



CAUCE
Canadian Association for
University Continuing Education

12 Key Pillars for Success

A CANADIAN CONTINUING EDUCATION
PERSPECTIVE ON POSTSECONDARY
TRANSFORMATION

Table of Contents

Foreword | **Setting the Stage: Continuing Education as a Transformation Catalyst (3)**

Supporting the Canadian Labour Market (4)

Attract Global Talent (5)

Support Regional Talent Pipelines (7)

Tailor Learning for Corporations (9)

Respond to Labour Market Needs (11)

Driving Institutional Innovation (13)

Create Institutional Transformation (14)

Lead Digital Transformation (16)

Manage Costs & Delivering Quality (18)

Offer Diverse Credentials (20)

Creating Impact in Communities Across Canada (22)

Support Aging Canadians (23)

Prioritize Sustainability (25)

Adopt an EDIDA Lens (27)

Expand Access Through Flexibility (29)

Moving into the Limelight: How CE Supports Canadian Transformation (31)

About CAUCE (32)

Setting the Stage: Continuing Education as a Transformation Catalyst

Canadian higher education institutions are experiencing unprecedented challenges from international student caps, tuition freezes and plummeting student enrolment. Traditional programming and management methods no longer serve institutional growth, calling for true strategic change in university operations.

As such, **Canadian Continuing Education (CE) divisions are increasingly recognized as vital assets driving institutional change, community engagement, and long-term sustainability.**

The landscape of CE is evolving in response to broader shifts in the workforce, technology, and societal needs. CE divisions act as change-makers for their institutions and their communities due to their ability to adapt quickly to market needs. By offering flexible, responsive programming that aligns with evolving workforce demands, CE divisions help institutions stay ahead of economic and technological shifts.

This in no way suggests any diminishment to formal degree programs and academic study, but rather encourages institutions to

foster an educational ecosystem that emphasizes lifelong learning—one that is inclusive and accessible to students from all walks of life and aligns with societal, regional and industry needs.

Now, more than ever, higher education institutions must respond to the dynamic needs of diverse learners who will need to continuously learn and adapt to rapidly changing technology and industries. CE divisions have always operated under this premise and can help drive long-term sustainability for our sector.

Chapter 1

SUPPORTING THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET

1. Attract Global Talent

Canadian Continuing Education units create pathways to high-demand jobs in sustainable careers for global audiences.

With programming that responds to regional labour market needs—and innovative program design approaches that prioritize skill development and high-quality outcomes—international learners that enroll in programs offered by Canadian CE units often transition into great middle-skill and high-skill jobs.

This supports the inflow of skilled labour into communities across Canada, building the local tax base and driving regional economic growth.



Christine Brooks-Cappadocia

Assistant Vice-President, Continuing Studies

York University (Toronto, ON)

University continuing education programs, designed in collaboration with industry, offer employers globally experienced talent while minimizing risks. International students choose these programs to build on their professional experience and education from their home countries, developing Canadian industry networks and specializing in locally valued skills. Core features like hands-on learning, industry mentorship, and recognized credentials enhance employability.

These programs create pools of well-educated talent with global experience to foster innovation and cultural know-how to serve global markets, combined with localized knowledge and professional connections to thrive in Canada. The long-term benefits are significant, as these graduates fill immediate talent gaps and enhance the local workforce.

2. Support Regional Talent Pipelines

Canadian Continuing Education units play a central role in driving industry investment in communities across Canada—attracting businesses in high-skill fields by supporting business growth with a sustainable and skilled talent pipeline.

By working closely with industry and offering programming that supports every level of the labour force, CE units create welcoming environments for domestic and international businesses to invest across Canada.



Amrit Ahluwalia

Executive Director of Continuing
Studies

Western University (London, ON)



The goalposts on what it means to have a talented workforce shift daily because of constant transformation in technological capability. As a result, professionals at every level of the talent pipeline need to regularly upskill and reskill to stay relevant.

Our role as university Continuing Education divisions is to ensure we're serving our industry partners and workers with programming that's designed to help them keep pace.

In this way we help our communities attract new employers, support productivity growth and keep our economy humming.

3. Tailor Learning for Corporations

Canadian Continuing Education units don't just serve individual learners—as a sector, CE units also directly support employers and industry associations.

By working closely with industry partners, CE units will tailor and customize learning experiences to support corporate talent pipeline needs, keeping Canadian businesses competitive and helping them stay relevant.



Carola Weil

Dean of the School of Continuing
Studies

McGill University (Montréal, QC)

With input from

Inna Popova-Roche

*Director of Professional & Corporate
Education in the School of Continuing Studies,
McGill University*

University continuing education divisions are key to long-term workforce development, offering interdisciplinary and innovative approaches. They provide access to experts, resources, and customized learning solutions, enhancing the value of corporate training.

Current trends highlight a shift towards co-creating and customizing training with company experts, measuring the impact and ROI of programs, and integrating assessments to gauge learning outcomes. AI-based tools are increasingly used to support learning, while flexible delivery formats, including blended learning, are predominant. Data analytics play a crucial role in assessing skills and customizing training, despite challenges with data privacy. Large organizations often partner with multiple universities to address diverse workforce needs, with a consistent demand for training in communication, leadership, and emotional intelligence. And finally, continued upskilling for digital transformation and AI technology implementation remains essential.

These trends position university continuing education divisions at the forefront of equipping organizations for an evolving work environment.

4. Respond to Labour Market Needs

Canadian Continuing Education units are highly agile and responsive to labour market needs.

By prioritizing high-demand skills and working with industry to build programming with distinct outcomes in mind, CE units ensure Canadians have access to educational offerings that help them keep pace with the rapidly-changing labour market. Shorter development cycles and creative approaches to credentialing ensure offerings are high-quality and appropriate to supporting employment outcomes.



Jo-Anne Clarke

Dean of the Division of Continuing
Studies

University of Victoria (Victoria, BC)

With AI advancements, a wave of retirements, and rising inequities, rapidly skilling the Canadian workforce is more urgent than ever. Within universities, CE units have long championed short-cycle, accessible learning for early and mid-career professionals.

We're leading design and delivery of microcredentials that combine high-quality learning of a university with applied practical skills that employers are looking for. We're evolving our practises, using powerful new market research tools to better understand in-demand job skills. We're working with industry experts to co-develop and teach programs that will help people reskill or upskill. And we're leading change on our campuses to open pathways for laddering and stacking credentials.

In today's dynamic job market, **there's a much deeper level of engagement between employers and educators because we're all invested in strategies to ensure Canada has an educated, skilled workforce.** Programs that seamlessly blend academic excellence with workforce readiness are not just needed—they're game-changers.

Chapter 2

DRIVING INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION

5. Create Institutional Transformation

Canadian Continuing Education units lead programmatic and credential innovation within their home institutions.

Having served audiences that don't fit the mold of the 18-22 year old on-campus student for decades, these units pioneered online learning, certificate offerings, short-cycle learning experiences and microcredentialing.

Now at the hub of institutional innovation, CE units are partnering with faculty across campus to support innovation and agility across their respective colleges and universities.



Sheila LeBlanc

Associate Vice President of
Continuing Education

University of Calgary (Calgary, AB)

Institutions are being called upon to provide more accessible, modularized, and flexible learning at all levels. One emerging trend is expanding the mandate of Continuing Education divisions to help faculties design and implement short-cycle and online programs for a broader range of learners.

By combining the expertise of CE divisions with the subject matter knowledge of academic faculty, institutions have the potential to integrate a lifelong learning model and significantly increase impact.

However, achieving this requires strong leadership, executive support, and trust to foster strategic alignment and the creation of shared goals.

6. Lead Digital Transformation

Canadian Continuing Education units prioritize the creation of digitally-enhanced learning environments that meet modern learners where they are.

To that end, they've always worked with technologies that streamline administration and enhance the learning experience.

CE units are at the cutting edge of AR/VR learning, introducing digital tools that maximize educational flexibility, and leveraging Generative AI.



Kassie Burkholder

Executive Director of Corporate and
Continuing Education

Northern Alberta Institute of
Technology (Edmonton, AB)

Continuing Education divisions are leading digital transformation in higher education by responding to the evolving needs of modern learners. Across Canada, divisions like ours prioritize innovation to create accessible, flexible learning experiences tailored to diverse pathways, from upskilling and reskilling to career exploration.

While actively exploring cutting-edge technologies like AR/VR and Generative AI, **our focus is on implementing impactful digital tools that streamline operations and elevate learner engagement.**

This strategic approach not only prepares us for future advancements but also positions CE as a critical driver of meaningful change and a benchmark for innovation across the education sector.

7. Manage Costs & Delivering Quality

Canadian Continuing Education units serve diverse audiences who are savvy and price-sensitive consumers.

The average CE learner expects the highest-quality learning experience with immediate impact on their career, but they also typically pay for programming out-of-pocket.

As a result, CE units have a great deal of experience creating learning solutions that are high quality, flexible and affordable.



Evan Cortens

Dean of the Faculty of Continuing
Education

Mount Royal University (Calgary, AB)

I see firsthand how Continuing Education units uniquely balance cost and quality. **Operating largely unfunded, we rely on our own revenues to cover costs and typically contribute surplus funds back to the broader university.**

This financial independence sharpens our focus on delivering value to students, who are price-sensitive and demand high-impact, flexible learning experiences. Yet our programs are vital access points for upskilling and reskilling underserved populations, which can be opposed to the notion of profit generation.

Integrating these insights into institutional planning benefits the entire university.

8. Offer Diverse Credentials

Canadian Continuing Education units know that the postsecondary degree isn't the only mechanism to effectively communicate learning outcomes.

By bringing a variety of more granular credentialing options to the table—including certificates, certifications and microcredentials—CE units ensure there's an appropriate credentialing solution for every learner they serve.



Ailsa Craig

Special Advisor to the President on
Continuing Education

Memorial University (St. John's, NL)

By starting with desired learning outcomes, Continuing Education can flexibly design creative offerings and credentials that meet learners where they are in, order to take them where they want to go.

Innovation comes from listening well, employing strategic problem-solving tactics, and active collaboration with key community partners, across units within the university, and with industry and business.

Our approach to credentialing learning opportunities can enhance traditional higher education—whether as an on-ramp to degree studies, extended learning after degree completion, or as parallel offerings that enhance the achievement and experience of higher education programming.

Chapter 3

CREATING IMPACT IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS CANADA

9. Support Aging Canadians

Canadian Continuing Education units work with learners at every life stage.

Since older Canadians are the fastest-growing age demographic—and since life expectancy is expanding—CE units are finding creative ways to create access to programming for older adults that helps them transition into new careers and find purpose in their next life stages.



Jennifer Hann

Acting Dean of the Faculty of Open
Learning & Career Development

Dalhousie University (Halifax, NS)

Education is a journey that evolves with every stage of life. At Continuing Education divisions across Canada, we are committed to supporting mature learners as they navigate new opportunities and challenges throughout their lives.

As the number of older Canadians continues to grow, **we are focusing on programs that inspire personal growth, career transitions, and a sense of purpose.**

By providing tailored advising and accessible learning experiences, we aim to empower adult students to achieve their goals and embrace lifelong learning

10. Prioritize Sustainability

Canadian Continuing Education units are working to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) “for peace and prosperity while tackling climate change” by the target achievement date of 2030.

They do this work by developing quality educational programs that incorporate equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility into their curriculum while promoting lifelong learning.



Nicole Neufield

Manager for Continuing Education

University of Northern British
Columbia (Prince George, BC)

As Universities evolve, Continuing Education units are becoming key drivers of innovation and industry transformation. By developing inclusive, accessible programs on critical topics like renewable energy, sustainable business practices, and social equity, **CE units equip professionals with the skills needed for sustainable practices.** Strategic partnerships with government, business, and communities enhance this impact.

As CE units expand their offerings, we can collaborate with Academics to create short-term programs that address the rapidly changing landscape, ensuring the workforce is prepared to lead Canada into a sustainable future.

11. Adopt an EDIDA Lens

Canadian Continuing Education units, by their very nature, work to expand access to their respective institutions. To that end, their work naturally adopts an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Decolonization and Accessibility (EDIDA) lens.

Historically these units have served to broaden the audiences that postsecondary institutions serve, offering programming designed for younger learners, older adults, newcomers and other demographics that are historically under-represented in traditional campus programming.



Julia Denholm

Dean of Lifelong Learning

Simon Fraser University (Burnaby,
BC)

As points of access to their institutions, Canadian Continuing Education divisions remain committed to equity, accessibility, and belonging alongside truth, reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization.

These commitments are not add-ons or “nice to haves.” Rather, they are part of the fabric of our everyday work, both in operations and curricula.

From simple actions such as moving beyond stereotypes in case studies to collaborating with Indigenous elders on course development, **we can use our nimble development processes to embed our values in our actions.** In fraught and polarized political climates, it’s more important than ever that we as educators live what we teach.

12. Expand Access Through Flexibility

Canadian Continuing Education units serve modern learners who are juggling numerous priorities—including family care, full-time work, volunteer work and more.

To that end, CE units work hard to create flexible learning environments that meet learners' needs inside and outside the "classroom" and have expertise in determining the right learning modality for the right outcome.



Christie Schultz

Dean of the Centre for Continuing
Education

University of Regina (Regina, SK)

Canadian university Continuing Education programs are designed to meet the diverse needs of diverse communities of learners, providing opportunities for both professional and personal growth.

By offering flexible learning options—including alternative credentials, lifelong learning pathways, and online options—**we ensure that education is accessible to everyone, regardless of their schedule or location.**

This commitment to flexibility enables us to provide high-quality, accessible, innovative, and responsive education for learners throughout their lives.

Moving into the Limelight:

How CE Supports Canadian Transformation

Continuing Education units across Canada play a critical role in supporting local, regional and national transformation—and they do so quietly, on the periphery of their respective institutions.

These units drive labour market growth by attracting talent, supporting upskilling and reskilling, and remaining relevant to dynamic industry needs. They create access to opportunity for diverse audiences for Canadians of all ages, backgrounds and experiences, enriching our talent pool and contributing to the development of an educated citizenry. And all the while, they do this work while managing their units like businesses;

managing operating costs, driving innovation to improve effectiveness, and keeping costs low for Canadians.

CE units support transformation across every corner of Canada, keeping the economy thriving and serving their communities.

As we move into a new era, where technology is transforming labour market demands daily and higher education institutions are under greater revenue pressures than ever, CE units need to move into the limelight; making their presence and impact felt daily to expand their reach.

About CAUCE

The Canadian Association for University Continuing Education (CAUCE) is a professional association of deans, directors, senior administrative personnel and practitioners whose professional careers are in university continuing education in Canada. Membership in CAUCE is on an institutional basis with most benefits of membership also extended to professional and affiliate members.

Our Vision: Strengthening the impact of universities through excellence in continuing education.

Our Mission: Advancing learning and workplace readiness in 21st century Canada, CAUCE is dedicated to supporting the success of our members in serving professional and adult learners and diverse learning communities. We accomplish this by fostering best practices in lifelong teaching and learning, flexible learning models, including online learning, and university-community engagement.

To learn more about CAUCE, visit cauce-aepuc.ca

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