

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.

Medicine Hat College

VISION

Social innovation and entrepreneurship has been an increasing element to the culture at Medicine Hat College (MHC); however the real work in this area has been happening in various silos throughout our campus. In order to have greater community impact it's important to bring these initiatives together, quantify them and streamline our approach.

Our proposal is based on the success of our Entrepreneur Development Centre (EDC), a program that's foundational purpose is three-fold:

1. Foster and enhance an entrepreneurial culture at Medicine Hat College, working with students and faculty to realize that entrepreneurship is a valued career option.
2. Develop cross-curriculum resources and leverage existing resources to provide education and training across college credit and non-credit programs.
3. Contribute to building the entrepreneurial capacity of the larger community through enhanced partnering with relevant stakeholder organizations.

Alongside this MHC initiative, the student centered ENACTUS club was formed enabling students to undertake projects with a triple bottom line – social, environmental and economic – and use entrepreneurial action to help people in need improve their quality of life and standard of living through skill enhancement. Even though ENACTUS is a young club (started in 2012) it has had many successes, with some of the biggest returns being social benefits.

The EDC is pan-institutional and therefore impacts each department at MHC. Using the EDC as the base, we believe there is potential to build on the strengths and successes we have achieved by adding supports that allow social innovation to take place. Over the long-term we envision this capacity building stemming into seed funding for the creation of social and environmental focused businesses, not-for-profits engaging with the students for problem solving or opportunity development, and an engaged campus-wide social ecosystem.

The purpose and focus of this project matches the overall community culture here in Medicine Hat. We are a young, innovative community of 61,000, with a trading area of 90,000. Our municipal leadership has a strong relationship with local businesses, as well as not-for-profits to create the best quality of life in Medicine Hat. (Our local Community Foundation is in their eighth year of publishing Vital Signs, which helps us monitor these changes in quality of life, including our rural surroundings). Further, to support the anecdotal statement of our innovative culture, we are working towards being the first community in North America to eliminate chronic homelessness. Through great community leadership, local agencies have come together for a goal greater than each individual association, and we are so close to being the community that solves local homelessness. We believe that this kind of success demonstrates the collaborative and innovative nature of our community as a whole.

1. PROJECT SCOPE

In order for our institution to have increased, targeted social innovation and entrepreneurship, we are seeking additional resources and expertise to conduct a campus/community mapping exercise. Instead of hiring an external consultant, we have decided to take the approach of hiring an expert to come internal and work with each of the divisions for one year. During this year the employee will identify the assets within the college where there are elements of social innovation activities taking place. Because our college offers a small, connected community we feel it would be possible to incorporate awareness of activities happening in all 6 innovation zones identified by RECODE.

The next phase would be for the employee to assess current external community activities. As our organization is currently creating its new strategic plan we foresee this work coinciding with that process and MHC would identify potential stakeholders to approach. We would hope that this would lead to gap identification where there are opportunities for students to get involved and help to solve recognized social problems. (This is referenced again in the Benefits and Outcomes section.)

3. BACKGROUND

Advancing social innovation and entrepreneurship on campus will align strongly with many initiatives we currently have taking place on campus.

Entrepreneurial Initiatives

As mentioned previously, the EDC has many activities that could serve as the starting point to blossom into social innovation zones:

- 1) On campus incubators with mentorship through an Entrepreneur in Residence and entrepreneurial industry advisory committee.
- 2) Seed capital has been donated from a local accounting firm and students can use these funds to start a summer company.
- 3) Be Your Own Boss seminar training and toolkits were developed for the student body and expanded pan-institutionally – specifically to include trades, massage therapy, and visual communications.
- 4) New student clubs forming such as ENACTUS and ongoing interest from industry to become involved in aspects of the EDC.
- 5) Investment in Pencil Case – a new innovative software piece that allows us to create additions to training through the creation of applications.

Other examples of entrepreneurship taking place in smaller scales on campus include:

- The Division of Business and Enterprise having contests in the classrooms where students pitch business proposals to local organizations.
- Second year social work students travel to Africa and provide the tools for small start ups to individuals living in poverty who could not afford them on their own. For example sewing machine and hand plows were provided.
- The 3D printer allows for industry to create prototypes of new products on campus.

Social and Environmental Initiatives

There are multiple examples of social initiatives that have taken place on campus. A few include:

- The MHC Simulation Centre offers applied and experiential learning opportunities with students and the community. Immersive experiences are recorded and afterward, the team participates in a psychological debriefing/feedback session where social issues and awareness are explored such as team relationships, individual/team performance, communication, failure, leadership, etc. Using appreciative inquiry and discussion, learners feel more in control of their learning and an increased sense of subject matter retention.
- Bring Back the Music is a program where conservatory instructors of the college visit elementary schools with no music budget and provide them with musical training.
- To test the local water quality a collaborative research project took place between the City of Medicine Hat, not-for-profit groups, and MHC.
- A solar thermal project, developed by trades students and faculty, now provides power to the trades wing.
- Our campus trail has benches strategically placed along it to allow for rest points for those with physical disabilities. The research of where to place these benches was done by students in the health division and external partnering assisted in the project being completed.

All of the leads for the projects listed above represent potential champions for social innovation and social entrepreneurship. The RECODE project funding will allow us to bring these individual initiatives together under a more formal social entrepreneurial umbrella.

4. BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES

If funded, we foresee many benefits for our students, college and community.

In the short-term we expect a formal report to be developed that will have:

- An asset map that quantifies internal activities
- Identification of social innovation zone gaps internally
- Identification of social innovation zone gaps externally
- Identification of three opportunities for social entrepreneurship in different departments to be developed.

In the long term, we predict the following benefits:

- Increased culture of entrepreneurship and social innovation
- Specific projects being developed to match our internal strategic plan and RECODE initiatives / values
- Increased opportunities for partnerships and collaboration of social initiatives
- Increased awareness in the community of social innovation opportunities.