

The following information is an excerpt from the Letter of Intent submitted to the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation in response to the RECODE Request for Proposals of Spring 2014.

McGill University

Executive Summary

McGill University understands that to become a social innovation zone, it must begin first by innovating itself – by recognizing that the knowledge required to address the most pressing social and ecological challenges is distributed among stakeholder both *inside* and *outside* the University. By rethinking itself as a co-producer of knowledge through dialogue with multiple communities across Quebecois, Canadian and global society, McGill University commits to a program of real and profound institutional change by reorienting our strengths toward active participation in the social world.

We envision this fundamental shift as a platform for transformation conceived across three pillars:

- **Innovation:** To convert more ideas into innovations and to spin-off more social and technological ventures, McGill is committed to its own organizational innovation by changing roles, routines and resource flows to provide opportunities, and enhance support, for entrepreneurship.
- **Integration:** To integrate community engagement into teaching and research, McGill is committed to developing long-term relationships with community partners to improve the exchange of ideas across disciplines, and traditional hierarchical boundaries.
- **Impact:** To increase our positive impacts on communities at the provincial, national, and international levels, McGill University is committed to making social innovation and entrepreneurship activities central to its mission.

We call this platform **Institutional Innovation and Integration for Impact**, or *I³*. Through *I³*, McGill University will build a university-wide social innovation zone that builds upon existing, social purpose activities to foster more social innovation and entrepreneurship (SI&E) initiatives and embed them into the DNA of our curricular and co-curricular programs. *I³* will bring together students, researchers and community actors in novel ways to drive learning, research and action, and *I³* will leverage resources for positive impacts for the multiple communities with which we engage. Finally, *I³* is an ambitious change project and a compelling work in progress.

With support from The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation's RECODE Transformation Fund, McGill University will create:

1. **Increased access for students – regardless of their Faculty affiliation or level of study – to:** for-credit academic courses in SI&E; opportunities, internships and other curricular and co-curricular experiential learning in social economy organizations; access to mentorship by social entrepreneurs and other social venture incubator and accelerator services, including capital.
2. **Improved connections between students and researchers (across all disciplines) and organizations** in the not-for-profit, public and private sectors, that will facilitate the scoping of multi-sector and interdisciplinary interventions, and foster teaching and research projects that improve social outcomes while co-producing new domain-specific knowledge.

3. **An innovative financing strategy that connects investors, funders, donors and alumni to SI&E activities** by leveraging direct-spend gifts, research contracts, existing or newly dedicated endowment monies dedicated to “impact investing” in McGill stakeholders’ ventures and aimed at generating both social and financial returns.

The following document outlines our vision and plan: existing McGill SI&E initiatives; the specific programs and initiatives which RECODE funds will support; as well as our strategy for how new and existing programs will fit into a larger institutional mandate that puts the engagement of students, researchers and community actors at the core of McGill’s mission and vision for innovation.

Through broader institutional initiatives, such as *The McGill Commitment*, *McGill Innovation Funds*, as well as *Quartier d’Innovation*, McGill also pledges in this document to raise funds that will match and even exceed those to be committed by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation RECODE program.

In short, we are committed to making transformational change and to reinvigorating the University’s role in the community and world.

1) What is your vision for how social innovation can flourish at your institution?

Social innovation is the process of introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change prevailing routines, resource flows, authority relations or beliefs in ways that endure and yield broader impact in the form of ongoing improved social outcomes (Westley, 2008).

Whereas social purpose activities and social entrepreneurship do not necessarily result in system-level change, social innovation is premised on it and therefore requires connecting with different sectors (e.g. not-for-profit, public and private) and working at multiple scales in the social system. In recent years, McGill has initiated a number of institution-wide programs to encourage true social innovation:

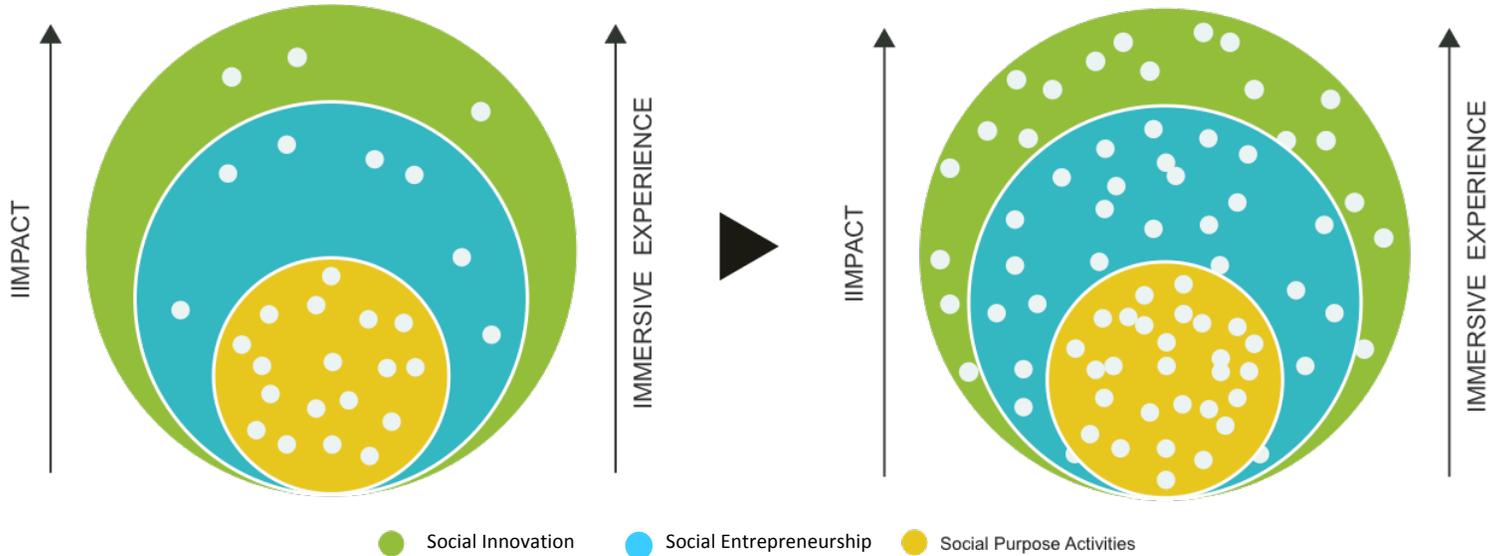
- The 2013 launch of the **Quartier de l’Innovation (QI)** – a unique innovation “ecosystem” in the heart of Montreal in partnership with **ÉTS** -- provides a gateway to address local challenges by piloting new mechanisms of engagement and collaboration between the University and local communities.
- McGill’s **Innovation Steering Committee**, which was initially convened in 2013, has led the development of a joint initiative between the Office of Research and International Relations and the Office of the Provost to produce an Institutional Roadmap for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training, outlining the University’s long-term vision and strategy for innovation at McGill.
- In March 2014, Professor Suzanne Fortier, the University’s Principal and Vice-Chancellor, publicly announced **The McGill Commitment** – a pledge to combine student life and learning into a distinctive and enriching education experience, with more experiential learning opportunities and increased innovation and entrepreneurship training for students.
- In May 2014, the VP-RIR and VP-DAR committed to the creation and implementation of **McGill Innovation Funds** to provide opportunities for investments in innovative research and business development initiatives, including social enterprises, at McGill. Through the **McGill Innovation Funds**, McGill will explore avenues to implement impact investing initiatives and different social finance models, to bring new resources and funding to SI&E initiatives.

Through the proposed **i⁴ platform**, McGill envisions increasing the number, and changing the mix, of activities with community impact – generating more social purpose activities and opportunities for social innovation and entrepreneurship overall, but also with a much bigger increase in instances of social innovation and entrepreneurship. The platform has two objectives against which we commit to measuring our progress:

- **Impact** – we want to achieve more of it -- more translation, more knowledge transfer, more implications for policy in our research; and more tangible outcomes and change in the communities with which we engage.
- **Engagement** – through more immersive and strategic engagements, we will improve our students’ and researchers’ experience in the communities in which they work; conversely, we will improve community actors’ experience with students, researchers and McGill more broadly.

While the value and contributions to communities from social purpose activities are often notable, they lack the scale and scope necessary to make transformative change. As the diagram on the following page illustrates, the University wants to scale and leverage these social purpose activities (shown as white dots) as gateways to create more impactful social innovation and social entrepreneurship initiatives.

Figure 1: Increased Impact through More Immersive Experiential Learning



The key to forging a Social Innovation Zone at McGill will be to connect currently dispersed pockets of innovative activity inside and outside the University, so that people can learn from each other, benefit from varied resources and perspectives, and leverage social purpose activity into more impactful community engagement. Students, community members, and researchers lie at the heart of McGill's network of innovators. With support from the RECODE Transformation Fund, a more connected and more impactful entity will be created through the # platform.

2) What is your vision for how social entrepreneurship can flourish at your institution?

McGill's students, staff and faculty have a long history of engaging in social purpose activities and in social entrepreneurship endeavours to create not-for-profit or for-profit ventures aimed at improving social outcomes. These initiatives include:

- Student entrepreneurship endeavours, notably:
 - the Aspire Food Group, which was awarded the prestigious 2013 **Hult Prize for Social Entrepreneurship** (\$1,000,000) to launch a venture aimed at increasing food security and nutrition in urban slums, using protein derived from insects.
 - a team of students from McGill and Concordia Universities beat out more than 600 competitors, winning the Shell Ideas360 international competition for their innovative product – Skywell – a large, sail-like structure with a hydrophobic coating that collects dew as a water source for some of the world's driest locations.
- **McGill's Faculty of Law** has been involved in fostering access to legal assistance in the Montreal community for decades, helping to create The Community Legal Clinic of Point St. Charles as well as ties to The Mile End Legal Clinic with student, faculty and alumni engagement.
- The **Faculty of Dentistry's Outreach Program** works directly and creatively with the Montreal community to provide free basic dental care to people who cannot access private care because of financial hardship or physical or psychological disability. In Quebec, The McGill Outreach Program is the only dental outreach program that uses mobile equipment to go directly into community centers to offer free quality dental care.
- **The Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas (IPLAI)** is dedicated to advancing humanities-based teaching and research in innovative and interdisciplinary ways. IPLAI is re-energizing the study of human history, culture, thought and creativity by expanding and multiplying the contexts and communities of humanities research.
- **The Trottier Institute for Sustainability in Engineering and Design (TISED)** promotes bold and green ideas through education, outreach, and research in order to connect McGill with the public for a greater understanding and appreciation of sustainability issues in our society
- Expansion of **Student Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE)** to include direct community outreach and engagement through programs and activities such as **Community Engagement Day, Homework Zone, and Alternative Spring Break.**
- Establishment of the **McGill Centre for the Convergence of Health and Economics** which brings together interdisciplinary teams of academics and practitioners from all sectors to develop economically sustainable solutions to health challenges through convergent innovation (CI).

As a publicly purposed yet research-intensive university, McGill brings extraordinary resources to bear to contribute to a healthier, more equitable and sustainable society: talented and engaged students with deep curiosity and commitment to improving our world; celebrated researchers who contribute new knowledge to a wide variety of disciplines of social significance; and a broad network of public,

nonprofit and private partners, who bring complementary perspectives and resources to our collaborations. These considerable assets, when combined, have transformative potential for SI&E activities:

- **Content Expertise** – courses and scholarly activity on specific social issues as well as on social innovation and related topics;
- **Process Expertise** – approaches, structures, frameworks for working with community for social innovation;
- **Social Capital** – relationships within McGill units, or between McGill units and community groups, that are potentially relevant for catalyzing social innovation; and
- **Resources** – financial, human and other resources, which could be mobilized for social innovation.

However, integration is needed. From an institutional perspective, these assets are fragmented at McGill. Individuals and units act within specific domains of expertise, along traditional disciplinary hierarchies, characteristic of higher education institutions. Greater connectivity is required to build capacity and to create a culture of social innovation and entrepreneurship at McGill.

3) What types of activities, practices, programs and/or structures are you proposing to achieve this?

To achieve the broad, long term vision described above, we are proposing an institutional change project, the **↑ platform**, made up of (a) content-focused, (b) process-focused and (c) human resources-focused elements.

a. Content-focused elements of McGill's institutional innovation project. The 2x2 table on the following page organizes activities along the following spectrum of outcomes:

- Red text indicates an existing activity to be scaled up.
- Blue text indicates a new activity to be launched.
- Text in normal font indicates that the activity is an explicit line item with a price tag attached to it and linked to McConnell RECODE monies or matching funds in the budget
- *Text in italics* indicates that the activity is a key part of the social innovation zone but we anticipate it being supported by broader commitments to implementing the Institutional Roadmap for Innovation and Entrepreneurship training, the QI, and the McGill Commitment.

Figure 2: Content-focused elements of McGill’s institutional innovation project

	Emphasis on classroom (or online) learning	Emphasis on experiential learning
For-credit	<p><i>QUADRANT 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Scaling of courses on SI&E</i> - <i>New course on impact investing</i> - <i>Scaling of courses on entrepreneurship (Roadmap)</i> - <i>New courses on integrated management essentials (Roadmap)</i> 	<p><i>QUADRANT 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>New social enterprise accelerator course</i> - <i>Scaling of project-based courses on entrepreneurship (Roadmap)</i> - <i>New course on impact assessment</i> - <i>Scaling of SI&E-focused independent studies and special topics courses (Roadmap)</i>
Not-for-credit	<p><i>QUADRANT 3</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Scaling of Community Action Toolkit</i> - <i>New co-curricular SI&E training, tools and skills development modules</i> - <i>Scaling of social economy initiative’s speaker series</i> - <i>New SI&E website / virtual engagement platform</i> 	<p><i>QUADRANT 4</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>New SI&E student engagement fund & new SI&E community engagement fund</i> - <i>Scaling of Dobson Cup by adding a community-driven SI&E track</i> - <i>New SI&E networking events to bring students and members of external communities together</i> - <i>Scaling of impact internship program, with emphasis on community partners in the QI district & indigenous community organizations (McGill Commitment + QI)</i> - <i>New McGill-affiliated SI&E incubator in the QI district (QI)</i>

b. Process-focused elements of our proposed institutional change project.

In addition to the content-focused changes described in the table, our approach also recognizes the importance of *emergent strategy* as an essential complement to deliberate strategy when innovating (see Mintzberg & Waters, 1982; Mirabeau & Maguire, 2013). We therefore envision using an appreciative inquiry approach to build a community agenda n internal McGill community and agenda around SI&E, as recommended in a 2014 report, *An Assessment of Opportunities for McGill University to catalyze Social Innovation within the Quartier de l’Innovation (QI)*. We propose that funds from the McConnell Foundation’s RECODE program be used to fund these important processes.

- Convene McGill stakeholders to develop a shared agenda for social entrepreneurship and social innovation scholarship at McGill.
- Convene community stakeholders (e.g. from QI, indigenous communities, etc.) to establish a needs-based SI&E agenda and to pilot new mechanisms of community engagement for increased impact.

c. HR-focused elements of our institutional innovation project.

Rather than implementing our proposed institutional change project by adding new academic or administrative units at the periphery – the typical approach – we propose to create integrating roles in the centre, with a McGill-wide reach (including MacDonald campus).

- Senior SI&E Integrator
- Student-facing SI&E Integrator
- SI&E Administrative Coordinator (half-time)
- Dedicate administrative and academic support as well as other resources to bolster opportunities for social entrepreneurship activities at McGill, especially for students.

A full list of proposed initiatives, as well as funding requirements, is included in the proposed budget table in **Appendix 1**.

In sum, McGill is eager to create an institution-wide agenda for SI&E that unites stakeholders through the # platform in order to scale up existing initiatives and launch new ones that connect McGill in meaningful ways with local, national, and international communities.

4) How do these activities align with existing initiatives on campus and your institution’s strategic priorities?

Over the past few years, McGill has affirmed its commitment to innovation, community engagement for positive impact, and interdisciplinary experiential learning opportunities through a range of institution-wide priority commitments. These include:

- The McGill **Principal’s Task Force on Diversity, Excellent and Community Engagement (PTFDECE)** report, published in 2010.
- The **Achieving Strategic Academic Priorities (ASAP)** policy document, with one of its 10 strategic objectives being: “extend and promote McGill’s service to Quebec, Canada, and the global community”;
- McGill’s **Strategic Research Plan (SRP)** which affirms five core commitments of ideas, *innovation, sustainability, collaboration and partnership, and social engagement*; while identifying one its areas of research excellence as being: “strengthening public policy and organizations, and creating a deeper understanding of social transformation”;
- McGill’s **Sustainability Strategy**, which emphasizes applied student research and experiential learning about sustainability issues, and enhanced connectivity with local communities. The contents of this document come directly from conversations with more than 1,500 students, faculty, and staff. This has resulted in a high degree of community buy-in for the Strategy.

McGill has also launched new initiatives aimed at encouraging more research, teaching and outreach around social innovation and entrepreneurship in addition to traditional social purpose activities.

- Launch of the **Social Economy Initiative** (housed in the Desautels Faculty of Management), focused on expanding teaching, research and outreach on social innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Expansion of the **Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE)** Office’s community engagement activities.
- Launch of the **Experiential Learning Network (ELN)** group.

5) If funded, how might this change the teaching, research and/or student experience on your campus?

Through the creation of a Social Innovation Zone and expansion of existing initiatives, McGill will inspire a generation of socially-conscious and civically engaged students to move forward in their lives, confronting societal challenges thoughtfully and in solidarity with marginalized voices and communities.

Students will benefit from being able to:

- enroll in more courses on social innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Access more opportunities to engage with diverse communities beyond the campus.
- co-create knowledge and innovative solutions to real world challenges.
- develop an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the competencies they are developing at McGill.

Faculty and researchers will benefit from being able to:

- create more opportunities for students to engage with research work and SI&E initiatives.
- establish new communities of practice and research.
- encourage interdisciplinary and intercommunity collaborations for increased positive impact.

Community members will benefit from being able to:

- engage directly with research that can improve social and public policy outcomes.
- engage directly with the brightest students from Quebec, Canada and around the world.
- contribute to setting McGill's SI&E agenda and leverage their insights and perspectives to co-produce actionable knowledge for transformative change.
- mobilize a broader and more diverse set of human, financial and other resources.