

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.

Trent University

Introduction

Trent University is known as an institution with a strong commitment to social justice and community development. Through community-based education and research projects at the undergraduate level, students have the opportunity to engage in purposeful learning that develops their capacity and passion for transformational change within local and international communities. At Trent, program innovations such as Comparative Development Studies, now known as International Development Studies, in the early 1970s, to the recent Masters of Sustainability Studies allow students to explore the academic dimensions of social change. Trent's Business Administration program is uniquely focused on a triple bottom line philosophy, and the University has an Endowed Chair in Ethics that has an interdisciplinary mandate. Trent University is now focussed on the development of a unique entrepreneurship centre/ innovation zone at both the Peterborough and Durham Region campuses that is a student centred, interdisciplinary and socially innovative enterprise to address the pressing socio-economic needs of our regions. This requires new approaches, new tools, connecting the dots between ecosystems, curating a marketplace of resources, mobilizing passionate change makers and a commitment to drive the future of the social sector. We need a process, an organization, an entity that combines and cultivates the best attributes of the marketplace with the passionate commitment of the social sector.

The concept will be developed on a partnership model leveraging existing networks, expertise and assets of the surrounding communities of entrepreneurs, investors and organizations, and will consider the local community needs and opportunities at both our Peterborough and Oshawa campuses.

What are your initial aspirations and vision for how social innovation can take root and grow at your institution and contribute to broader change?

As noted above, Trent has a strong and embedded culture of social innovation. Trent staff and students recently fostered the development of a community social innovation centre in Peterborough (Hatch), students achieved the Fair Trade designation for the University and operate an on-campus kitchen with food grown on campus or sourced locally. Many of these are independent efforts – our vision is to create a stronger support network to facilitate more of these innovations, and link students in different disciplines to actively work on solving pressing community challenges.

The approach at Trent's Peterborough campus is to continue to cultivate a well-established relationship with the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education (TCCBE), Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN) and Hatch Ptbo, Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC), and the Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster, and build on the ability to foster community-driven, student-led social innovation. TCCBE brings the needs of community-based organizations to faculty and students and each year over 60 unique projects are completed for credit in various academic departments. We want to support this process and enable students with innovative ideas to test these concepts and take them to the next level. Post-secondary students are

uniquely positioned to bring fresh ideas and new approaches to addressing persistent and complex societal challenges in pursuit of a more inclusive and sustainable society.

At Trent University Oshawa, we envision that social innovation initiatives on campus will be mobilized under the umbrella of a **Regional Social Innovation Zone**, located at Trent's Durham campus and in collaboration with our delivery partner, the Community Innovation Lab (iLab). Within the proposed Regional Social Innovation Zone, we aspire to nurture change makers on campus via experiential learning activities developed in partnership with Community Innovation Lab and by educating via the development of social entrepreneurship courses on campus.

What are your initial aspirations and vision for how social entrepreneurship can take root and grow at your institution, and contribute to broader change?

Trent's vision is to create a student centred, interdisciplinary, social innovation entrepreneurship centre and accelerator in partnership with the community. It would expose students across all disciplines to business and social entrepreneurship, foster the development of a vibrant culture of social innovation and entrepreneurship at the University, including support for faculty incorporating principles of social innovation and entrepreneurship in their courses, provide experiential and co-curricular learning opportunities, and create access to mentorship, partnership, resources and funding opportunities to enable and grow student-led initiatives and start-ups.

At Trent, creating a social entrepreneurship 'culture' on both campuses will be key in espousing the development of innovative responses to social problems.

In Peterborough we currently have a working group planning a socially innovation zone on the Peterborough campus, with a secondary location in downtown Peterborough as the accelerator where ideas will be brought to life through mentorship, partnership and funding.

In our **Community-Based Education Program** projects, students tell us that they are learning essential social entrepreneurship "competencies" (Miller, Wesley, Williams, 2012) such as communication skills, project management and challenging traditional ways of thinking. We envision expanding and strengthening structures and pathways that empower students to have confidence to bring their innovative ideas forward and take their skill set to the next level.

We envision **supporting a culture of innovation locally**, so that local organizations see and experience the potential for creativity and innovation that students can bring. We believe that in this way we can "provide this and future generations of students and their communities with tools and resources for carrying out adaptive change in the face of our greatest challenges." Trent University believes in the community-based approach of the TCCBE, and knows that because of this approach, student social enterprises will not just make change economically, but will also respond to community-identified social, environmental and cultural needs.

For Oshawa, social entrepreneurship will take root and grow via the proposed Regional Social Innovation Zone, where the following social innovation initiatives can be cultivated and delivered:

In-Class and On-Campus Activities: *Inspiration, Education and Experiential Learning*

Mobilizing and fostering a culture of social entrepreneurial thinking and activities on and off campus through the development and delivery of social entrepreneurship courses, extra-curricular activities and initiatives and events (i.e. workshops, lectures and idea cultivation mentorship sessions.)

Social Entrepreneurship Accelerator: *Taking Action* Mobilizing the tools, resources and supports to enable student ideas and social ventures to take shape via the Regional Social Innovation Zone. The accelerator is the program or “student support package” within the Zone for students to begin the process of turning their idea for social change into a reality. Students will be given the opportunity to cultivate their ideas with access to key resources and tools to assist in the progression and refinement of their social innovation.

Knowledge ‘Do Tank’: *Enabling Systems Thinking and Broader Social Change*

Leveraging a social innovation idea via a ‘Do Tank’ or caucus to engage broader community stakeholders and activate systems thinking to achieve broad changes while sustaining activities within the **Regional Social Innovation Zone**.

The Zone and ‘Do Tank’ vision is to:

- a. Stimulate and enable an ‘intentional environment’ where academia, regional politicians, not-for-profit communities and businesses can jointly design and pool people, resources and capital to drive innovative solutions to complex issues and systems barriers affecting local communities;
- b. Act as a central resource where local communities can access social innovation knowledge, tools and expertise in the region;
- c. cultivate and bring together a robust network of national and global resources, tools, people and partners in social innovation to add further opportunities for learning, exchanges and collaboration;
- d. Explore and undertake opportunities for social innovation research initiatives with cross disciplinary partners (e.g. social impact bonds and youth unemployment);

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

To achieve the facilitation of social innovation and entrepreneurship on our respective campuses, we propose the following activities, practices, programs and structures:

‘Infuse a culture and establish a network’

- Establishing a social Innovation ‘*Do Tank*’ for collective impact, to bring together regional thought leaders and stakeholders to jointly tackle complex local issues and create an ecosystem of social enterprises, funders, businesses, and government agencies. *(A collaborator for cross-sector stakeholders to collaborate, pool resources, measure impact, research and experiment with new instruments such as social impact bonds to tackle complex issues e.g. food security, youth unemployment, aging, poverty, transportation and downtown revitalization).*
 - Undertaking future research in social innovation in collaboration with academia/students/community at local universities and colleges.
 - Trent is currently developing a social entrepreneurship course for 2016.
 - Trent is also developing a unique 3-year interdisciplinary degree, “Critical Thinking and Communication,” which has as its capstone course an experiential learning component. This degree will be offered Trent’s campus in the Durham Region.

‘Opportunities for learning and creation of resources’

By infusing a culture of knowledge and activities on social innovation in the classroom and community, students will become more aware of its impact on local economies and more interested in exploring the tools, spaces and resources to begin experimenting with social entrepreneurship.

Through partnerships with the TCCBE, Hatch Ptbo and the Community Innovation Lab, the following activities will be developed and delivered at Trent’s campuses as well as offered to campuses of supporting institutions (UOIT, Durham College, Sir Sandford Fleming College):

- Inspirational national and global social innovation guest speakers will be sourced and brought to campus.
- An annual campus social innovation festival will be organized with students.
- Students will participate in field trips to social enterprises around the province (Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury).
- Students will have access to bursaries to attend social innovation and impact conferences and events.
- Students will have options to pursue capstone projects on social innovation experiential initiatives via the Community Innovation Lab.
- Students will have access to fellowship programs.
- Students will receive opportunities to participate in a groundbreaking Social Innovation Digital Badge project in collaboration with the Community Innovation Lab, Ashoka Canada and the Mozilla Foundation. Digital Badge is a micro-credential program and provides a learning pathway where students can learn through the provision of mini workshops on topics such as Social Innovation 101, Sustainability 101, Leadership, Crowdfunding, 3D Printing, Storytelling, Theory of Change and Social Finance.

‘Support incubation and growth of social finance’

Enhance pre-existing initiatives and programs including:

- Enhancing and supporting the activities of the, “The Cube”, Peterborough’s first best-practice technology incubator at the Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster, based at Trent University.
- Identifying TCCBE student projects that have the potential to develop into social enterprises.
- Creating a new “social innovation and entrepreneurship fellowship” program to recognize and support students who complete socially innovative and entrepreneurial community-based education (CBE) projects. This program will support students to develop, expand, and test ideas flowing from their completed community-based education projects. Participants will also be connected with Hatch Ptbo “a dynamic community space for creative, social and entrepreneurial engagement”, who will connect the participants with other social entrepreneurs and with training and mentorship opportunities.
- In partnership with Community Innovation Lab and MaRS Centre for Impact Investing, foster the growth of social finance and impact investing in social enterprises and provide tools, resources and opportunities for students to learn more about social finance and venture development.
- To sustain the delivery of services within the Regional Social Innovation Zone, a continuous flow of blended investments is required. Together with the Community Innovation Lab, we are taking on an intermediary role via a joint initiative, the Social Enterprise Collaborative (SEC). SEC builds on the foundation of the “Durham Ideas Den” microfinancing platform and will

provide additional opportunities for impact investors to invest in the capacity needs of promising youth led and youth focused social enterprises nurtured within the Zone. This project is a partnership between Trent University, the Community Innovation Lab, the MaRS Centre for Impact Investing and the Social Venture Exchange.

How do they align with existing initiatives on campus?

Trent has been a leader in forging good working relationships with its community partners. With a strong humanitarian, environmental and social impact reputation, Trent has delivered meaningful programs and activities that have impacted their respective communities.

For example, each year at our Peterborough campus over 60 for-credit community-based education projects are completed by Trent students for organizations in Peterborough City and County, Haliburton County and City of Kawartha Lakes, through TCCBE and its delivery partners U-Links and C-Links. We know that some of these projects present innovative and entrepreneurial ideas; but, once the for-credit projects are completed there is currently no formal mechanism in place to support students to continue their work and test their innovative and entrepreneurial ideas. The social innovation and entrepreneurship fellowships would create this mechanism.

The fellowships also align with the existing Community Innovation Forum, an annual event hosted by Trent University, Fleming College, the Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster and TCCBE. The Forum currently celebrates students' community-based projects, and awards impactful and innovative projects; the awarding of fellowships could be naturally connected to this event, and would serve to build a culture of recognition of innovation at Trent and in Peterborough.

At our Durham campus, our partnership with the Community Innovation Lab has established several social innovation resources and activities, including a student venture incubation mentorship an ideas jams and several workshops to foster social innovation ideas. Trent is the education sponsor for the "Durham Ideas Den," a pitch competition to crowdsource student ideas for venture development and we are currently working towards a Social Enterprise Collaborative and Impact Investing platform to support venture development.

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

- Teaching will focus on stimulating interests in classrooms around social innovation on campus with professors engaged as active mentors via supports for business development and social innovation activities on campus when necessary.
- Research collaboratives (teachers, students and communities) will enhance and take on a broader role to address more complex issues with stakeholders on subjects such as social impact bonds and the impact on youth unemployment.
- Student experiences will include mentors and community partners who will coach students in venture development and skills development via experiential projects such as city revitalization and sustainability initiatives.
- Students will benefit from the real-world immersive learning experiences and generate new networks and employment prospects.

- Experiential learning opportunities for students will be available in the third year capstone course of the Interdisciplinary degree, “Critical Thinking and Communications”