ACAT *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative*

Business Assessment Report

Report Completed for ACAT Council and Innovation and Advanced Education

Final – July 2015

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Prefacing Comments

The Business Needs Definition phase of this Business Assessment focused on eliciting feedback to define the business problems currently experienced in the Alberta Transfer System in order to define the objectives for the *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative* (LPMI). This was elicited from a large number of ACAT stakeholders from post-secondary institutions (PSIs), including students, and inter-provincial partners. It was a very valuable exercise that helped to set the context for the initiative.

While not the focus of the Business Assessment, stakeholders were also asked to identify strengths and opportunities that exist for learner pathways in Alberta and provided balance in the overall impression of the system's fitness. These strengths and opportunities are briefly referenced in this report; however, its emphasis is on clearly identifying problems/issues in the system that need to be addressed.

Post-secondary learner pathways are growing and evolving. The Alberta Transfer System is a well-established system with strong capabilities and a strong history that supports learner pathways in Alberta. ACAT collaborates and compares well with its Pan-Canadian counterparts, as it works to support the new needs of learners, institutions, and other stakeholders as pathways continue to evolve.

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Executive Summary

The *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative* (LPMI) aims to improve learner pathways administration processes and tools to support student mobility in the post-secondary education system.

The LPMI Business Assessment is the first phase of this initiative. It began in October 2014 with the formal engagement of the Alberta Council for Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) and the ACAT Secretariat, who confirmed strategic direction and developed well-articulated strategic goals to set context for all project stakeholders. On behalf of and in collaboration with ACAT, Information and Technology Management (ITM) of Innovation and Advanced Education (IAE) provided a Business Analyst and supports to facilitate the engagement, data collection, and reporting for this Business Assessment.

ACAT's goals for this initiative are to provide a seamless student experience in navigating the post-secondary system, with:

- Access to information about pathways, including a focus on transfer and interprovincial mobility, in Alberta, Western Canada and across Canada.
- Connections to related Government of Alberta (GoA) and agency/organization program information, including:
    - Learning Clicks, admissions, high school transitions and adult upgrading, occupations, Dual Credit, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), online learning, labour market information, etc.
- Connections to student-relevant information about: institution admission, application, transcript, student aid, and scholarship information.

This assessment identified business needs/problems and requirements for modernizing learner pathways in Alberta. We worked collaboratively with stakeholders across this multi-organizational environment to elicit this information.

We conducted eight working group sessions with stakeholders from post-secondary institutions (PSIs) and the K – 12 system in Alberta and from interprovincial partners to elicit input into what issues need to be addressed to improve learner pathways administration. The majority of participants were PSI representatives, including students, student advisors, Contact Persons, Articulation Committee members, and Vice President Academics, as well as participants from Alberta high schools/upgrading, Alberta Education, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The sessions focused on identifying system problems and their root causes in order to identify clear objectives for LPMI solution projects. Additionally, session stakeholders identified strengths and opportunities within the system, which will serve to inform the program and direct organizational changes, supports and improvements.

This was followed by approximately thirteen additional meetings/sessions to complete the gap analysis. Students, high school and admissions representatives, GoA program and agencies representatives, and provincial representatives participated in these sessions.

Discussions in both the working group and additional sessions focused on the administration of Transfer Credit, admissions, Dual Credit, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), high school transitions, and interprovincial mobility. This formed the basis for a proposed solution set to support:

- Multi-organizational and cross-jurisdictional learner pathways
- ACAT support for students, Alberta PSIs, and other stakeholders
- PSI autonomy within a collaborative framework
- Post-secondary co-learning and mutual understanding as a basis for collaboration, negotiations and agreements
- Student access to information with which to make informed pathway choices.

In the additional sessions, GoA program and agency partners provided an understanding of the opportunities to collaborate and coordinate linkages to support learner pathways and the administration of learner pathways (e.g. Learning Clicks, Alberta Learning Information System (ALIS) website, Apply Alberta, eCampus Alberta, Apprenticeship and Industry Training, etc.).

Also in these sessions, interprovincial partners from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario provided insights into their supports for learner pathways and mobility with a focus on admissions and transfer frameworks, processes, resources, and maturity, which provided a basis for comparison, collaboration, and good examples to leverage in the design of LPMI solutions.

Further, educators, administrators and GoA program and agencies representatives from the K-12 and the adult upgrading sector helped us to understand the current gaps in pathways from high school to post-secondary.

As a result of these sessions and during the overall Business Assessment, Information and Technology Management (ITM) under Innovation and Advanced Education (IAE) provided information about existing GoA tools and databases that support stakeholders. ITM also made recommendations for new technology and a new approach to modernizing technology given the diversity and breadth of the organizational environment for learner pathways.

The broad organizational scope of this assessment is reflective of the large-scale of this initiative. We add value here by providing context and an understanding of the overarching process of learner pathways processes and administration in the system.

The major learner pathway and mobility gaps identified by these groups fell into these general categories:

1. Transfer – The Transfer Agreement and Archival Retrieval System (TAARS) no longer adequately supports transfer credit in Alberta and between provinces. A Transfer Credit Evaluation System (TCES) replacement is needed for Alberta PSIs who do not have their own system; however, workflow and business rules must be flexible to accommodate institutional differences in business processes between PSIs.

   PSIs with their own systems have to manually duplicate agreements in TAARS. PSIs want to upload agreement data directly into a transfer agreement catalog.

   Provincial partners also need a way to upload their agreements into a new Alberta Transfer Agreement Catalog, which must accommodate different data formats.

2. Dual Credit and PLAR – Administration of newer/other pathways need system frameworks and supports for best-practice administration. There are two new system-led ACAT Articulation Committees in dual credit and PLAR that are supportive of this work, as well as other mechanisms.

3. Currently, information to help students navigate learner pathways is incomplete, inconsistent, scattered and difficult to access. Students want access to pathways and planning information, including admissions and transfer information, in one, well-organized, well-designed interface available from their computers, tablets and cell phones.

4. Organizational gaps exist in learner pathways governance and administration. Stakeholders need a coordinated and clear means to improve pathways administration for students, and that simplifies collaboration and access to GoA supports, while at the same time respecting the autonomy of Alberta PSIs.

Technical solutions reviewed included:

- Tools used by inter-provincial partners
- GoA IT tools and GoA agency tools
- PSI tools
- Commercial –off-the-shelf (COTS) solutions/tools.

The need for multi-organizational users and system/data integration from GoA partners made a customized solution the only feasible option. We recommended that ACAT, supported by IAE, build an overall Learner Pathways System with a number of independent, integrated IT tools that would work together to support pathways.

The Business Assessment was the first phase in the LPMI solution roadmap. The work done in the Phase 1 - Business Assessment led the assessment team to recommend the following solutions in three additional LPMI phases.

Phase 2 - Transfer Modernization – 2015 - 2016

Build a new Transfer Credit Evaluation System (TCES) based on the BCCAT TCES model, and with BCCAT's and other interested partners' collaboration. Build a Transfer Agreement and Admissions Catalog to house and display transfer agreements between PSIs in Alberta, and between Alberta and other provinces, as well as a link to institution admissions information. The new catalog would be available to students and others from an easy-to-use interface that can be accessed from a web browser, mobile phone or tablet.

Phase 3 - LPMI Stakeholder Tools – 2016- 2017

In continued collaboration with other interested provincial partners, build additional administrative support for Alberta PSIs, with an enhanced ACAT website and extranet access to improved communication and collaboration tools, a Dual Credit administration module, a PLAR administration module, and access to business intelligence tools for Learner Pathways data collection and reporting.

Phase 4- Learner Pathways Connections – 2017-2018

In continued collaboration with other interested provincial partners, build connections among learner pathways information and resources from all relevant GoA programs for the benefit of the students by making resources accessible from the student website/Transfer Alberta. This will require collaboration and coordination between stakeholders, as well as the use of technology solutions to make the information easy to understand and seamlessly accessible from an integrated and easy-to-use interface.

The proposed solution roadmap in this report that outlines these phases has been validated by ACAT Council. ACAT Council passed a motion to work with ITM/IAE and Alberta stakeholders to undertake phases 2 – 4, in collaboration with the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) and other interested jurisdictional partners, including Saskatchewan, Manitoba (Campus Manitoba), and Ontario (Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT)).

Introduction

ACAT – Role, History, and Governance[1]:

Established in 1974, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is an independent advisory body responsible for leadership, oversight, and collaboration regarding learner pathways and mobility within the post-secondary system with a focus on admissions and transfer. ACAT is an arms-length public agency that advises government, Campus Alberta and Alberta Transfer System member institutions, and the system. ACAT advocates for students and works co-operatively with stakeholders to support pathways and mobility, including effective transferability of post-secondary courses and programs for the benefit of students. Learners in Alberta's system access post-secondary education through a nationally and internationally recognized admissions and transfer system.

ACAT was developed as an alternative to affiliation agreements with universities. The Alberta Transfer System and ACAT are not regulated by formal legislation. The system and ACAT's role are based on institution collaboration and partnerships and on Ministry (Innovation and Advanced Education (IAE)) support/facilitation via an ACAT Secretariat. In 1976, to facilitate collaboration, Council established a network of public institutional representatives—Contact Persons. In 2010, a Ministerial Order for ACAT was put in place to formalize its role as a council. ACAT operates under this order and as a public advisory agency under the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act*, as well as with respect to its *Mandate and Roles* and relevant interprovincial and pan-Canadian agreements.

Council is comprised of approximately 17 voting members (to date) appointed by the Minister (including representatives from Campus Alberta's six public institution sectors, indigenous institutions, and two public and two student members) and non-voting members represented by government (Alberta Education and IAE). Participation in ACAT Council is governed by established competency standards, identified via ACAT's Governance Structure and Recruitment Practices.

Alberta Transfer System

Since 1974, the transfer structure/model in Alberta has included institutions and system stakeholders participating in ACAT and the Alberta Transfer System, offering transferable courses/programs across the system. Student transfer involves the portability of educational credit among programs. Based on successful completion of studies, students receive transfer credit, where appropriate, upon admission to an educational program in a post-secondary institution.

The Alberta Transfer System is currently comprised of 39 post-secondary institutions working collaboratively to support student mobility and learner pathways, including recognition of prior learning. Members include 26 publicly funded, 4 out-of-province, 5 Indigenous, and 4 private not-for-profit

[1] Information for this Introduction is cited from the *ACAT Learner Pathways and Student Mobility in Alberta Update* (October 2014, http://www.acat.gov.ab.ca/pdfs/ACAT-Update-Latest.pdf)

institutions. Membership in the transfer system is open to public and private not-for-profit institutions. Member institutions may share agreements via the Transfer Alberta provincial website, mobile app, and online search tool, including agreements they have with non-member institutions that are sending students to member institutions.

ACAT's Secretariat (situated within IAE) manages the operations of the transfer system, information, websites, and tools. Council and the Secretariat work together to support and facilitate the transfer system and students through work led by member institutions and Contact Persons, as well as other structures, including program area Articulation Committees and Council Sub-committees. Student mobility in the transfer system can be affected by many factors, including a student's specific context, institutions' admissions practices and requirements, ease of access to key information and modernized transfer credit tools, and student movement to a different course/program.

Further information about ACAT and the Alberta Transfer System, including information on Alberta Transfer System membership and ACAT governance, is provided at www.acat.gov.ab.ca.

LPMI & Business Assessment Report Overview:

The *Leaner Pathways Modernization Initiative* (LPMI) is a multi-organizational initiative with a large group of stakeholders that cross jurisdictions, making it an important system initiative with great complexity that will support/affect many students.

Recognizing this complexity, this Business Assessment was conducted at the start (Phase 1) of the LPMI to understand the current business challenges and opportunities for learner pathways administration and student service "delivery"/support in and with Alberta.

This *Business Assessment Report* includes the following:

Business Assessment Approach
Current State
Business Requirements
Gaps Analysis
Technical Solution Assessment
LPMI Recommendation & Solution Roadmap
Appendices I – VI

- I: LPMI Business Needs Definition – Focus Group Input
  - Problem-Framing Outputs
  - SWOT Analysis Outputs
- II: Contributing Stakeholder List
- III: Learning Clicks Ambassadors Input
- IV: ACAT Admissions Sub-committee Input
- V: GoA/Agencies Partners Session
- VI: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms.

The Business Assessment was largely completed through stakeholder collaboration and qualitative data gathering that identified evidence from focus groups/sessions (see Appendix I). This data informed the Business Needs Definition Report (Appendix I), with well over 100 stakeholders across this multi-organizational environment. The Business Needs data is one of the largest sources of evidence in this Business Assessment Report.

Participating stakeholders in the focus groups/sessions included:

- ACAT (Council and Secretariat)
- Learners, both secondary & post-secondary
- Student advisors, both secondary & post-secondary
- PSI Contact Persons
- PSI Student Advisors
- PSI Administrators, Program/Faculty, and Articulation Committee representatives
- Inter-Provincial Partners (e.g., provincial councils for admissions and transfer, province/territory representatives/organizations)
- IAE/Education/Ministries business units in the GOA and other post-secondary-related organizations and agencies.

Working with this large group of stakeholders yielded business requirements, which included suggestions for:

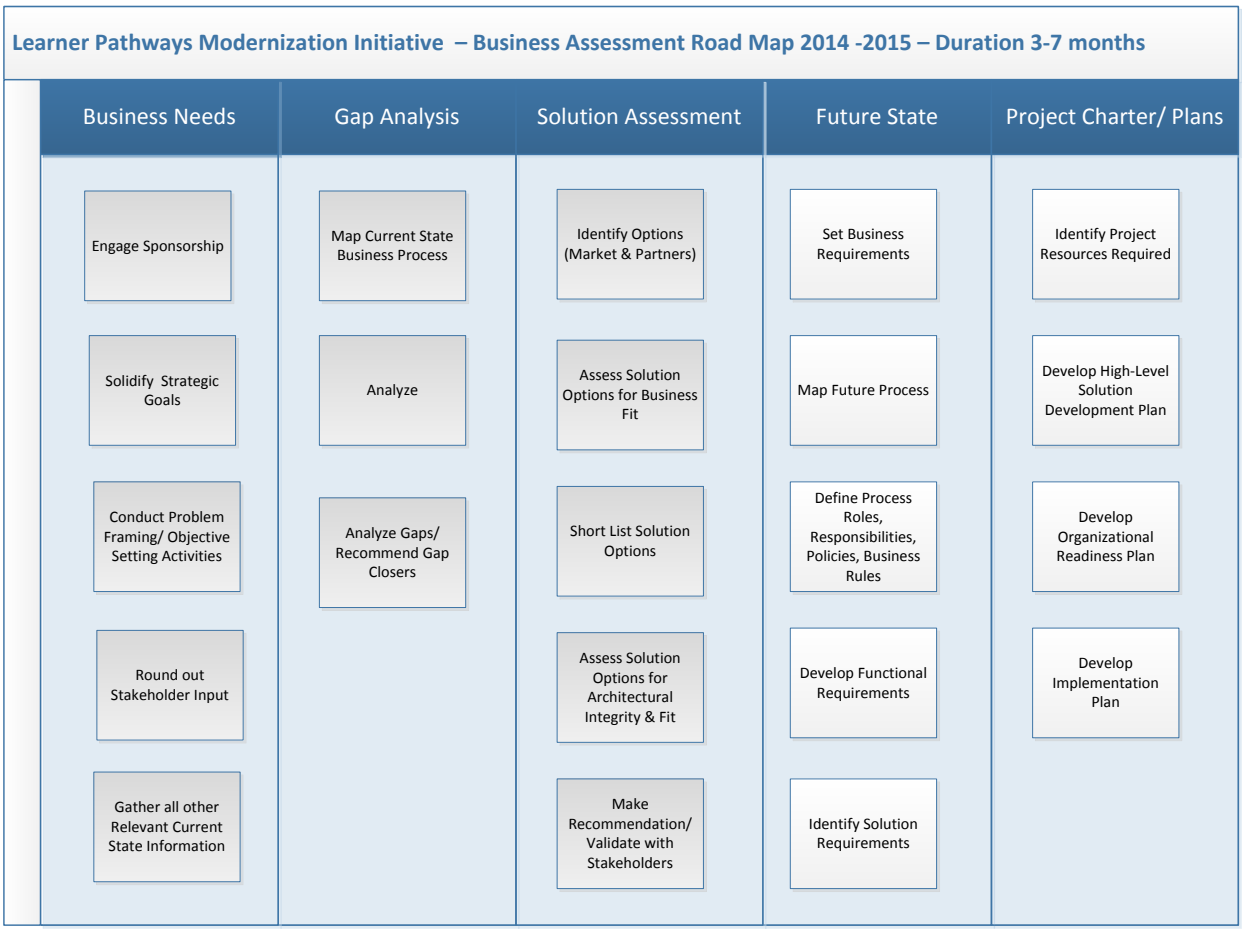
- Policy and/or process changes
- Better collaboration and communication mechanisms
- Improvements to learner pathways' administration processes
- Better supporting technology and tools
- Better organizational learning supports
- Mechanisms for information collection to address provincial/system data gaps and inform evidence-based decision making.

Given ACAT's approval of the recommended solutions, the plan is to now follow this Business Assessment Report with three project phases as described in the program roadmap. Each phase will include process redesign and the development of future state requirements, and the development and implementation of subsequent LPMI solutions. Completion of the development of the plans for the first project(s) on the LPMI program roadmap is the next step.

Business Assessment Approach

The map illustrated below was used throughout the process to guide the business assessment activities. Shortly into the Business Needs activity lane, the size and complexity of the LPMI became clear.

The solution will require a number of projects, some of which will be technology based. The LPMI will take an iterative approach, with several project-based implementations. Each implementation will require process redesign and organizational readiness activities. This report offers high-level requirements for the future state. Detailed functional and non-functional requirements will be included in a design/solutions phase for the technology-based project.



1. Business Needs Definition

Strategic Project Goals

The project started with informal engagement of ACAT Contact Persons and the ACAT Chair and the formal engagement of ACAT Council and the ACAT Secretariat to identify the project goals and direction. This was an important starting point in order to:

- Confirm strategic direction from ACAT Council and develop well-articulated strategic goals for all project stakeholders
- Champion the project & provide support and path to remove roadblocks if required
- Have a mechanism via Council to ratify the final recommendation(s).

Problem-Framing/Objective Setting

Next we facilitated sessions across the province to engage a cross-section of ACAT stakeholders to understand their issues and concerns. These sessions also began to determine what supports will enable learner pathways, including supports for the administration of learner pathways like Transfer Credit, Admissions, Dual Credit, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), and Interprovincial mobility.

Collaboration with a very large group of stakeholders (over 100) was very important in ensuring we recommend the best solutions for the ACAT system as a whole, notably because:

- Everyone in the system had knowledge to contribute to understanding the gaps and opportunities for learner pathways in Alberta's post-secondary environment today.
    - Not one stakeholder group has a clear picture of the whole system
    - Everyone has knowledge to contribute
    - Everyone has something to learn.

The co-learning that took place during the Needs Definition Report phase of the assessment (Appendix 1) provided the basis for achieving an approach to a solution set that supports:

1. The goals of the broad multi-organizational and cross-jurisdictional learner pathways environment
2. The ACAT mandate to support students, Alberta PSIs, and other stakeholders
3. PSI autonomy
4. Post-secondary co-learning and mutual understanding as a basis for collaboration, negotiation and agreements
5. The student's need for access to information and pathways to support making informed choices and success.

Eight working group sessions with 10-15 participants in each session were facilitated, with stakeholder

representation from learners, student advisors (both secondary & post-secondary), ACAT Institution Contact Persons, Inter-Provincial Partners/CATs, Post-secondary faculty and program staff, ACAT (Council and Secretariat), and related GoA and agencies representatives.

The information contained in Appendix I of this report, the *Business Needs Definition – Focus Group Data*, is an edited assembly of input from over 100 ACAT stakeholders.

2. Current State

Understanding the scope of the current state learner pathways administration processes required additional information gathering and engagement with:

1. ACAT Secretariat – who provided information about Alberta's current Transfer Credit Evaluation System (TCES) called TAARS, as well as, introductions to committees and partnerships within the GoA and with provincial partners.

2. ITM, Innovation and Advanced Education provided information to understand all tools and databases that are used by PSIs and students to support and map learner pathways.

3. GoA and agencies program areas provided an understanding of the opportunities the GoA and the system has to collaborate and coordinate linkages to supporting programs and mechanisms to enable learner pathways and the administration of learner pathways (e.g. Learning Clicks, ALIS website, Apply Alberta, eCampus Alberta, AIT, etc.)

4. Provincial partners for admissions and transfer from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick gave us insights into what they are doing to enable learner pathways, either through direct input or via their available online tools/information. Each had strengths to use to inform the solution recommendations.

5. Alberta PSIs who support their own TCES helped us to understand why they use their own systems in addition to TAARS to track evaluations, store agreements and provide data to their own online catalogs. They helped us to better understand why PSIs want a provincially shared mechanism for students, like TAARS, but need TAARS to be modernized/updated in order for it to be better used, as well as how we can help them reduce administration tasks and avoid double-data entry in two systems. This large group of stakeholders wants to upload a subset of data directly into a centralized catalog.

6. Educators, administrators and GoA program and agencies representatives from the K-12 and adult upgrading sector help us to understand the current gaps in pathways from high school to post-secondary.

The current state outputs are reflective of the large-scale of this initiative. We add value here by providing context and an understanding of the overarching process of Learner Pathways processes and administration in the system.

3. Gap Analysis

The Gap Analysis synthesized the information gathered during the Business Needs Definition and the Current State Analysis, which was required to create a balanced view of the issues and provide clarity on what will be required to close/address gaps for Learner Pathways supports in Alberta.

4. Solution Assessment

With information gathered from discussions with the Provincial partners, we assessed the BCCAT TCES, as well as a scan of the tools in place by New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan; we examined the original offer by BCCAT to leverage their BCCAT TCES tool and Transfer Guide model. We travelled to British Columbia and did a business review and an IT architectural review of the BCCAT TCES.

We also conducted a scan of the commercial-off-the-shelf software products available for learner pathways' administration, student pathways information delivery and system supports to evaluate these products for fit.

In addition, we assessed the tools built and supported within the GoA, as well as open data sources available, to see what we could leverage to support current and future needs.

Enterprise Architects from ITM, IAE evaluated this information for technical integrity and fit; and the business analyst and ACAT Secretariat looked at the organizational fit.

Recommendations

The analysis conducted within the business assessment to this point, provides the basis for the solution recommendations. The recommendations were vetted by ACAT Council, supported by the ACAT Secretariat. Following this, validation occurred with the CIO of ITM, IAE and the Executive Director of Operations, Programming & Accountability, ALCP, and IAE.

ACAT Council made the final decision to proceed with the recommendations, with mapping of the next steps, a detailed future state, and development of project charters and plans now being completed.

The solution model includes organizational supports that require new solution developments. Functional requirements for technology-based supports and solution requirements for process improvements and organizational learning are also identified.

Current State – High-Level Organizational Scan

Business Overview

ACAT is an independent advisory body accountable to the minister and responsible for leadership, oversight, and collaboration regarding learner pathways and mobility within the post-secondary system with a focus on admissions and transfer. ACAT is an arms-length public agency that advises government, Campus Alberta and Alberta Transfer System member institutions, and the system. ACAT advocates for students and works co-operatively with stakeholders to support pathways and mobility, including effective transferability of post-secondary courses and programs for the benefit of students. Learners in Alberta's system access post-secondary education through a nationally and internationally recognized admissions and transfer system.

ACAT was developed as an alternative to affiliation agreements with universities. The Alberta Transfer System and ACAT are not regulated by formal legislation. The system and ACAT's role are based on institution collaboration and partnerships and on Ministry (Innovation and Advanced Education (IAE)) support/facilitation via an ACAT Secretariat. In 1976, to facilitate collaboration, Council established a network of public institutional representatives—Contact Persons. In 2010, a Ministerial Order for ACAT was put in place to formalize its role as a council. ACAT operates under this order and as a public advisory agency under the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act*, as well as with respect to its *Mandate and Roles* and relevant interprovincial and pan-Canadian agreements.

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The Alberta Transfer System is currently comprised of 39 post-secondary institutions working collaboratively to support student mobility and learner pathways, including recognition of prior learning. Members include 26 publicly funded, 4 out-of-province, 5 Indigenous, and 4 private not-for-profit institutions. Membership in the transfer system is open to public and private not-for-profit institutions. Member institutions may share agreements via the Transfer Alberta provincial website, mobile app, and online search tool, including agreements they have with non-member institutions that are sending students to member institutions.

ACAT's Secretariat (situated within IAE) manages the operations of the transfer system, information, websites, and tools. Council and the Secretariat work together to support and facilitate the transfer system and students through work led by member institutions and Contact Persons, as well as other structures, including program area Articulation Committees and Council Sub-committees. Student

mobility in the transfer system can be affected by many factors, including a student's specific context, institutions' admissions practices and requirements, ease of access to key information and modernized transfer credit tools, and student movement to a different course/program. More specifically, ACAT is responsible for developing best-practice guidelines and administrative supports, which have been primarily focused to date on facilitating transfer credit between PSIs. The PSIs implement their own admissions and transfer policies and procedures that meet government legislation and fit within the ACAT framework.

As the delivery of post-secondary education changes and learner pathways expand, new expectations have been overlaid on a transfer credit system that was designed for process-embedded course-by-course and block credit transfer agreements. The current system lacks the robustness that will be required in an increasingly competitive international system of higher education that supports learner pathways and student access.

Complex evaluation criteria that have been individuated by institutions produce problems because institutional differentiation introduces and exacerbates pressures that fragment the system.

As a result, the system no longer adequately supports Learner Pathways administration processes. Specifically, the transfer credit process too often appears to be inconsistent, and in some cases appearing potentially subjective/unclear to students, parents and others who support students and their success.

Learner Pathway Administration – Key Variables

Learner Pathways refers to the route(s) chosen by a learner to successfully navigate through their post-secondary education, to build knowledge and skill toward a desired outcome (see ACAT Glossary definition, Appendix VI).

The *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative* intends to build on, and improve Learner Pathway administration processes to assist learners, post-secondary institutions and related partners to promote pathways and ease mobility into, within, out of, and back into the post-secondary system as the learner requires.

The main variables identified that affect how pathways are administered include sector, pathway type and student category.

Post-Secondary Areas/Sectors

Post-Secondary Schools fall into eight areas—the six "Campus Alberta" defined sectors and Indigenous and private institutions, with each sector having unique evaluation criteria that affects the credits mobile learners may receive when they transfer to new programs or institutions. The eight areas/sectors are as follows.

1. BASI - Baccalaureate And Applied Studies Institution (e.g. teaching-focused university)
2. CARI – Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution (e.g. research university)

3. CCI – Comprehensive Community Institution (e.g. regional steward and community college)
4. SACI – Specialized Arts and Culture Institution (e.g., ACAD and Banff Centre)
5. IAI – Independent Academic Institution (e.g., faith-based universities)
6. Polytechnical Institutions (e.g., NAIT and SAIT Polytechnic)
7. First Nations Colleges/ Indigenous Institutions
8. PVT – Private Vocational Training Providers (e.g., private colleges/institutions).

Learner Pathways

There are several pathways that fall under the jurisdiction of ACAT and are included in the modernization initiative:

Transfer Credit (Agreements between institutions; variations include)

- Course by course
- Program block to program block
- Ladder/credential transfer – e.g., certificate to diploma, diploma to degree
- Ladder – e.g., first "two" years at one institution and the last two years at a partner institution (or other variations of credential laddering).

Admissions information and supports for PSIs, including access to program area and admissions requirements and pathways into and among programs and linkages between admissions and transfer.

Dual Credit Courses are post-secondary courses/opportunities offered to interested high school students in different configurations. The students get both a high school credit and a post-secondary credit for the same course and/or advanced placement (course equivalency) or workplace certification. Dual Credit is intended to;

- motivate students to finish high school
- inspire students to learn, work and live in the local community
- give students the confidence to transition from high school to post-secondary and/or the workplace.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) recognizes a person's knowledge and skills, acquired through non-formal and informal learning, in relation to a certain goal (for example, receiving credit towards a post-secondary program, meeting professional licensure/certification requirements, or obtaining employment).

Collaborative Degree/Diploma Courses/Brokering Courses

- Co-listing with the same instructor – different fee, different credit on transcript
- Space agreement/ one teacher – only one institution provides the degree
- Curriculum franchise – share space and teacher both institutions provide the degree
- Deliver another institution's curriculum
- Industry courses given within a program for credit in that program

Visiting Students/ Exchange Program supporting international student learning pathways.
Bridging Programs

- Mapping coursework and/ or learning between 2 credentials - e.g., EMT to Nurse, to determine transfer credit.

Future/ Evolving Pathways

MOOC – Massive Open Online Courses

- Optional choices on how you get accredited
  - No grade, no transfer
  - Graded by university offering it
  - Certificate.

Transfer Expansion - Private/ Vocational providers may become eligible for transfer credit to accredited schools.

Learner Types

Learners include:

- High School
- Upgrading
- Post-Secondary
- Apprenticeship
- Mature Students who are or have been in the workforce
- First Nations
- Graduate Students
- International Students.

Learner Pathways Stakeholders

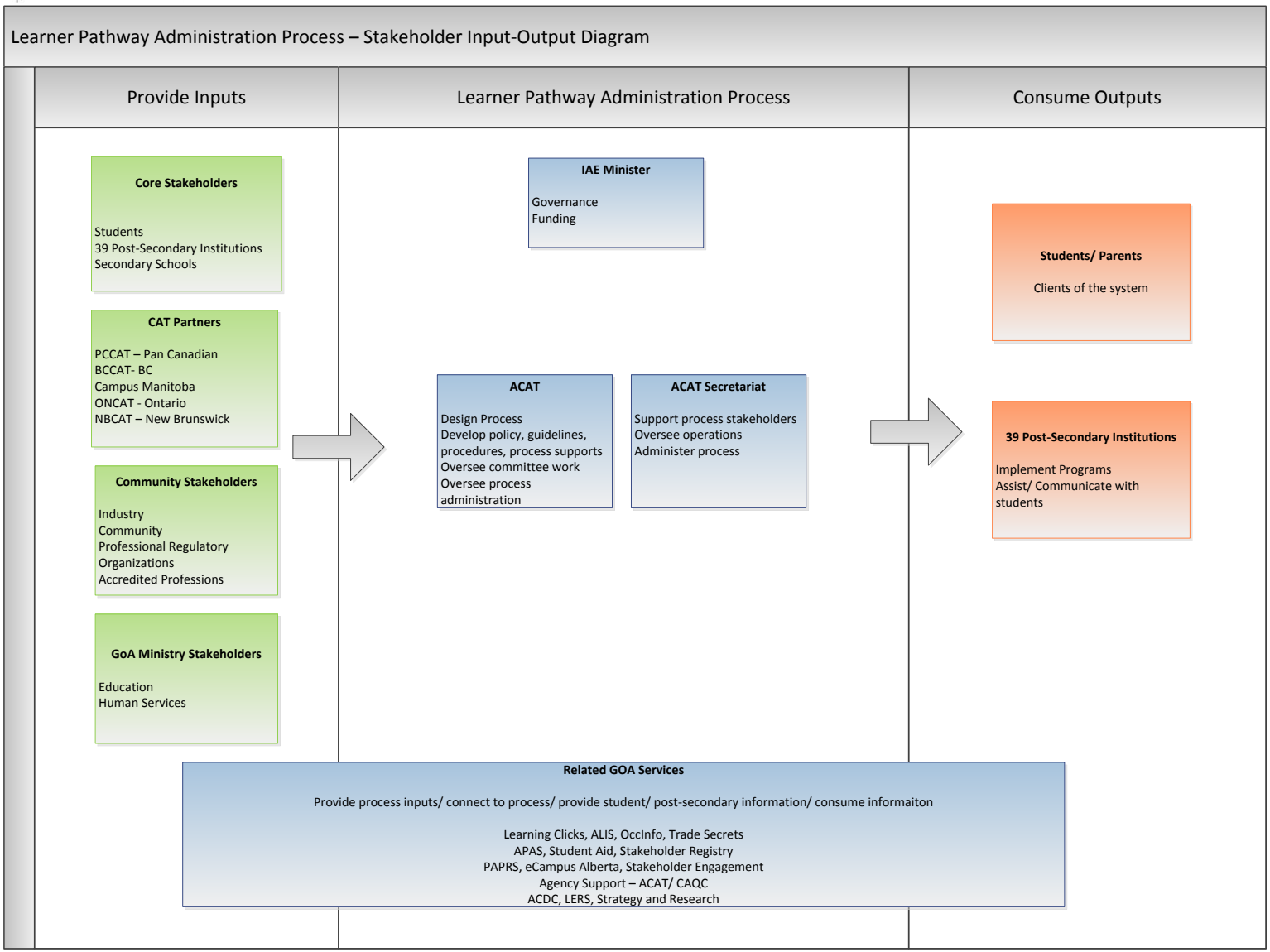
The stakeholder environment for the administration of learner pathways in Alberta has understandable complexity because it is:

- Geographically dispersed
- Subject to frequent system change
- Can have disconnection between system stakeholders.

Learner pathways administration process stakeholders are also organizationally diverse and include:

- ACAT (Council and Secretariat)
- Learners, both secondary & post-secondary
- Student advisors, both secondary & post-secondary
- Contact Persons
- Other Provincial Councils for Admissions and Transfer and provinces/territories
- Administrators, Program/ Faculty, and Articulation Committees
- IAE/Education/Ministries business units in the GOA and related agencies.

Based on system focus group guidance, the diagram that follows illustrates where stakeholders have been identified as currently engaging in the learner pathways process.


Learner Pathway Administration Process – Stakeholder Input-Output Diagram
Provide Inputs
Learner Pathway Administration Process
Consume Outputs
Core Stakeholders
Students
39 Post-Secondary Institutions
Secondary Schools
CAT Partners
PCCAT – Pan Canadian
BCCAT- BC
Campus Manitoba
ONCAT - Ontario
NBCAT – New Brunswick
Community Stakeholders
Industry
Community
Professional Regulatory Organizations
Accredited Professions
GoA Ministry Stakeholders
Education
Human Services
IAE Minister
Governance
Funding
ACAT
Design Process
Develop policy, guidelines, procedures, process supports
Oversee committee work
Oversee process administration
ACAT Secretariat
Support process stakeholders
Oversee operations
Administer process
Students/ Parents
Clients of the system
39 Post-Secondary Institutions
Implement Programs
Assist/ Communicate with students
Related GOA Services
Provide process inputs/ connect to process/ provide student/ post-secondary information/ consume informaiton
Learning Clicks, ALIS, OccInfo, Trade Secrets
APAS, Student Aid, Stakeholder Registry
PAPRS, eCampus Alberta, Stakeholder Engagement
Agency Support – ACAT/ CAQC
ACDC, LERS, Strategy and Research

LPMI Goals

The goals below were defined by ACAT Council members at the beginning of the Business Assessment Project in October 2014. These goals set the parameters for the assessment and were used to ensure alignment throughout the assessment.

The overarching goal of the LPMI is to support student mobility & post-secondary success, by providing supporting learner pathway mechanisms & access to information.

- In collaboration with internal and external stakeholders
- For secondary and post-secondary students, post-secondary institutions, and other post-secondary stakeholders.

The high level goals of the initiative are:

1. To provide a more seamless student experience in Campus Alberta, the Alberta Transfer System, and the Advanced Learning System.

2. To provide information and access to learner pathways and mobility, including:
    a. Course & program transferability in Alberta, Western Canada & across Canada (Pan-Canadian)
    b. Admissions
    c. Dual Credit
    d. Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR).

3. To facilitate connections to information about:
    a. institution application procedures
    b. admission requirements
    c. transcripts
    d. student aid
    e. scholarships
    f. other related or complementary information or programs, like:
        i. high school equivalency (e.g., grade 12 out of province course equivalencies, adult upgrading)
        ii. occupations
        iii. online learning
        iv. planning and labour market information
        v. brokered, cooperative, and/or bridging programs.

Project level goals are to:

1. Streamline transfer agreement procedures by making decision-making criteria more consistent, transparent and visible between institutions.

2. Develop an approach to student mobility that facilitates Recognition of Prior Learning (credit for formal learning (e.g., transfer credit, dual credit) and informal learning (e.g., PLAR), and reciprocal transfer both to and from institutions.

3. Provide greater transparency of, and access to, information and tools/ supports.

4. Provide pathways and transfer information that is accurate, real-time and accessible to all stakeholders.

5. Support research that could improve pathways and the work of student advisors.

Business Drivers

The business drivers for this project included the need to enable ACAT to:

- Create a framework to promote intellectual diversity, student empowerment and employability.
- Support students to complete post-secondary programs, where mobility and flexibility are required.
- Support efforts towards a regional/ national system for student mobility and credit transfer:
    - From one institution to another in Alberta
    - Between provinces/ countries
    - Into/ out of/ and back into the post-secondary education system.
- Connect learner pathways, including the transfer system with other provinces.
- Replace the current IT system, which no longer supports the learner pathway process and was built with an underlying technology that is obsolete and no longer supported.
- Support the need for data to inform pathways research and process development.
- Reduce the workload and simplify the process for post-secondary institutions that administer pathway agreements.

LPMI Business Needs Definition

The business issues and needs were identified by ACAT stakeholders. We conducted eight working group sessions that included participation by approximately 100 stakeholders from across the province. Refer to Appendix I for a detailed account of the problem framing, business needs focus group session feedback.

The key issues identified by the business needs focus group sessions are separated into three categories:

1. Governance and Cultural Change
2. Student Expectations & Perceptions
3. Learner Pathway Administration Process.

General Themes

The general issue identified regarding learner Pathways administration processes was that the current guidelines and supports were inadequate.

Stakeholders complained about the lack of resources to execute on agreements effectively and efficiently. They wanted more standardized and channeled workflow to help navigate transfer rules based on sector differences and to maximize efficiency.

Stakeholders felt that the lack of well-defined procedures with a good efficient workflow means that administrators create their own, non-transferrable, non-repeatable procedure when required.

The second major theme was that students lack information and to make informed decisions and to take responsibility for navigating their own pathways.

There was a general lack of knowledge among the 100 stakeholders engaged in the business needs definition activities, notably:

- About pathways
- How they are intended to work
- How to put them into practice
- What resources are available to help
- Inclusion of better access to the current transfer tools & guide.

The divide was evident between those who take a protectionist stance and do not believe mobility is good for PSIs or students, and those who believe that paradigms are shifting and believe PSIs must support mobility to be successful and enable student success. Support for mobility among the PSI

stakeholders appeared to be stronger than those opposed to mobility, but the paradigm shift would be better supported with the dissemination of research-based reports/evidence and organizational learning supports.

A very common position in the problem-framing portion of these sessions was to blame the Government of Alberta funding model for encouraging protectionism, or at least to some extent confusion with competition and collaboration somewhat at odds with one another in system direction. It warrants some assessment in order to determine if this is in fact true, and requires policy review; or if this position is based on perception or assumptions and requires organizational learning supports.

The most common themes of the problems identified by the stakeholders were:

1. Student frustration – lack of information, incomplete information, unreliable information, out-of-date information & a lack of transparency.
2. Institution Administrators frustration – arduous process, outdated process roles and role-based workflows (sending/ receiving institution), lack of transparent, easily accessible information.
3. Inconsistent application of pathway policies/ procedures across institutions = lack of coordination, repeatability = one-off agreements.
4. No data to measure the scale of problems or the success of pathways.
5. New Pathways unsupported – no system records, lack of clear, easy to follow guidelines.
6. Philosophical rift between those that value credential-based evaluation versus outcomes based evaluation.
7. Credential-based proponents argue that 'branded', quality degrees have currency for those pursuing an academic path – grades, program reputation and references are needed to excel.
8. Outcomes-based proponents argue that credentials are losing currency with industry, nationally and internationally & outcomes based evaluation provides a level of breadth and depth that provide a more accurate picture skill and experience the student gained.
9. Institutions from different sectors don't appear to fully understand each other's admissions/transfer/ Dual Credit, PLAR policies and have made assumptions because of this.

Addressing these problems and providing clarity to address misconceptions will be one of the key measures of success for the LPMI.

Observations

Lack of knowledge Across Stakeholders:

- About pathways
- How they are intended to work
- How to put them into practice
- What resources are available to help
- Including access to the current transfer tools & best practices.

Perceived Protectionism:

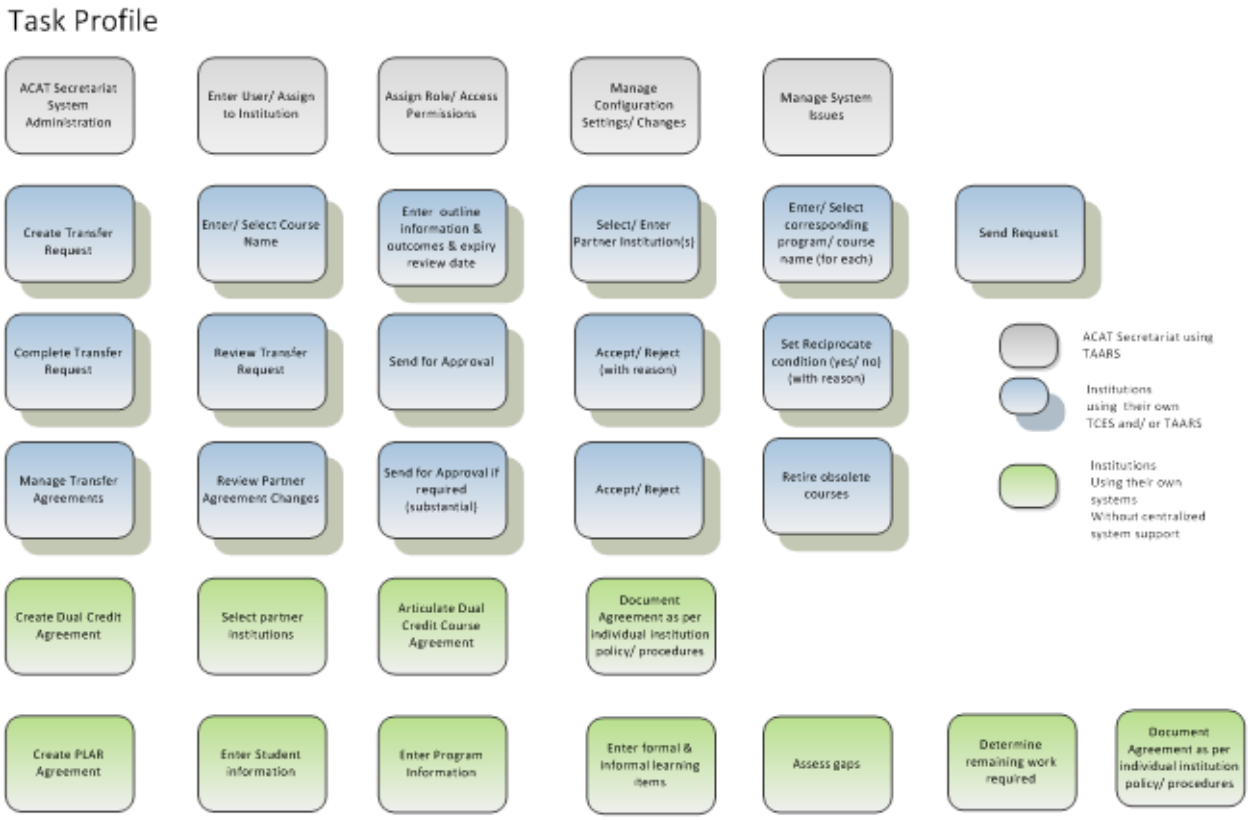
- Lack of cross-sector understanding lead to an exaggerated perception that protectionism is the reason that large institutions do not fully participate in the ACAT Transfer System.

Perception that GoA Funding Model may limit mobility:

- Model perceived to encourage competition and collaboration at the same time, limiting mobility.

Learner Pathways Administration Profile

The following Learner Pathways Administration Profile is based on feedback received during this Business Assessment.



Notes:

PLAR does not easily fit within the course / program articulations.

Double Entry – Most large post-secondary institutions have their own systems, where they maintain pathway records that conform to their own business process and model. Some will update TAARs with a duplicate record, provided that the agreement they have entered into conforms to the TAARs business process.

Learner Pathways Administration

Learner Pathways administration in Alberta is supported by ACAT Council and its appointed Articulation Committees and Contact Persons, as well as by institutions themselves. The ACAT Secretariat supports Council's work and its activities, with IAE providing the funding for this work.

The preceding task profile illustrates with color which pathways administration tasks are supported with a centralized technology.

Blue tasks, with a green shadow, are supported by TAARS; however, many PSIs have their own transfer evaluation systems and do not use TAARS for all of their agreements. The reasons cited for not using TAARS for all agreements include:

- It is time consuming and without enough added benefit for the institution given current technology.
- Its workflow imposes extra work on their agreement partners and they feel it is inappropriate to ask partners to engage in an administrative task after they have already completed an agreement.
- It does not allow PSIs to record unilateral decisions.
- Entering multi-lateral agreements requires entering multiple decision sets, one for each partner involved. This is a 'work around'. The system is not design to accommodate multi-lateral agreements.

Transfer Credit

The ACAT Secretariat has supported a well-defined transfer credit agreement process for many years. The administration of transfer credit agreements has been supported by the Alberta Transfer System, Transfer Alberta, and TAARS.

TAARS has been in used since the 1990's, but was not kept up technologically and no longer meets the business needs of the Transfer Alberta stakeholders.

Larger PSIs that have a long history have had their own transfer evaluation processes and systems for some time. Many are on their second generation of tools and systems to support their needs.

They engage in bilateral agreements with other institutions, and unilateral agreements at the request of students. Many have inter-provincial and international agreements.

The TAARS sender/receiver model requires that their partners engage in redundant approvals that have already been negotiated and recorded in their own systems. So these PSIs do not enter all agreements into TAARS because it places a burden on their partners to do extra work.

For these PSIs, supporting TAARS currently requires double data entry, and they would greatly benefit from an automated data upload of their transfer decisions.

Dual Credit

Dual Credit is a new pathway administration sub-process, intended to help ease the transition from high school into the post-secondary system. The framework for Dual Credit implementation is being developed, and based on this development, the ACAT Secretariat will support the new learner pathways sub-process.

PLAR

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a newer mobility option designed to facilitate credit for non-formal and informal learning for those entering or re-entering the post-secondary system with related learning, life or career experience. A shared process is not clearly defined or centrally supported. Some PSIs have rolled out their own PLAR programs, but these processes are not aligned.

Current Supporting Technologies

These technologies are supported by the GoA on behalf of the ACAT Secretariat. All are slated for upgrading, redesign or replacement:

- TAARS
- ACAT Website (Institutions)
- Transfer Alberta Website (Students)
- Transfer Catalog/Data (website, mobile device, tablet)
- SharePoint for Collaboration.

The solution recommendation at the end of this report includes recommendations for the modernization of these tools.

Interprovincial Partners

There are several partners in Canada who were involved in the business needs definition sessions, and at a set of meetings hosted by the British Columbia Council for Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) in March 2015. Attending partners were from:

- The Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT), which is also a member of PCCAT (see definition that follows)
- Manitoba, represented by Campus Manitoba, and which is also a member of the Western Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (WestCAT)
- Saskatchewan, represented by institutions and ministry, and which is also a member of WestCAT
- The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT), which is also a founding member of WestCAT and the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT)
- BCCAT, which is also a founding member of WestCAT and PCCAT.

The provincial councils/representatives on admissions and transfer in Canada (CATs), Western Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (WestCAT), and the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT) collaborate and exchange information on a regular basis to promote alignment of learner pathways administration processes. The emphasis is on admissions and transfer in its various forms, but newer pathways like Dual Credit and PLAR are also included, and the councils are well aware that pathways that have yet to be defined will emerge.

Two things to note:

1. New pathways come about when students and innovative post-secondary institutions work together to enable a student to move, or to bring in outside credit to continue or finish a program of study.
2. The framework for learner pathways administration reaches across the provinces/territories and internationally.

The provincial CATS are also part of the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions & Transfer (PCCAT). The purpose of PCCAT is to facilitate the implementation of policies and practices that support student mobility both within and among Provinces and Territories and granting of transfer credit in order to improve access to post-secondary education in Canada.

Each of the councils that contributed to the ACAT *Business Assessment Report* has implemented processes to support their provincial stakeholders. Most have implemented technology supports to facilitate those system processes.

The tools that each province has developed to date differ in:

- The audience they are designed to support (post-secondary institution or student, or both)
- The functionality
- The technology
- Ease of use.

A review was completed based on partner presentations provided at the March 2015 meeting, as well as a review of public-facing information technology assets of four councils for admissions and transfer (CATs) from Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and New Brunswick and of Campus Manitoba's site.

The student-facing information technology assets for each of the council's reviewed perform the same functions and each has strengths that can contribute knowledge and ideas for the design of LPMI project information technology outputs.

ACAT provincial partners would like to provide students with a TCES system and a catalog of admissions and transfer options available across Canada. These business requirements will be addressed in the solution recommendation.

GoA/Agencies, Admissions, and Learning Clicks Partners

Half day information sharing sessions were held with:

- Learning Clicks Ambassadors post-secondary student representatives, March 16, 2015, as well as a questionnaire for Ambassadors to collect information about pathways and the system. (Learning Clicks Ambassadors are current post-secondary students who also work for IAE part time to support and inform junior high and high school students regarding post-secondary transitions and planning.)

- Admissions Sub-Committee and High School/Upgrading representatives, March 9, 2015, to learn more about gaps and opportunities in the secondary education sector for transition into post-secondary and careers/occupations.

- GoA and Agencies Partners, March 6, 2015.

Discussion about the LPMI and key questions were also raised as a part of the *ACAT Articulation Committee Chairs Annual Meeting, February 24, 2015*.

See Appendices III through V for a summary of the half-day session discussions.

These sessions sought to answer:

- How do learner pathways and transfer fit into the application process?
- How do learner pathways and transfer fit into the transcript process?
- How do learner pathways and transfer fit into the student aid process?
- How do learner pathways and transfer fit into the data collection/research process?
- How do learner pathways and transfer fit into western Canadian/pan-Canadian student mobility?
- How can learner pathways, mobility and transfer be more accessible, effective, and easier for students and the system/stakeholders?
- How can learner pathways and transfer be measured to ensure the system is working?
- How do we best connect with our GoA partners to better support the student experience?
- How can we best support pathways into post-secondary?

A brief summary of the observations from the Learning Clicks Ambassador Questionnaire and student session with Ambassador Representatives on March 16, 2015 is as follows:

1. Transfer is common among students – out of 12 respondents only 1 did not transfer.

2. Student Advisors are a very important resource for students.

3. Anecdotal accounts from the respondents indicated that Transfer Alberta resources were of use when located, but could be of minimal use in obtaining information or in obtaining transfer

credit if not accessible or up-to-date. Advice, direction and direct negotiation with the destination PSI was/is required for success.

At the Admissions Sub-Committee session, discussion occurred regarding "How do we support pathways…":

- From high school into post-secondary?
- From upgrading to post-secondary?
- How to connect to the Provincial Adult Upgrading Committee (PAUC)?
- How do we make admission information more visible during transfer?

The breadth of stakeholders at the GoA/agencies session was large with representatives from many GoA programs under the IAE; Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour (JSTL); and Education Ministries, as well as related agencies/organizations. Like the large ACAT PSI stakeholders group, this group is working to understand how they connect in the overall service to students. These groups deliver student services but need more understanding they connect to learner pathways in order to provide better support and coordination of overall student service delivery.

To pull GoA programs together so they can collaborate, share linkages and information, and make connections among the delivery of related information to students will require a large-scale organizational improvement initiative with connections among information delivery to students as the measure of success.

Touch points within IAE/ministries and with various agencies identified for further investigation include:

- Stakeholder Registry
- Provider and Program Registry System (PAPRS)
- Student Aid Alberta
- Apply Alberta (APAS)
- Alberta Learning Information System (ALIS)
- eCampus Alberta
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Agency Support – ACAT/ CAQC
- Data Collection and Analytics
- Learner and Enrolment Reporting System (LERS)
- Provincial Approach to Student Information (PASI)
- Strategy and Research
- Representatives from other Ministries/GoA.

Business Requirements

The following business requirements are based on input from a wide group of stakeholders in the ACAT organizational system. The business requirements are separated into categories that represent the main areas for improvement identified by ACAT members and stakeholders. Business requirements will be used in subsequent solution development projects to ensure the projects are addressing the needs of ACAT, stakeholders, and the system.

Governance & Culture

1. Acknowledge institutional autonomy and the need for system coordination to support the public good.

    - E.g., encourage members to respect an institution's choice not to participate in an agreement.

2. Allow the culture of post-secondary education to evolve by supporting mobility.

3. Identify system leaders who have the authority to commit their institution to becoming early adopters of new pathway initiatives.

4. Allow student behavior to provide incentives for institutions.

    - Let informed student behavior determine the need for pathway changes.

5. Build awareness, educate leaders, and provide reports with metrics that demonstrate the benefits of student mobility.

    - Use awareness building, education, and advocacy to generate support for transfer credit, admissions information, dual credit, PLAR and other pathways among all post-secondary institutions.

6. Foster increased cooperation and collaboration as a best practice for reducing barriers, generating savings, and promoting transparency.

    - E.g., Form a consortium of institutions to establish liaisons between sectors and levels to model the kinds of integration that are possible.

    - E.g., expand the consortium to incorporate new joiners and encourage the adoption of transfer best practices.

7. Increase knowledge and integration between sectors of post-secondary education institutions.

    - Educate ACAT members about the differences in business rules between the sectors to garner greater understanding to support negotiation and agreement.

8. Identify broad areas of similarity and divergence to set realistic expectations about different categories of educational providers within the system.

9. Present information to institutions that explains the benefits of supporting transfer, admissions information, Dual Credit and PLAR for them, for students, and for the community.

    - Leverage research that supports PLAR (e.g., Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)) to inform/ educate Alberta stakeholders about its benefits.

    - It is captured in LERS what equates into a FLE. Collecting provincial data separates Alberta as a leader in PLAR and sets us apart from other provinces that do not support PLAR in the same way. It is important to collect data in a formal way to validate the importance of a pathway provincially.

10. Regularly provide research reports, white papers on mobility for institutions to review that are easily accessible.

11. Leverage opportunities to disseminate knowledge and awareness about Learner Pathways and the Transfer System:

    - Learning Clicks
    - Promote between Contact Persons/Student Advisors & Decision Makers/leaders
    - Presentations by the ACAT Chair, Council, and Secretariat
    - Transfer Fairs or Events
    - WestCAT and PCCAT-related events
    - Post-secondary system and ministry meetings.

Organizational Capacity Building

12. Improve ACAT's standing as a leader in Learner Pathways development among their members and their peers across Canada.

1) Develop a business case to garner support and buy in from the Ministry of Education, Innovation and Advanced Education, and other relevant ministries.
    a) For policy change where required
    b) Funding for rollout, maintenance, ever greening.

2) Request a policy change to eliminate the need to use the Locally Developed Courses (LDC) model or to allow other post-secondary to secondary curriculum alignment options, such as assigning a post-secondary course a secondary course code and allowing 1 to 1 credit for a Dual Credit course on the high school transcript and on the post-secondary transcript. Also, put in place a provincial process and funding model.

a) Suggestion: Request that post-secondary courses be treated as an elective on the high school transcript (Policy change. Support partners in development of needed provincial processes.

13. Create better linkages between related GoA and agencies-led programs through ACAT and the ACAT Secretariat.

14. Create better linkages at the Ministry level, and at the implementation level to reduce bureaucracy and increase effectiveness.

Learner Pathways Administration

15. Support continuous improvement by fostering cooperation and collaboration among institutions in the system.

16. Investigate an approach based on/including Learning Outcomes help to provide a more consistent framework for awarding transfer credit.

17. Disseminate information and findings to ACAT Members on a regular basis to promote consideration and knowledge.

18. Support a unilateral, bilateral and multilateral transfer system that respects the autonomy of institutions while fostering coordination among PSE institutions, and across jurisdictions.
    - Facilitate reciprocity and triangulation.

19. Build a new generation of pathway processes based on the institutions that have demonstrated success in doing the most robust articulations.

    - Identify programs/organizations that make up the larger learning support system in Alberta.

    - Invite other institutions to join either now or in the future.

    - Model what is possible and extend the model into areas where it does not yet exist.

    - Include IQAS in these agreements to create ways to link Canadian requirements to international qualifications.

    - Evaluate the utility of key criteria from the sector model, CAQC credentialing criteria, and regulatory body profession criteria to refine transfer agreement data elements in the new system to facilitate decision making.

20. Create an evaluation framework that allows for some diversity/flexibility in evaluating specific criteria, but overall standards in what criteria are being considered.

    - Consider learning outcomes in addition to course outline inputs information for evaluating transfer credit.

- Start with program-to-program translation, where outcomes based evaluation could get some traction.
- Create criteria for transfer agreement evaluation that are flexible enough to allow for diversity in course outlines and institutional autonomy.
- Include mechanisms for data collection.

21. Develop defined process guidelines for institutions to use in implementing and developing administration processes:
    - Clear definition for each Pathway
    - Clear framework rules
    - Suggested sub-processes and workflows
    - Supporting materials
    - Assessment tools
    - Communications to and from the larger learning support system in Alberta.
22. Develop a centralized framework for the delivery of Dual Credit programs across the province:
    - Guidelines that allow for regional flexibility and allow you to implement locally
    - Easy to use handbook available in a centralized location
    - Business rules that enable downstream pathways
    - Consistent administration processes, including curriculum alignment and reporting and duty of care, supported by the new ACAT system (easy to follow steps)
    - Standardize a funding model and criteria for Memorandum's of Understanding for all Dual Credit Agreements
    - Support Rollout & ongoing information needs about the program
    - Work with key required partners (e.g., Ministries, Steering Committee, Articulation Committee, etc.) to support these needs.
23. Develop a centralized repository for Dual Credit agreements and data collection that all secondary and post-secondary institution administrators and stakeholders can see.
24. Provide regular training and access to information about Dual Credit that explain the advantages and limitations of Dual Credit for institutions, students and parents:

- In Transfer Alberta and/or Provincial Dual Credit website on eCampus Alberta (online)
- For institutions
- For students
- For parents.

25. Promote collaboration between Secondary and Post-Secondary partners to improve the delivery of the Dual Credit Program.
    - Identify essential skills necessary for post-secondary success.
    - Develop transitional programs or courses in all post-secondary institutions similar to pre-tech program in technical / polytechnic schools.
    - Train Graduate coaches (Student Advisors) to assist high school students to transition to post-secondary.
26. Develop best practices for the delivery of PLAR programs across the province:
    - Guidelines that help to build consistency across institutions for possible future recognition of PLAR assessments between institutions
    - Business rules, data collection, and tools that help to enable downstream pathways
    - Support Rollout & ongoing information needs about the program
27. Develop a secure, centralized repository for PLAR information/agreements that post-secondary institution administrators can access.
28. Provide access to information about PLAR that explains the advantages and limitations of PLAR for institutions and students:
    - In Transfer Alberta (online)
    - For institutions
    - For students.
29. Establish a means for regular communications and partnerships within the larger organizational environment.

Student Expectations

30. Provide Students with all of the information needed to make informed pathway decisions:
    - Sector, program, institution differences in providing transfer credit

- Destination program admission requirements
- Transfer credit opportunities based on the student's existing credits.

31. Explain the limitations for transfer from one program, and/ or institution to another.

32. Explain sector differences so students understand the implications of changing pathways.

33. Help the students step through pathway considerations and decision-making points so they understand what will be required to reach their destination.

Supporting Technology

34. Ensure all technical solutions enable a higher degree of usability and self-service for all users:

    - Students mapping future pathways
    - Institutions negotiating agreements between themselves and publishing decisions to share.

35. Replace the current obsolete TAARS application with a set of tools that will support the broader learner pathway programs and administration process, and enable:

    - Transfer credit evaluation (e.g., TCES)
    - Transfer decision sharing, within and between provinces
    - Admissions information
    - Dual Credit articulation and information sharing
    - PLAR administration
    - Student information and pathways search
    - ACAT member communications & collaboration.

36. Ensure the new Learner Pathways tool set is built for a change. It must be flexible and dynamic to accommodate pathway programs and business processes that are evolving:

    - Technical solutions must allow for specific components to be changed, added to or removed as Learner Pathways evolve and administration needs change.

37. Ensure that solutions align with ACAT governance principles:

    - Solutions must balance centralized structure with institutional autonomy and different jurisdictional governance and process needs.

- Data and information must be shared between institutions that have their own business processes that conform to a standard(s) for a shared Learner Pathways framework.
- Institutions reside within Alberta and other provinces/territories.
- Institutions belong to different post-secondary sectors, which have different business rules.

Gaps Analysis

Learner Pathways are evolving and administration for learner pathways is changing in Alberta and across the country. LPMI can support this growth and improve the success of the Alberta Admissions and Transfer System by:

- Supporting post-secondary students with the information they need to make informed pathways decisions.
- Better defining best practices and standardized procedures to minimize administration in stakeholder institutions.
- Providing decision makers with the information they need to make decisions quickly and with confidence.
- Providing all stakeholders within Alberta and between the provinces with information about agreements and decisions, thereby increasing transparency, co-learning and student success.

With a future Pan-Canadian view on admissions and transfer, Alberta has the opportunity to leverage knowledge and cost sharing opportunities by leveraging relationships with other provincial councils (e.g., . ACAT, BCCAT, ONCAT, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba/Campus Manitoba).

Admissions and transfer councils across Canada have the same types of learner pathway programs and goals because they have grown from the student's need for mobility intra-provincially, inter-provincially and even internationally.

1. Could a better system and a broader view reduce organizational challenges or resistance?
2. How much challenge/resistance is philosophical and how much is a result of increased workload and confusion due to incomplete process and support?
3. Would challenges/resistance diminish if we:
    - Co-created process?
    - Increased access to information and transparency?
    - Enabled co-learning?
    - Had better tools, process and support?
    - Better supported transfer credit and other pathways?

In support of the gaps analysis, three Alberta PSIs (Athabasca University, University of Lethbridge, and SAIT Polytechnic) that have developed their own transfer credit evaluation systems were interviewed.

This information will be used to inform the development of business and functional requirements for a new ACAT learner pathways administration system.

The PSI interviews were completed to understand:

- Why they need their own system
- How they interact with TAARS
- What opportunities exist to minimize administration for PSIs with their own systems and still make transfer agreements available in a central Transfer Alberta system?

Also in support of the gaps analysis, the BCCAT TCES was analyzed in collaboration with BCCAT via a detailed set of technical questions to better understand their current software, design, and business processes.

Transfer Gaps

The current Alberta transfer credit evaluation application, TAARS, is outdated both technologically and conceptually. However, most of the data elements collected in TAARS are still relevant.

ACAT PSI stakeholders use TAARS inconsistently because they have different business processes, different business rules and different support mechanisms.

1. Many PSIs have their own transfer credit evaluation systems (TCES):
    - So entering data in TAARS is extra work without enough benefit for them given current technology issues.
    - To do so, they must manually enter agreements again into TAARS. This double entry is inconvenient and time consuming.
    - In addition, many avoid entering some agreements into TAARS because entering agreements into TAARS requires triggering a built-in approval process. TAARS requires approval from the partner institution (sending institution) to approve agreements that have already been approved before it will publish the agreement for use by students and other PSIs.
    - They do not want to cause extra work for their partner institutions.
    - Some have had transfer credit evaluation processes in place that precede TAARS.
    - Many have transfer credit evaluation processes that include inter-provincial and international transfer.

- These institutions see important merit in the provincial TAARS-like system, but are currently ahead of the centralized TAARS system.

2. TAARS has hard-coded workflow and business rules around the request sender and request receiver role that cause unnecessary work for PSIs in evaluating transfer credit.[2]

3. TAARS does not support unilateral or multilateral transfer decisions; it supports bilateral agreements where both institutions must agree on the transfer credit being awarded

    - PSIs grant transfer credit at the request of a student without asking for agreement from the originating PSI. These agreements reside outside of TAARS.

    - PSIs have their own transfer credit business processes, and many do not need the permission of the original PSI to grant transfer credit.

    - PSIs that want to enter into multi-lateral agreements, but currently must enter three bilateral/separate agreements, each requiring multiple, unnecessary approvals.

4. PSIs that rely on TAARS for transfer credit evaluation, want ACAT to provide a new and enhanced centrally available TCES because:

    - They need a way to enter agreements into a database that will be visible to students and other PSIs.

    - Some want to use a new TCES to encourage buy in because they believe agreements in TAARS reflects important system participation in supporting student success through transfer.

    - They want more transparency with regard to decisions, especially agreements that are denied, they want:

        - A reason for denial

        - The reason for denial sharable in some way with students.

    - They want the system to drive a paradigm shift and encourage a different approach to evaluation that emphasizes or at least includes learning outcomes over course/program outline parameters.

    - They want a comprehensive TCES that promotes organizational learning and transparency and includes:

        - Evaluation forms that include Inputs (course outline, text books, instructor qualifications etc.) that are informed or differentiated based on

[2] Additional information is available regarding technical coding.

expectations/requirements, to help Alberta Transfer System Members understand the differences in evaluation by sector/institution.

- An optional section of the evaluation form that includes Learning Outcomes to encourage a different approach to evaluation (paradigm shift).
- Optional built in workflows that help navigate differences between sectors/institutions.

5. All PSIs want the system to balance and respect their autonomy with the desire for collaboration and cooperation under a shared transfer credit framework.
    - PSIs come from different post-secondary sectors/institutions in the systems that have mandates and policies that differ from one sector to another.
    - Sectors/Institutions have rules or policies that affect or determine how they grant transfer credit; however, there is a need for more knowledge of those rules between the sectors/institutions to garner a greater understanding with regard to transfer credit decisions and supports for learner pathways.
    - This would help those who feel that decisions are somewhat subjective/arbitrary to understand why a transfer credit is accepted or denied, including information such as regulatory requirements.

All PSIs want the system to balance and respect their autonomy with the desire for collaboration and cooperation under a shared transfer credit framework.

- PSIs come from different post-secondary sectors that have mandates and policies that differ from one sector to another.
- Sectors have rules that affect or determine how they grant transfer credit, however there is a need for more knowledge of those rules between the sectors to garner a greater understanding with regard to transfer credit decisions.
- This would help those who feel that decisions are arbitrary to understand why transfer credit is accepted or denied.

Transfer Gap Closer

TAARS Replacement

The current Alberta transfer credit evaluation application, TAARS, is outdated both technologically and conceptually. However, most of the data elements collected in TAARS are still relevant.

ACAT PSI stakeholders use TAARS inconsistently because they have different business processes, different business rules and different support mechanisms.

1. Many PSIs have their own transfer credit evaluation systems (TCES):
    - So entering data in TAARS is extra work without enough added benefit for them given current technology issues.
    - To do so, they must manually enter agreements again into TAARS. This double entry is inconvenient and time consuming.
    - In addition, some may avoid entering agreements into TAARS because entering agreements into TAARS requires triggering a built-in approval process. TAARS requires approval from the partner institution (sending institution) to approve agreements that have already been approved before it will publish the agreement for use by students and other PSIs.
    - They do not want to cause extra work for their partner institutions.
    - Some have had transfer credit evaluation processes in place that precede TAARS.
    - Many have transfer credit evaluation processes that include inter-provincial and international transfer.
    - These institutions see important merit in the provincial TAARS-like system, but are currently ahead of the centralized TAARS system.
2. TAARS has hard-coded workflow and business rules around the request sender and request receiver role that cause unnecessary work for PSIs in evaluating transfer credit.[3]
3. TAARS does not support unilateral or multilateral transfer decisions; it supports bilateral agreements where both institutions must agree on the transfer credit being awarded
    - PSIs grant transfer credit at the request of a student without asking for agreement from the originating PSI. These agreements reside outside of TAARS.
    - PSIs have their own transfer credit business processes, and many do not need the permission of the original PSI to grant transfer credit.
    - PSIs that want to enter into multi-lateral agreements, but currently must enter three bilateral/separate agreements, each requiring multiple, unnecessary approvals.
4. PSIs that rely on TAARS for transfer credit evaluation, want ACAT to provide a new and enhanced centrally available TCES because:
    - They need a way to enter agreements into a database that will be visible to students and other PSIs.

[3] Additional detail was examined regarding technical coding.

- Some want to use a new TCES to encourage buy in because they believe agreements in TAARS reflects important system participation in supporting student success through transfer.

- They want more transparency with regard to decisions, especially agreements that are denied, they want:

    - A reason for denial

    - The reason for denial sharable in some way with students.

- They want the system to drive a paradigm shift and encourage a different approach to evaluation that emphasizes or at least includes learning outcomes over course/ program outline parameters.

- They want a comprehensive TCES that promotes organizational learning and transparency and includes:

    - Evaluation forms that include Inputs (course outline, text books, instructor qualifications etc.) that are informed or differentiated based on expectations/requirements, to help Alberta Transfer System Members understand the differences in evaluation by sector/institution.

    - An optional section of the evaluation form that includes Learning Outcomes to encourage a different approach to evaluation (paradigm shift).

    - Optional built in workflows that help navigate differences between sectors/institutions.

5. All PSIs want the system to balance and respect their autonomy with the desire for collaboration and cooperation under a shared transfer credit framework.

    - PSIs come from different post-secondary sectors/institutions in the system that has mandates and policies that differ from one sector to another.

    - Sectors/Institutions have rules or policies that affect or determine how they grant transfer credit; however, there is a need for more knowledge of those rules between the sectors/institutions to garner a greater understanding with regard to transfer credit decisions and supports for learner pathways.

    - This would help those who feel that decisions are somewhat subjective/arbitrary to understand why transfer credit is accepted or denied, including information such as regulatory requirements.

ACAT Council and Secretariat can provide the framework for transfer credit evaluation, and work to align that framework with their counterparts in other provinces; however, they cannot mandate exactly how each PSI in Alberta implements transfer credit agreements with other PSIs or with students.

Building too much process into TAARS has resulted in a reduction of its use among many of the larger PSIs, who have their own business processes and transfer credit evaluation systems. Building a new transfer evaluation system with more data elements designed to encourage a paradigm shift, and more business rules to try to force standardization, risks non-compliance and potentially a greater gap in coordination and understanding among PSIs in Alberta.

Taking lessons from other provincial systems that have built a transfer credit decision database that provides students and other PSIs with a catalog of transfer credit options and admissions information would allow individual PSIs to negotiate their own transfer credit agreements that are published to a publically available catalog.

This approach allows for unilateral, bilateral and multilateral decisions to be published, shared, and accessed by students, PSIs and other stakeholders.

Building capability to automatically upload decision 'records' into a transfer catalog, simplifies administration for the PSIs and cuts down on double data entry and unnecessary approval steps.

Building a transfer evaluation tool based on the British Columbia/BCCAT TCES model could satisfy the needs of PSIs who need a transfer credit evaluation and agreement negotiation tool. Those agreements could be automatically transferred into a transfer agreement catalog upon completion. These tools could work seamlessly together to support transfer.

The BCCAT TCES model respects the autonomy of PSIs and accepts evaluation inputs as document attachments. Workflow and processes are simple and communication is accomplished directly between institutions. In addition, BCCAT provides access to a database of course outlines, both current and historical, which simplifies the data collection necessary for evaluation. In Alberta, the onus is currently on the student to provide outlines, which is very difficult because the students lack easy access to course outlines, particularly if some time has passed since they took the program/ course. The BCCAT TCES is simple, clean, and flexible and will not constrain process changes. It shares many of the data elements currently collected in TAARS without cumbersome or outdated business rules for a sender and receiver role.

Transfer Agreement Catalog

A separate catalog interface would accommodate the need for Alberta PSIs that have their own TCES systems to be able to upload agreements directly into a catalog. This will:

- Minimize administrative workload

- Allow for unilateral, bilateral and multilateral agreements
- Encourage participation
- Increase the amount of transfer data we have available for student and PSI consumption.

Transfer data from agreements negotiated in the TAARS replacement tool would be ported directly into the catalog, once deemed complete.

A separate Transfer Agreement Catalog with a data transfer mechanism could also be used to capture out-of-province transfer opportunities.

This would require collaboration with ACAT's provincial partners and Alberta's PSIs to decide on a standard data set and validation for catalog presentation, and to participate in providing requirements for data upload, data sharing and/ or data set transfer.

It is also an opportunity to bundle needed admissions information with transfer information in the catalog to better serve students.

PLAR & Dual Credit Gaps

PLAR and Dual Credit are newer pathways and administration frameworks that are being developed.

Gap Closer:

Dual Credit and PLAR need:

- A best-practice framework for administration
- Learning/information resources to support its implementation
- A centrally available repository for PSIs to keep agreement records
- A new record type for Dual Credit that could be accessed by students and PSI users from a Transfer Catalog
- Agreement from PSIs to share PLAR records and then access to a PLAR repository that is restricted to PSIs and ACAT.

High School to Post-Secondary Pathway Gaps

The high school curriculum/environment is perceived to be prescriptive and laid out for students, without necessarily preparing students for the post-secondary environment where they have choices and responsibilities for their own pathway. This leaves students unprepared to make a decision about their goals. There is a cost to the system for student to 'find themselves'. We need to help them find a pathway for transition from high school.

High school advisors don't necessarily think about post-secondary paths when giving advice because their main focus is to ensure students do well in high school. High schools get evaluated on the good grades of their students and the achievement of a high school diploma.

The current high school system is seen to do best in supporting students with pathways to university over other post-secondary paths because high school advisors know the university path the best because they have experienced it.

Different discipline levels for math, science, etc. available in high school are there to support the achievement of a high school diploma, but they have implications for post-secondary paths that are not always considered when making a decision to "stream" a student.

Deciding to "stream" a student to a different level within a discipline has post-secondary pathway consequences that need to be explained to the student and parent, before they make a decision. It is understood that there are also many other important high school student success variables that are a part of this decision.

Gap Closers

There are a number of excellent opportunities to leverage high school programs and resources to better prepare students for post-secondary school. The solution lies in collaboration, co-learning and integration of supporting programs and tools within the PSI and the K-12 organizational environments, which could be facilitated by ACAT Council and Secretariat.

Suggestions include:

- Use the CALM course curriculum to better effect. Introduce CALM in grade 9.
- Reinforce this learning repeatedly by introducing an annual career path/ post-secondary path workshop for high school students. (I.e. annual CALM workshop). Reinforce the connection between high school choices and downstream learner pathways and career goals.
    - Annual career pathways discussion
    - Bundled into courses
    - On the first day of class.
- Introduce Teacher/ Council pathway workshops to reinforce messages about the transition from secondary to post-secondary school. These might be included at Teachers Conferences.
- Leverage e-portfolio to incorporate pathways discussions into teachers' responsibilities. Have them indicate they have had pathways conversations with students. E-portfolio is a good source of data on career changes for grant-funded students and is also an available option already in the PASI system.

- Forge better relationships and connections between secondary and post-secondary systems for students that are late in completing high school.
    - Inform post-secondary advisors
    - Help them to understand transcripts, especially for students who have been out of school for some time.
    - Help them to find information on equivalencies and make information easier to find.
- Develop a digital planning tool that helps the student to visually see pathway options. Help them to link career clusters to pathway options.
- Connect information so it is easy for user to access and navigate. Increase linkages to and use of Learning Clicks Ambassadors and related resources and supports.

Stakeholders want to create an environment that balances the student councilor's responsibility and the student's responsibility.

Post-Secondary Student Pathway Information Gaps

Students want easy, guided access to the admissions and transfer information that they need to map their pathways in one, well-organized, well-designed interface available from their computers, tablets and cell phones.

Currently, information to help students navigate learner pathways is incomplete, inconsistent, and difficult to find.

Students need one interface that helps them to navigate pathways information from their perspective, and provide them with access to everything they need to know to make informed decisions.

We need to connect pathways information so it is easy for students to get information relevant to their learner pathways from one location. Usability is the most important priority in continually improving the Transfer Alberta website.

Gap Closer

There is no doubt that technology will deliver solutions and information to students.

However, process improvement is needed to support a more integrated approach to delivering learner pathways information and services to students.

It will require building information and relationship connections between GoA programs to deliver learner pathway information in a logical way and from one access point.

It will also require more participation from Alberta PSIs and transfer data from other provinces to connect information and potentially develop a more integrated approach to delivering learner pathway options and more comprehensive information from one source.

There is an opportunity to leverage design ideas from ACAT's interprovincial partners. Each of these has strengths in:

- Service delivery integration
- Student interface design
- Learner pathways navigation.

Collectively, the partners provide an excellent resource and are eager to collaborate.

The Transfer Alberta website will need regular review and improvements to remain relevant. It cannot be left to become irrelevant in an environment that is dynamic and changing.

PSI Knowledge Gaps

The PSI stakeholders in this multi-organizational environment:

- Do not fully understand each other
- Lack effective coordination
- Lack organization learning support
- Don't clearly understand sector differences
- Don't clearly understand ACAT's role
- Don't always understand their roles and responsibilities.

As well, related GoA programs that are integral to Learner Pathways administration have not clearly identified how they fit together.

Closing these gaps is key to improving support for Learner Pathways services in Alberta.

Transfer Best Practices provides good information about the importance, governance and purpose of the transfer credit articulation; however, it is a text heavy document, which makes it an onerous reference resource.

In addition to being difficult to use, *Transfer Best Practices* lacks practical 'how to' information to support PSIs as they implement their own transfer credit, dual credit and/ or PLAR administrative processes and business rules.

The "Best Practices" need a review and updated peer-based redesign. The roles and workflows do not match what the PSIs are doing today, and what they need.

Gap Closer

1. Transfer Guide Replacement

PSIs are too busy to use the learning tools and best practices guide currently available because it is text heavy, paper-based and inconvenient.

The *Transfer Best Practices* document needs to be updated, more comprehensive and the delivery method modernized. ACAT needs to review and update the current Learner Pathways administration framework and best practices collaboratively with its members.

Transfer Best Practices also cannot be delivered in a paper-based format if the goal is to provide convenience for PSI stakeholders. Information needs to be delivered in a format that:

- Has context (inside tools or administration modules)
- Is easy to search
- Is digitally delivered and interactive with embedded learning and context-based help

A new/updated transfer guide also needs to expand to include administration of new pathways in a way that aligns with how the PSIs want to administer these programs.

GoA Organizational Gaps

The GoA programs and related agencies that serve Alberta students are delivering services that have some overlap, direct but undefined relationships with one another, and experience disconnection from one another, including from the ACAT delivered services.

This requires process improvements in IAE, with connections to the ACAT service delivery processes.

Gap Closer

There is a desire to organize information and disseminate that information from a student centric viewpoint across all stakeholder groups.

The LPMI can leverage and provide leadership to integrate with these programs.

First steps will be to continue learning about how these programs intersect and to drive new understandings and create opportunities to connect programs, or to leverage initiatives being undertaken by ministry branches/agencies with related goals.

The LPMI needs to identify related GoA and agency initiatives and leverage, support and connect to that work.

Technical Solution Assessment

The technical solutions assessed for LPMI focused on TAARS replacement and Online Transfer Agreement Catalog software. Other technical solutions are available and could be enhanced or leveraged from the government or other providers.

The assessment looked for Commercial-of-the-Shelf solutions to see if there were any that would meet the need for the modernization of the transfer system. As previously referenced in the Gaps Analysis, the BCCAT TCES was also assessed for technical fit, and the findings are presented below.

COTS Scan Summary

The COTS scan indicated that very few COTS products exist in the transfer evaluation system and online transfer guide market. None of the COTS products examined appeared to be flexible out of the box and would require customization to products that are not readily customized without high costs associated.

BCCAT TCES Review

The BCCAT TCES was reviewed and was found to be an excellent foundational model that can be leveraged in terms of design principles. There was a fairly extensive review of the application architecture, data architecture, technical architecture and security architecture. The BCCAT technology as it is to date did not fully align with the IAE internal network or the architecture standards and guidelines and would require revisions.

As referenced, further dialogue is recommended with BCCAT to leverage its clean and proven design principles and processes for transfer, with discussion regarding the best way to utilize IAE and BCCAT resources to determine the specific technology build/modernization needed to meet Alberta and British Columbia technology network needs, as well as other potential partners.

Recommendation

The recommended approach is to utilize the existing Government of Alberta tools and hosting environment as it offers a modern infrastructure platform of integrated services and technology by following a standardized set of tools that ensure security compliance. The Government has several technologies in the environment that can be leveraged that would otherwise be costly to obtain and support. As a part of this approach, the GoA IT Architecture team recommends building into the overall Learner Pathways System a number of independent IT tools that would work together and be presented in the appropriate front-end user facing interface.

With this approach in mind, it is also recommended to engage in further dialogue with provincial partners regarding next steps. This would include important dialogue with BCCAT regarding working together to leverage its design and processes for transfer from its BCCAT TCES to support the transfer evaluation system portion of the pathways system IT tools. Discussion regarding the best way to utilize

IAE and BCCAT resources to determine the specific technology build/modernization needed to meet both Alberta and British Columbia technology network needs regarding the transfer pathway, as well as those of other potential partners, is also recommended.

LPMI Recommendation & Solution Roadmap

The Learner Pathways Administration System will accommodate users from many organizations. There will be integration points with systems and data sources from ACAT partners and pathway-related GoA programs. For these reasons, a customized solution, hosted within the GoA environment while working with interested provincial partners is the best technical approach for the LPMI.

There are no known COTS solutions that can meet these core requirements. Data integration with related programs within the GoA is greatly facilitated when the systems that require integration reside in the same environment. In addition, ACAT would save costs by building and hosting its technical solutions using existing IAE/government resources and IT infrastructure in collaboration with interested partners.

IAE/ ITM Standards

IAE's ITM group aims to produce quality software that fulfills client requirements.

IAE architecture standards are:

- To provide clear direction from ministry architects to application development teams and jurisdictional partners regarding application architecture documentation,
- To provide predictable and standard ways of describing an application,
- To support thoughtful and complete architectural planning,
- To support high quality products and partner collaboration resulting in the best possible results for student access to pathways information and long term cost savings to the client and the ministry.

The latest versions of individual technologies are used and applications are developed with quality standards that include:

- Usability - The Solution tools should be intuitive and easy to use.
- Recoverability – The Solution must follow ACID (Atomicity, Consistency, Isolation, Durability) rules on all transactions.
- Scalability – The Solution is built to allow for the growth of the user base without modification.

- Extensibility – The Solution must have programmatically accessible and secure API. Data must be available for secure remote access.
- Non-functional Requirements, Resource Monitoring and Usage – CPU, Memory, and Disk usage and network bandwidth are all taken into consideration.
- Performance - The User interface response time is measured and considered. The basic performance counters: pages per seconds, transactions per second, CPU % used, memory used etc. are all part of the performance considerations.
- Developer Testing - All code is unit tested and performance tested.
- Secure Authentication (SIAMS) and Authorization principles.
- Job Control technology (Active Batch).
- Responsive design – User interfaces are responsive and consumable on mobile devices, desktop computers and tablets.

Technical Approach

The technical approach recommended by the IAE, IT Architecture team is to build the Learner Pathways System with a number of independent, but connected modules and components that would work together to provide an integrated experience for stakeholders (e.g. PSIs, students, inter-provincial partners). The systems can contribute data for different interfaces appropriate to different audiences.

Taking this "micro-system approach" for maximum flexibility, the new system would consist of a number of components or modules that meet specific needs. The components would be connected but not inter-reliant, simplifying system changes when changes are needed. Components can be retired when they become obsolete, upgraded or changed when needed, and new components can be added with minimal impacts to other system components.

Solution architecture like this, allows ACAT to leverage robust GoA IT tools and services like business intelligence, development technology, hosting services, and maintenance services that already exist in support of Innovation and Advanced Education, as well as collaborative sharing with other provincial partners.

There are collaboration and cost savings associated with shared system and service use. In addition, it will be easier to leverage data and resources from Alberta PSI, Agency, and GoA partner programs willing to collaborate with LPMI. Specifically, it will simplify access to pathways information and resources for the student interface, and for business intelligence objectives for reporting.

Solution Description

The solution includes building a TCES in collaboration with BCCAT to leverage BCCAT's design principles and processes, as well as learnings from Alberta PSIs TCES systems. It is understood that ACAT and all potential provincial partners require mechanisms, processes, and flexibility to support their business area leadership, knowledge, and decision-making.

The solution roadmap in this report has been validated by ACAT Council. ACAT Council passed a motion to work with Innovation and Advanced Education, ITM to undertake phases 2 – 4, with collaboration from BCCAT and other interested jurisdictional partners from Saskatchewan, Manitoba/Campus Manitoba, Ontario/ONCAT or any other provincial council/representatives for admissions and transfer.

The Business Assessment was the first phase in the LPMI solution roadmap and the work done led the assessment team to identify the following solution projects and phases:

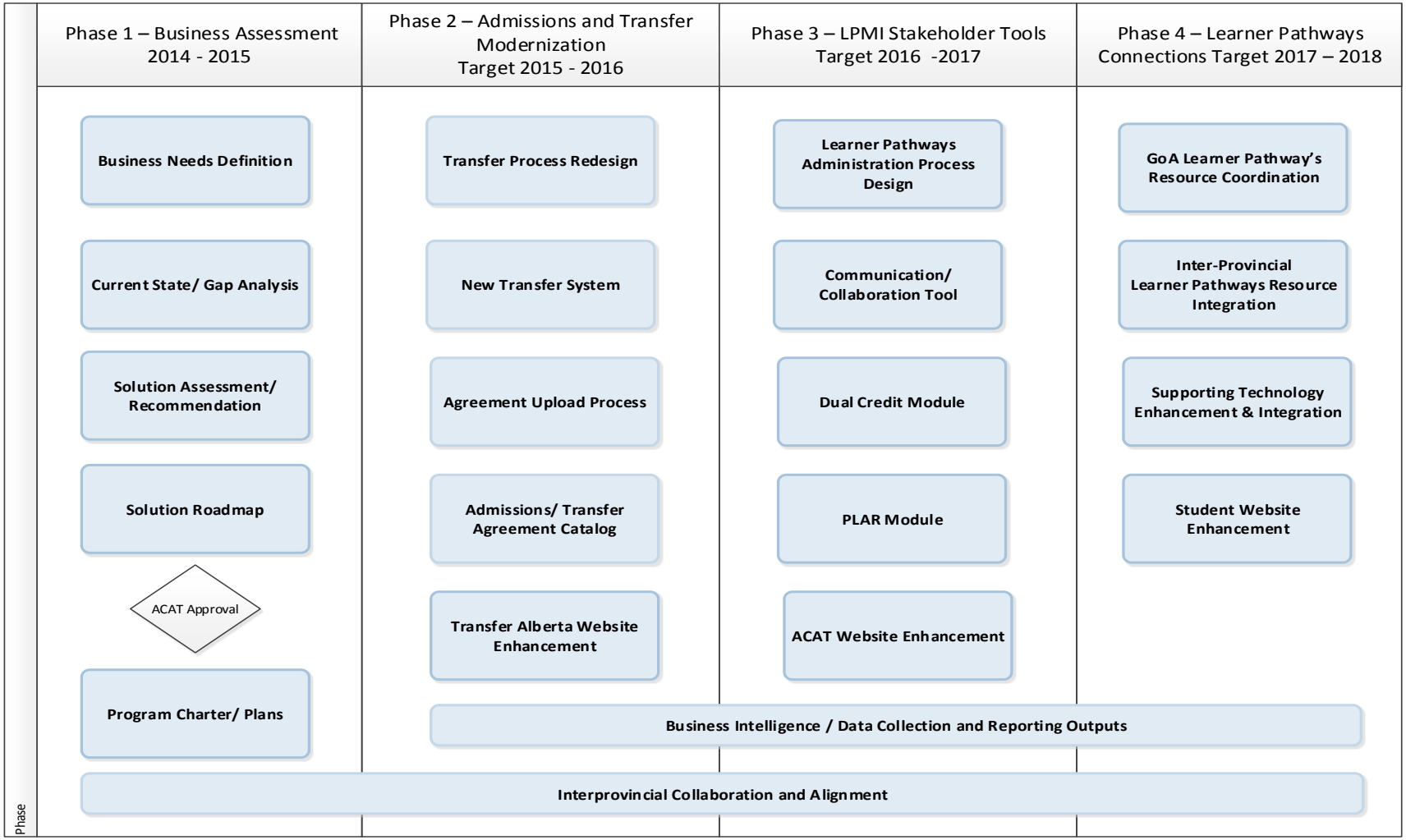
- Phase 2 – Admissions and Transfer System Modernization – With a new Transfer Credit Evaluation System based on the BCTCES model; a new Transfer Agreement and Admissions Catalog to house active agreements between PSIs in Alberta, and institutions from other provinces, as well as admissions information. The new catalog would be available to students and others from an easy-to-use interface that can be accessed from a web browser, mobile phone or tablet and be a part of a modernized Transfer Alberta website.

- Phase 3 - LPMI Stakeholder Tools – To support learner pathways administration. The target audience is Alberta PSIs and collaboration with provincial partners, with an enhanced ACAT website and extranet access to improved communication and collaboration tools, a Dual Credit administration module, a PLAR administration module, and access to Learner Pathways reporting.

- Phase 4- Learner Pathways Connections – To make connections among Learner Pathways information and resources from the greater organizational environment for the benefit of the student by making resources accessible from Transfer Alberta/a student website. This will require collaboration and coordination between stakeholders; as well as, the use of technology solutions to make the information seamlessly accessible from an integrated and easy-to-use interface.

Development of business intelligence and reporting (e.g., data analytics and data collection and reports) would also be a part of all Phases 2 – 4.

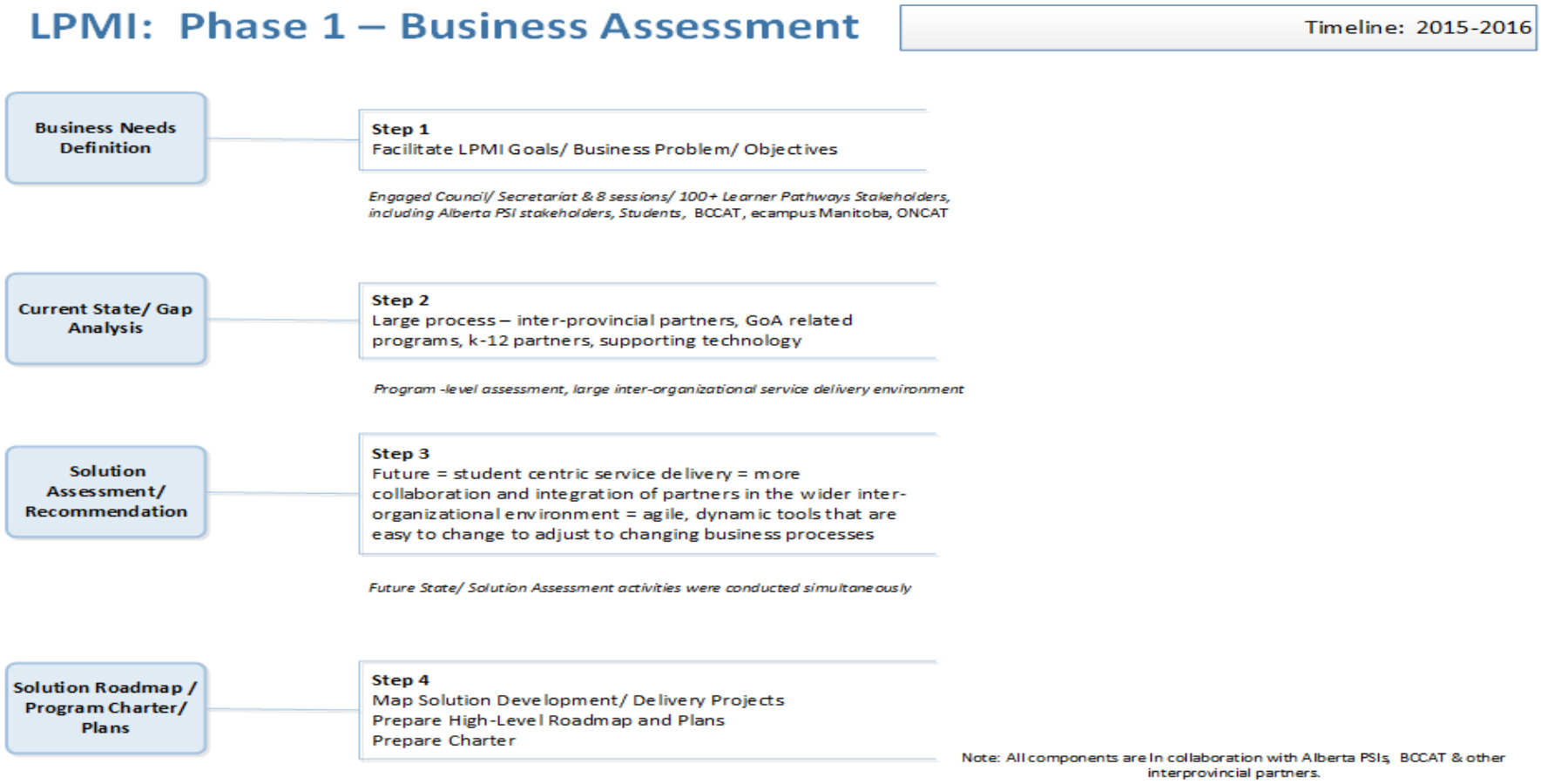
Solution Roadmap



More detail for each phase of the *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative* Solution Roadmap is described in the following section. Process improvements, organizational learning support, and implementation support will be required for each phase described below.

Phase 1: Business Assessment

The Business Assessment Report process will be completed by June 30, 2015, providing the foundation for development of a more detailed Future State, Project Charters and a Solution Road Map, based on ACAT Council approval and guidance received on May 27, 2015. Details in the phases outlined in this report will be revised in the LPMI project charters as needed during planning and development, guided by ACAT, provincial partner collaboration, and ITM advice.



This report is the main deliverable for the Business Assessment, which will be completed by June 30, 2015, followed by the Project Charter(s) for Phase 2.

Phase 2 - Transfer Modernization - 2015-2016

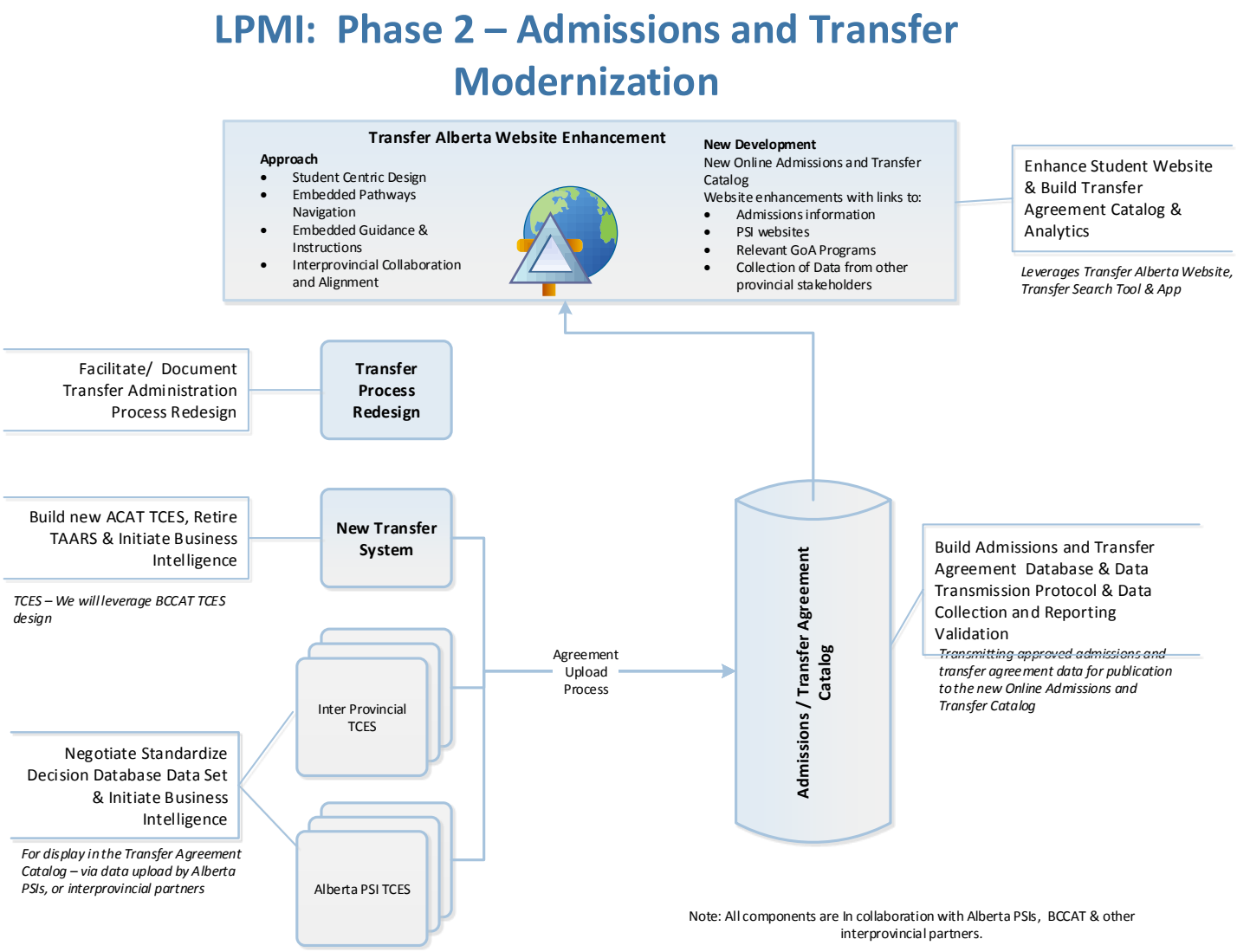
Phase 2 focuses on transfer as the pathway with the most urgent need for improvement, because it is most developed and most used of the learner pathways; and technology updates are urgently required. It will also include collaboration with interested provincial partners.

Phase 2 requires business process redesign to reflect the way transfer is done today, and to ensure that IT systems remain flexible to accommodate changes to process, which are anticipated to occur continuously. Since PSI's develop transfer procedures and policy that vary to suit their specific mandates, ACAT will ensure that new systems have business rules, roles and workflows are common, flexible and generic.

For example, some institutions desire bilateral agreements, some grant credit via a unilateral decision. The system should be able to accommodate and publish both types of transfer credit agreements.

1. Redesign the Transfer Credit Administration process to meet new business requirements.
2. Replace TAARS with a custom-built system using the BCTECS design.
    a. This will be built with collaboration from BCCAT.
    b. This will be offered for use to Alberta PSIs that do not have their own transfer credit evaluation tool and to allow for linkages among jurisdictions/systems.
3. Develop a standard, validated, approved data set that all PSIs and provincial partners can agree on for the centralized transfer agreement database.
    a. This will include only consumable data. Data intended for student consumption.
    b. This will accommodate batch uploads from PSIs who have their own transfer evaluation and agreement process and tools for display in an online transfer catalog.
    c. It will be built to accept unilateral transfer decisions, as well as bilateral and multilateral transfer decisions.
    d. It will be built to accept inter-provincial data, provided that we can work together to define a standard transfer decision data set.
4. Develop a Transfer Agreement Catalog for public access with best practice information and design ideas taken from the best ideas of ACATs interprovincial partners and PSIs.

5. Enhance the Transfer Alberta website to include a student facing online Admissions and Transfer Agreement Catalog with admissions and transfer information, links to PSI websites and relevant GoA and agencies program information.



Phase 3: Learner Pathways Stakeholder Tools - 2016-2017

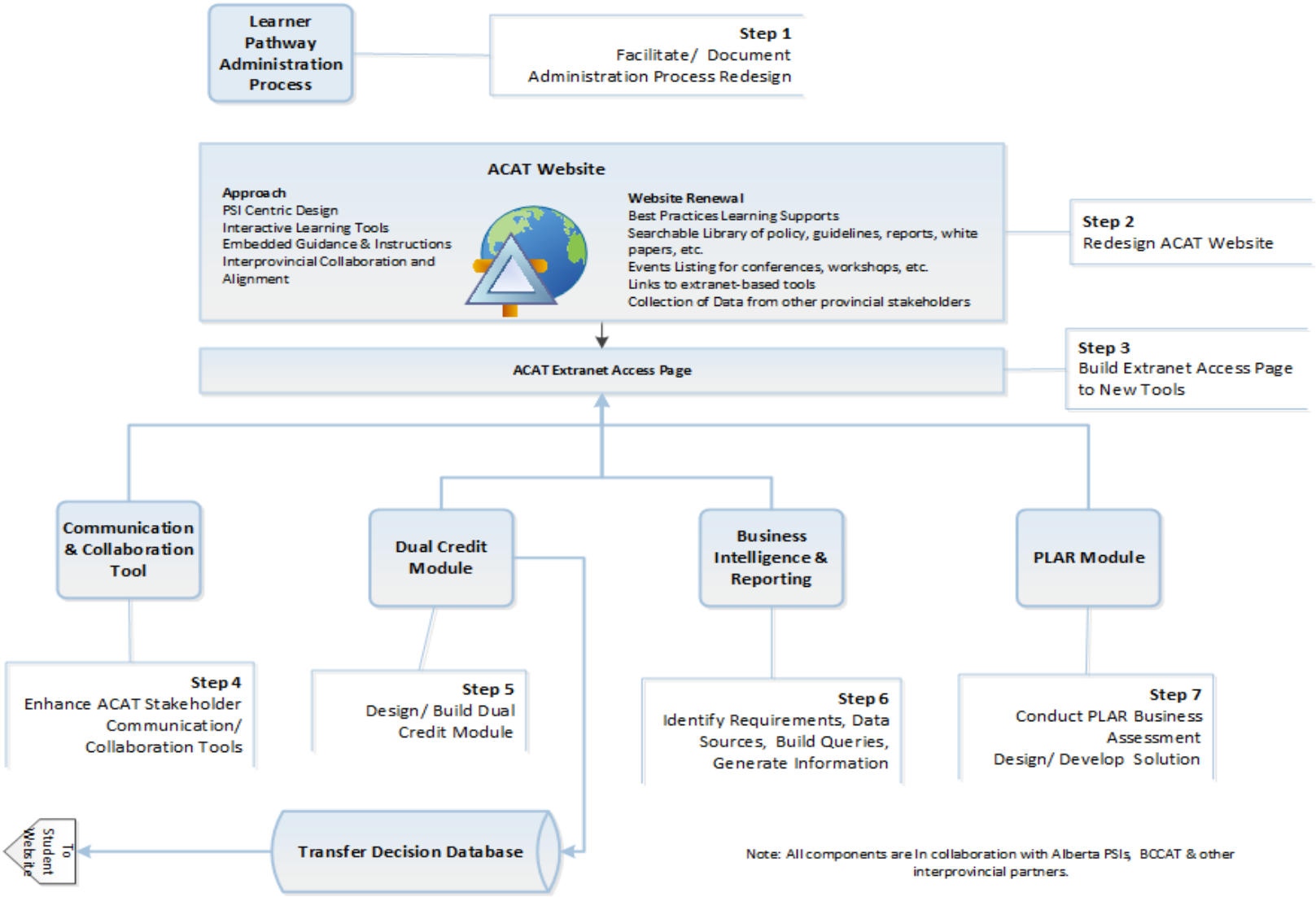
Phase 3 focuses on providing learner pathways administration support for Alberta PSIs and continued collaboration with interested provincial partners. The vision is to provide process support and tools from the ACAT website that are easy to follow and easy to use. PSIs are expected to participate in learner pathways administration, yet they do not receive extra funding to pay for developing, implementing and maintaining administrative processes and supports.

ACAT wants to build organizational supports, like IT tools, guides and learning resources to make administration easier and to minimize administrative burden. Feedback provided from PSIs in this assessment called for more comprehensive frameworks for pathways administration, as well as, learning resources and 'how to' guides to ease administration of pathways initiatives including transfer, dual credit, PLAR and any future pathways initiatives. They also want access to reports, white papers, and other written materials about pathways that can inform pathways policy within their organizations.

Activities for this phase include:

1. Develop learner pathways administration process/ best practices for Dual Credit and PLAR and other pathways initiatives.
2. Redesign the ACAT Website to provide an intuitive interface:
    - Develop/ present new Transfer, PLAR and Dual Credit frameworks and best practices learning resources.
    - Develop/ present a resource library for PSIs.
3. Build Extranet to access new tools.
4. Enhance/ Deploy better communication & collaboration tools.
5. Develop/ Deploy/ Implement a Dual Credit Module with outputs to the Transfer Agreement Catalog.
6. Develop/ Deploy/ Implement a PLAR Module.
7. Deploy Business Intelligence services and develop reporting outputs; with data access to GoA data, and negotiated data from PSIs to provide Pathways metrics, data collection, and information to measure Pathways performance.

LPMI: Phase 3 – LPMI Stakeholder Tools



Phase 4: Learner Pathway Connections - 2017-2018

Phase 4 seeks to connect ACAT stakeholders, GoA and agency stakeholders, and interprovincial stakeholders who deliver services related to Learner Pathways to Alberta students.

This is important work for delivering comprehensive information to students because current 'disconnects' between programs is one of the main reasons students cannot find the information to make informed pathway decisions. Students want to consume pathways information from one well-organized website to increase comprehension and understanding.

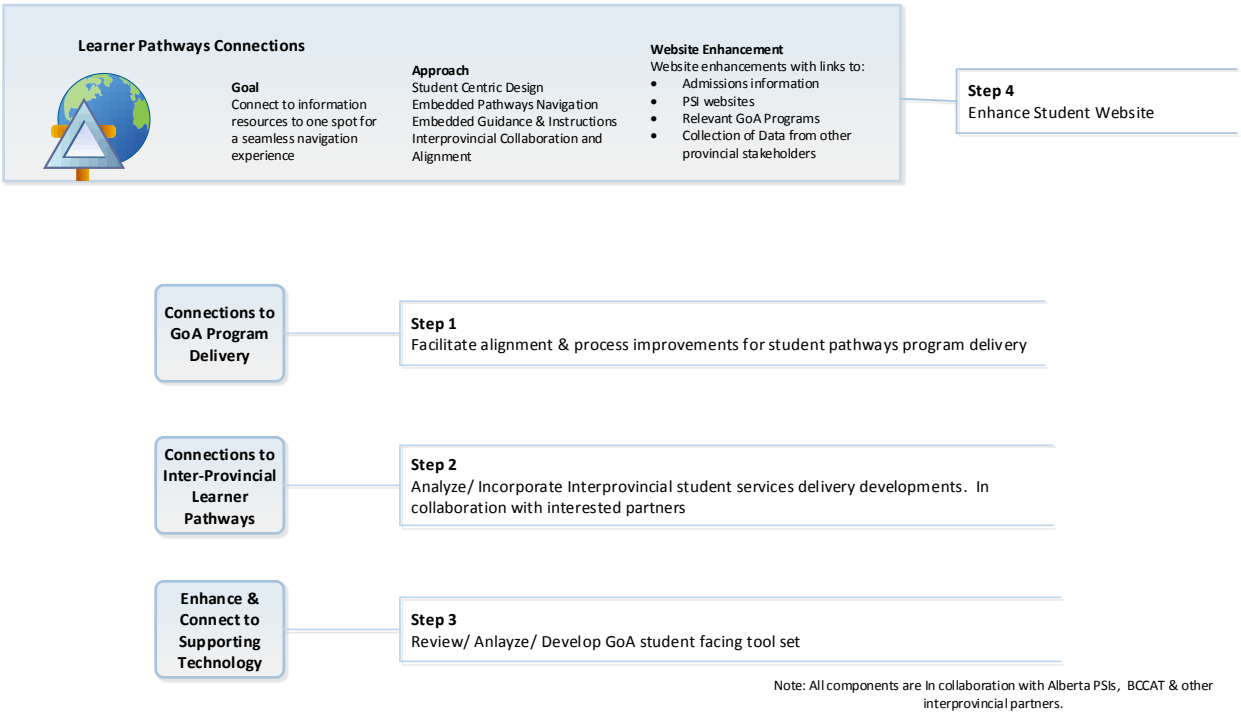
This project will cross organizational boundaries within the GoA, and outside of the GoA and likely the province. Although the project crosses organizational jurisdictions, a technical solution could help to achieve a seamless interface for students, within current organizational structures. If the owners of required data and services are willing to collaborate, students can have a one, seamless source of information to navigate post-secondary pathways.

A solid project governance structure appropriate to this inter-organizational environment will support a successful outcome.

The main goals for this project are to:

1. Identify GoA and Agency pathways linkages, connections among, and collaboration points.
2. Map all data sources that are applicable to learner pathways and understand the technical environment as it is, in order to understand what data and resources could be leveraged from one student interface or portal.
3. Facilitate alignment between contributing organizational areas for coordinated student pathways program delivery.
4. Define coordinated student pathways delivery and develop a process for coordination, updating and continuous improvement of student pathways service delivery.
5. Analyze/Incorporate interprovincial student services delivery developments.
6. Connect and enhance supporting technology to deliver better learner pathways information to students and other stakeholders.

LPMI: Phase 4 – Learner Pathways Connections



Appendix I – LPMI Business Needs Definition: Focus Group Input

The *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative* (LPMI) Business Needs assessment information that follows represents the voice of over 100 ACAT stakeholders, the majority of whom are Alberta Transfer System Members. It also includes post-secondary students, ACAT Council and ACAT partners from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, as well as K – 12 representatives. Approximately eight education system/interprovincial focus groups and thirteen additional sessions/meetings (including an interprovincial meeting hosted by BCCAT) were completed during data gathering for this *LPMI Business Needs Definition Focus Group Data*. This report is intended to be a key Appendix in the larger *LPMI Business Assessment Report*, providing data/evidence that informed the findings for the overall Business Assessment.

Some of the content that follows in this appendix (*LPMI Business Needs Definition Focus Group Data*) is directly quoted, with the majority of the content an edited amalgamation of like-minded points. Although the co-authors are identified in Appendix I, individual authors are not identified and quotes are not attributed to specific individuals because this report/data represents the collective voice of these stakeholders on common questions/points. The data is divided into two sections – Problem-Framing Outputs and SWOT Analysis Outputs.

The issues in the first section – Problem Framing Outputs – are divided into categories including:

1. Governance & Cultural Change
2. Student Expectations & Perceptions
3. Learner Pathways Administration Process

The issues are complex and inter-related. Each issue is articulated with:

- Business Problem: A brief description of the business problem and how the issue manifests itself in learner pathways administration in the post-secondary system.
- Cause: The identified cause(s) of the business problem.
- Business Need: A description of what is needed to address the business problem.

The second section – SWOT Analysis Outputs – provides charts of data regarding key questions/areas of learner pathways and mobility and the system that arose at some of the working group sessions. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) were identified for the following questions/areas:

- Promoting Learner Pathways
- Can we balance student choice and sustainable programming options?
- Alberta's ability to enable pathways for students
- Alberta's support for Pan-Canadian Cooperation for Learner Pathways
- Balance the PSI desire to protect "Turf" with Student's need for mobility
- Collaboration Agreements between Institutions
- Enabling Learner Pathways for unique, innovative, non-traditional programs
- Taking a protectionist position at the PSI level
- Taking a position of open/ collaboration between PSIs.

Problem-Framing Outputs

Governance & Cultural Change

Business Problem:

System Quality Assurance for credentialing is changing and becoming international and Alberta needs to align with these developments to keep up with the rest of the world. [4]

There is a lack of connection between what happens in the province and formal qualification frameworks at the national and international level. Consider where we are with regard to Learning outcomes and the National system of credentialing.

Lack of public awareness of the essential skills and learning outcomes that comprise credentials makes it difficult for post-secondary education to be valued appropriately. The level, depth, and breadth that various credentials provide is not generally understood because what is done locally by institutions in this, and every other province is not seen as a piece of a global system of higher/tertiary education.

For example, fall through courses are courses that are not part of the student's new program and therefore not eligible for transfer credit. However, they are real learning and may provide some overlap with courses from the current program, but the student does not get credit for these courses and so their time to completion with the new program may be extended.

Cause:

Many people, even those intimately involved in the post-secondary education sector, regard a credential or degree as an assembly of credits without being able to articulate the depth and breadth of learning that makes a particular degree similar to all other credentials/degrees at that level, and the small portion of the credential that is specific to a discipline. However, these international criteria endorsed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) must be brought to the fore.

ACAT has a primary role in creating awareness, educating the public and advocating that affirming these standards is crucial to the integrity of post-secondary education in Alberta. Learning outcomes, exemplary transfer credit services, and ultimately reduced frustration for students follows from this.

Business Need:

Educating educators and the public about the necessity for the Alberta Post- Secondary Education (PSE) sector to mesh seamlessly with other jurisdictions to ensure portability of education, labour mobility and employability is an emergent new order need for Albertans to be assured that they can "Stand Tall" wherever they go.

[4] This information has been transposed verbatim.

For this to occur reciprocity is required; receiving and sending of people to and from other education systems needs to demonstrate that all post-secondary institutions in Alberta meet established standards. Without the ability to provide this assurance Alberta's post-secondary sector may fare poorly under close scrutiny.

To achieve economic diversification Alberta needs to create an integrated PSE sector that leads by its example and invites collaboration from other jurisdictions.

Leadership in the post-secondary education sector will serve Albertans by joining up other jurisdictions to create a national system. System level leadership will come from Alberta/ACAT, British Columbia/BCCAT, Ontario/ONCAT, and/or other provinces. Given that Alberta is a net beneficiary of inter-provincial mobility among younger Canadians, Alberta is well-positioned to provide for the necessary leadership nationally, through a consortia model. Universities that try to "go it alone" into international education may be thwarted by the lack of a coherent framework to support their activities.

High-level coordination will require thought and planning as to how to induce the creation of a comprehensive and unified post-secondary education sector. At the same time, work is needed to consolidate the transfer system from the bottom up. Without the vision, the detailed work on course-by-course transfer may not be able to produce the kinds of results that students require..

Business Problem:

Learners' paths are not linear, and students come into, and out of the post-secondary system over a lifetime:

- We need to recognize prior learning
- We need to look at learning outcomes in assessing what they bring to the table.

It is not reasonable to assume that all the requirements for a successful life can be jammed into the first 22 years of their lives.

- Continuous learning is not at the forefront of curriculum development within the secondary and post-secondary system, with the exception of those institutions that have initiated PLAR activities.
- We need to start integrating a philosophy of life-long learning at the secondary and post-secondary level.
- For example, faculty at Athabasca University use portfolio development and gap analysis into course requirements in order to encourage lifelong learning and recognition.

Cause:

Mobility is the cause. Students are mobile to meet learning needs in a socio-economic environment that is characterized by continuous change and a more global context.

Business Need:

The Alberta post-secondary education system needs to recognize that people will come into and out of the post-secondary environment for various reasons and we need to create pathways for them.

Business Problem:

The post-secondary education sector faces a reputational risk that needs to be addressed if advanced education is to retain its role in quality assurance

Non-recognition of real learning is a reputational risk not only for individual post-secondary institutions, but also for advanced education in its entirety. Not all learning will count toward individuals' next educational goals; however, much more of it needs to be drawn into processes of formal recognition in order to affirm that post-secondary education institutions are legitimate arbiters of learning breadth, depth, and level.

Cause:

Resistance to change in the way learners need or want to navigate the post-secondary system to completion.

Business Need:

Transformational leadership is needed to demonstrate that the post-secondary education, institutional stakeholders have a very important role and responsibility in bringing about change. Rather than cede the field to new private for-profit educational providers beyond Alberta's borders, it is desirable to seize the initiative to lead in the modernization of the post-secondary system.

Business Problem:

Institutions / sectors disagree that pathways that enable mobility are good for students or the institutions.

Some institutions feel that by giving credit for prior learning (transfer credits or PLAR) they are losing out on tuition. Institutions want to give their seats, especially for programs with limited seats, to first year students who will be with them through a 3 or 4 year program, rather than to PLAR or transfer candidates.

Students want to maximize transfer credits for prior learning, some institutions want to restrict transfer credits because they feel it dilutes the quality of their 'product', their degree.

Faculty does not trust that courses from outside of their program/ institution are of the same quality as comparable courses in their program.

For many institutions, retention of students to graduation is a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for institutional success, which is a disincentive to enabling pathways into and out of their programs.

Conversely, when an institution is motivated to get students, they give more credit and make it easier for the student to transfer.

The approach is inconsistent and decision-making is flexible depending on the motive of the evaluating institution.

- Some argue that trying to retain students that don't fit well into the program is a disadvantage for the student.
- Others argue that there should be a cost for mobility for the student to prevent frivolous moves.
- Others counter that there is an inherent cost to mobility because the student inevitably loses credits and has to pay more to complete their post-secondary education when they move.

Smaller institutions feel that larger institutions have transfer policies and practices that inhibit transfer from smaller institutions and give the large institutions a competitive advantage over small institutions.

For example, large institutions evaluate instructor's credentials and will not accept transfer credit for a course if the instructor's credentials don't meet their requirements.

Smaller institutions cannot easily meet some of these standards, which they feel are unreasonable and tougher than the requirements of international Universities.

Cause:

Not all institutions have the mission and mandate, personnel, interest or funding to support learner mobility.

Some believe in student retention and do not agree that mobility is good for the student. In addition, some do not trust that other institutions provide equal quality in education, particularly across sectors.

Institutions lack knowledge on research that supports learner pathways; transfer credit and PLAR.

Business Need:

Create a compelling argument in support of Learner Pathways and use it to inform, convince, and address self-interest to create buy in among all institutions/ sectors.

Use data to demonstrate that enabling learner pathways, generally results in increased enrollments overall and increased tuition dollars for the institution.

Support the data with institutional success stories.

Those in support of promoting learner pathways maintain that students can end up in a program that is a better fit for them because they were allowed some fluidity. They were allowed to change direction once they gained some experience in the post-secondary system, and because of this they stand a better

chance of finishing a credential.

Business Problem:

University stakeholders maintain that mobility can hurt undergrads that want to go to graduate school.

- Pathways to graduate school are hindered by:
  - Transfer and mobility
  - Part time study
  - Non-traditional study.

- Entrance to graduate school is partially dependent on references from professors who taught the student in their undergraduate program.

- Students who aspire to go to graduate school need to form relationships with professors to get references.

- Some maintain that students will also miss out on the cultural experience of doing their undergraduate program in one institution when they transfer.

- Others maintain that this is a bigger problem in schools that are enshrined in tradition and adverse to change.

Cause:
Currently the pathway to graduate school is dependent on relationships with faculty from a specific undergraduate program at a specific university.

Business Need:
There is a need to determine whether or not there is a desire to change within CARI/other institutions.

Business Problem:

Institutions are conflicted between the need or desire to compete and the expectation of cooperation for transfer credit agreements.

Institutions want students to complete whole programs because they get more tuition if the student starts and finishes a program at their institution.

Institutions that define themselves as 'feeder' schools expect universities to cooperate with them to develop 'laddering' programs with block transfers for their first/ second year students. They experience frustration when they don't get cooperation, and maintain that 'protectionist policies' decrease competitiveness and results in other institutions getting the 'feeder' students.

At one time, the Colleges and Universities had agreements where a portion of a program could be completed at the College then the remainder of the degree could be completed at the university (ladder programs). Both institutions had strong healthy programs. Cooperation between the university sectors could be seen to have shifted when BASIs were given the full degree granting designation and did not necessarily continue to have CARI universities at student recruitment events on their campuses.

Some stakeholders maintain that the post-secondary funding model motivates educational institutions to focus on getting students instead of quality programming. The goal becomes getting "bums in seats" instead of getting "the right bums in the right seats."

Many institutions use the "bums in seats" as a Key Performance Indictor for their institution's success. However, many stakeholders also believe that Alberta would benefit from moving to an outcome-based approach to course/learning evaluation. Measures should be focused on the quality of instruction and how many students are successfully completing a program and entering the work force.

Cause:

Institutions are competing for tuition fees and maintain that transfer and PLAR reduce tuition that can be earned from that student.

The increased level of complexity that mobility poses in comparison to the older model of "take our courses, complete our programs, get our credential" requires more work without obvious benefits for the institution.

Business Need:

Address the issue of lost tuition dollars due to enabling learner pathways and mobility. Conduct research/answer questions such as: Does enabling mobility result in a net loss of revenue from tuition fees? If you fail to enable learner pathways, will you lose your competitive advantage to those who will? Does the GoA funding model to post-secondary institutions present a disincentive for mobility? If so, how?

Student Expectations & Perceptions

Many students don't know what outcome they want from their post-secondary education when they start post-secondary. This uncertainty often results in plans changing, which can mean moving schools or programs; and when students move, applicable coursework changes, and often credit is lost.

Currently, students who start and end their degree in the same program do not face this issue of losing credit for prior learning, but students that transfer always risk losing credit for prior learning. This is often a surprise for students.

Business Problem:

Students are not prepared for the transition from high school to post-secondary school.

Secondary, post-secondary and industry have a different understanding about what a high school graduate is capable of doing.

High school is highly structured with few choices or responsibility for the student, whereas the post-secondary world is unstructured with many choices, and all responsibilities for path mapping, conferred on the student.

Students don't understand how their choices affect their future pathways. They need to understand that their destination affects their pathway, and when they change direction, not everything they've learned to date will be applicable to the new direction.

- Students need to be educated about their choices before they can be held accountable for their choices
- They need to know about pathways by high school
- We need to put tools in place to help students understand.

Cause:

There is a lack of communication, understanding and coordination between the K-12 and Post-Secondary systems.

High school students receive one class about pathways (CALM program), but that is not enough to help them retain general knowledge about their options and the costs of changing courses/programs.

Business Need:

The secondary and post-secondary systems need to work together to better prepare high school students to understand and map their pathways successfully after high school.

Students need to know about learner pathways starting in high school, and the information needs to be repeated periodically throughout high school to improve retention.

Business Problem:

Students do not always receive adequate pathway information or advice.

Once in the post-secondary system, students can't find the information they want online; so they go to Student Advisors, faculty or their friends for advice, and they don't always get the best advice for their pathway.

In high school, Counsellors and Career Advisors give advice to students, but there is no consistent approach. Advisors are trained in an academic environment and often have an academic bias in their approach to counselling.

Students need to learn that there is a perceived hierarchy among institutions to be considered when navigating the post-secondary system.

Students need to be told about sector differences and transferability.

Who is going to teach students the difference between the types of post-secondary paths and the difference in the credential from each?

Cause:

The Learner Pathways Administration process is complex even though the process is shared and there are overarching guidelines; each institution has their own policies that make pathway transactions different at each school. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the best pathway for the student because:

- Advisors/faculty may not have enough information to give students clear direction
- Online information and tools are not easy to understand or find, and often the information provided is incomplete
- Students many not know about advisors so they ask their friends or parents for advice and may receive incorrect information.

Business Need:

Students need Learner Pathway guidelines, information and tools that are easy to find (centralized) and provide adequate information (complete) and are easy to use (step by step).

The ideal tool for students would have the following characteristics:

- Available online and from various devices
- Provide comprehensive information
- Branch or provide steps to find information relevant to the student and their goals.

Business Problem:

Students do not understand, or agree with the complexity of transfer credit rules between programs and/or institutions.

Students are frustrated when they don't get credit for seemingly overlapping course content from one institution to another.

- Institution to institution
- Between sectors (e.g., Polytechnic to university)
- Program to program
- Etc.

Currently, students are responsible for assembling their credits, pre-requisites, transcripts, etc. to determine their eligibility for learning opportunities, however they do not have easy access to the information or guidelines needed to navigate the rules of transfer.

They don't understand that if they are transferring to a new program, pre-existing credits may not be relevant or eligible for transfer credit.

Sometimes they enroll in a new program before their credits are accepted and are disappointed when the credits are not accepted in the new program.

Unless they seek out a reason, students are not made aware of why they were denied transfer credit.

In addition, students do not realize that downstream pathway restrictions exist for all pathway types, because agreements are between individual institutions or between the student and one institution.

- Transfer Credit – is typically negotiated between two institutions
- Dual Credit – is not broadly recognized across institutions, and can be inconsistently delivered
- PLAR – is negotiated between an individual and an institution.

A student's eligibility for transfer credits to the destination program is often not visible to them, until they apply and request credit transfer. Students want a self-service mechanism so they can "shop" for transfer credit before they commit to a school or a particular program.

Cause:

Criteria used to make decisions can seem arbitrary to students because institutions have their own policies for admission and transfer that are often not made transparent to the student prior to transfer.

An institution's individual mandate differentiates them among education providers and affects the weighting of decision criteria. Multiple factors are considered that affect the application for transfer credit awards to individual student's program of study.

Business Need:

There is a need to make decision-making criteria transparent to students, and to explain why transfer credits were not awarded.

Business Problem:

Students do not understand the difference between block transfer and course-by-course transfer.

Block transfers are negotiated between two institutions for a specific program. Course-by-course articulations are more flexible for students and can be negotiated individually.

Rules for block transfers appear to be inconsistent because students do not understand the specificity of articulation agreements for blocks.

Each post-secondary institution articulates block credit differently, for example:

- At Athabasca University, 60 credits can be given in transfer credit.
    - They scan to ensure core courses are covered and give credit for other courses as electives.
    - The student signs a declaration that they have the pre-requisite and skills for the program, and if they fail, the student takes responsibility for being unprepared.

- At University of Lethbridge, articulated block transfers are program-specific. The student must meet all of the agreement criteria.

- University of Calgary generally does not have 2 + 2 agreements or block transfers.

Students are confused when their credits/credentials don't transfer over because:

- They lack pre-requisites for the new program
- The destination institution determines the transfer course to be worth less than the corresponding internal course
- They did not meet the grade requirement for a transfer course
- A course changes and needs to be reassessed for alignment
- They have too many transfer credits to meet the residency requirement, so they have to leave a credit off.

Cause:

Specific block transfer agreements will have different conditions as specified by the institution. Students are not well informed about the conditions or differences.

Business Need:

Students need all applicable information about transfer requirements and conditions when exploring transfer options suitable to their path.

Business Problem:

Students are frustrated and confused by inconsistent admission requirements between institutions or programs that create unanticipated transfer roadblocks for them.

Admission Requirements can be referenced in agreements, but are outside of the Transfer Agreements process.

Students don't understand that each destination institutions can have different requirements for admission and residency that affect credit transfer.

Often colleges have fewer high school admission requirements than universities; so when students transfer to universities from a college, they might still have to complete a high school requirement to gain admission.

Even in situations where institutions have developed a laddering program, admission requirements can change, catching students and their advisors by surprise and creating delays for the student.

The onus is on the student to understand the admissions requirements of the program for which they intend to register. The problem is they don't know what they don't know and admission road blocks are counter-intuitive to them.

For example, English language proficiency admission requirements are different at each institution, so students must be re-screened when they transfer from one institution to another. E.g., SAIT and NAIT have different English Language Proficiency requirements.

Adding to the options and potential confusion, institutions will provide alternative admission routes for students based on an individual assessment of the student.

Cause

Transfer credit agreements are evaluated independent of admission requirements.

Admission requirements can be found using webpages, advisors, recruitment networks, handouts, admission packages; the information is not bundled with, or linked to transfer agreements.

Students assume that they will find all the information they need to make an informed decision about transfer and other pathways in one place. They also expect institutions to have similar admission rules.

Business Need:

If admissions requirements will vary between institutions, sectors and programs, students need easy access to admission requirements and transfer information to navigate pathways with clarity.

Business Problem:

Students have limited opportunity to make an informed transfer decision before enrolling in a new program.

There is no mechanism or tool to help students understand what they will have left to do at the destination institution, when they are trying to make a transfer decision.

- This is especially true for program transfers, where equivalencies have to be assessed on a course-by-course basis.
- Often the transfer equivalency cannot be completed until after the student has been admitted to the new program/ institution.
- Sometime students pay for an assessment that is completed after they have been admitted into a new program, and they may not get as much transfer credit as they had hoped for.

When students want to transfer from one post-secondary institution to another, they often cannot know what current credits will transfer to the new program until they have registered in the new program. This limits their ability to make a fully informed decision ahead of time.

There are very few university-to-university transfer agreements available in Transfer Alberta. In addition, course-by-course transfer credits are often assessed and awarded outside of the TAARS/Transfer Alberta system for one student at a time. They are not formalized and stored in the Transfer Alberta database.

Students have to request the transfer credit assessment from the destination institution for an accurate assessment. This is a very time-consuming process (months) and the student may want an answer in a day or at least a week in order to make a timely decision, particularly when they are considering more than one destination institution.

In addition, time lags in getting grades to the new institution often results in the student enrolling without knowing if they are going to get credit for a course from their previous institution.

Students have few self-serve options and little access to data to look for options that recognize current credit or prior learning, and they often cannot get consistent advice in a timely manner.

Cause:

There is a limited amount of information in the Transfer Alberta system:

- Pending or Rejected transfer agreements are not available to Student Advisors or Students.
- Transfer agreements in the Transfer System can be outdated.
- Many agreements are not recorded in TAARS.
- Transfer Alberta does not show admission requirements for the courses/programs with transfer agreements.

APAS – There is a perception that ApplyAlberta waits for fall grades and then sends them to the institutions in January; this lag requires that the student gets their transcript to the new institution themselves.

(Additional Information for Reference: Both students and institutions have the ability to request that transcripts be delivered at any time using the ApplyAlberta system. However, courses must be completed and grades posted/credit awarded before transfer credit can be assessed.)

Business Need:

More courses/ programs need to be articulated, recorded and kept up to date in the ACAT Transfer Alberta system; and the status of all transfer agreements needs to be visible to stakeholders, including Pending and Rejected agreements.

Ideally, admission requirements would be presented with transfer information. The student at least must be reminded to seek out admission requirements.

The system needs to be informative, transparent and truthful to students so their expectations are in line with reality. They need to know what their options are with ease.

Learner Pathways Administration Process

Process Implementation

Business Problem:

The depth of knowledge, as well as the interpretation and application of ACAT guidelines for transfer varies among Post-secondary Education Institutions.

Pathways administration processes are inconsistent between institutions, and some do it better than others. Process and tools to support mobility are underdeveloped making administration burdensome.

In addition, stakeholders do not know each other's business rules and therefore are surprised by decisions they did not expect.

Post-secondary Institutions define learner pathways and interpret the ACAT guidelines for transfer differently to a degree that the variation causes confusion and seems to hinder pathways. For example, inconsistent terminology between institutions causes confusion for all stakeholders.

Institutional stakeholders are frustrated with the burden mobility currently places on them. They want more definition and standardization for transfer and for other pathways

Cause:

The *Transfer Best Practices* document is not broadly used because it is not known or easily accessible/usable. Supports for other pathways are also not clearly available.

Funding for institutions to implement and maintain focus for mobility administration is inadequate, so it is under-resourced and as a result institutional knowledge and administration procedures are inconsistent and underdeveloped.

Business Need:

Learner Pathways programs, including Transfer Credit, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), and Dual Credit policies and practices require additional alignment with a clear understanding of how these can work within and between sectors.

Administration of learner pathways programs requires concise explanations, periodic review and documentation to support administrators, learners and advisors.

Institutions need resources to support clearly defined expectations for learner pathways administration.

Suggestions included:

- More standardization in the transfer process and for other pathways (flexible but clear standards)
- Better tools
- Better knowledge transfer
- More funding
- Clearly defined reason to support mobility administration
- Clearly defined performance expectations
- *"Instruments such as MOUs, articulation committees, consortia, and financial incentives can help align practices."*

Business Problem:

Evaluation frameworks used to determine transfer credit are inconsistent between institutions and across sectors.

There are two main issues:
1. There are inconsistencies in the amount and type of information provided to establish equivalencies`.

Many who are responsible for evaluating transfer credits feel there is not enough information available to evaluate the quality of the course/ block/ program to determine its eligibility for transfer credit.

Often, when evaluators cannot see enough information about the course that demonstrates equivalency, they err on the side of caution and either deny transfer credit, grant unspecified credits in the system, which cannot be used for anyone else, or provide credit to individual students outside of the system.

Current evaluation criteria are based on course/program inputs not learning outcomes. The current transfer system is one-dimensional with its emphasis on course outlines, but the assessment process is really multi-dimensional with many dependencies and considerations:

- Course-by-course transfer
- Block credit transfer
- Matrices of learning outcomes based on Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) guidelines
- Capstone courses or other exit level demonstrations of program learning outcomes
- Residency requirements
- Program regulations
- Campus Alberta Quality Council requirements
- Challenge Evaluations
- PLAR
- Dual Credit
- Foreign Qualification Recognition
- Etc.

2. Cross-sector evaluation lacks an agreed upon framework for transfer credit evaluation.

   Typically, there are sector differences in course inputs that are treated as legitimate reasons to deny transfer credit.

   University stakeholders maintain that there can be differences in the quality of courses taught in colleges versus universities.

   CARI to CARI transfers are typically accepted at face value, but they are often not housed in the ACAT Transfer Alberta system. The problem is with transfers involving institutions from different sectors.

   Some college stakeholders challenge the notion that students who come from a college will be less prepared for success at university. They maintain that there is evidence to the contrary.

Sometimes, a course can be vetted, and a transfer agreement can be established, but the problem with the vetting is that specific criteria can change.

Transfer credit course evaluation criteria called into question and/or to be considered includes:

- Course Name/number
- Course outline differences (e.g. knowledge-based components versus practical components)
- Text books used
- Hours of instruction
- Pre-requisites
- Instructor qualifications
- Instructors grading practices (scale, the implication being that non-university institutions give higher grades than the university would)
- Learning outcomes (for some).

Cause

Faculty are reluctant to grant transfer credit without adequate information to determine equivalency based on course inputs and quality, and this is especially true if the transfer is across sectors.

Business Need

The system needs more alignment across post-secondary institutions with an agreed upon evaluation framework for transfer and for other pathways with standardized criteria for each that take into consideration sector, program, and course(s) when determining equivalencies for transfer.

Business Problem:

Transfer credit evaluation criteria limits cross-sector pathways for students from First Nations Colleges/ Indigenous institutions because they have a different approach to education.

The credentials of First Nations Eminent Scholars are not recognized by most colleges and universities in Alberta.

The group was aware of one mainstream college that is willing to be more flexible by applying a competency-based model to evaluate outcomes and provide credit for courses taught by First Nations Eminent Scholars.

Cause:

Innovative or different approaches to learning do not conform to traditional evaluation criteria and the system does not accommodate differences well.

Business Need:

Seek avenues to investigate the feasibility of transfer credit for learning from institutions with different approaches to post-secondary education.

Business Problem:

For most institutions, transfer credit evaluation is heavily dependent on comparing detailed course outline information; unfortunately outlines can be difficult to obtain and the content varies between institutions.

Course outlines have different information elements for different institutions, so it is not easy to draw comparisons from outlines.

Information published in course catalogs is easy to obtain, but only current outlines are published.

Older outlines may be difficult to maintain because the ACAT Transfer Alberta system does not have access to a database of older course outlines and for outlines that are in the system there is limited access to users at institutions.

In addition, some instructors are reluctant to provide their course outlines because they are considered the intellectual property of the instructors. Ostensibly, program plagiarism has occurred to substantiate this stance.

Cause:

Course outline Information, needed by most institutions to evaluate course equivalencies, is not always available.

Business Need:

Institutions need access to course outline information from current and past course outlines.

Business Problem:

Faculty members control transfer agreements, but many disagree with the principle of student mobility, which hinders the development of a standardized approach to pathway administration.

This is perceived to be a system-wide problem:

- Articulation Committees experience political resistance
- Faculty see transfer agreements as a burden with little value for them
- Faculty is not convinced that mobility is good for students.

Faculty members are the ones evaluating a student's prior learning for transfer credits, and they are not always clear about, or using ACAT best practices.

Current best practices for formal transfer credit articulation are cumbersome and time consuming, especially because there is not enough information provided with the request. Faculty do not have time to get the information they need to satisfy themselves that the transfer credits are eligible for a formal transfer agreement, so they make decisions based on their best effort for an individual student.

These agreements are informal and not recorded and the lack of visibility and transparency allows for indefensible evaluation practices to go unnoticed and unchallenged.

This is especially true where there is little motivation to formalize transfer agreements.

The current efforts regarding standardization provided by the ACAT Transfer Alberta system, with its existing guidelines, help because there is some visibility into what others are doing to enable student mobility.

Better guidelines and more information would help even more. If more agreements (including those under development and in separate institutional databases) were visible centrally it would help.

Cause:

Faculty are not convinced that student mobility can have benefits for students and institutions, and they are the key stakeholder in enabling learner pathways within the post-secondary education system.

Business Need:

Faculty needs evidence and supports regarding the benefits of responsible student mobility for the learner pathways administration processes to improve. Without their buy in, it will be difficult to gain substantial improvements.

Business Problem:

The Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process is underdeveloped, and the lack of a repeatable procedure makes PLAR evaluations time consuming.

PLAR assessments are quite complex by their nature, and the lack of clear policy and procedural guidance makes assessments labor intensive and time consuming.

PLAR is designed to help people bridge entry requirements for post-secondary programs. This challenges the idea that people can't be successful in a post-secondary program without a high school diploma.

- Some new Canadians must take high school credits to gain entry into post-secondary programs.
- Some post-secondary institutions have bridging programs to help individuals get recognition for the skills and knowledge they bring to the table.
- PLAR is a gap analysis tool to help students that come to post-secondary from a non-conventional path, recognizing non-formal and informal learning. It helps them to identify what programs they are best qualified for, so they can make better decisions.

Students expect:

- To get recognition for prior learning as seamlessly as possible.
- To get transfer credit for PLAR credit received at an institution from future institutions.

A cooperative and comprehensive approach to PLAR may be difficult to achieve, because PLAR agreements are between the institution and the student for a specific program.

In British Columbia, a province regarded as ahead of the other provinces for enabling transfer/mobility, PLAR agreements are not transferable. They are between one institution for a specific program and one student. Manitoba operates much the same way.

Many institutional stakeholders do not believe it can be any other way, and this is a big problem because students are not going to accept this in the long run. Students want flexibility, which requires more seamless transfer.

"We can focus on protectionism, or we can focus on Students' needs."

Cause:

The PLAR initiative lacks adequate guidelines and procedure to structure and streamline the assessment process.

Institutions lack resources to execute evaluations quickly, and they are added to people's regular workload.

The lack of a well-defined procedure with a good efficient workflow means that administrators create their own, non-transferrable, non-repeatable procedure when required.

Business Need:

Even though PLAR will always be individualized to align with what skills and knowledge the student brings to the institution, and what program they seek to complete, this group wants an Alberta –wide set of guidelines and procedures to help institutions undertake assessments more efficiently (reduce time, reduce lag time) and in the interests of student participation in post-secondary and success.

Business Problem:

PLAR agreements are not transferred between most post-secondary institutions.

The approach to PLAR implementation by institutions is individuated and disjointed. The agreement is between an individual and a specific institution.

The PLAR process is also unique to the institution and is often labour intensive and time consuming with delays caused by waiting for support documents from attesters and other sources.

Alberta rolled out PLAR as an Action Plan (2008), which implied that each institution was free to develop its own PLAR process and operational policies. However, post-secondary institutions cannot ensure seamless mobility in the system without a shared approach to and/or standardized criteria for PLAR.

The government did provide a way to develop a best practice approach to PLAR, which some institutions successfully adopted.

For example, SAIT has updated policies to align with the work the PLAR Stakeholder Committee did a few years ago. Their policies now mirror the Alberta government PLAR webpage. It took years of advocating, however, notably given a pull back in government support for implementation of the PLAR Action Plan. The new procedures and PLAR policy were officially passed at SAIT last April 2014.

Cause:

Post-Secondary Institutions lack a shared approach and/or standardized criteria and tools to negotiate PLAR agreements.

Business Need:

All institutions must respect each other's approach to PLAR, so it is critical to work together in order to ensure PLAR is accepted across the system by all post-secondary institutions in the ACAT Transfer Alberta system.

In addition, stakeholders would like these PLAR records/reporting/data housed in a centralized ACAT system like Transfer Alberta to gain visibility into common practices and the previous agreements of students with whom they are working.

Business Problem:

Dual credit lacks a shared, consistent process in Alberta, which results in misalignment with potential loss of transfer credit for students downstream.

Dual credit is a relatively new and important high school to post-secondary pathway that needs to be integrated in the ACAT Transfer Alberta system. There is a lack of shared process between educational institutions.

The intent of Dual Credit is for it to be recognized at the post-secondary institution/organization that holds the Dual Credit course/program and recognized for high school credit. The intent is also to see the post-secondary credit received at the host institution be acknowledged at any institution/organization with which it has a transfer agreement for that course/program.

The way a Dual Credit course is delivered affects how the credit is reflected on a student's transcript. The way it is recorded on the student's transcript affects whether or not the credit will be recognized by other post-secondary institutions/organizations outside of the specific Dual Credit host institution/organization relationship.

Dual Credit programs serve different sector pathways: academic, trades, applied/business. Evaluation criteria will be different for different pathways.

Dual Credit agreements can be more pervasive in rural areas. Rural students are more likely to transfer to finish their degrees at urban colleges and universities.

Consequences of the undeveloped process and lack of system supports include:

- Lack of visibility - If Lakeland College has a Dual Credit agreement with a high school; Grande Prairie College can't see it.
- Outside of provincial/credentialed pathways, each Dual Credit agreement is generally a one-off agreement.
- The Dual Credit process is inconsistent, and lacks guidelines, including regarding curriculum alignment and reporting, dual credit administration, and duty of care.
- Funding - When a student earns a dual credit from the high school, the school board gets funding for the credit earned. The school pays the college from the funding they get for a dual credit. Sustainable mechanisms and processes for funding are needed.
- The Dual Credit is recorded by the high school, or the college, or both. Where and how it is recorded can affect transferability at a later date.
    - The student may get a high school grade and a post-secondary credit.
    - If the student gets a post-secondary credit, the credit could be transferrable if there is a transfer agreement in place for that course.
    - Dual Credit students should always get two transcripts: one from the High School and one from the Post-secondary institution.

Cause:

Dual Credit was rolled out without enough support to ensure successful transitions for high school students in the post-secondary educational environment.

K-12 stakeholders do not understand the rules for transfer credits in the post-secondary environment, and this lack of knowledge has resulted in creating Dual Credit programs that are not always recognized by other institutions in the post-secondary sector.

Business Need:

Dual Credit needs a consistent process that includes consideration of all stakeholders, supported with a system wide database. It needs:

- Consistent funding and processes to simplify administration
- Roles between sectors
- Business rules that consider downstream pathways.
- Process support.

Business Problem:

Institutions need more support to build and maintain transfer and mobility administration processes.

Many institutions lack tools and use spreadsheets to document and track individual transfer credit agreements.

The information needed to negotiate agreements, such as course outlines, are often difficult to find and assess, so transfer credits are often determined for one individual as a one-time agreement.

Faculty have difficulty evaluating transfer credits efficiently because they do not have time to learn to use the ACAT *Transfer Best Practices* guide and system supports/tools.

Cause:

Institutions have resource constraints, so without implementation support, programs are given a low priority.

- Process is arduous & transfer program is underfunded
- Lack of time to establish/administer agreements
- Lack of funding for effective administration
- Not a priority – institutions that are lagging do not always see 'what is in it for them'.

Business Need:

Institutions need a shared understanding of how programs like transfer are intended to be rolled out. They need:

- Easy-to-use guidelines to understand how transfer could be rolled out in their institution and how they are intended to work with other institutions.

- Tools and resources to ensure successful rollout in their resource and funding constrained institutions
    - E.g. standardize evaluation criteria for transfer by program type; allow uploading of transfer credit decisions from institution databases.

Institutions need rollout information/ tools that support implementation. They need the "how to" in addition to the "what" to roll out.

Business Problem:

The transfer credit process is arduous and consultative.

Transfer credit was designed based on the evaluation of paper syllabi and on a course-by-course basis. Transfer credit is still assigned on a course-by-course basis by faculty who may or may not be acquainted with the transfer credit administration procedures.

In the current transfer system, there is no easy way to transfer block credits, though there are some block agreements in the system.

Articulation Committees are working to define core curriculum requirements that could help define transferable blocks between institutions, but this is going to take time.

Block transfers work best for well-defined programs that are fairly common between institutions.

Block transfers tend to devolve into a course-by-course assessment, which is very time consuming in a resource-constrained environment.

Cause:

The system grew up in the era of paper transcripts and stamps, whereas today the learning environment is more dynamic because of technology, with many more recognized educational providers and a coordination function that has yet to become multilateral.

Business Need:

Leaner pathways administration processes need to be more standardized, easy to learn and enabled with tools that are easy to use, flexible, and take the user down a decision-making path.

Business Problem:

TAARS is outdated, contains some inaccurate and incomplete information, and does not support newer pathway programs, including:

- Transfer Agreement reciprocity
- Admissions information

- PLAR
- Dual Credit.

TAARS structure doesn't support new pathways and the outdated technology makes it time consuming to use it for transfer agreements.

TAARS was designed at a time when the transfer culture was hierarchical. It was assumed that Colleges would be transferring credit to Universities or Polytechnics, not the other way around or in other configurations.

The system was designed to support an implied hierarchy that defined institutions as 'sending' students or 'receiving' students.

- This did not support reciprocity.
- If you want to reciprocate in the current system, you have to enter all of the information again from a 'sending' institution role.

Many institutions have built, or acquired their own Transfer Credit Evaluation Systems (TCES) because ACAT took too long to build a new one. So now we have data in different, disparate systems; this data needs a mechanism to make it centrally available without needing to re-enter the data or repeat evaluation process.

There is a lot of willingness between institutions to cooperate and enable learner pathways and this could be encouraged and facilitated with a system that better supports agreement administration and decision making.

"We need to create a system for the future not today...considering secondary and post-secondary...planning for students' education of the future is a passport of flexible credits and pathways."

"Students don't sit in a classroom taking notes anymore. They do different things to affect learning."

Cause:

Alberta system TAARS is 15 years old and no longer supports the process, which has grown and evolved. TAARS design is limited and outdated.

- Business process has changed
- The system does not adequately support the business process
- Business process will continue to change as learner pathways continue to evolve.

Business Need:

The ACAT System requires new, flexible technology supports that include better administration tools and more comprehensive information for all pathways.

Business Problem:

Unspecified credits assigned to individual students are used as a short cut or system work around.

Unspecified transfer credits that are negotiated for one student are subjective and cannot be used for another student's assessment.

Some institutions assign unspecified credit to a course articulation in the ACAT System, but when the student goes to the institution, they receive specified credit for a specific course number.

Unspecified credits are thought to be used for the following reasons:

- It's the "easiest way" to get an agreement in to ACAT without having to do the full assessment of the course.
- When there isn't enough data to make specific connection between courses for a transfer agreement
- To shortcut the time consuming articulation process when faculty want to give transfer credit to a student.
- When faculty does not feel comfortable assigning full credit to another institution's course but they do want to give some credit.

Cause:

Decision makers lack information they require to make a definitive, committed decision about transfer credit for a course from another institution and they do not have time to follow up with time consuming communications.

The ACAT Transfer Alberta system allows for unspecified credit.

Business Need:

Decision-makers need more information in the ACAT Transfer Alberta system to make and commit to an articulation decision under their current policies/practices.

Business Problem:

Course numbers cause confusion for faculty and administrators in determining transferability.

Cause:

Inconsistent number schemes between institutions leads to confusion about course levels and delays in mapping courses between institutions.

Business Need:

Establish a code for course numbers in a new technology solution that identifies course level and is independent of the institution's course number

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Business Problem:

Not all institutional stakeholders have access to TAARS or know how to use the data that is available.

Student Advisors don't have access to the course outline data currently captured in the transfer system, and that would help them to provide advice to students.

Student Advisors and Contact Persons need to be able to see course names in the system to shop for transfer credit agreements.

Cause:

Over the years, new ACAT stakeholders in different roles have evolved in the process, but were not recognized or considered for access to TAARS.

Business Need:

Implement an ACAT System stakeholder role review to provide access to readily available data right now. Provide access to those who would benefit, like Student Advisors and Faculty, and provide instructions for use.

Business Problem:

It is difficult to effectively help a student map a pathway when there is little visibility into what courses/programs have transfer agreements or are eligible for transfer.

Not all universities show what they will accept from other institutions. One can't see what degrees are eligible for block transfers to a specific university.

Cause:

Transfer Alberta data currently does not provide a comprehensive view of all transfer agreements in place and transfer agreements that have been denied.

Business Need:

Stakeholders want a more comprehensive ACAT Transfer Alberta system that shows:

- Why a course is not transferrable
- What has been evaluated and deemed not transferrable
- What hasn't been evaluated
- Date the course curriculum changed
- More detailed historical records in Transfer Alberta in order to research older courses.

Business Problem:

Government departments that administer programs that support Learner Pathways in Alberta are rolled out separately, which results in disconnected communications and processes that cause confusion for students and institutional stakeholders.

Institutions are responsible for knowing about pathways, but structures, processes and communication tools are disparate.

All of the GoA (and related councils/agencies) websites and tools exist independent of communication with one another, which makes it difficult to ensure information is adequately disseminated, updated, accurate and connected.

Cause:

The larger learning support system lacks coordination. Learner Pathways programs and supports are created by different groups and rolled out independent of one another.

Business Need:

Institutions must drive their own modernization, and ACAT could provide a vehicle to support inter-organizational communication and coordination to support access to learner pathways supports, tools, and information from a student perspective.

Process Sustainability

Business Problem:

Lower participation in ACAT's Transfer Alberta (TAARS) results in a lower volume of agreements, making Transfer Alberta incomplete with outdated records.

Given evolving technology and process issues with TAARS, many institutions' transfer agreements are negotiated and stored outside of the ACAT Transfer Alberta system. Agreements outside of Transfer Alberta are confusing for students, and other stakeholders, and their limitations need to be clearly defined for the student.

Memorandums of understanding started with out-of-province institutions and then began to be used between Alberta Institutions outside of the ACAT Transfer Alberta system and guidelines.

- Some institutions do not take the time to formally assess transfer credits for schools that do not supply a large number of students (e.g. Urban BASI for Northern Community Colleges).
- Some institutions don't put their transfer information into the ACAT Transfer Alberta database to keep them private.
- No one appears directly accountable for updating TAARS or taking out obsolete courses.
    - Links to PAPRS might present an opportunity to automate updates since course changes must be updated there.
    - Contact Persons are in this role and might be leveraged to do this work if given time/resources to do so.

Cause:

Institutions are not fully committed to the ACAT Transfer Alberta system. Not all institutional leaders are onside with what ACAT is trying to achieve. ACAT needs to build relationships with strategic level leaders in post-secondary institutions to build commitment and trust in the value of enabling learner pathways.

Business Need:

More courses need to be articulated in the system to make the system work. The process for transfer credit evaluation must be able to be duplicated, with consistent data sets and processes between institutions and programs.

The ACAT system needs some marketing and promotion to educate institutions about pathways, support and the benefits of keeping information in a centralized system.

Business Problem:

There are impediments to reciprocity and triangulation that prevent quicker assessment.

Triangulation = 2 institutions agree that a course is mutually transferable; one of the two also has an agreement for the same course with a 3rd institution. So, theoretically, 1 and 3 should also agree to transfer the relevant course credits between their institutions.

Impediments to triangulation and reciprocity include:

- Perceived "higher" sector institutions scrutinize courses from perceived "lower" sector institutions onerously because they want to ensure that the quality of the course delivery is equivalent to their own.
    - E.g., Instructor qualifications are typically the one of the evaluation quality elements that is doubted, particularly between sectors.
- Some institutions systematically devalue coursework completed at other institutions, which results in duplication of course work for students and unnecessary increased time to completion.
- Lack of currency in the system – courses that have changed or are obsolete are still in the system so data is not trusted.
- Lack of consistency in evaluation criteria used by each institution – so each one feels they need to evaluate for transferability themselves.

Reasons for disagreement between institutions about transfer credit and reciprocity are not made public. Transfer Alberta only shows what agreements exist, not what is pending, in review, or denied.

Decisions are up to institutions, so the student transfer information can be "held hostage" when it is sent to a "receiving" institution for consideration, and the decision takes a long time. There should be a way to obtain an assessment within a specific timeframe.

Cause:

Evaluation for eligible transfer credits in a reciprocal situation is not automatic because "receiving" institutions do not trust that the quality requirements for course delivery were met and, therefore, they must assess it for themselves. Lack of information makes assessment labor intensive, including:

- Lack of currency for agreements in the system
- Inconsistent evaluation criteria
- Lack of agreed upon key evaluation criteria
- Not enough information with which to make a decision.

Business Need:

Institutional stakeholders need to have their information needs met to facilitate assessment and generate quicker articulation decisions. Recording the reason for acceptance and rejection of transfer agreements in the system would promote understanding between institutions about their transfer

requirements.

In addition, the Sending/Receiving Model is flawed. A multilateral model that all institutions, including universities, can opt into or out of would be preferable.

Business Problem:

Change management for approved transfer agreements is inconsistent and may or may not get done even though ACAT has published change management procedures in the *Transfer Best Practices*.

This poses problems for small institutions who have already negotiated agreements and would like to ensure those agreements remain in place and without interruption.

If you make a change to a course in TAARS, it gets flagged and each institution with an agreement involving that course gets flagged so they can review the change and determine whether or not it constitutes a substantial change (therefore must be re-evaluated) or a non-substantial change and therefore leaves the agreement intact.

When a course is flagged even for small changes, like the name of the course or textbook, the affected agreements are suspended until the changes are reviewed and the agreement is revalidated.

Re-evaluation does not happen consistently, and participants do not clearly know what the guidelines are for:

- Reporting changes
- Timelines for re-evaluation
- Determining substantial versus non-substantial change.

Cause:

Stakeholders do not all have dedicated resources (e.g., Contact Persons) to manage Learner Pathways administration. Learner Pathways administration is often conducted as a periodic, side task, by end users who often hold the role temporarily as a Contact Person.

Business Need:

Stakeholders need to know what the best practices are and have the resources and willingness, knowledge and human power to undertake effective change management.

A new, simpler system with context-sensitive, best-practices information made available to the user as they are undertaking tasks would better support stakeholders who are transitory users of the system.

Business Problem:

The ACAT system lacks data to measure Learner Pathways performance and inform improvements to administration processes.

There are no Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) or metrics to measure the success of the transfer administration process for the different learner pathways.

There is a lack of data and information for ACAT to measure success criteria, the scale of problems and other performance indicators to demonstrate need in the system.

Without data and research, it is difficult to convince those who doubt the benefits of allowing for student mobility.

Cause:

TAARS lacks comprehensive data, ACAT/the province does not currently collect transfer data, and ACAT/the province has not actively sought access to existing GoA data sources that could provide metrics and other business intelligence.

Business Need:

Identify KPI's that effectively measure learner pathways activity, successful outcomes, etc. Seek out and collect data sources to obtain data and develop reports.

Leverage existing research and reports from other provinces, nationally and internationally and share these with ACAT system stakeholders regularly.

SWOT Analysis Outputs

The following outputs offer up the opinions stakeholders from several of the eight working group sessions. The opinions, values and assumptions shared here can be used by ACAT to move the LPMI improvement projects forward. They may prove valuable for informing organizational development activities over the course of the LPMI.

Topic: Promoting Learner Pathways – PSI perspective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Block agreements work well • Transfer guide is a good tool • Course pre-requisites can set the student up for success • Advisors/ Recruiters/ Professional Regulatory Organization are a good source of information about what students and industry need • Admission Requirements protect the PSI's integrity	**Weaknesses** • The current process/ tools create too much work for staff, faculty and chairs • There is little funding for pathways administration • Turnover is difficult because succession for this specialized and underfunded work is not a priority • Niche pathways and individual assessment are very time consuming, so even though they might be 2% of the total transfer volume they take up 80% of administration and decision-making time • There is no automation to speed up the agreement process • Customized/ individual assessments cannot be automated because decisions do not apply to anyone else (judgment call)
Opportunities • Gain a deeper understanding of the student's end goal to provide the best pathway advice, especially with students who do not know what their options are. • Create a more focused approach to advising students to prevent swirl, promote completion, and minimize overhead. • Establish pathway options for any student, no matter where they start or where they want to go. (eliminate dead-ends) • Ask the student what they want to get out of their program before giving them pathway advice. • Establish more partnerships/ agreements between institutions	**Threats** • The lack of student retention to graduation impacts institutions funding, so enabling pathways brushes up against the institutions policy to retain students. • Employment opportunities change and pathway need to needs to react quicker to accommodate the learners need to learn and work, and to provide programming relevant to industry, where applicable. • We have inaccurate information or a lack of research and information to understand learner pathway needs • We make policy/ decision based on a short-term view and do not consider long-term societal needs.

Topic: Promoting Learner Pathways – Students perspective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Higher probability of achieving a credential • Flexible in choosing their educational experience • Allows shopping • Allows for multiple entry/ exit/ reentry points • Allows for sampling to find a good fit • Saves time • Provides options	**Weaknesses** • Time consuming and complicated (a lot of hoops to jump through) • Too many options can lead to confusion • Some students 'swirl' because they lack a clear direction • For 'swirl' students they are less likely to get a credential • Can lead to dissatisfaction if their needs are not met
Opportunities • Decrease time to completion	**Threats** • Unrealistic expectations • Waste time and money • Lose interest • Lose transfer credits if they lose currency before completion of credential • Generic credential lacks branding and therefore lacks credibility

Topic: Can we balance student choice and sustainable programming options? From the PSI Perspective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • We already have a lot of options for students	**Weaknesses** • Resources can't sustain the learner pathway workload • There is no agreed upon way to measure course/ programming quality • More choice is not necessarily better
Opportunities • Prioritize what you can offer well at the system and institutional level • Consider cost/ benefit for programming • Put change management practices in place to ensure resources are focusing on currently relevant pathways • Find quality measures that the whole system can agree on • Provide financial incentives for developing learner pathway administration processes and manage expectations.	**Threats** • Unrealistic student expectations

Topic: Can we balance student choice and sustainable programming options? Student Perspective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Limit choices for sustainable pathways • Focus choices to help students make informed decisions that consider their end goal	**Weaknesses** • Potentially less choices for students • Communication needs are complex because the programs/ processes are complex • High school to post-secondary transition is often ignored • There is no common language between high school and post-secondary.
Opportunities • Goal-oriented advice and pathways • Provide clarity for students on choice/ options • Provide better communications to students • Clearly define pathways from high school to post-secondary school to help reduce swirl E.g. Concept changes pass/ fail	**Threats** • Students drop out because it is too hard to get through • No funding • Students leave the province

Topic: Alberta's ability to enable pathways for students Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Pathways produce high transition into post-secondary school because flexibility allows students to explore options before they make up their minds on a destination program. • Increased post-secondary completion. • Makes education more cost effective, when students can transfer credits to a new desired program. • ACAT • Comprehensive post-secondary education system – soup to nuts • Excellent PSI research • Great capacity for growth and development • A fair number of block transfer agreements have already been articulated and are in the system.	**Weaknesses** • Takes too long to complete agreements • Current lack of process and misaligned systems increase complexity and time to completion for agreements, • …and increases the likelihood of inconsistency and decisions that are indefensible • Technology is obsolete • There are many gaps in the data • Lack of communication/ understanding of how pathways are intended to work, especially across sectors • Lack of direct or easy access to the right data to execute agreements • Disparate governance structure creates roadblocks that make the pace of change slow • Institutional mind sets that are internally focused instead of student focused fail to meet student needs • Credentials are becoming misaligned with industry needs • Institutions are not recognizing some big societal changes and therefore are not responding to remain relevant
Opportunities • CATs can provide a Pan Canadian view of learner pathways • Leverage political will with current support • Senior level managers in institutions are mandating support to develop pathways • Leverage the *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative* and Ministerial review of ACAT to gain support, funding and structural change to make the overall organization more effect • We have the opportunity to make changes to	**Threats** • Thinking too small when there is a Pan-Canadian & even international view for learner pathways • Failing to think out of the box • Institutions that feel threatened are uncooperative and could bog down project success • Lack of buy in • Industry interests students, trains them and then pays them • Private institutions will step into the space of the public post-secondary schools to meet demand

remain relevant, address demands and keep our space. • E.g. Lethbridge College unbundling curriculum to the outcome level – learners can package learning outcomes based on their needs. • Deliver learning outcomes instead of/in addition to credentials. • Change mindsets and ask if we are delivering credentials or learning. • Working together will promote better process improvements • Staying in touch with industry will offer the opportunity to deliver learning and skills relevant to industry	• Transfer credits may become obsolete in the future because credentials are changing and becoming obsolete and replaced with open systems/ open education. • Government interest and funding could be fleeting (political agenda, economy reactive)

Topic: Alberta's support for Pan-Canadian Cooperation for Learner Pathways Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • More choice for students nationally and internationally (they do come back) • Ability to develop a system that is second to none in the country • Generation of government to government transfer dollars from institutions sending students to Alberta • CATs/PCCAT are working toward agreement in principle on commonality in transcripts for all sectors across Canada • CATs can broker agreements with their own institutions	**Weaknesses** • Differences across systems • In urban areas, there are not enough seats or not enough instructors to meet the demand for some programs • Alberta has a shortage of seats overall • Education is a provincial jurisdiction • Funding is limited • Students might have too much choice if they don't have the right tools to navigate choices.
Opportunities • International students bring money into the Alberta system • Partnerships with other colleges to provide more choices (e.g. Arizona online & SAIT) • Leverage NAFSA and other supporting organizations to see what is going on internationally (NISTS, PCCAT) • Learn from Europe's pan European system that incorporates outcomes based learning systems, and a common transcript. • Send Alberta students to other provinces, when Alberta seats are full • Keep the student in mind and ensure that systems are easy for them to navigate • ACAT can play a role for promoting Pan-Canadian transfer • A Pan-Canadian approach to change can result in a common transfer tool and more funding if more than one CAT contributes to a system. • Aggregate Pan-Canadian data to use for reports and research	**Threats** • Internally-focused/PSI stakeholders don't understand opportunities and are risk adverse • Can be limited spaces for Alberta students, spots are limited for some programs • Pathways to nowhere because there is no seat available in the destination program. That is why some programs do not take 2nd year entrants. • Economic changes affect demand for seats. • Too much information.

Topic - Balance the PSI desire to protect "Turf" with Student's need for mobility
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

Strengths

- Strong articulation agreements
- Willingness to negotiate articulation agreements
- Everyone has a residency requirement to ensure that their graduates have a minimum number of credits from their institution
- Increases choices in delivery options and programming in the community
- Institutions know each other now
- Students can chose a learning environment that meets their current need/ want

Weaknesses

- No articulation process for graduate courses
- Lack of standardization
- Transfer agreement process is labour intensive and time consuming due to lack of process and tools
- No easy pathway for a student to do post-secondary courses as professional development
- Students wanting to take a course for professional development are not encouraged
- Agreements are currently "one-offs"
- There are few after-degree programs especially in rural areas
- The proprietary nature of curriculum development is counter to the transfer credit concept; some won't share their course outlines
- Course outlines are owned by professors in some universities and many are not willing to reveal their intellectual property and this slows down the articulation process
- Each institution has their own policy with regard to proprietary course outlines:

  For example, Medicine Hat College has a central hub for all course outlines. All outlines are standardized in format, and are the property of the college. In contrast, at the U of L or many other institutions, course outlines are intellectual property.

Opportunities

- ACAT can expand scope to graduate courses

  Although…"I think it is more important to improve our current system before we move on to that."
- Mobility enables post-secondary education, increasing the overall pool of students
- Keep an eye on the future developments for pro-active process growth
- The technology exists to stay with students that are mobile (online, alternative, partnerships)

Threats

- There are fewer high school students
- Government funding model doesn't support individualized student pathways.
- Turning colleges into universities increases supply but we don't have demand and it reduces choices for students at the college level and increases competition with universities

Topic: Collaboration Agreements between Institutions – Hosts Perspective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Attracts students • Retains students • Host partnerships in the community • Use community space • Increase networking for staff/ faculty • Allows institutions to offer more opportunities to students	**Weaknesses** • Resource intensive coordination • Collaboration or no say for one partner on curriculum • Two institutions can have conflicting policy/ practices/ dates/ times
Opportunities • Use available space to full advantage • Builds community relations • Increased networking • Spread out demand (urban to rural)	**Threats** • Owning institution can pull the plug any time • Salary grid issue is the two universities have different pay scales • Host expects partnership, but partner wants autonomy and a place to host.

Topic: Collaboration Agreements between Institutions – Owning Institution Perspective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Expands capacity for over-prescribed programs when there is demand • Cost savings • Increases Networking with professions, staff, faculty • Opens up opportunities for students	**Weaknesses** • Lose students on campus • Sometimes the province prescribes the number of seats allowed for the delivery of a program • Resource intensive coordination
Opportunities • To offer a program that you don't have space for.	**Threats** • Host can pull the plug • If the program becomes popular, the hosting university might "take" the program from the owning university • The host may not be delivering the program properly • Could cause saturation of the job market

Topic – Enabling Learner Pathways for unique, innovative, non-traditional programs Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Increased flexibility for students • Innovation can build a reputation for excellence for the institution which could increase students' opportunity for transfer • Provide a specialty that no one else offers to students • Flexibility to respond to an opportunity, e.g., specific community need, industry need • Could leverage good pathways that already exist • Most institutions want to support the student	**Weaknesses** • Special programs are not recognized elsewhere because they don't ladder directly into more mainstream programs • Currently 'unique' approaches limits transferability and pathway options • We tend to emphasize what doesn't work • Sometimes institutions paint each other with the same brush, positively or negatively. • Comments on reputation influence student's decision
Opportunities • Communicate and emphasize the pathway processes that work • Some programs increase a student's success • Publish real results for everyone to see and to eliminate hearsay • Think about future pathways while bundling new programs • Define the line/limit for pathways, resist trying to be all things to all students • Define pathway options for students so they understand where their pathway opportunities are	**Threats** • Sustainability when pathway administration is not well funded • Changing management/ administration can pull support • Serving two or more masters does not always work well, e.g., post-secondary and industry/ community • Institutions/ Programs that think that they are the only ones that can do things well decrease the opportunity for cooperation

Topic: Taking a protectionist position at the PSI level Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Protects you from losing students to other schools because they can't transfer credits. **If students are not given the opportunity to have clear information regarding transfer, they may be afraid to lose credit and choose to remain in a safe environment.* • Protects your brand and the student feels they have a valuable parchment. • Protects the institution in an environment where there is an oversupply of undergraduate programs *e.g.** One College fed hundreds of students into programs at university X, then cut off marketing related communication with them and offered a similar program to the students to motivate them to remain. University X lost students from city A and town B in high numbers because of this.*	**Weaknesses** • Decreased options for students • Decreased options for revenue generation if closed to options and collaboration • Does not provide opportunities for the vulnerable students, including minority populations that need to bridge into larger/other programs
Opportunities • Create 'non-vanilla' undergraduate programs that are better than anyone else's • Can use protectionism to create a unique program designed with specialized content to integrate minority students into the mainstream • Create unique capstone courses that no one else can offer for a unique student experience.	**Threats** • Might lose students who want more flexibility/ opportunity for change …e.g., new universities are "taking" undergraduate students from older universities. • Lose opportunities for beneficial/ lucrative cooperation with other institutions • Environment is changing

Topic: Taking a position of open/ collaboration between PSIs Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	
Strengths • Can strengthen quality because of the need for transparency. • Can share resources • Can attract more students • Can negotiate and present nice, clear pathways between institutions • Good publicity for collaborators since students are looking to keep pathways available • Can give more targeted support to a student (e.g. Blue Quills and Red Crow) • Collaboration is a more sustainable model in a changing post-secondary environment because it enables flexibility in serving students in many ways • Collaboration helps institutions to adapt to new ways of learning • It allows the choice to cooperate with some and compete with others	**Weaknesses** • Takes longer because collaboration requires dialogue and coordination • Communication needs increase • Trust is required • Lack of common ground with stakeholders threatens collaboration • Exacerbated by GoA roles/ initiatives that are not rolled out with conviction so not everyone buys in • Perceived as unsustainable • Current system funding doesn't support collaboration • Political instability = funding/ policy instability for post-secondary institutions …e.g., programs like ACCESS designed to assist pathways for underprivileged students was simply stopped because it was a 'special project' and funding was cut. • Funding and policy Instability breeds protectionism • Collaboration can create vulnerability because your curriculum/ intelligence is exposed • We focus on things that go wrong instead of all the examples of what goes right in the system.
Opportunities • Open collaboration can be used to promote pathways between institutions and increase marketability to students • Collaboration can include sharing costs for joint resources • Collaboration can increase the overall success of a program by leveraging each other's experience and expertise • Collaboration increases recognition/ visibility by other institutions • Increases capacity to provide learning options that students are demanding • Provides the opportunity to program collectively and make better business decisions – you can specialize locally • Model this project on what has gone right in the system	**Threats** • Student mobility can be impeded if other jurisdictions don't recognize your model • If you are not transparent about changes, you could affect agreements that could affect student pathways • You have to give up some autonomy in order to collaborate • Loss of students if you don't offer what they want and they have to go elsewhere • Can sometimes have partners that use your programming/ intelligence without permission

Appendix II – Contributing Stakeholder List

Individuals referenced in this appendix participated directly in one of the sessions and/or provided written/oral participation or other forms of feedback during the Business Assessment process. However, while all of ACAT Council and the Secretariat participated in the process, only those Council members that participated directly in an external/public session are referenced here. All individuals in this list are listed in alphabetical order by first name.

Session Contributors – Learner Pathway Administrators and Users

1. Ada Ness, Associate Registrar, Enrollment Services
2. Alan Chouinard, Team Leader, Wellness, French Language Education Services, Alberta Education
3. Alexis Anderson, Supervisor, Student Academic Services Augustana Campus, University of Alberta
4. Alice MacKichan, Manager, Admissions & Recruitment Office, Mount Royal University
5. Alice Wainwright-Stewart, President and CEO, Lakeland College
6. Alicia Payne, Student Advisor, Education, University of Alberta
7. Andrew Hakin, Provost & Vice-President (Academic), University of Lethbridge
8. Anita Ratnam, Special Projects Coordinator, Campus Manitoba
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12. Catherine Roy, International Exchange Advisor, University of Calgary
13. Cathy Newman, Administration/ Support, University of Lethbridge
14. Crystal Hollister, Student Support Advisor, DeVry Institute of Technology
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16. Dave Neale, Executive Director, Campus Manitoba
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18. Debbie Thompson, Dean, Animal Sciences & Horticulture, Olds College
19. Debbie Vance, Dual Credit Director, College of Alberta School Superintendents
20. Elaine May, Collaboration/Articulation Administrator, Mount Royal University
21. Emily Macphail, ACAT Council, Student Member (CAUS Representative)
22. Emma Lowry, BBA Student Support & Program Advisor, Athabasca University
23. Genevieve Fox, Assistant Contact Person, Red Crow Community College
24. George Dashkewytch, Dual Credit Administrator, Northern Lakes College
25. Glenn Craney, Executive Director, ONCAT
26. Glenn Keeler, Associate Vice-President, Institutional Research, The King's University
27. Glenn Mitchell, Dean, Business, Academics and University Studies, Lakeland College
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30. Heather Kitteringham, Senior Manager, Academic Research and Development, NorQuest College
31. Heather Mirau, Director, Integrated Planning, University of Lethbridge
32. Helen Salzl, Associate Registrar, Athabasca University
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34. Jacqueline Preyde, Academic Research Project Officer, University of Lethbridge
35. James Dobbie, Assistant Dean, Student Program Services, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lethbridge
36. Jamie Gibson, Senior Academic Advisor, Learner Support Services, Athabasca University

37. Jane Arscott, Program Coordinator Human Services, Program Director Bachelor of General Studies, Athabasca University
38. Jennifer McLean, Academic Advising Coordinator, Grande Prairie Regional College
39. Jerry Farewell, Dual Credit Manager, Bow Valley College
40. Jim Thomas, Chair, ACAT Biology Articulation Committee and Biology, University of Lethbridge
41. John Corlett, Provost and Vice-President Academic, MacEwan University
42. John FitzGibbon, Associate Director, Transfer and Articulation, BCCAT
43. John Partington, Administration/ Support, SAIT Polytechnic
44. Jonathan Strand, ACAT Council and Principal, School of Theology and Professor of Philosophy, Concordia University
45. Joy Fehr, Vice-President, Academic Administration, Canadian University College
46. Joyce First Rider, Director, Arts and Science, Red Crow Community College
47. Karen S. McDaniel, Articulation Coordinator, Academic Development, SAIT Polytechnic
48. Karie Chambers, Student Support and Program Advisor, Athabasca University
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59. Lesley Guerin, Senior Specialist, Academic Advising, University of Calgary
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63. Lori Downer, Team Lead, International Admissions, NAIT
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70. Nicole Lazorek, Undergraduate Office, School of Business
71. Norma Schneider, Vice-President , Teaching & Learning and Chief Academic Officer, NorQuest College
72. Patricia Goodwill-Littlechild , President, Maskwacis Cultural College
73. Patrick Simmons, Registrar, Columbia College
74. Paul Gaudette, Registrar, Olds College
75. Phil Warsaba, Associate Vice-President, Enrolment Services, Mount Royal University
76. Rita Halma, Chair, School of Business, Lethbridge College
77. Rob Adamoski, Associate Director, Admissions and Research, BCCAT
78. Robert Fleming, Executive Director and Co-Chair, BCCAT

79. Robin Fisher, ACAT Chair
80. Roy Weasel Fat, ACAT Council and President, Red Crow Community College
81. Rozlynn Wick, ACAT Dual Credit Articulation Committee Co-Chair and Coordinator, Summer Camps and Youth Initiatives, SAIT Polytechnic
82. Sandy Farney, Undergraduate Programs Office, Faculty of Management, University of Lethbridge
83. Sarah Sutherland, Learning Clicks Ambassador/Student Representative
84. Shannon Maass, Transfer Specialist, Lethbridge College
85. Shaun Craig, Coordinator, Assessment and Articulation Services, Red Deer College
86. Shawn Johnsrude, Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Lethbridge
87. Stuart Cullum, Vice-President Academic & Chief Operating Officer, Lethbridge College
88. Susie Bowles, Student Advisor, Keyano College
89. Sydney McNalley, Academic Advisor/Program Specialist, University of Lethbridge
90. Tara Froehlich, Academic Advisor for BHSc, Health Sci - Student Program Services, University of Lethbridge
91. Tasha Klimchuk, Administrative Assistant to the Registrar, NAIT
92. Tessa Cocchio, ACAT Council/Student Member (ASEC Representative)
93. Tom Blake, Learning Clicks Ambassador/Student Representative
94. Tony Norrad, Associate Registrar, MacEwan University
95. Ute Elizabeth Perkovic, Academic Advisor, University of Lethbridge
96. Wendy Hutchison, Coordinator of Admissions and Evaluations, Athabasca University
97. Wendy Weninger, Instructor, Child and Youth Care Program and Chair, School of Human Services, Lethbridge College

Government of Alberta/Agencies – Stakeholders from Programs Related to Learner Pathways

1. Emmy Mukasa, Strategic Initiatives, Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour (JSTL)
2. Janm Mehta, Strategic Research and Analysis, Innovation and Advanced Education (IAE)
3. John Brosda, Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT), IAE
4. Julie Desrochers, Public Awareness, IAE
5. Karen Lamothe, International Education and Intergovernmental Relations, IAE
6. Lana Rissling, Programs of Study and Resources for Implementation, Alberta Education
7. Lisa Fox, Policy Development and Legislation, IAE
8. Marg Leathem, Stakeholder Connections, IAE
9. Marilyn Patton, Director, Campus Alberta Quality Council
10. Mike Ponting, Strategic Policy and Legislation, IAE
11. Nyong Phan, JSTL
12. Pamela Cunningham, Post-secondary Programs, IAE
13. Patti Papirnik, Agencies Support, IAE
14. Sue Welke, Professional Governance, JSTL
15. Susan Stein, Executive Director, APAS (Apply Alberta)
16. Terri Brault, Student Aid, IAE
17. Tom Roach, Stakeholder Relations, IAE
18. Tricia Donovan, Executive Director, eCampus Alberta

ACAT Admissions Sub-Committee Stakeholders

1. Jim Gibbons, ACAT Council, ACAT Admissions Sub-committee Chair, and Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Member
2. Tessa Cocchio - ACAT Council, Student Member (ASEC)
3. Simrit Parmar – Grant McEwan and Provincial Adult Upgrading Committee (PAUC) Member
4. Debbie Hanzen – NAIT and PAUC Member
5. Kelly Harding - Edmonton Public School Board and ACAT Dual Credit Articulation Committee Member
6. Corinne Sperling - Manager, High School Credentialing/Competencies, Alberta Education

Appendix III – Learning Clicks Ambassadors Input

March 16, 2015 - Session with Learning Clicks Ambassadors/Post-secondary Students

Questions:

How do we connect to students?
How do you serve in this process?
Who do you serve?
Where do you see disconnects?
What do you think is needed to improve pathways to and through post-secondary?

Discussion:

There is no formal list or ongoing process for setting up sessions with ambassadors. Ambassadors do their own marketing to schools and set up their own sessions. They are relatively well prepared and knowledgeable yet they reach only a fraction of the high school population.

We are missing a ready-made vehicle to disseminate knowledge about the post-secondary system and Learner Pathways resources.

There must be ways to use PASI tools, curriculum coordinators, ARPDC, ATA teacher conferences, guidance counselors, parents association, modernization tools to bridge gaps between students and the post-secondary system.

This is an opportunity to build in better ways to leverage Learning Clicks Ambassadors in pathways modernization.

- links to book learning clicks ambassadors on the app and/or search tool
- best timing for deliver transfer awareness - high school, after application before course registration
- support for students' internal motivation is important
- disconnect between autonomous institutions and open/transparent information for transfer; working on a cultural shift in the system.

Access to student advisors, etc. is difficult. There are too many students, and not enough support to help them navigate pathways. This group recommends more student mentorship and student-student models be utilized.

Ambassadors tell students that they have to:

- be their own advocates
- market themselves
- connect with professors and student groups
- learn how to learn as a post-secondary student
- research the program area post-secondary experience.

There is a general lack of information at high schools about opportunities:

- for the trades
- non-academic careers,
- stepping stones, and laddering pathways (trades to degrees possibilities...getting credit for 2 years of a degree from Completion of a trade).

Ambassadors do caution high school students to be aware of the role that high school marks and completion still play in opening pathways or avoiding the need to redo high school classes.

Learning Clicks Ambassador messages are built on past experiences and government messaging from key areas.

Learning Clicks Ambassadors Questionnaire

Learning Clicks Ambassadors – Student Input
Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative
November 22, 2014
11 Respondents

Questions	Responses
1. Have you ever used any of the following learner pathways to move into or within Alberta's post-secondary system? Indicate all that apply: a) Transfer of a course/program from one institution to another institution for credit b) Transfer of more than one course/program from more than one institution to another institution for credit c) Use of a completed credential to enter/ladder into a new program d) Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition of non-formal/informal learning for credit at an institution e) Dual credit course/program credit towards a program at an institution/provider f) Brokering/taking a course for your program from a different institution than the main institution you are registered in g) Other? Please list here	a) 8 said yes to institution transfer credit b) 5 said yes to multi-institution transfer credit c) 4 said yes to ladder transfer d) 2 said yes to PLAR credit e) 1 said yes to Dual credit f) 2 said yes to broker courses g) 1 said transferring programs within the same institution.

2. If you have ever sought to transfer a course/program for credit in Alberta, how did you do so? Indicate all that apply: a) From one program to a different program b) From one credential to a different credential c) From one institution to a different institution d) From a: i. Comprehensive Community institution (e.g., Lethbridge College) ii. Polytechnical institution (e.g., NAIT or SAIT Polytechnic) iii. Independent Academic institution (e.g., Concordia University College of Alberta) iv. Specialized Arts and Culture institution (e.g., ACAD) v. Baccalaureate and Applied Studies institution (e.g., MacEwan University) vi. Comprehensive Academic and Research institution (e.g., University of Alberta) vii. First Nations College (e.g., Blue Quills First Nations College) viii. Private Vocational Training institution ix. Out-of-province institution To a: i. Comprehensive Community institution (e.g., Lethbridge College) ii. Polytechnical institution (e.g., NAIT or SAIT Polytechnic) iii. Independent Academic institution (e.g., Concordia University College of Alberta) iv. Specialized Arts and Culture institution (e.g., ACAD) v. Baccalaureate and Applied Studies institution (e.g., MacEwan University) vi. Comprehensive Academic and	a) 4 said yes to program transfer b) 2 said yes to credential transfer c) 8 said yes to institution transfer d) From: • 2 from Comprehensive Community College • 1 from Polytechnic • 1 from Independent Academic institution • 0 from Specialized Arts and Culture institution • 3 from Baccalaureate and Applied Studies institution • 3 from Comprehensive Academic and Research institution • 0 from First Nations College • 0 from Private Vocational Training institution • 2 from Out-of-province institution Please Note; 2 survey respondents indicated multiple transfers, 6 respondents indicated one transfer, 3 indicated no transfers To: • 1 To Comprehensive Community College • 0 To Polytechnic • 0 To Independent Academic institution • 0 To Specialized Arts and Culture institution • 4 To Baccalaureate and Applied Studies institution • 4 To Comprehensive Academic and Research institution • 0 To First Nations College • 0 To Private Vocational Training institution • 1 To Out-of-province CARI institution Please Note: destination schools were predominantly BASI and CARIs with one

Research institution (e.g., University of Alberta) vii. First Nations College (e.g., Blue Quills First Nations College) viii. Private Vocational Training institution ix. Out-of-province institution	community college. Supports the overall observation that transfer is typically up the sector hierarchy to a BASI or CARI.
3. Please describe your experience and overall satisfaction with transferring a course/program for credit.	1. "It was really easy once I sat down with an academic advisor. Before then, I still found the Transfer Alberta site to be confusing when transferring a course from one institution to another." 2. "It was good, but difficulties in dealing with some institutions (U of A) not considering a third year course from another institution as a third year course at their institution." 3. "The transfer guy at Red Deer Community College was very helpful and that made stuff easy. The transfer credits in some cases were transferred as general courses as posted to what they actually were due to equivalency problems." 4. "The courses did not transfer any credit toward my current program." 5. "I transferred out of Province so Transfer Alberta was not relevant, but all of my courses did not transfer over. I also had to go through a process of getting syllabi sent to the receiving institution so they could assess and determine if I would get credit. I am now in the process of getting my courses completed in my BA, as I am now pursuing and after degree at Athabasca University." 6. "Great experience the transition was very smooth (from Community College to a BASI)."

	7. "It was awful with very little support. I lost an entire semester of credit. The second time I transferred it was much easier because I was more accountable and chased people/ institutions down for information." 8. Study abroad program courses were not recognized here. 9. "Overall, it's been pretty good, however; I had to take a course I took in my first degree at Concordia again at the UofA. So I am paying to take a course I have already taken, passed and received credit for."
4. If you have not transferred a course/ program to date, do you anticipate a future need to transfer a course/ program for credit?	6 = Not answered 4 = no 1 =yes Please Note: the respondents were Learning Clicks Ambassadors, and are close to completing a course of study.
5. If yes, please describe how you think you might want to transfer a course/program for credit.	1 = yes "I want to complete a second degree by doing 2 post-degree programs, and a lot of my current option courses will transfer."
6. Please describe your experience and overall satisfaction with other learner pathways in the system. Please identify the pathway (e.g., PLAR, dual credit, IB, AP, out-of-province, brokering a course, etc.) and your experience and satisfaction.	"I haven't needed them." "Out of province brokering a course. It was good, I had to forge a lot of my own pathways and have transfer credit assessed at different institutions." "I have taken AP & IB classes, but they were not full programs, so no transfer of credit ability, however 6 courses were great building of character and preparing for post-secondary." "I would like to see more continuity across programs. I have taken a course twice because the credit did not transfer, but the

	course was very, very similar." "Out of Province – do other provinces have a similar system? If an institution requests a syllabus that you want transfer credit for, it can be hard to get if the course was taken a long time ago." "I was very unhappy. It is getting better, but there is so little chatter between the institutions that the correct information is often lost or altered." 5 respondents did not comment.

Appendix IV – ACAT Admissions Sub-Committee Input

March 9, 2015 – LPMI Information Gathering Session from the ACAT Admissions Sub-Committee

Attended by:

- Jim Gibbons – ACAT Council, Chair, ACAT Admissions Sub-committee, and ASBA Member
- Ann Marie Lyseng – ACAT Secrétariat
- Eric Dohei – ACAT Secretariat

- Tessa Cocchio - ACAT Council, Student Member (ASEC)
- Simrit Parmar – Grant McEwan and Provincial Adult Upgrading Committee (PAUC) Member
- Debbie Hanzen – NAIT and PAUC Member
- Kelly Harding - Edmonton Public School Board and ACAT Dual Credit Articulation Committee Member
- Corinne Sperling - Manager, High School Credentialing/Competencies, Alberta Education

Facilitated by: Angie Bugera

The purpose of this meeting is to provide additional high school pathways and admissions feedback/input related to the ACAT *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative* (LPMI).

Questions:

How do we ensure students are better informed about admissions and transfer as they transition from secondary to post-secondary school?

How do you give high school students some insights into the post-secondary environment? From prescriptive to full choice.

Discussion:

There is a cost to the system for student to 'find themselves'. We need to help them find a pathway for transition from high school.

The high school curriculum is very prescriptive and does not prepare students for the post-secondary environment where they have choices and responsibilities for their own pathway.

High school advisors don't think about post-secondary paths when giving advice, because their main focus it to ensure students do well in high school.

High schools get evaluated on the good grades of their students and the achievement of a high school diploma.

The current high school system does best in supporting students with pathways to university over other post-secondary paths.

High school advisors know the university path the best, because they have experienced it.

Different discipline levels for math, science, etc. available in high school are there to support the achievement of a high school diploma, but they have implications for post-secondary paths that are not often considered when making a decision to stream a student.

Deciding to streamline a student to a different level within a discipline has post-secondary pathway consequences that need to be explained to the student and parent, before they make a decision.

Suggestions:

Create an environment that balances the advisors responsibility and the student's responsibility.

Use the CALM course curriculum to better effect. Introduce CALM in grade 9.

Reinforce this learning repeatedly, by introducing an annual career path/ post-secondary path workshop for high school students. (i.e. annual CALM workshop). Reinforce the connection between high school choices and downstream learner pathways and career goals.

- Annual career pathways discussion
- Bundled into courses
- On the first day of class

Introduce Teacher/ Council pathway workshops to reinforce messages about the transition from secondary to post-secondary school. These might be included at Teachers Conferences.

Leverage e-portfolio to incorporate pathways discussions into teachers' responsibilities. Have them indicate they have had pathways conversations with students. E-portfolio is a good source of data on career changes for grant-funded students.

Forge better relationships and connections between secondary and post-secondary systems for students that are late in completing high school.

- Inform post-secondary advisors
- Help them to understand transcripts, especially for students who have been out of school for some time.
- Help them to find information on equivalencies and make information easier to find.

Develop a digital planning tool that helps the student to visually see pathway options. Help them to link career clusters to pathway options:

- Connect information so it is easy for user to access and navigate

Appendix V – GoA/Agencies Partners Session

March 6, 2015 – GoA/Agencies Session

Participants

- Emmy Mukasa, Strategic Initiatives, Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour (JSTL)
- Janm Mehta, Strategic Research and Analysis, Innovation and Advanced Education (IAE)
- John Brosda, Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT), IAE
- Julie Desrochers, Public Awareness, IAE
- Karen Lamothe, International Education and Intergovernmental Relations, IAE
- Lana Rissling, Programs of Study and Resources for Implementation, Alberta Education
- Lisa Fox, Policy Development and Legislation, IAE
- Marg Leathem, Stakeholder Connections, IAE
- Marilyn Patton, Director, Campus Alberta Quality Council
- Mike Ponting, Strategic Policy and Legislation, IAE
- Nyong Phan, JSTL
- Pamela Cunningham, Post-secondary Programs, IAE
- Patti Papirnik, Agencies Support, IAE
- Sue Welke, Professional Governance, JSTL
- Susan Stein, Executive Director, APAS (Apply Alberta)
- Terri Brault, Student Aid, IAE
- Tom Roach, Stakeholder Relations, IAE
- Tricia Donovan, Executive Director, eCampus Alberta

Observation:

The breadth of this group was large with representatives from many GoA and related agencies programs under the IAE, JSTL, or Education Ministry or a public agency/organization.

Like the large ACAT stakeholders group, this group is working to understand how they connect in the overall service to students.

To pull GoA and agencies pathways-related programs together so they can collaborate, share information, and potentially integrate the delivery of related information to students will require a large-scale organizational improvement initiative with integrated information delivery to students as the measure of success.

Discussion:

We need:

- To simplify the complexities to support a student perspective
- More frequently engage with stakeholders
- Continue *Spotlight* communication and add other forms of communication like email re: milestones
- To support information for lateral movement program to program (include in overall mandate)
- Recognize the role of online and part time learning.

Students' expectations:

- Students can make choices to move between institutions but the choices may not be recognized.
- Students think they can do things we don't yet support.
- We need to be honest and simplify the language.
- We need to link transfer Alberta to ECampus courses; need transparency.
- Students want to see the cost for transfer credit (calculator...what if...) before transferring.
- Need information pop ups for students to support key info (... Have you checked...); need real time information.
- There is also the student responsibility side. They need to be asking key questions. Need student learning and public awareness beginning in high school.
- IAE / ACAT should be reaching out to students in high school re: planning and awareness before post-secondary, including continued collaborative efforts with Learning Clicks.
- An institution who doesn't have student advisors or is limited in the number of advisors is highly problematic in the system.

General points discussed:

- Business integration tools behind the scenes would support data/information needed to inform decision making.
- Would need to properly address privacy assessments, etc. should we collect new data.
- Need to ask the higher level question re: purpose for data collection to have direction.

- Would like access to data and shared information (e.g., student level, data dictionary, transfer nomenclature, common PLAR guidelines)
- Support for regulatory requirements (streaming, consistency, transfer).
- Ability to save and support planning; have what if planning rewards at the end...carrot
- Links to *Time to Choose* (...increase use and value and access for students); also have an international version of this resource (Study in Alberta - View Book) and *This is Your Life* publications, Learning Clicks (use as pop ups/info checklist/supports on Transfer Alberta). Also could consider a timely, short, avatar that students could ask questions of. Also need to be mobile phone/technology accessible overall.

Connection Points that might be relevant to/important for Learner Pathways:

- John Brosda, AIT - Apprenticeship transfer agreements/data and database for program patterns. A great deal of transfer data available. Offer to look at this defined data and a possibly make available re: transfer Alberta (see John Brosda). An IAE architect followed up with AIT.
- Susan Stein, APAS - Could consider adding database links.
- Nyong Van, JSTL - Assessing use of *Time to Choose* (also Career Insight resource)
- Emmy Mukasa, JSTL - International and IQAS career videos
- Julie Desrochers, IAE - Learning Clicks personality assessment updates and videos and OCCinfo.

Other possibilities/ contacts:

- map the pathway info for the student experience

- updates to GoA re: milestones

- more linkages to resources and with ALIS and OCCinfo career info

- potential linkages to Alberta Works

- potential linkages to eCampus

- potential linkages to student aid

- potential linkages to program and professional laddering / PROs and FQR with JSTL

- need to broaden mechanisms for student support

- connections to career planning and supports for CALM and CTS

- connections to international Education and IQAS

Group recommended having ongoing follow up meetings with this GoA/agency group for further advice, data sharing from LPMI, next steps, etc.

Appendix VI – Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

Terms

Learner Pathways:

- Are "Different routes that individuals take to progress into, within, and out of the post-secondary education system. Learner pathways are used to describe the recognized mobility options available to different learners." (ACAT Glossary)
- Reflect a student's individual learning and program/career choices that define his/her pathway(s) (route(s)) into, among, out of, and/or back into post-secondary education.

For additional learner pathways and mobility-related terms, including regarding transfer, please consult the *ACAT Glossary of Transfer Terms* on Transfer Alberta (http://alis.alberta.ca/ps/tsp/ta/rs/glossary.html#Learnerpathways).

Acronyms

BASI - Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institution (e.g., teaching-focused universities)
CARI – Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution (e.g., research-focused universities)
CCI – Comprehensive Community Institution (e.g., regional stewards and community colleges)
IAI – Independent Academic Institution (e.g., faith-based institutions)
SACI – Specialized Arts and Culture Institution (e.g., Alberta College of Art + Design and Banff Centre)
LPMI – *Learner Pathways Modernization Initiative*
PSIs - Post-secondary Institutions
PSE – Post-secondary Education
PVT – Private Vocational Training Providers (e.g., private colleges/institutions)
TCES – Transfer Credit Evaluation System (e.g., a generic term referring to a particular type of transfer credit technology)