



Funding the Future:

Why Earning Through Learning is Critical
for Modern Membership Organizations

D2L

How Associations Can Deliver More Value
to Members and the Industries They Serve

Industry Contributors

We thank the many experts from the people management, finance, infrastructure, healthcare and engineering sectors for working with D2L on this whitepaper.



Good Roads



**The Lighting Industry Association
(LIA)**



Eric Young
Manager of Education

Eric is the headmaster of education and training at Good Roads. He is in charge of the learning management system and guides the team of volunteer instructors and course directors. He also helps develop course content and goals, aimed squarely at helping municipal staff members win at their work.



Ayça Donaghy
Chief Executive Officer

Ayça brings over 15 years of experience in the broader electro-technical sector that combines strategic thinking, team management, and a dedication to sustainability, diversity and innovation. Since taking on the role as CEO of the LIA, she has spearheaded a series of groundbreaking initiatives—including university competitions aimed at bridging the skills gap—and has been instrumental in propelling the industry’s mission and amplifying its voice on a national level.



Kyla Di Perna
Instructional Designer

Kyla creates effective and engaging educational materials and experiences at Good Roads by applying principles of learning and design. She uses a variety of technologies and media to deliver high-quality instructional courses to enhance learning outcomes.



Teresa Beazley
Commercial & Training Manager

With over 25 years of expertise gained from both the public and private sectors and across a range of industries, Teresa is passionate about bridging skill gaps through innovative, proactive approaches to ensure that both employees and business are well equipped for the future. She has successfully implemented strategic initiatives that enhance workforce capabilities and deliver measurable improvements to employee engagement, performance and retention.



The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)



Andrea Cook
Director of Specialised and Lifelong Learning

As a qualified Chartered Accountant with a strong interest in learning and development, Andrea has been heavily involved in training for both ACA trainees and ICAEW members. In her current role, she is leading the introduction of a brand-new suite of e-learning courses for ACA trainees.



The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)



David D'Souza
Director of Profession

David oversees the CIPD's membership offering—from member engagement, retention and growth to overall customer experience. A respected voice in HR, he brings deep expertise across a range of industries in organizational development and culture, learning and development, corporate ethics, and the future of work.



The British Society of Lifestyle Medicine (BSLM)



Andrew Howie
Chief Finance and Commercial Officer

Andrew leads the BSLM's Learning Academy Project, overseeing both the implementation of the organization's LMS and the development of course content. With extensive experience in both the private and voluntary sectors, he has successfully delivered major initiatives around compliance and policy frameworks and workplace wellbeing.

Table of contents

FOREWORD FROM BILL SHEEHAN	5
PERSONALIZED LEARNING FOR A CHANGING MARKETPLACE	7
LEARNING BUILT FOR WORKFORCE IMPACT	10
LEARNING THROUGH CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL PARTNERSHIPS	12
LEARNING WITHOUT BORDERS	13
EDUCATION THAT FUNDS THE FUTURE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION	14
LEARNING THAT IS FLEXIBLE—REPURPOSING, SHORT COURSES AND MICRO-CREDENTIALS	16
LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATION	18
LEARNING THAT SUPPORTS A SUSTAINABLE AND EXCITING FUTURE	20

FOREWORD

Professional associations exist to protect, promote and advance the industries and professionals they represent. But fulfilling that mission today requires more than strong programming; it demands a sustainable, forward-looking business model. Members are navigating tighter budgets, heavier workloads and rapidly evolving skill expectations, while associations face rising operating costs, intensified competition for attention and heightened accountability to boards and stakeholders. In this environment, learning is no longer simply a programmatic offering; it is increasingly the strategy itself.

The economic signal from members is unmistakable. Research consistently shows that the number one reason individuals join an association is to access professional development, credentials and continuing education. Once they join, members rank these tangible learning benefits as the most valuable components of membership, with more than two-thirds expecting associations to provide them. When asked what they are willing to pay for beyond dues, continuing education credits rank first, followed by certifications and professional development opportunities. Expanded career development resources are also the leading factor that would make individuals more likely to join. Learning is not peripheral to the value proposition; it is the primary economic driver of acquisition, retention and monetization.

Associations that treat education as enterprise infrastructure rather than a standalone department position themselves for resilience and growth. When intentionally designed, learning strengthens workforce impact, deepens engagement and generates scalable, diversified revenue streams that offset pressure on dues and traditional funding sources. Modern, technology-enabled educational delivery models expand reach and flexibility without proportionally increasing overhead, which improves organizational efficiencies while amplifying mission impact. The question before boards is no longer whether to invest in learning, but whether their current model is robust enough to compete, scale and shape the future of their profession.

Each of the contributing associations shares a conviction that a thoughtfully designed learning strategy, enabled by the right technology, is central to advancing both mission and sustainability. We are deeply appreciative of their candor and willingness to share their experiences. It is our hope that their perspectives spark new ideas and provide practical direction for associations seeking to embrace a strategic, balanced approach to earning through learning in pursuit of even greater impact.



Bill Sheehan
Global Head of Association Strategy
D2L



Personalized Learning for a Changing Marketplace

The notion that every member of an association will access and engage with learning in the same way is outdated. Variables for each member—such as the device they’re using to access content, their accessibility requirements, their location and their demographic, to name but a few—affect how each personal learning experience should be delivered.

A flexible, agile and responsive learning strategy is crucial to meeting the diverse and evolving needs of members. Plus, giving people ownership over their learning journeys can enhance engagement and long-term retention.

This has been the case at Good Roads where Eric Young, manager of education, and Kyla Di Perna, instructional designer, and their team have completely transformed the way that learning is delivered.

Historically, Good Roads—a municipal association dedicated to creating better road infrastructure in Ontario—trained its over 2,000 learners in-person. As the province’s workforce evolved, the in-person delivery model couldn’t keep up. Municipalities across Ontario needed education that was flexible, scalable and inclusive—regardless of their location.

Good Roads now trains students through a variety of modalities, including in-person, blended, asynchronous and online.

“Once we were able to help folks see that our digital programs were an added service and not necessarily a ploy at replacing our in-person programming, we were able to gain the momentum and buy-in that really helped service folks in parts of the province that were struggling to gain access with courses to begin with,” says Kyla.

The change has resulted in a workforce that is now more knowledgeable and helps workers to obtain certifications for promotion within their career paths. “The parts that fulfill me the most with what I do is knowing that we’re providing and making education more accessible to those who wouldn’t otherwise have access to it,” Kyla explains.

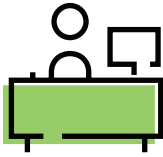
The pandemic was a pivotal moment of change for the Lighting Industry Association (LIA) in terms of how it delivered learning programming.

“Prior to COVID, training was delivered entirely in person, relying on traditional classroom settings where industry experts delivered content via lengthy presentations.”

Teresa Beazley
commercial and training manager, LIA

THE LEARNING MODEL SHIFT

TRADITIONAL MODEL



- ✗ Face-to-face only
- ✗ Limited geographic reach
- ✗ High travel and facilitation cost
- ✗ Long course formats
- ✗ Completion dependent on attendance

MODERN MODEL



- ✓ Digital-first/blended
- ✓ Global access
- ✓ Scalable, lower overhead
- ✓ Modular, bite-sized
- ✓ Self-paced and trackable

“Prior to COVID, training was delivered entirely in person, relying on traditional classroom settings where industry experts delivered content via lengthy presentations,” says Teresa Beazley, commercial and training manager at the LIA.

By adopting a blended learning model, the LIA now offers learners the freedom to engage with online content at their own pace and participate in facilitated workshops to discuss practical applications. This flipped classroom approach has significantly improved engagement levels and is also helping members apply their learning more effectively.

An ability to offer more modular content also allows members to learn at their own convenience and pace, and this approach has been adopted as part of the

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development’s (CIPD) learning strategy.

“There’s no doubt that we’re having to work harder for people’s time and attention than we’ve ever done before,” says David D’Souza, director of profession at the CIPD. His focus is on connecting the CIPD’s diverse offerings to ensure that engagement with one product naturally leads members to other valuable resources, fostering a more immersive, relevant and holistic professional experience, when and where learners need it.

“The parts that fulfill me the most with what I do is knowing that we’re providing and making education more accessible to those who wouldn’t otherwise have access to it.”

Kyla Di Perna,
instructional designer,
Good Roads



Learning Built for Workforce Impact

Members are also turning to their associations to help them acquire a broader or more specialist skillset, or to carve out their own individual learning pathways.

Andrea Cook, director, specialized and lifelong learning, has been at the heart of shaping the Institute of Chartered Accountants for England and Wales' (ICAEW) learning strategy for more than a decade, witnessing first-hand how the profession—and an accountant's learning journey—have evolved.

The ACA qualification has long been the ICAEW's flagship offering and is regularly reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of stakeholders. While fundamental skills remain important, the world of accountancy has become increasingly diverse and complex, with accountants demanding highly focused skills.

To cater to this, the ICAEW is introducing specialized learning pathways which allow students to tailor their



CAREER-LONG SUPPORT: FROM FIRST STEPS TO LEADERSHIP

CAREER START

The LIA aspire to provide members a “succinct route from the start of their career to the end” – LIA

EARLY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“We're shifting some of our emphasis to supporting people in their career, not just in their specialism or expertise” – CIPD

learning experiences to their specific field of work. This enables trainees and their employers to select additional learning modules that may be relevant to their industries or sectors—a module on taxation in the agricultural sector, for example.

“This shift is about empowering students, giving them knowledge that aligns directly with their career paths, while still upholding the standards of the ACA professional qualification,” says Andrea.

“We recognized that one core set of exams couldn’t accommodate the wide variety of roles that students do. Specialized pathways give learners the opportunity to access more specialized or niche content as part of their ACA—meaning we can deliver even more value back to both students and their employers.”

A cross-industry skills shortage is also a challenge that most industries expect to face in the coming years, particularly around the adoption of AI and other

emerging technologies. The LIA estimates that “in 10 years’ time there could be more jobs than there are skilled professionals to fill them”, says Ayça Donaghy, chief executive officer. But high-quality, engaging and bespoke learning will enable associations to face this head on, ensuring professionals always have the skills they need, and enabling entire industries to benefit.

The modern membership association has an obligation to continually upskill its members and deliver career-long learning. **“We’re shifting some of our emphasis to supporting people in their career, not just in their specialism or expertise,”** says David, at the CIPD. “It’s a given that we should be able to help you be a great recruiter or HR advisor. But there’s more we can be supporting members with. Maybe they’re about to attend their first board meeting, for example. That’s something outside of their technical expertise, but we can build niche learning content to support them with those critical moments in their career.”



CRITICAL CAREER MOMENTS

“Maybe they’re about to attend their first board meeting. That’s something outside of their technical expertise but we can build niche learning content to support them” – CIPD

LEADERSHIP AND EXPERTISE

“Our training, in conjunction with other affiliated corporations, really helps folks to seek and obtain certifications for promotion within their career path” – Good Roads

LEGACY

Support can continue “even through retirement, where we are able to offer a discounted membership fee and certain additional benefits, relevant to that stage of their lives” – ICAEW

Learning Through Corporate and Individual Partnerships

Learning technology is the foundation upon which these lifelong career journeys are being built. It is also opening up opportunities to generate additional revenue that can be reinvested back into membership value.

One such opportunity lies in working directly with organizations within the industries that associations represent.

This is a key focus for Andrew Howie, chief finance and commercial officer at the British Society of Lifestyle Medicine. The BSLM is working with organizations to help them deliver lifestyle medicine training to their employees. It has recently secured a contract with a multinational client, with almost 60,000 employees.

“We’re able to offer accessible tools and resources that are relevant to people at all levels within the organization,” says Andrew. “Not only is this beneficial to staff but it also has implications for the company, helping to reduce sickness and increase productivity. It’s the flexibility of our learning platform that has opened up these opportunities to us.”

As Andrea explains, this ability to deliver engaging content efficiently is critical to serving the ICAEW’s ultimate purpose: engaging those they serve.

“Engagement drives everything for us,” says Andrea, and it’s this dedication to member experience which allows the ICAEW to be a lifelong partner to its students and members.

“As they grow in their careers, so do we in our ability to offer support which caters to their ever-changing needs,” explains Andrea. “That is what keeps our members engaged and that is why the vast majority stay with us, even through retirement, when we are able to offer a discounted membership fee and certain additional benefits, relevant to that stage of their lives.”

The CIPD has also seen significant success here. While the association typically sees an average net membership increase of approximately 3,000 per year, the introduction of corporate membership is expected to accelerate this growth, potentially adding 5,000 members annually.

“It’s an exciting model for us, to convince one decision-maker in an organization to support their entire team’s development rather than try to convince an entire profession, individual by individual,”

David D’Souza
director of profession, CIPD

5 WAYS ASSOCIATIONS ARE EARNING THROUGH LEARNING

Modular learning design

Shorter, stackable courses

Corporate learning partnerships

Packaged learning for employers

Specialist career pathways

Deep skills and credentials

International expansion

Cross-border growth

Micro-credential bundling

Bite-size qualifications with CPD

Learning Without Borders

Blended learning removes barriers around physical location and reduces the workload on instructors, making learning more accessible for the member and therefore more scalable for the association. This is evident at the LIA where removing geographical constraints has opened up its learning offering to an international audience.

“Through attending events in the Middle East, I saw there was a significant demand for UK-accredited lighting expertise,” says Teresa. “This global expansion could become a major revenue stream for us, made possible by our ability to deliver scalable, online learning.”

International expansion is also fundamental to the BSLM. It is currently delivering its core accreditation to the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine, for example, generating significant overseas revenue that is being re-invested back into organizational efficiency and member services.

Education That Funds the Future of Your Organization

Regardless of the sector or the membership base, enhanced digital learning capabilities are delivering exceptional contribution margins for associations—and helping secure support at board levels. For the LIA, the shift to digital, modular and AI-supported learning has vastly improved the efficiency of its education offerings. The association can also serve more learners without increasing costs, with every additional learner contributing to the bottom line.

One pilot program saw 77 learners register for a course in just two weeks. This compares to a previous average of 400 learners completing courses over a 12-month period—demonstrating the potential of the LIA's ability to respond and scale at pace.

“Our instructor-led training had high costs, including trainer fees, administration and venue hire, with a low contribution margin of approximately 5%,” says Teresa. “By moving to online, self-paced learning, we have been able to maintain our income while significantly reducing our overheads, leading to a projected 75% contribution margin within the next 18 months.”

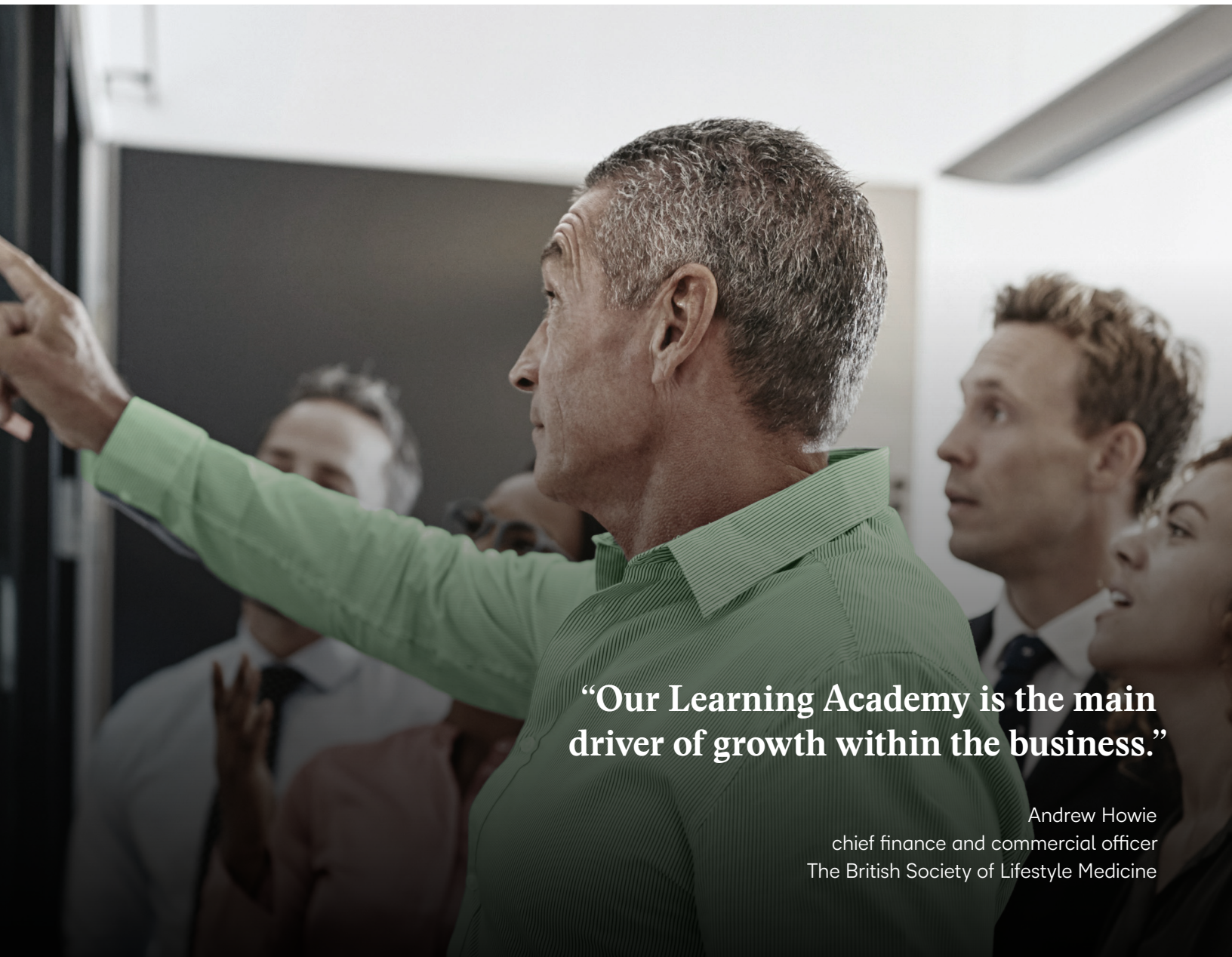
Eric emphasizes how incorporating online learning at Good Roads not only opened up access to their programming but helped to reduce the time it took to complete it.

“We’ve taken something that once took learners two years to complete through in-person sessions [that] can now be finished in as little as two weeks,” he says.



“Moving the courses online led to a nearly 50% increase in participation that year, resulting in the highest attendance in the program’s history.”

“Our Learning Academy is the main driver of growth within the business,” adds Andrew at the BSLM. Income from education now represents over 50% of turnover, and the organization has doubled its revenues over the past three years. Since January 2023 the association has provided education to over 2,500 individuals and has delivered more than 70,000 hours of high-quality online learning to people in over 25 countries.



“Our Learning Academy is the main driver of growth within the business.”

Andrew Howie
chief finance and commercial officer
The British Society of Lifestyle Medicine

EDUCATION AS A REVENUE GENERATOR: THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF LIFESTYLE MEDICINE

2,500+

individuals educated
since January 2023

70,000+

hours of online
learning delivered
across 25+ countries

2,500,000+

patients receive care
from GPs who have
completed the BSLM
Core Accreditation

50%+

of total revenue is
generated through
learning

Learning That is Flexible —Repurposing, Short Courses and Micro-Credentials

Learning management platforms enable associations to maximize the potential of their content—whether that’s through refreshing, repurposing or repackaging it into shorter, bite-sized course material. The ability to update learning content at speed is also crucial when responding to industry changes. As part of the ICAEW’s Specialized Learning offering, the institute will be providing learning packages on new and emerging trends, such as on changing accounting standards and budget updates. Repurposing content to offer this in various digestible formats allows the ICAEW to ensure learning content is reflective of current market conditions, while maintaining internal operational efficiency.

“What might constitute valuable learning for one person is completely different for someone else, which is why we need to be able to offer a wide variety of learning opportunities that offer value to all of our members.”

Andrea Cook
director, specialised and lifelong learning
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

Offering smarter bundling and packaging can also help increase the percentage of members that access additional learning, which justifies the investment into content creation for the association. For David at the CIPD, this is also about maximizing the use of existing resources, whether that’s through intelligent integration across departments or rethinking how existing systems can be used more effectively.

“Essentially we’re looking at ways to link content in more meaningful ways,” he explains. “For example, if someone completes a course, they’ll receive a prompt on the next logical steps, such as upgrading their membership, offering a discount on the next course or accessing related materials.”

David sees “sweating the assets” and deriving maximum value from every piece of content as being key to efficiency, better user experiences and sustainable growth.

“When we interview an expert, we don’t just use that as a one-off piece of content,” he says. “We look at whether it can be used in a podcast, in a magazine article, as part of a written guide or within a learning module.”



Learning Through Collaboration

“There are challenges that online learning presents, but we’ve made a concerted effort to ensure that we’re incorporating strategic interactive elements for our learners and transform them from passive consumers to active participants,” says Kyla.

As industries and demands for specialist expertise evolve, associations see collaboration as crucial for delivering more rounded skills and expertise—and providing ultimate value to members.

Collaboration is the only way to maintain unified high standards of training across the lighting industry, according to Teresa at the LIA. **“The transformation of our learning offering has enabled us to do some soul searching and understand where we can really add value in our industry,”** she says.

Ayça and Teresa have a vision for a single, unified path for professional development, but they also recognise that this requires extensive collaboration.

“Our utopia moment will be when associations across our industry can work together to offer people a clear, transparent and succinct route from the start of their career to the end,” Teresa says. “Technology can play a major role in making that happen.”

David D’Souza agrees that the CIPD should focus on the areas in which it excels. **“Rather than trying to become AI experts overnight, we should be partnering with people who already have deep expertise in that space,”** he says. “This will enable us to deliver highly relevant and up-to-date learning to our members, quickly.”

At Good Road, Kyla emphasizes the need for internal collaboration to ensure the learner is at the center of everything they do, regardless of modality. She works closely with her colleague to maintain synchronicities between courses that are delivered both in-person and online.



“What really matters the most to us, and it’s a question that we ask ourselves often is, how do we deliver this content to how do we create an experience in an environment where learners will remember it and will have the most impact?”



ENGAGING LEARNING = ENGAGED MEMBERS

Course completion numbers have soared at Good Road as a result. It’s seeing an average course completion rate of 85%—with assessment scores above 80%—and ten times the number of online enrollments within two years of launching.

Learning That Supports a Sustainable and Exciting Future

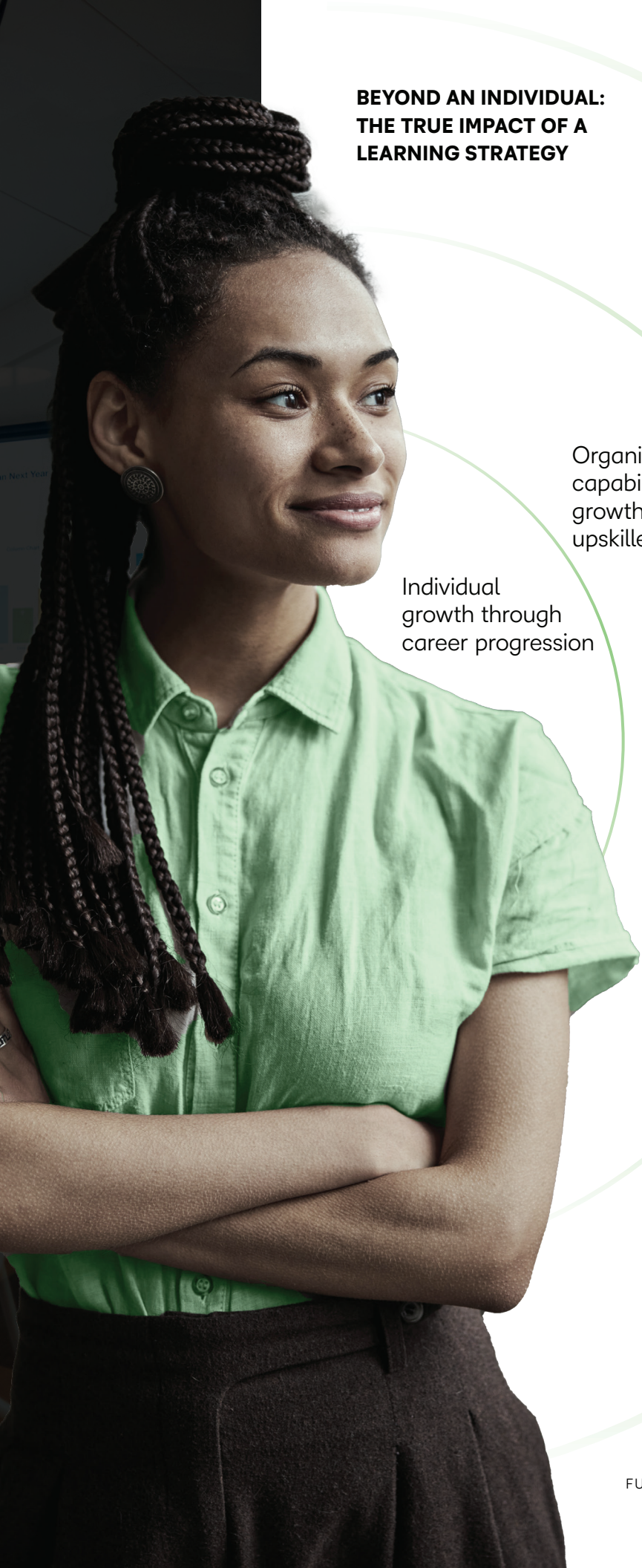
“National growth is a part of our strategic initiative, and it’s something that we’re working towards. Our array of online courses is something that we’re putting forward to take the next steps in that direction,” Kyla explains.

Learning is viewed as being pivotal to their future to reach an even wider audience of learners.

“Our online programming is structured modularly, so it’ll help us make us agile and keep us nimble so that we can alter our courses for other provinces across the country and hopefully across other countries,” she adds.

From our conversations, it’s clear that associations remain laser-focused on their purpose—to improve industries and the lives of the people who work in them. But they also recognise that an effective learning strategy is an enabler of this, providing the financial stability required to secure their future and give more back to members.

Although our contributors represent a variety of sectors and face a range of challenges, they are united in their desire to deliver exceptional learning experiences to their members. By recognising the commercial contribution that an effective learning strategy can make to member value—as well as its impact on the bottom line—professional associations can put themselves in a strong position to fund their future and transform the industries they serve.



**BEYOND AN INDIVIDUAL:
THE TRUE IMPACT OF A
LEARNING STRATEGY**

Wider societal benefit through industries with highly skilled specialists (vs. skills gaps/shortages)

Raising overall industry standards

Organizational capability growth through upskilled workforce

Individual growth through career progression

About D2L

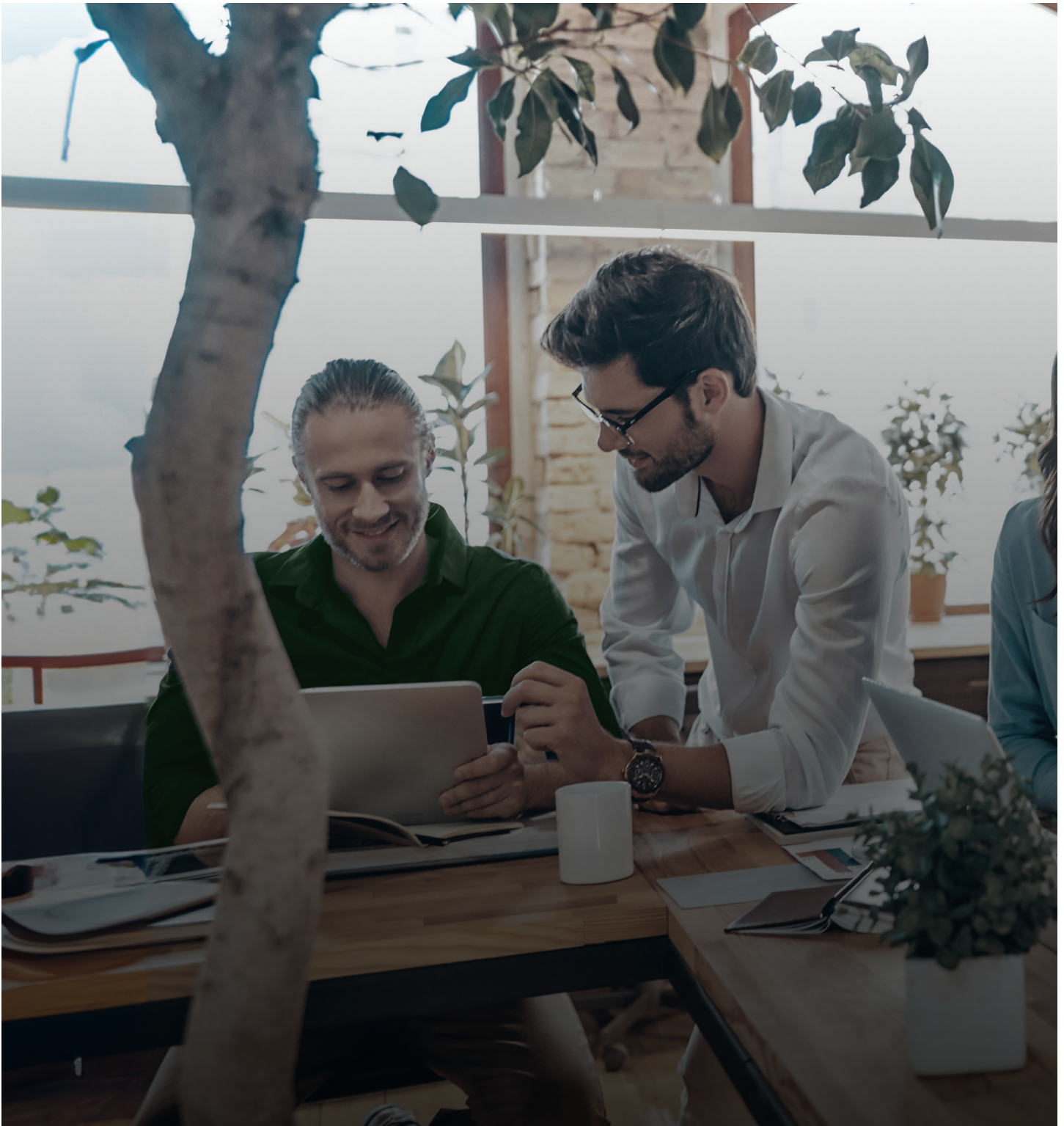
D2L is a global learning innovation company, reshaping the future of education and work. We are leading the way into a new era of personalised learning, driven by the belief that everyone deserves access to high-quality education, regardless of age, ability or location.

Our signature technology product—D2L Brightspace—enhances the learning experience for millions of learners at every stage of life, from the earliest days of school to the world of work.

Learn more at d2l.com












D2L

D2L CORPORATION

Global Headquarters
137 Glasgow Street Suite 560
Kitchener, ON
N2G 4X8

-  /D2Linc
-  @D2L
-  @D2L
-  [linkedin.com/company/D2L](https://www.linkedin.com/company/D2L)
-  ContactUs@D2L.com