

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 - 2027

THE WAY
FORWARD



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) is a non-profit multi-stakeholder initiative focused on addressing the employment and employability challenges facing Québec's English-speaking community. This strategic plan for 2024-2027 outlines five key shifts, the introduction of a third organisational pillar, and eleven strategic goals that will guide PERT's efforts to address the unique employment challenges faced by English speakers in Québec.

FIVE KEY SHIFTS IN OUR FOCUS

1

Expand and deepen relationships with francophone stakeholders

Building relationships with francophone employers, unions, educational institutions, and civil society organisations is crucial in a predominantly francophone labour market. This shift enables PERT to advocate more effectively for the needs of English-speaking Quebecers and access new collaborative opportunities.

2

Communicate more assertively while leveraging a robust evidence-base

Persistent myths about the English-speaking population create resistance to targeted employability initiatives. PERT aims to dispel these misconceptions through data-driven advocacy, positioning itself as a critical voice in promoting the inclusion of English speakers in Québec's labour market.

3

Identify and implement a PERT-driven research agenda

By centering its research on the challenges and gaps identified by the community itself, PERT ensures that its work remains relevant and impactful. This shift highlights PERT's commitment to grounding its work in the needs of English-speaking Quebecers, rather than being solely guided by external funding opportunities.

4

Develop innovative solutions to increase employability for the English-speaking community

Leveraging its comprehensive knowledge and cross-sectoral perspectives, PERT will support the development of innovative solutions by collaborating with stakeholders. This approach ensures that projects are tailored, effective, and scalable to meet the community's needs.

5

Grow PERT internally to be able to respond to new realities

To stay adaptable in a changing landscape, PERT will prioritise internal growth, ensuring it remains responsive and capable of addressing the evolving needs of Québec's English-speaking workforce.



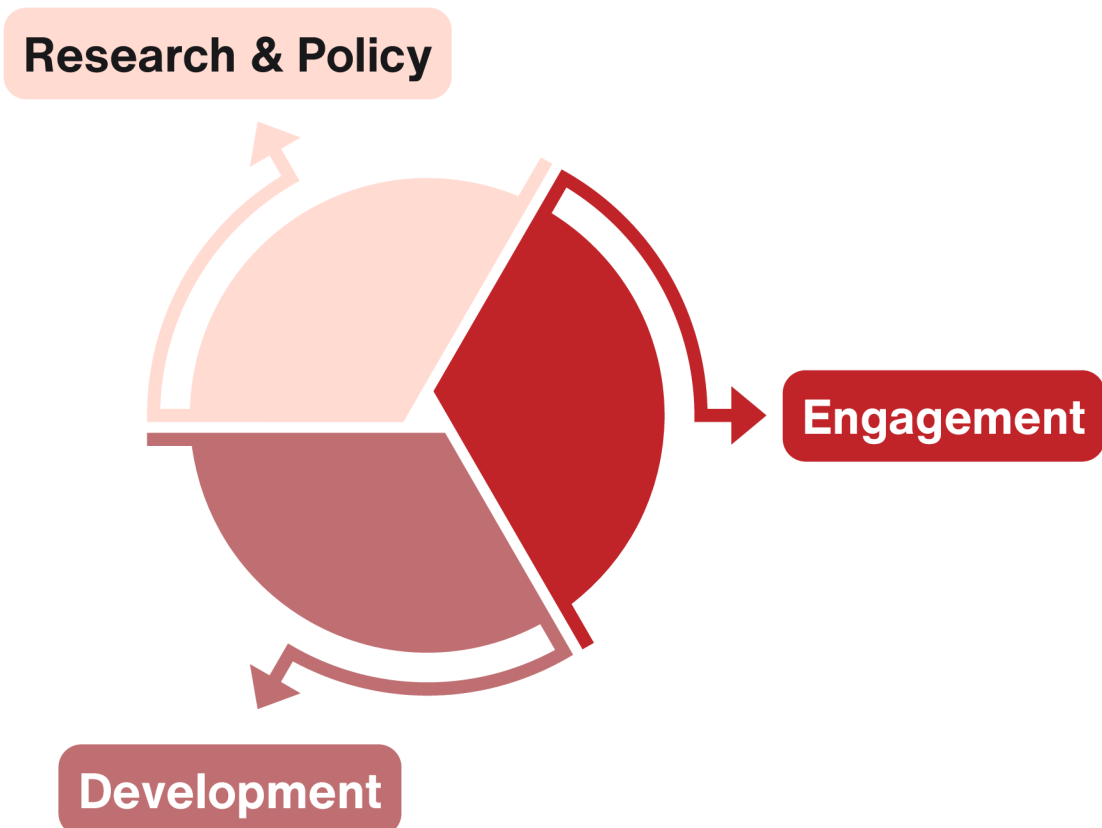
INTRODUCING A THIRD ORGANISATIONAL PILLAR TO DELIVER SOLUTIONS

The addition of the development pillar expands PERT's organisational pillars from two to three:

- **Development:** Focuses on the creation, testing, and scaling of innovative solutions to address the employability needs of English-speaking Quebecers.

This pillar is being added to the two core pillars that have guided PERT's work over the last few years:

- **Research & Policy:** Provides a data-driven foundation for understanding employment issues, identifying gaps, and informing policy with evidence-based recommendations.
- **Engagement:** Focuses on fostering collaboration with stakeholders, advocating for English speakers, and creating an environment for diverse stakeholders to address employability challenges together.



ELEVEN STRATEGIC GOALS TO DRIVE IMPACTFUL CHANGE

Engagement



Goal 1

Inclusion of Québec's English-speaking community as a priority clientele within the action plans of the Government of Québec



Goal 2

Develop and expand relationships with francophone civil society partners

Research & Policy



Goal 3

Develop relationships with a broad base of employers and employer representative groups



Goal 4

Improve the data environment on the employability of the English-speaking community

Development



Goal 5

Identify and implement PERT's research priorities



Goal 6

Explore and implement multi-stakeholder partnerships to develop and deliver innovative employability solutions

Strategic Capacity Building



Goal 7

Diversify funding



Goal 8

Mature PERT's HR capacity



Goal 9

Continue to strengthen the governance structure



Goal 10

Ensure agility and strength of organisational practices



Goal 11

Enhancing engagement with members



INTRODUCTION

Over the last four years, PERT has delivered on its robust engagement and policy agenda. This has led to the publication of a significant number of policy reports, the organisation of important events and webinars, as well as impactful engagement with stakeholders and government. Despite these accomplishments, the landscape in which PERT operates is rapidly evolving. Political and socio-economic changes have created both new challenges and opportunities. This context required a re-evaluation and updating of PERT's strategic directions. The following strategic plan is PERT's response to that evolving context, and also takes into account its various organisational accomplishments to date while leveraging what has worked.

This strategic plan was developed by a strategic planning subcommittee created by PERT's Board of the Directors. The subcommittee was led by three PERT board members: Trina Belanger, Rachel Hunting, and Malcolm Lewis-Richmond. They were supported by Frances Ravensbergen working as an external consultant, and by PERT's Executive Director Nicholas Salter. The group held six meetings where they reviewed key documents, conducted an internal and external scan, and developed a draft plan.

PERT's Board of Directors as well as PERT's associate members were consulted on the draft plan during the summer of 2024 via three consultation sessions. A member's survey was also launched. Feedback and comments from that survey were incorporated into this updated strategic plan.

The following strategic plan is a result of that comprehensive process, and positions PERT well to take on the employability challenges and opportunities facing Québec's English-speaking community.

OUR VISION & MISSION

OUR VISION

English-speaking Quebecers are actively living, working, thriving and making our contribution to a strong and vibrant Québec economy.

OUR MISSION

The Provincial Employment Roundtable (PERT) is a non-profit policy, research and engagement organisation that works with employment service delivery organisations, employers, partners in education, and government to research and address employment challenges and opportunities of the English-speaking communities across Québec. PERT is dedicated to building and strengthening employment support networks and ensuring inclusion in Québec's labour market for generations to come.



OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PERT has made significant strides in its capacity to address the employment challenges facing Québec's English-speaking community since it first launched in 2020.

Over the past few years, PERT has produced thirty-five comprehensive policy reports, organised eleven webinars, three in-person conferences, participated in eleven government consultations, and grown its membership to over 100 members.

OUR MEMBERSHIP

PERT's membership is distributed across four sectoral tables:

Employment Services Sectoral Table

Brings together practitioners, experts, users, stakeholders and industry leaders from the employment services sector in order to discuss the gaps in employment service delivery and skills training that are contributing to the employability and employment challenges experienced by the English-speaking communities of Québec.

Education Sectoral Table

Brings together educators, education experts, and students from across the province in order to discuss the gaps in education and programming that are contributing to the employability and employment challenges experienced by the English-speaking communities of Québec.





Employers Sectoral Table

Brings together stakeholders and industry leaders from Québec's business community, nonprofits and para-public sectors in order to discuss the gaps in policies, tools, and training that are contributing to the employability and employment challenges experienced by the English-speaking communities of Québec.



Employment Services Sectoral Table

Brings together stakeholders and community organisations working in the regions to consider policy issues, develop policy recommendations, and create solutions that respond to the issues and challenges facing English speakers living in Québec's regional communities in the areas of employment and employability.

OUR RESEARCH

PERT's regional profiles used 2016 census data to examine the state of employment for English speakers across the province's seventeen administrative regions. Most recently, PERT updated these reports with 2021 census data.

PERT has also mapped employment supports for racialized, First Nations and Inuit, and immigrant English-speaking communities, as well as examined the state of employment for mature workers. This research provides critical insights into unemployment rates, income disparities, and the higher rates of poverty across the diverse identity-based or geographic sub-communities within Québec's broader English-speaking community.

Additionally, PERT has conducted a series of reports which examine the French-language barriers to employment faced by English speakers, various best practices in language learning to address these, and assessments of the current French-language learning ecosystem in Québec.

IN NUMBERS

11

Webinars

35

Policy reports
completed,
available in
English and
French

11

Government
consultations

+1000

Survey
participants

40

Media
mentions

3

Conferences
held

OUR ENGAGEMENT

PERT has engaged its community and external stakeholders via online and in-person events. These outreach activities have included an online conference on French-language learning, along with an in-person conference on the economic potential of Québec's English speakers with partners the Regional Development Network (RDN) and the Consortium of English-language CEGEPs, Colleges and Universities of Québec (the Consortium). PERT's efforts have also included a series of webinars on a variety of topics ranging from mature workers to French-language learning best practices.

Outreach with a number of stakeholders across its sectors of interest has been a priority for PERT. To engage with employers, PERT has joined the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ), the Chambre de commerce du Montréal métropolitain (CCMM) and the Conseil du patronat du Québec (CPQ). Within these forums, PERT has participated in a number of their events and workforce development committees.

In the education sector, PERT has joined the Québec English-Speaking Communities Research Network's (QUESCREN) Inter-Level Educational Table (ILET) and participated in their Education and Vitality Forum 2023. PERT has also joined the Consortium of English-language CEGEPs, Colleges and Universities of Québec's Inter-institutional Skills for Success Steering Committee, as well as participated in their Skills Symposium 2023.

With regards to the employment service delivery sector, PERT has become a supporting member of the Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC). PERT has also developed a strong relationship with the Alliance des centres-conseils en emploi (AXTRA). PERT has actively participated in and presented at both these organisations' respective events and conferences.



OUR POLICY WORK

By publishing briefs and policy recommendations, PERT has influenced government policies to better support English speakers in Québec's labour market. More specifically, PERT has engaged in provincial and federal pre-budget consultations, advocating for increased investment in employability programs and work-integrated French-language training opportunities. PERT has also presented at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and submitted a series of briefs to provincial government consultations including: youth, poverty, and the future of the French language.

Since its creation, PERT has contributed to the achievement of three notable policy victories:

- The introduction of a targeted Employment Assistance Fund of 208 million dollars over five years as part of the Federal government's updated action plan for official languages for 2023-2028.
- The widening of eligibility for French-language training to all Quebecers as part of the creation of Francisation Québec.
- The provincial government's commitment to collect more linguistic data as part of its new plan for the future of the French language.

NEW INITIATIVES

PERT has also recently secured two notable and financially well-resourced projects: a mentorship and networking program with Francisation Québec, and a program which targets employers funded by the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise (SRQEA). This last project seeks to aid employers with their integration of French-language training in their workplaces, as well as the recruitment and retention of English speakers.

THE EVOLVING CONTEXT IN WHICH WE OPERATE

The English-speaking community, which now represents 14.9 % of Québec's total population, is the largest official minority language community (OLMC) within a Canadian province. Though the community has historically been regarded as being an ethnically and economically homogeneous group, the reality on the ground is much different. In fact, Québec's English-speaking population is an incredibly diverse group made up of many communities with different ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations, education, and income levels spread across the province's 17 regions.

Over the last four years, PERT has mobilized its stakeholders in the English-speaking community to gain insight on the employment situation and challenges their communities are facing.

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

Higher levels of unemployment

- Despite high levels of education, Québec's English-speaking community has a higher unemployment rate than francophones.
- The unemployment rate for English speakers in Québec has increased since 2016. English speakers face an unemployment rate of 10.9%, four percentage points higher than French speakers' 6.9%.
- This difference has doubled since the 2016 census, when the gap was 2 percentage points.
- According to the 2016 census, there were approximately 12,000 ('12 K gap') more unemployed English-speaking individuals than there were French-speaking persons relative to the proportion of each language group within the total population. Looking at 2021 census data, that gap has now increased to 28,000 ('28 K gap').



Lower incomes

- English speakers continue to earn lower incomes compared to French speakers across the province: English speakers have an after-tax median income that is \$2,800 lower than French speakers and a median employment income that is \$5,200 less than French speakers.
- The gap in median employment income between English and French speakers has widened significantly since 2016; English speakers have a median employment income that is \$5,200 less than French speakers, previously \$2,648.



Higher levels of poverty

- The provincial poverty rate for English speakers stands at 10%, nearly double that of their French-speaking counterparts, who have a rate of 5.8%.
- English speakers in Québec are also twice as likely to live beneath the low-income cut-off (LICO) level. Specifically, 8.9% of the English-speaking population in Québec live under the LICO threshold, compared to just 4.5% of French speakers.

At the same time, in the first quarter of 2024, there were approximately 143,400 job vacancies in Québec. In this context, one would expect that Québec's English speakers would be able to thrive in the labour market and not only find meaningful employment but also close the gap with their francophone counterparts. Yet, stakeholders on the ground confirm that English speakers still face many employment barriers. Moreover, there are fears that the changes to the employment landscape brought about by the implementation of Bill 96 will further exacerbate these existing employment gaps.

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

PERT's research & policy work has identified these key challenges to the employability of our community.

Lack of access to adapted employment services

- Based on the most recently available data from 2021-2022, the Québec government spends approximately only 3 percent of its funds for external employment service providers, or \$7 million, on employment service delivery organisations directly supporting the English-speaking community.
- The English-speaking community is not recognized as an under-represented group or targeted in the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale's *Plan d'action des services publics d'emploi* nor in its *Plan d'action gouvernemental visant la lutte contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale 2024-2029*.

Limited French-language training for those in the workforce

- Inadequate levels of professional French, especially after secondary school, as well as low confidence levels when speaking professional French are barriers that are not being met by the existing language training infrastructure.
- Despite the creation of Francisation Québec and the widening of eligibility to French-language training for all Quebecers — irrespective of their immigration status — French-language training continues to be the greatest barrier to an English speaker's ability to find, maintain and advance within the Québec workforce. Programming is:
 - Inadequate in regards to support for integration within professional orders such as medicine, engineering and law.
 - Finding information, determining eligibility, and accessing courses and materials for French-language training remains confusing. This includes long delays and waiting lists for existing courses.
 - Not accessible enough in terms of geographic distance. Users face challenges with signing up for courses in their region.
- The English-speaking community also remains unaware of the Québec government's creation of Francisation Québec and the free offer of French-language courses for Québec residents.



Inadequate skills training ecosystem

- English speakers pursue vocational education at half the rate of French speakers: 6.2% of English speakers in Québec have a vocational education diploma, compared to 13.2% of French speakers.
- More than half of all English-language vocational and technical training (VTT) programs offered in Québec (approximately 54%) are located on the island of Montréal, with regional communities facing challenges accessing these important programs.
- The lack of bridging programs to help graduating English-speaking students enter the labour market contributes to the brain drain of skilled workers who often leave Québec after struggling to find employment.

The community is also spread out unevenly throughout the province's 17 administrative regions, which poses a unique challenge in terms of access to employment services in their language, French-language training, and educational and upskilling opportunities. It's also unclear how the recent changes to the tuition structure of Québec's English-speaking universities will impact the existing education system, and further limit skills training opportunities for the English-speaking community.

In addition to these access issues, the wide-ranging disparities between the sub-groups that make up the English-speaking community, each with their own specific needs, add an additional level of complexity to the employment and socio-economic challenges they face, in a province that recognizes French as the only official language.

FIVE KEY SHIFTS IN OUR FOCUS

Labour market evolution owing to economic and technological change, as well as a changing policy landscape, calls for a strategic realignment. PERT's new strategic planning process identified five key shifts to help the organisation to position itself effectively to address the English-speaking community's employability challenges.

1

Expand and deepen relationships with francophone stakeholders

Given that Québec's labour market is primarily francophone — and increasingly so in a post Bill 96 context — building relationships with francophone employers, unions, educational institutions, professional associations, and civil society organisations will allow PERT to advocate more effectively for the English-speaking community's needs. It will also create pathways for accessing new opportunities and developing partnerships.

2

Communicate more assertively while leveraging a robust evidence-base

Persistent myths and misconceptions about Québec's English-speaking population as wealthy and homogenous remain. These stereotypes contribute to resistance against PERT's policy efforts and the implementation of its recommendations. By dispelling misconceptions through robust data and compelling narratives, PERT can challenge prevailing biases and build a more accurate understanding of the employment challenges faced by English-speaking Quebecers. This approach will position PERT as a critical voice in shifting the public and policy discourse towards greater inclusion and support for Québec's English-speaking community.

3

Identify and implement a PERT-driven research agenda

PERT has established itself as a research-driven policy organisation, producing valuable reports on the employment challenges and opportunities for Québec's English speakers. Calls for proposals offered by funders may not always match the community's priorities. This makes it essential to further develop a policy & research agenda that is aligned with PERT's goals and explore ways to carry out this policy & research work, irrespective of the funding opportunities present over the next few years.

4

Develop in partnership with members and key stakeholders, innovative solutions to increase the employability for the English-speaking community

PERT's extensive knowledge base positions it as capable of identifying gaps, leveraging data-driven insights, and guiding the development of targeted solutions that address the community's specific employment needs. By supporting the development of innovative solutions, PERT can bring together its cross-sectoral membership with its network of diverse stakeholders: employers, industry associations, unions, and educational institutions. This collaborative approach will ensure that initiatives are tailored to the unique context of Québec's English-speaking population and regional economies.

5

Grow PERT internally to be able to respond to new realities

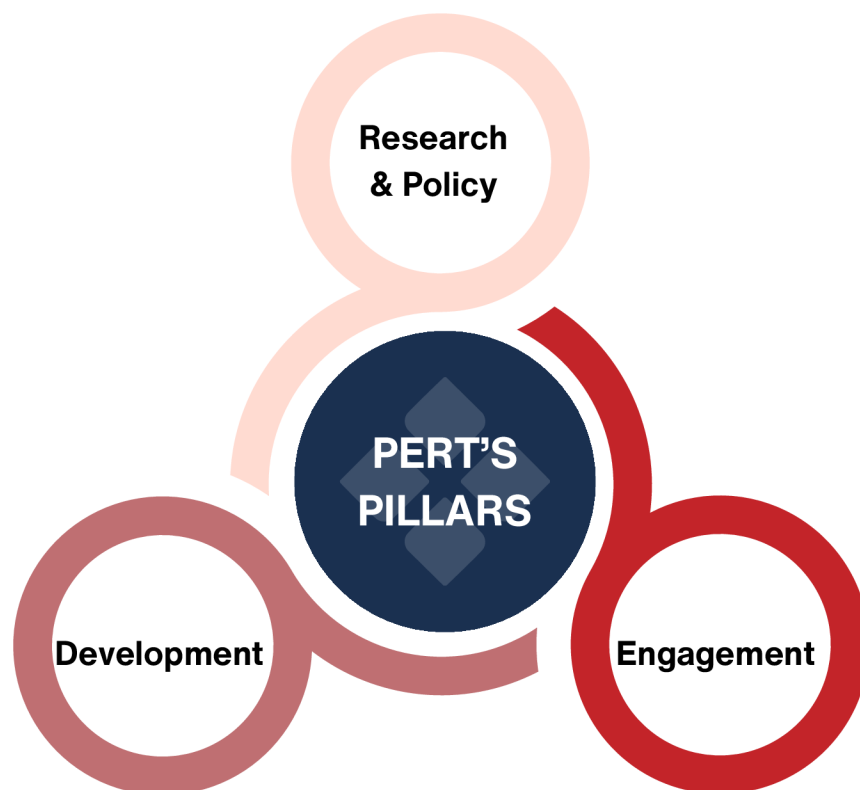
By investing in internal growth, PERT ensures it can adapt to new challenges and seize emerging opportunities, keeping the organisation relevant and capable of meeting the evolving needs of Québec's English-speaking workforce.

INTRODUCING A THIRD ORGANISATIONAL PILLAR TO DELIVER SOLUTIONS

For the last few years, PERT's approach has rested on two organisational pillars: Engagement, and Research & Policy. This strategic plan includes the addition of a third pillar: Development.

The addition of the Development pillar recognizes the need to move beyond identifying challenges and towards actively creating and testing solutions. This pillar focuses on mobilizing resources and leveraging the expertise of sectoral table members to innovate and scale projects that directly impact employability.

By introducing this pillar, PERT will position itself not just as a facilitator of discussions but as proactive in developing, piloting, and implementing initiatives that address the community's employment needs.





Research & Policy

- Develop a deeper understanding of the challenges and problems in the employability and employment landscape.
- Identify gaps in the data and improve the availability of information through research.
- Identify policy recommendations, disseminate research-based knowledge and advance solutions.

Engagement

- Foster an environment of engagement and collaboration between different stakeholders to have an impact on the employability of Québec's English speakers.
- Work with stakeholders for the benefit of Québec's English speakers.
- Engage with all stakeholders to identify and advocate for data-driven solutions to employability issues.

Development

- Mobilize resources to work across sectors in collaboration with members and stakeholders to develop, test, evaluate, and introduce innovative solutions to address the community's employment.
- Leverage the knowledge and expertise of sectoral table members to identify projects to scale or develop.

ELEVEN STRATEGIC GOALS TO DRIVE IMPACTFUL CHANGE

These eleven strategic goals will guide PERT in focusing its efforts on critical areas that will drive impactful change. The goals and actions are centred on PERT's three pillars. They also include a direction focused on strategic capacity building. This will enable PERT to address immediate needs but also strengthen the organisation's capacity to respond to evolving opportunities and challenges.

Engagement

1

Inclusion of Québec's English-speaking community as a priority clientele within the action plans of the Government of Québec

Key Actions:

- Work with the Comité Consultatif pour les Québécois(es) d'expression Anglaise (CCQEA) and other stakeholders to ensure this recognition is included in the *Plan d'action des services publics d'emploi*.
- Continue working with and build upon the relationships with key government departments, units, committees, and forums, etc.
- Develop deeper knowledge about how to work with government structures in Québec.

2

Develop and expand relationships with Francophone civil society partners

Key Actions:

- Expand upon and further explore relationships with unions.
- Develop relationships with francophone think tanks.
- Connect with other francophone employment entities doing similar work.

3

Develop relationships with a broad base of employers and employer representative groups

Key Actions:

- Expand on relationships with existing business and employer representative groups.
- Leverage new projects to concretely engage with employers.
- Develop networks with employers across the province and across industries.

Research & Policy

4

Improve the data environment on the employability of the English-speaking community

Key Actions:

- Develop a data strategy which examines the data landscape and availability of existing data, as well as avenues for new and timely data.
- Explore real-time data opportunities.
- Examine the viability of a yearly employment survey.
- Analyze alternative sources of data on the community's employability outcomes.

5

Identify and implement PERT's research & policy priorities

Key Actions:

- Increase collaboration with academia and recognition of PERT's work within educational and research institutions.
- Align PERT's research findings with the current economic context, its evolution, and the increase focus on productivity, underemployment and job quality.
- Disseminate and explain findings with all stakeholders, including promoting policy implications and solutions identified by the research.

6

Explore and implement multi-stakeholder partnerships to develop and deliver innovative employability solutions

Key Actions:

- Implement a framework to ensure that development of solutions is in co-creation with other stakeholders.
 - Ensure underrepresented groups and regional groups in the English-speaking community are included in project development.
 - Research models that have been successful in accomplishing this while maintaining a strong coalition.
 - Develop clear criteria for when and how this is done.
 - Inventory of existing initiatives and gaps in employability solutions.
 - Scope and develop proposals for alternative and untapped avenues for project development.
-

7

Diversify funding

Key Actions:

- Expand sources of funding by examining a wide range of funders including foundations.
 - Explore self-generation of funds via consultancy or other services.
 - Push for additional core funding to have more ability to determine priorities.
 - Win research grants with or from academia.
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8

Mature PERT's HR capacity

Key Actions:

- Be an exemplary employer and implement employment best practices.
 - Explore the creation of a more dedicated HR position.
 - Implement and evaluate the new employee professional development plan.
-

9

Continue to strengthen the governance structure

Key Actions:

- Explore board training opportunities.
 - Target the 50-30 Challenge.
 - Implement a system to review all policies, vision statements, and other key documents on a rotating basis.
 - Examine opportunities to update or formalise board structure.
-

10

Ensure agility and strength of organisational practices

Key Actions:

- Implement project management best practices.
 - Clarify and define PERT's approach to partnerships.
 - Update overall communications & outreach plan.
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11

Enhancing engagement with members

Key Actions:

- Build connections between members and PERT.
 - Foster ownership of sectoral table processes and outcomes.
 - Strengthen internal engagement.
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