ecampus Ontario

The Impacts of the Virtual Learning Strategy: Designed to Empower

The Virtual Learning Strategy (VLS) was an investment made by the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities to drive growth and advancement of virtual learning across the postsecondary institutions in Ontario.

The VLS was built on three key principles:

Collaborative

The VLS prioritized collaboration for sector transformation that impacts all institutions.

Learner-driven

The VLS drove virtual learning excellence for all learners in Ontario, now and into the future.

Digital by design

The VLS supported the development of online content that is digital by design.

eCampusOntario celebrates the role of the VLS in supporting innovation, and empowerment of post-secondary faculty, administration, and learners across Ontario's postsecondary sector between 2020 and 2024.

The VLS Pillars

Being the future

Providing sector supports to drive a continued co-existence with hybrid learning: Ensuring learners have high-quality education: anytime, from anywhere. This requires quality and innovation, better data, and digfital access to enable lifeling learning and fuel Ontario's global competitiveness

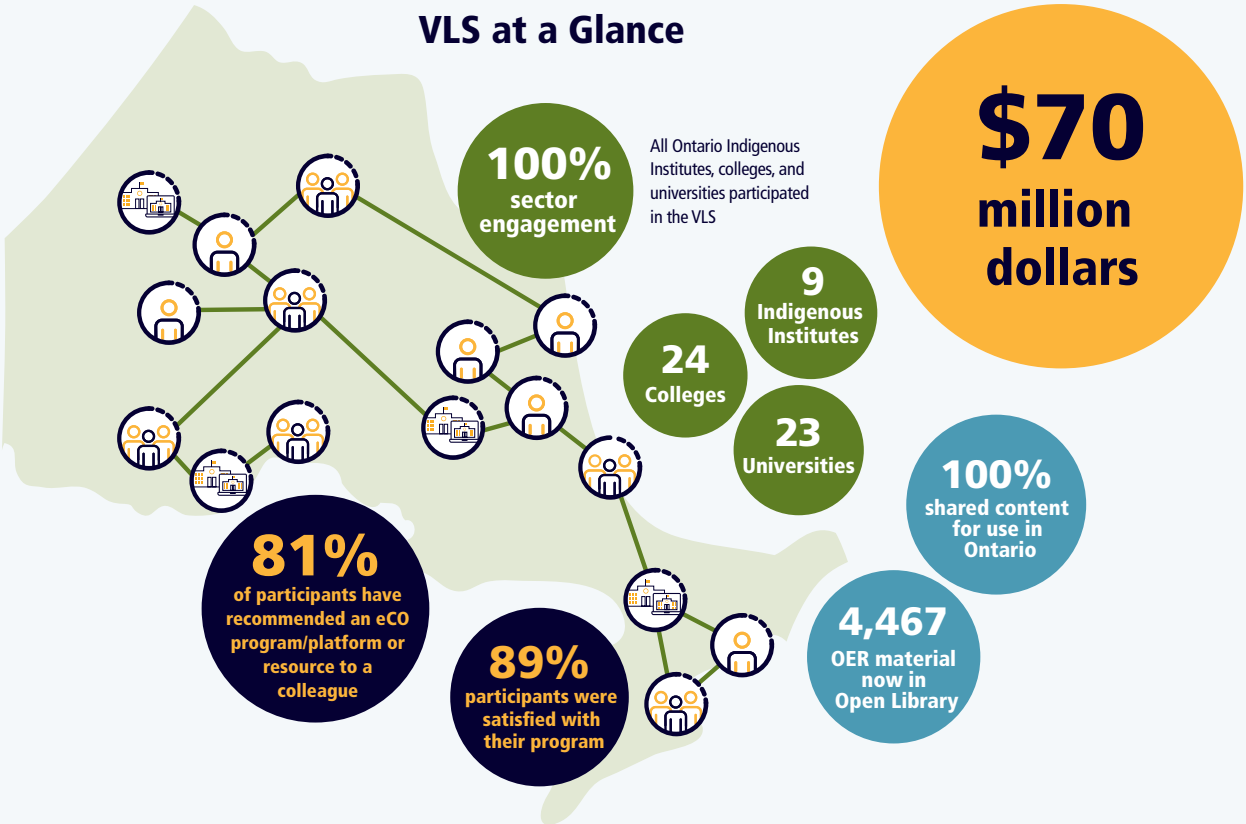
Being a lifelong learner

Enabling learners to meet the needs of the rapidly evolving labour market at any stage of their careers by providing digital supports and infrastructure for new short duration training.

Being a global leader

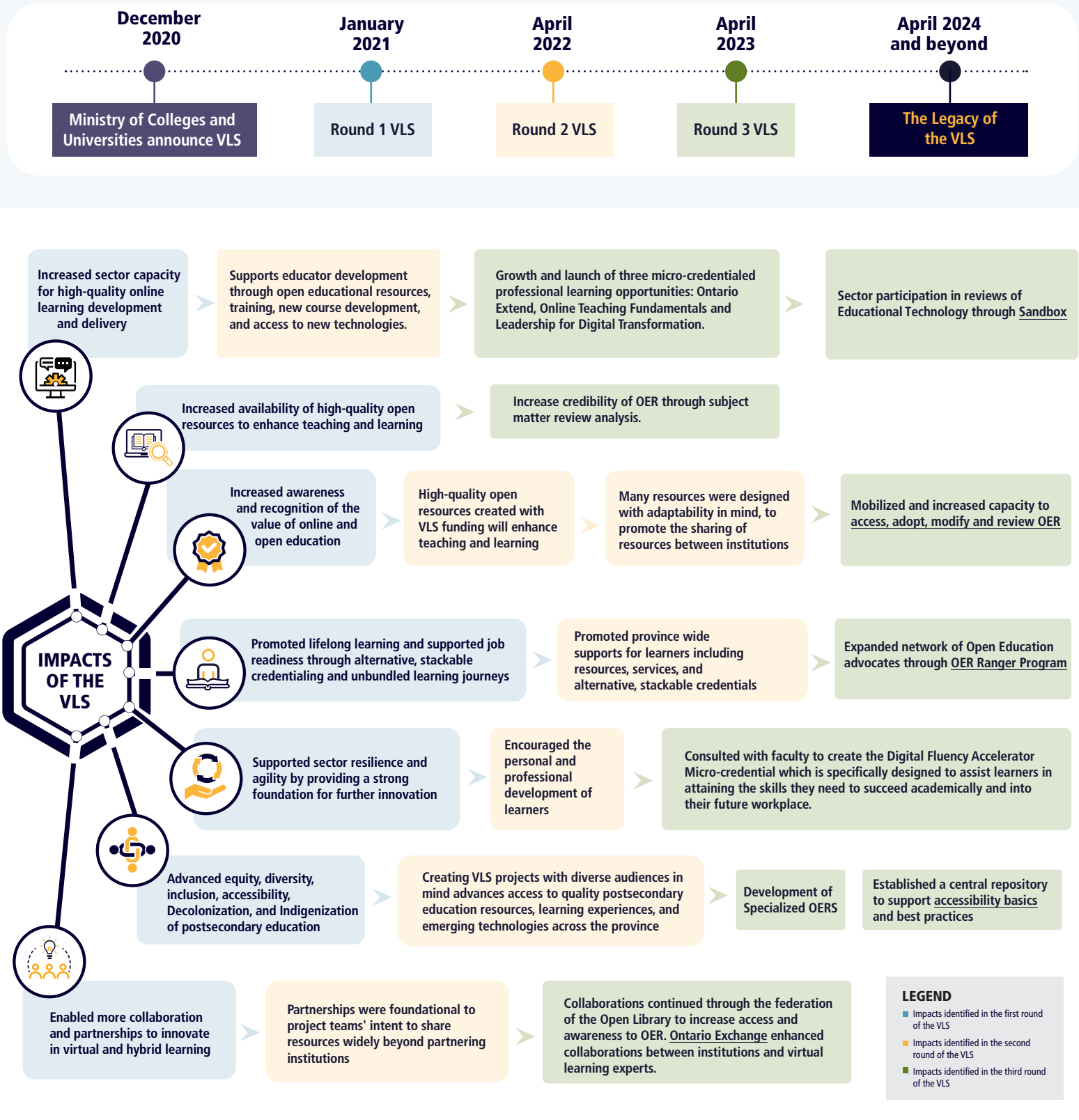
Strengthening Ontario's leadership domestically and globally, by expanding access for Ontario's institutions to the global marketplace for virtual learning. With this, we aim to position Ontario as a global leader for virtual innovation in teaching and learning, including Ontario educational technology companies.

VLS at a Glance



Milestones & Achievements

The diagram below demonstrates the timeline and impacts of each round of the VLS. The outcomes and impacts of each round build upon one another to drive growth and advancement of virtual learning. VLS project teams were asked a series of qualitative questions related to their projects and its anticipated impacts across the sector. Open-ended responses were analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis. Project elements were also reviewed for their relation or relevance to particular focuses. Major themes and aggregate quantitative findings were triangulated and are presented together below.



VLS Achievements: Round 3 Focus

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$8 million

		Highlights
Digital Design Hybrid Learning	**$2.1 million**	• New relationship established with Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM) • Building resources to support sector AODA compliance and accessibility awareness • 28 projects completed
Capitalizing on OERs	**$2.8 million**	• Creation of training materials for education and adoption of open education at PSEs • Created OERs that address gaps in resources related to business, engineering, skilled trades, and science • 27 postsecondary institutions federated. • 80 OER Rangers
High Quality Teaching & Learning	**$2.6 million**	• Facilitated cohort of 56 learners through the Digital Transformation Leadership micro-Credential • Led 200+ faculty through Ontario Extend Sprints • Created and piloted Online Teaching Fundamentals to 68 faculty • Designed and piloted a Digital Fluency micro-Credential for over 1000 learners in partnership with **Contact North**
Communications & Program Support	**$700,000**	• Program management, monitoring of impact, and building capacity for future virtual learning growth • Supporting awareness of VLS opportunities and impacts

Legacy of the VLS

OPEN LIBRARY

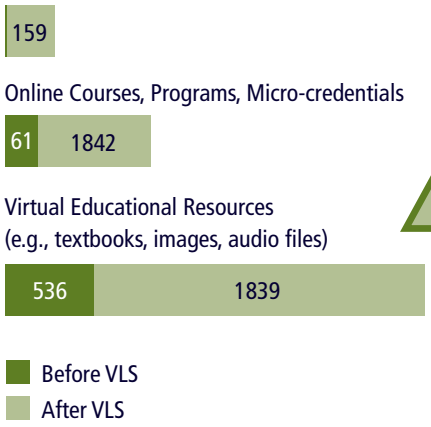
The eCampusOntario Open Library provides educators and learners with access to open educational materials, tools, and practices that can be used, shared, and adapted in the digital environment. The eCampusOntario Open Library is the largest Open Educational Resource (OER) repository in Canada.

The VLS made significant investments into the content within and the infrastructure that supports the Open Library. That growth is demonstrated in the visual below.

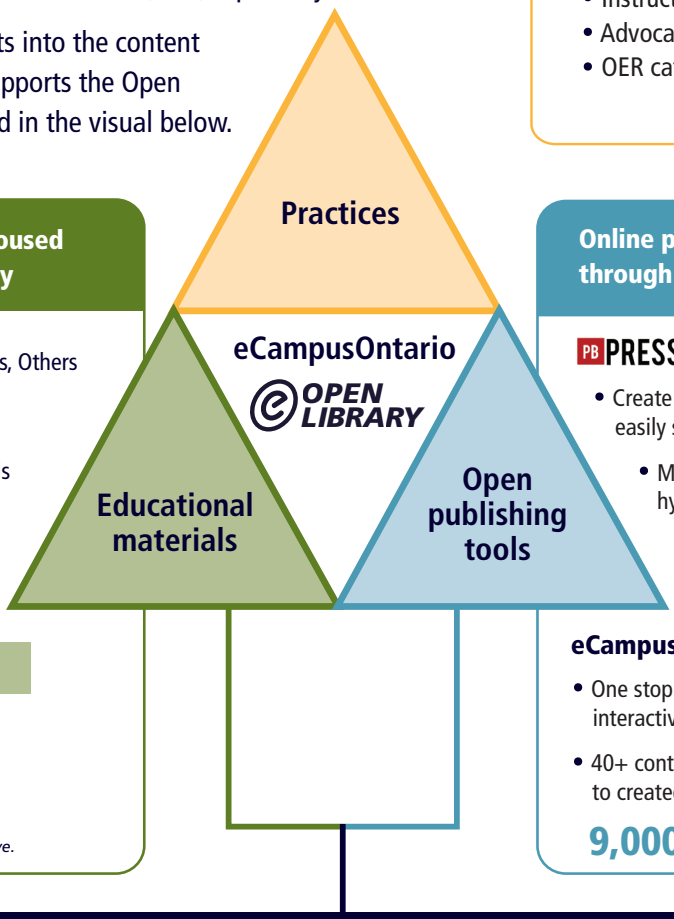
eCampusOntario Community Supports

- Ontario Open Library Network (OOLN)
- Instructional support materials
- Advocacy support
- OER cataloguing standards

Types of educational materials housed in eCampusOntario's Open Library



Only values greater than 5 have been labelled above.



Online publishing tools available through eCampusOntario Open Library

PRESSBOOKS

- Create or adapt interactive OER that can be easily shared
- Multiple export formats support and H5P, hypothes.is, and MathJax integrations

6,800+ Pressbook Users (as of March 2024)

eCampusOntario H5P Studio

- One stop shop to create, share, and discover interactive learning objects
- 40+ content types and a user dashboard with access to created content, favourite content, and more

9,000+ H5P Studio Users (as of March 2024)

Collaboration

A year after the closing of the first round of the Virtual Learning Strategy (VLS), eCampusOntario's Research and Foresight team reached out to the designated contacts of project teams in June and July of 2023 in order to understand the impacts of their projects.

Some project teams indicated that they have **continued to collaborate** with, or plan to further collaborate with, their project partners. When asked of the nature of **continued** collaborations, projects teams that were involved in **inter-institutional collaborations** mentioned:

- **sustaining** the work done collaboratively through their VLS project
- **adapting and disseminating** the outputs for their VLS project
- working together on **new projects**

Project teams that had **industry partners** responded that their **collaborations** have **continued** and that the impact on students has been positive. One project team specifically mentioned that their project outputs became **tangible examples of the services and benefits** that their industry partner can provide to other clients.

"The Virtual Learning Strategy has created significant capacity in Ontario to leverage the power of digital options for enhanced learner access and success. Over three years we witnessed the sector come together to collaborate and co-create these digital options. The results help all Ontarians be lifelong learners in a globally leading, future-focused education sector."

— **Robert Luke,** CEO, eCampusOntario