative model imagines a university deeply aligned with a corporate brand, where naming rights, product placement, and influencer-style partnerships are central to institutional identity. Institutions could become brand ambassadors, integrating advertising into campus life and communications. While this could unlock substantial funding, it raises concerns about academic independence and the influence of corporate interests on educational priorities.

Opportunities:

- **New sponsorship-based revenue stream:** Generates income through naming rights, product placement, and advertising deals, especially for institutions with strong public presence and media reach.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Micro-credential • Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Marketing • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Size Large • Infrastructure

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24 - Sustainable Expert-Led Tourism



Lead Organization

- None yet, though some institutions offer immersive study abroad programs (e.g., Queen's University's Herstmonceux Castle (*Postsecondary Institution – Canada*))

Description:

This model explores the potential for postsecondary institutions to partner with local and international communities to offer sustainable, interest-based tourism experiences. These could include cultural tours, fieldwork, or educational retreats led by faculty. In some cases, professors with strong international ties already facilitate immersive learning exchanges, moving students between regions for hands-on, community-based education. This approach blends tourism with pedagogy, creating meaningful experiences that support both institutional revenue and global engagement.

Opportunities:

- **New tourism-based revenue stream:** Integrating tourism with education can create new revenue streams for institutions while promoting cultural exchange and lifelong learning. By offering specialized tours led by experts, universities could attract tourists interested in niche subjects, such as history, science, or art and this may even act as a tool for collaborative research.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Learners • Other PSI • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Work-Integrated Learning • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Teaching Modality • Interdisciplinary	• Infrastructure • Teaching-Focused

Citations:

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25 - Unseating Academic Journals



Lead Organization

- University of British Columbia (UBC) (*Postsecondary Institution – Canada*)
- Cornell University (*Postsecondary Institution – U.S.*)

Description:

This model proposes that institutions challenge the dominance of traditional academic journals by creating or partnering with open-access publishing platforms. UBC's Educational Insights and Cornell's arXiv preprint server are examples of alternative publishing models that prioritize accessibility and speed. Institutions could fund these platforms through grants, memberships, or community contributions, while offering enhanced services like peer review and editorial support. This approach aligns with open scholarship values and reduces reliance on costly journal subscriptions.

Opportunities:

- **New publishing-based revenue stream:** Generates income through memberships, service fees, or grant funding, while reducing costs associated with traditional publishing models.

Tags

Related Tags	Thematic Tags	Contextual Tags
• Other PSI • Alumni • Community • External Partners	• Open • Shared Services • Community Engagement • Marketing • Policy & System Level Innovation • Interdisciplinary	• Research-Intensive

Citations:

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Guiding Assumptions and Considerations

This document was built on a set of guiding assumptions about the current and future state of postsecondary education in Ontario. These assumptions help clarify the intent behind the models and the kinds of change they are meant to support.

- 1. Change is relational.** Funding innovation depends on evolving relationships, such as those with learners, communities, governments and partners.
- 2. Inquiry drives strategy.** Asking the right questions is part of the work. Tags and guiding questions are tools to help surface your context, constraints, and role in change-making, but also fuel for questioning these assumptions.
- 3. Context matters. No model fits everywhere.** Institutional size, location, and mandate shape what is viable.
- 4. Innovation requires experimentation.** Speculative and emerging ideas are included because bold thinking is essential to help us move to explore the unknown.
- 5. Postsecondary institutions have untapped assets.** From land to expertise to networks, resources can be reimaged to generate new value.
- 6. Equity and ethics must guide innovation.** Funding models must be evaluated for fairness, inclusion, and alignment with purpose.



Tags Descriptions

Relational Tags: Who's involved?

- **Learners:** Reimagining how institutions engage, support, and deliver value to students across their learning journeys.
- **Other Postsecondary Institutions:** Partnerships with other academic institutions, including instructors and administrations.
- **Alumni:** Leveraging alumni networks for mentorship, funding, advocacy, and institutional development.
- **Community:** Deepening engagement and relationships with local or regional communities.
- **Government:** Engaging with policymakers and public institutions to align with or influence regulatory and funding frameworks.
- **External Partners:** Working with non-academic organizations such as private sector, non-governmental organizations, Venture Capital, philanthropic, cultural institutions, or international bodies.

Thematic Tags: What topics?

- **Micro-credential:** Short, focused learning experiences that certify specific skills or competencies, often stackable toward larger credentials.
- **Work-Integrated Learning:** Educational experiences that blend academic learning with practical, real-world work placements or projects.

- **Open:** Models that emphasize accessibility, transparency, and sharing—such as open educational resources, open access publishing, or open data.
- **Shared Services:** Collaborative use of infrastructure, platforms, or administrative functions across institutions or sectors to reduce costs and increase efficiency.
- **Community Engagement:** Initiatives that prioritize mutual benefit, co-creation, and responsiveness to community needs and aspirations.
- **Teaching Modality:** Modes of educational delivery and their implications for access, pedagogy, and infrastructure.
- **Marketing:** Strategic efforts to shape institutional identity, attract learners, and build trust with stakeholders.
- **Policy & Systems-Level Innovation:** Engagement with structural change, regulatory reform, and sector-wide transformation.
- **Interdisciplinary:** Approaches that integrate knowledge and methods across disciplines to address complex challenges or create new learning experiences.

Contextual Tags: Which features?

- **Size Large:** Institutional scale factors into the idea due to capacity or size of population.
- **Infrastructure:** Innovative uses of campus land, buildings, and facilities to generate revenue or serve new purposes.
- **Research-Intensive:** Institutional orientation toward research and the funding models that support them.
- **Teaching-Focused:** Institutional orientation toward instructional delivery, and the supporting funding models.

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