

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.

York University

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

Engaged scholarship creates opportunities for faculty and students to become active agents of social change. Engaging beyond the ivory tower by collaborating on issues relevant to business, community and government organizations maximizes the impacts of research and learning. This is social innovation at York University - collaborating to find new approaches to persistent social, environmental and economic challenges.

This is an ideal time to invest in systems that support social innovation. First, the university sector in Canada is in crisis. Our 600 year old business model is unsustainable for many universities including York which, like many universities, is undergoing a program prioritization process to identify and invest in high quality academic programs and administrative services. Second, universities are responding to the "impact agenda". Driven by policies such as the UK Research Excellence Framework as well as CFI and CRC expectations of "Benefits to Canada" and enabled by funding such as SSHRC's Connections Theme, universities are expected to support and articulate broad impacts of research and learning. Third, students are demanding engaged educational experiences that lead to meaningful careers that make a difference. Service learning, entrepreneurship, experiential education, co-ops and internships are becoming established models of learning.

In the Panarchy² model it can be argued that universities are in a period of "creative destruction" opportunities for "renewal" and innovation. York is responding to this opportunity by connecting scholarship to society. York is a national leader with an international reputation for knowledge mobilization that enables social innovation.³ In addition we are making significant investments in engaged scholarship and services to maximize the impacts of university research (see Appendix 1). Engaging with diverse communities enables social innovation and creates an impact on our local and global communities.

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

Social enterprise is a tool of social innovation. A social enterprise is an incorporated entity with a social mission. Social enterprises can have a variety of corporate structures. York's collaboration on Community BUILD (see below) supports early stage social "ventures" and allows their corporate structure to emerge as the business model evolves. Innovation York (see below) is focused on supporting for-profit entrepreneurship. Emergence will combine these two models to and grow social purposed businesses.

A York Example

Co-hosted at York, PREVNet¹ is a national network supporting engaged research and knowledge mobilization to address bullying. PREVNet's Healthy Relationship Training Module (HRTM) has influenced education and recreation systems by training over 24,000 adults in bullying prevention. This in turn has benefitted over 400,000 Canadian children and youth. Big Brothers Big Sisters calculated an 18:1 SROI from their training programs that includes HRTM. York's award winning Knowledge Mobilization Unit helped PREVNet develop a business model that incorporated the HRTM as part of a Bullying Evaluation and Solutions Tool (BEST¹). PREVNet invested \$50K in the business model which is now selling the BEST to schools in Ontario who have budgets to meet legislation requiring schools to assess and report on rates of bullying. To date over 4,500 students have benefited in schools that have used BEST.

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

Emergence is a connected campus hub for social innovation that will:

1. Develop a community of students interested in social innovation and social enterprise.
2. Identify a suite of related graduate and undergraduate courses; develop a repository of international social innovation curriculum and facilitate its uptake by faculty to enhance course content. Provide skills development building on curriculum from York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit and Studio Y at MaRS.
3. Promote engaged research on social innovation that will generate new understanding for student social ventures and be the focus of the annual York Symposium for the Scholarship of Engagement.
4. Provide mentorship, skills development and funding to support the growth of student owned social ventures through competitive acceleration and design challenges for youth employment and food security
5. Connect successful social ventures and student venture owners to on campus (Innovation York) and off campus (Community BUILD) entrepreneurship development
6. Link successful social ventures and student social venture owners to social markets through knowledge mobilization and to business partners through Innovation York
7. Leverage new investments including federal funding (Canada Research Chairs - confirmed), provincial funding and (Ontario Social Enterprise Development Fund – pending) and university fundraising (proposed).

How do they align with existing initiatives on campus and your institution's strategic priorities?

Social Innovation is a hall mark of York's research and teaching programs and is described or anticipated in the University's highest planning documents:

University Academic Plan 2010-2015: “Community engagement broadly conceived recognizes the world outside the walls of the academy as a source of both education and research partnership, rather than merely an object of study.”

Provosts White Paper “Building a More Engaged University” 2010-2020: “Universities are expected to engage with our communities for scientific, social, cultural and economic impacts.”

Strategic Research Plan (SRP) 2013-2018: The SRP identified “Scholarship of Socially Engaged Research” as one of five opportunities for investment. In addition, the SRP identified “World Leading Knowledge Mobilization Contributing to Social Innovation” as one mechanism for translating results of research into action.

There is a strong alignment with existing institutional and Faculty programs and individual scholarship. *emergence* has identified 13 programs and 11 researchers (plus two additional Canada Research Chairs to be recruited in areas relevant to social innovation) from 12 academic and administrative units all with existing capacity in social innovation/enterprise and all of whom have expressed interest in becoming engaged with *emergence* (see Appendix).