



# 2022-2023 Annual Report



**Attract. Connect. Educate. Advocate.**

# WRLA MISSION & VISION

## OUR VISION

To be the strategic partner our members rely on to attract talent, shape government policy, and connect with stakeholders to support our industry.

## OUR MISSION

To be the voice and an essential resource for the Lumber and Building Materials Industry in Western Canada by facilitating critical industry events, delivering value-added training and advocating to resolve key industry issues.

## OUR ROLE

**Attract. Connect. Educate. Advocate.**



## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1. Industry and Member Driven**  
We embrace a servant leadership mentality with the industry and our members.
- 2. Strategic Partnerships**  
We realize we cannot do everything ourselves so we collaborate with “best in class” partners to ensure optimum value for our members.
- 3. Embrace Technology**  
We embed technology within our operations and find new ways to deploy it within the industry.
- 4. Innovation and Continuous Improvement**  
We constantly improve our programs to exceed industry expectations and always seek new, innovative ways of doing things.
- 5. Professionalism**  
We employ strong business acumen and are committed to integrity and respect in everything we do.
- 6. Diversity and Inclusiveness**  
We promote and embrace diversity in the workplace, the board room, and within our operation.
- 7. Corporate Social Responsibility**  
We are responsible to our people and our planet, while ensuring financial sustainability.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Each year the annual report reminds us of the work we have done and how far we have come. While we haven't yet achieved the vision that we established for the WRLA, we have made significant progress. And while we don't conduct business looking in the rear-view mirror, looking back and recognizing our progress keeps us focused on the journey ahead.

We continued to reach new milestones in the last fiscal year in all areas of our programming. In terms of our strategic pillars, we were able to:

- ◇ Develop our public awareness campaign to support recruitment and retention needs for our members.
- ◇ Conduct a much-needed labour study.
- ◇ Implement our pilot project to connect grade 12 students with employment in the industry.
- ◇ Execute on our annual parliamentary days in Manitoba and Saskatchewan that led to further engagements, helping us to create an identity with government.
- ◇ Proceed with a normal showcase once again in 2023 and connect the industry to each other and to new products and business opportunities.
- ◇ Hire our first ever in-house curriculum team to establish the WRLA Academy and develop industry-specific curriculum to ensure our members have the training and development to support their recruitment needs.

On the journey of building a better WRLA and a better industry, it is important for us to stop and look at how far we have come. Our first annual report was introduced 5 years ago. When I look back on what we were reporting, it was the beginning for a lot of new things. A couple of key initiatives included the beginning of a formal advocacy program and the introduction of student tours connecting soon-to-be graduates of supply chain and marketing programs to an industry that was not talked about.

Despite its best efforts, COVID did not kill the WRLA, and in fact, I believe it made us stronger as we found new ways to connect, support, and add value to our members. While we don't want to repeat those years, we have learned a lot and have translated that into our programming. We encourage our members and their staff to continue to engage in all these areas.

I look forward to next year's report and the opportunity to highlight the progress in the next phase of WRLA growth.



Until then, our small but mighty WRLA team is dedicated to supporting the industry and ensuring that we are meeting your business needs.

We are often asked by members how they can serve on the WRLA Board of Directors. We strongly encourage those who wish to get involved to start by serving on one of our many committees so that we have good industry engagement in those areas. Please reach out to me for areas that you can lend your voice and experience, and let's go build a better industry together.

Liz Kovach  
President, WRLA



# THE YEAR IN SUMMARY



LET'S GO BUILD



CALGARY BOARD OF EDUCATION



WRLA ACADEMY



WRLA BUILDING & HARDWARE SHOWCASE

## BACK ON THE ROAD

Planning is everything, as the saying goes. So, when the WRLA (Western Retail Lumber Association) wanted to make sure we were doing the right things for our members, we brought them together and made a plan. At the start of 2022, we hosted an “Advocacy Summit” to discover the biggest challenges our membership was facing. Through this discussion, we arrived at a list of priorities that would inform our work during the year and set the agendas for the meetings we planned to hold with provincial governments across Western Canada.

Recruiting and retaining new workers has proven to be a challenge across the industry and hearing this directly from our members added both context and urgency to the issue.

Labour issues are one of those challenges that eclipse just about everything else until you address them. If you can't get enough people working for you to meet your orders, keep your doors open, or relieve the management from working a sixty-hour week, the rest of the problems seem less urgent.

In Alberta, WRLA undertook a comprehensive labour study that delved into the challenges and opportunities concerning job openings and potential workers. The results of this survey confirmed a few things we were aware of, such as the increasing rate of retirement, but also produced some eye-opening statistics, like finding out that over 50% of businesses surveyed had had job vacancies open for three months or more!

To aid in the recruiting and retaining of new talent, WRLA launched “Let's Go Build.” This is the largest public awareness campaign that WRLA has ever undertaken, and we hope it will revolutionize the hiring landscape for our entire membership. With eye-catching advertising and videos, this campaign drives job seekers directly to our members' websites and, more specifically, their job openings. We, as part of the Lumber and Building Materials Industry, know how great a working experience it is. Now we're letting the rest of Western Canada in on the secret. This campaign will run throughout 2023, and we are eagerly anticipating the results.

Moreover, we began a pilot project in 2022 with the Calgary Board of Education which put students to work at our members' businesses. These paid internships provide the students with class credit, along with wages, while the businesses get young, enthusiastic talent ready to learn about the industry and get real work experience. The program has been a fantastic success, paving the way for us to propose similar programs with school boards across Western Canada.

In a busy year that culminated in one of our best Building & Hardware Showcase events in years, we've only renewed our passion and enthusiasm for helping our members thrive and succeed.

Thank you for being a WRLA member. We are thrilled to have you with us.

# 2023 WRLA BUILDING & HARDWARE SHOWCASE

Over 2,000 exhibitors and retailers filled the third floor of Winnipeg's RBC Convention Centre for two days, bringing with them special deals, new products, and a willingness to connect and renew relationships.

## Some key highlights of this year's event:

- ◇ The Winnipeg Convention Centre was decked out with eye-catching graphics promoting this year's theme of "Building Better Retail" in conjunction with our co-hosts for the event, Burlington Merchandising and Fixtures (BMF).
- ◇ We had a fantastic slate of education sessions with special guests Joel Siebert from Mountain View Building Materials (Motivating your Sales Team), Pete Baran from Blueneck Business Mechanics (Succession Planning), Brad Cumiskey from Toolbx (E-Commerce) and more!
- ◇ The debut of WRLA Academy and our newly upgraded and rewritten Estimating courses, taught by Nicole Younge.
- ◇ Steve Buckle of Sexton Family of Companies gave a memorable speech as he received our Industry Achievement Award, sharing valuable insights into the nature of the industry and the value of all the relationships that are made on the road to success.
- ◇ Jodie Porter from Taiga Building Products and Jil Reid from All-Fab Building Components shared the distinction of being the first women to win Sales Representative of the Year Awards, Rob St. Onge from All-Fab, and Mark Wandy from Taiga also took home some well-deserved hardware.

## Key Stats

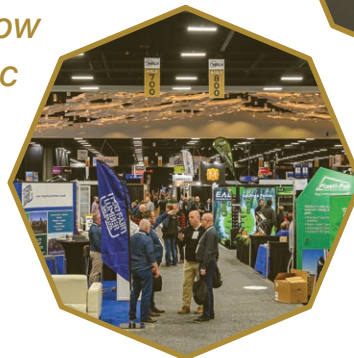
- ◇ 175 Exhibitors
- ◇ 2066 Delegates
- ◇ 606 Retailers

**Fun fact:** The WRLA App was back and growing in popularity, with 48% of all profiles logged in during the event!

*"Liz, I just wanted to send you an e-mail congratulating you and your team on putting on the WRLA show this year. You put together an amazing event and I can't even begin to understand the work that goes into planning and putting the show on. You have rebuilt the show and made it bigger and better after the pandemic killed the show. WOW, well done!*

*Thank you for everything you do for our industry!"*

*—Gary Fletcher, Trail Building Supplies Ltd.*





*“I wish I could have been there Thursday. It was the first time in my career that I did not attend the WRLA in full. I agree with the best comments everybody is now saying. It should be in Winnipeg all the time, the best convention facility, high ceilings, all windows, great restaurants, and the weather was awesome. People that did not show up will likely hear about how great the show was and will come next year. Fantastic job to you and your entire staff.”*

*—Gino Allegro, Johns Manville Canada Inc.*

*“I was really struggling with the number one concern that many startups are faced with. How do I get better penetration into the market? What is the best avenue? Social Media? Trade Shows? Etc. It was suggested to me by a colleague in the building industry that I consider joining the WRLA.*

*I did some research into the organization and afterwards I realized that this was a definite best choice for me. I will say that my decision to become a member of the WRLA was absolutely the best investment I have made so far.*

*The first day of the show was amazing. I was approached by a couple of distributors who were very interested in working with me before the show even started. This truly set the tone for an amazing two days. I ended up with over 24 leads from distributors to store owners to other manufacturers with whom we are discussing some possible joint ventures. I cannot express in words how amazing WRLA has been for my new venture. Thank you again for an outstanding, well-organized event. I look forward to a continued relationship with everyone at WRLA.”*

*—Rey Laferriere, PGT Global Inc.*

# ATTRACT

## SOLVING LABOUR ISSUES

In 2022, WRLA devoted our efforts to the issues our members told us were affecting them the most. One of the biggest areas of focus was an issue that's both easy to understand and complex to tackle—finding new employees.

In partnership with the Government of Alberta, we launched an intensive survey of our members with the goals of finding out where the biggest pain points were with hiring and discovering opportunities to widen the talent pool and bring new faces into the industry.

Speaking of bringing new talent into the Lumber and Building Materials Industry, we set out in the second half of the year to design a new public awareness campaign that would shine a spotlight on the many career opportunities that exist in LBM.

After much planning and groundwork, we were ready to launch! In May of 2023, WRLA rolled out the “Let’s Go Build!” Campaign. In addition to a robust ad campaign, the program will drive job seekers across Western Canada to a central careers page and, from there, to the various postings that our members have open. This is one of the biggest investments WRLA has made as an organization, but it’s one we believe has the potential to dramatically improve our members’ hiring prospects, and we can’t wait to get started!





# CONNECT

## GOLF TOURNAMENTS—FUN FOR A FANTASTIC PURPOSE

In 2022 we were thrilled to be back to a full lineup of four golf tournaments. In addition to getting our members together in Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, and Kenosha, we raised \$46,000 that went directly to funding our Education Grant program. Through this program, WRLA was able to make the prospect of re-training and upskilling a little more affordable for the 28 students who received grants.

With that important goal firmly in mind, it was also a real thrill to see so many new and familiar faces coming back together in one place for days filled with fun, exercise, and some truly incredible tee shots!

## NETWORKING EVENTS

One thing we wanted to be sure to do in 2022 was to get our Networking events going again. Not only are these get-togethers fun for us—as any opportunity to see our members are—they also give us a chance to talk face-to-face and find out what’s been going on in our members’ businesses and learn what we as an organization can do to help. They also, as the name of the event implies, give our members the chance to meet each other and, in many cases, make new business connections!

In September, once golf season wound down, we had a get-together at Regina’s Victoria’s Tavern that was very well attended. Then, in November, we brought members together in Edmonton for a night of drinks and carnival games at the Rec Room.

At the time of this writing, we’ve rounded the corner from spring to summer, and we can’t wait to start seeing our members out in a social setting once again. Cheers!







# EDUCATE

## WRLA ACADEMY

**A**s an organization, we're guided by our four key pillars—Attracting new talent to the industry, Connecting our members to one another and the industry, Advocating for our members through government outreach, and committing to Educate the people that work in this industry so that lifelong learning and career growth are possible. As important as all these pillars are, they can be summed up into one defining mission—to recognize and support the changing needs of our membership. It's with that mandate firmly in mind that we launched the new WRLA Academy. Starting with a complete reworking and upgrading of our popular Estimating courses to bring the course material in line with current building regulations and trends, we debuted the new material at the 2023 WRLA Building & Hardware Showcase.

Since then, we've built our in-house team with the addition of our Director of Professional Development, and then again in the spring of 2023 when we added a Professional Development Coordinator with a wealth of experience between them in curriculum development and learning management.

We've added a new Blueprint Reading Course to our online offerings, which we're strongly recommending to everyone considering Estimating Level 1—which no longer spends as much time on the basics in order to devote more resources to building skills. In addition, we also developed our newest online offering, an Industry Terminology course. This program is practically custom-made to welcome new employees into our members' businesses and quickly get them up to speed on common terms that will make them immediately more successful in their jobs. With summer rapidly approaching and so many students looking for work, this course will save employers both time and money!

*“Coming into this course for Estimating Levels 1 and 2, I was concerned I would not be able to understand the course as much as some of the others would that have been in the industry for several years. Len was very detailed and thorough in his explanations and made it an enjoyable and engaging two days! Although the course didn't apply to everything we use in our company, I feel I can apply a large portion to my everyday estimating tasks. I would recommend attending this course to anyone starting out in an estimating role. Thank you, Len and Martine!”*

—Danielle Allen, Igloo Building Supplies Group Ltd.

*“I found that the course has given me an excellent starting point for estimating. Some of the things that were taught were a little bit different or did not fully apply to what I'll be doing, but I will be able to take what I learned and adapt it to the way our company does their estimates. I would recommend anyone who wants to learn the fundamentals of estimating should look into attending.”*

—Jackson Stelte, Igloo Building Supplies Group Ltd.





# ADVOCATE

## ADVOCACY SUMMIT

We started 2022 with an advocacy summit that included members from across Western Canada and beyond. From that session, we compiled a list of priorities for the year that informed our work with government on behalf of the membership. Here are some updates on the commitments we made coming out of this meeting.

### Key Priorities

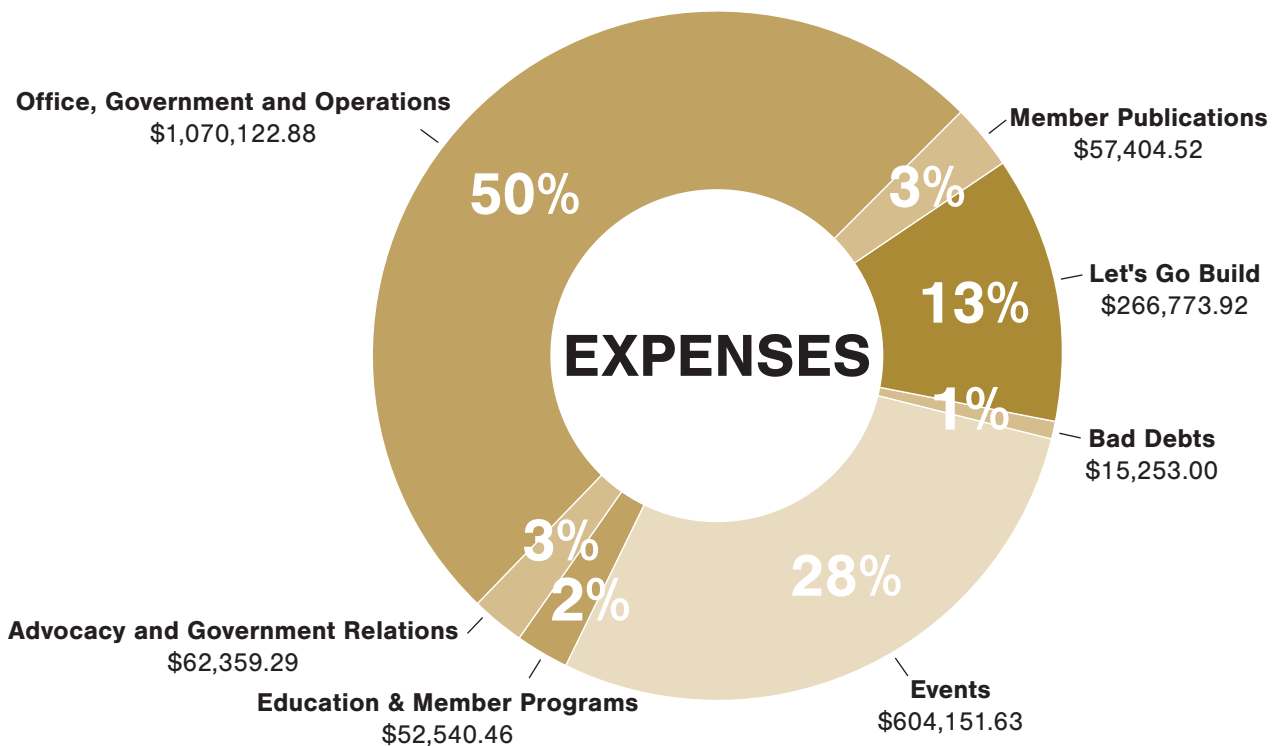
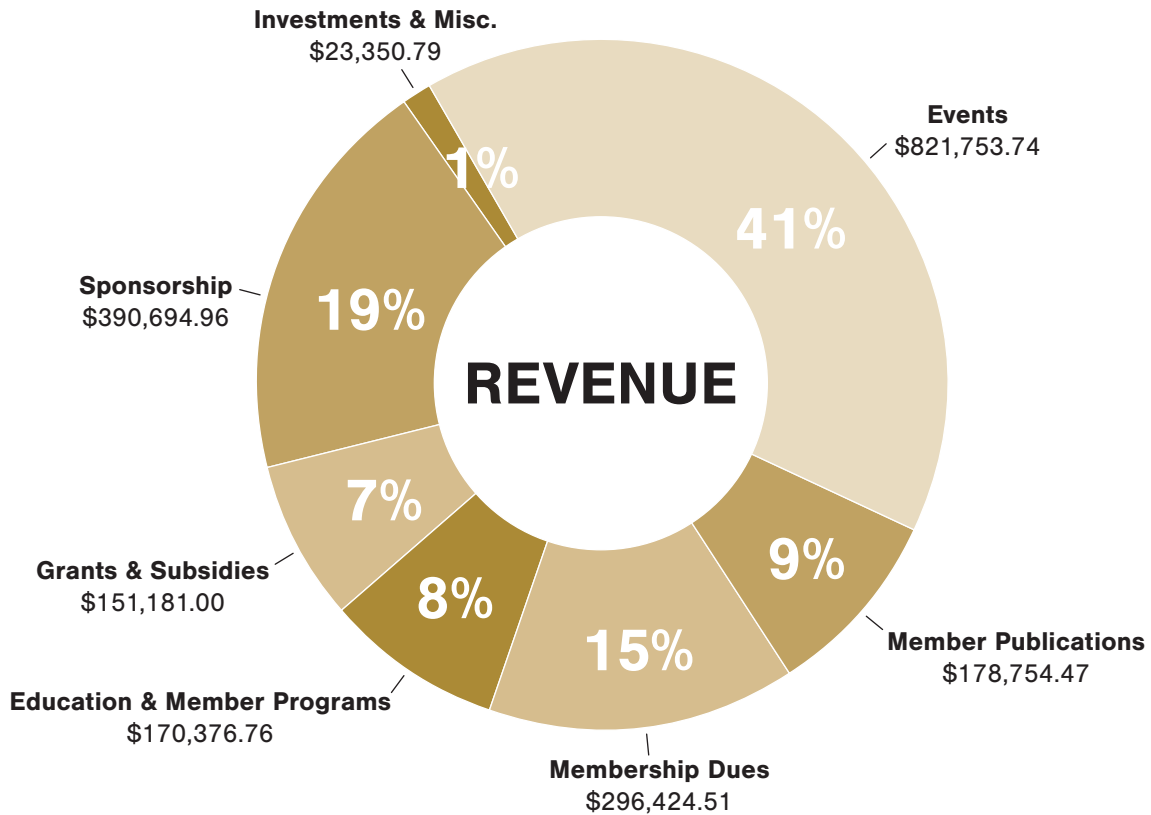
- ◇ Enhance WRLA relationship with provincial governments.
- ◇ Present WRLA to appropriate ministers, opposition critics, and legislative committee members.
- ◇ Continually engage and inform WRLA members on all key Advocacy and GR activities and outcomes.

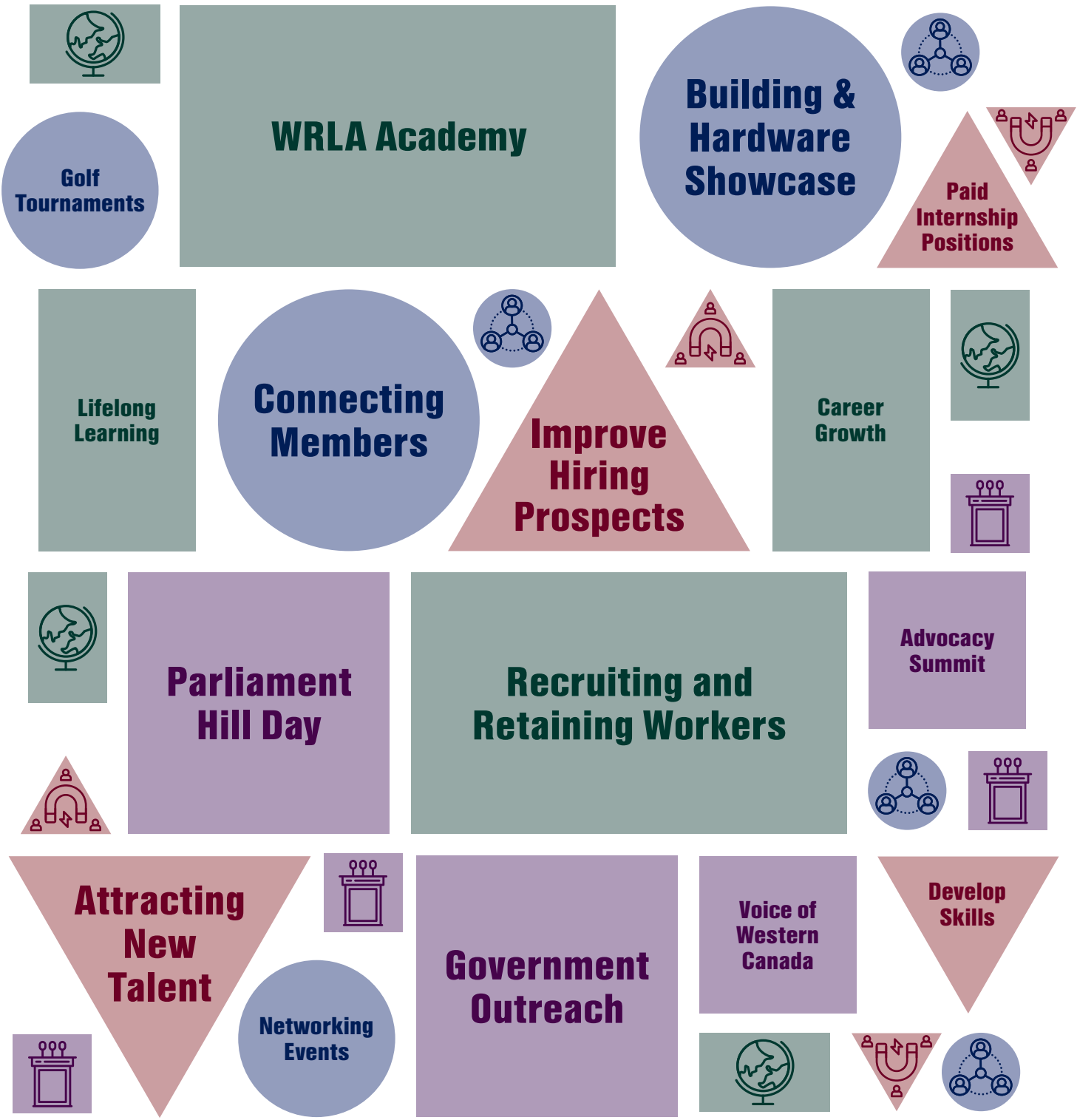
### Results

- ◇ We held in-depth meetings with provincial government representatives in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in fall of 2022.
- ◇ In Manitoba, Liz, and a delegation of members met with
  - ◇ Deputy Premier and Economic Development Minister Cliff Cullen
  - ◇ Finance Minister Cameron Friesen
  - ◇ Environment Minister Jeff Wharton
  - ◇ Advanced Education and Immigration Minister Jon Reyes
  - ◇ Natural Resources Minister Greg Nesbitt
  - ◇ Deputy Minister of Transportation, Sarah Thiele
  - ◇ On the opposition side, the group met with Liberal Leader Dougald Lamont, and NDP MLAs Diljeet Brar, Matt Wiebe, Jamie Moses, and Lisa Naylor
  - ◇ In Saskatchewan, Liz met with Jeremy Brick, Director of External Relations to Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe
- ◇ We have maintained a scheduled update of our Advocacy activities to our membership throughout the year, averaging one Advocacy-focused newsletter each month.



# FINANCE





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