

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.

University of Victoria, Camosun College, and Royal Roads University

Overall Vision of Vancouver Island Social Innovation Zone

The purpose of **Vancouver Island Social Innovation Zone (VISIZ)** is to strengthen collaborative relationships, activities and initiatives of post-secondary institutions, community, industry and government in support of enterprising approaches to social innovation on Vancouver Island. We will incubate, accelerate and scale innovation, through social enterprise, social venture, collaborative impact and social finance. We will be grounded in research, education and engagement to connect students and community members to inspiring ideas, models and processes. Sector leaders and industry actors will inform and advise the initiative; VISIZ will learn from the sector and provide services and outcomes that serve the sector. The overarching vision is to transform Vancouver Island's economic and social reality into a regional zone of blended economic value and social equity.

This is an emergent process; this proposal targets funds to convene regional assets, develop a collaborative structure, activate a communication network, and map the pipeline of existing assets and gaps. Additional funding requests will be informed by the collaboration structure, partner engagement and multi-year strategy and business plan.

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

The University of Victoria has been moving forward social innovation at the institutional level:

- In 2013 UVic created **The Institute for Studies and Innovation in Community University Engagement (ISICUE)** works towards establishing UVic as a recognized cornerstone of the community, committed to the sustainable social, cultural and economic development of our region and our nation. ISICUE is a lead partner in BC Partners for Social Impact;
- The **Centre for Co-operative and Community-Based Economy** coordinates interdisciplinary research related to the co-operative economy in BC and the world; promotes the dissemination of research and promotes the role for co-operative and community-based economy.
- The **Centre for Sustainable and Social Innovation (CSSI)** focuses on Education, Research, and Operations to increase the scope and effectiveness of responsible management, social entrepreneurship, sustainable innovation and eco-preneurship. One initiative is MIISsion Impossible, a one day sustainable/social innovation contest for UVic business students
- The **Innovation Centre for Entrepreneurs (ICE)** provides mentorship and incubator services to students, faculty, staff, and recent alumni taking business concepts from idea to investor-ready.

- **National Consortium for Indigenous Economic Development (NCIED)** is a new initiative that, in collaboration with leaders from aboriginal communities, business and government, advances and shares knowledge of best business practices, economic enablers, and institutional mechanisms to foster aboriginal economic development.

This application provides an opportunity to strengthen these existing initiatives and others by developing a collaborative governance structure to guide the vision and coordination of communications, activities and growth of a VISIZ grounded in a cross-sector and Island-wide approach.

Innovation is present on Vancouver Island, yet silos exist between organizations and sectors. There are a number of significant initiatives that are building collaborative relationships for broader change. VISIZ will build upon:

- **Collaboration agreement between the five Vancouver Island Post-Secondary Institutions**, signed March 2014, includes goals related to aboriginal engagement, job creation and investment, and research and innovation. Three institutions are included in this proposal with interest expressed from Vancouver Island University and North Island College to join in Year
- **Collective impact initiative** supported by McConnell Foundation's Innoweave has identified several issue-related working groups to advance cross-sector approaches to social change
- **Social Enterprise Catalyst** is a cross-sector collaborative of 24 partners (and growing) with the goal to support, showcase and inspire the growth of the sector on Vancouver Island
- The **Vancouver Island Community Research Alliance** is an established cooperative initiative among UVic, Royal Roads, Camosun College, Vancouver Island University, and North Island College to foster community relevant research. To date, the main focus of this alliance has been research on food security. Community Social Planning Council, Victoria Foundation and CRFair are involved a community-based initiative to address Vancouver Island food security issues
- We are conscious of working in the traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples and our commitment to continue building cultural awareness and knowledge exchange through connections and partnership initiatives – **Victoria Native Friendship Centre and NCIED** are partners in integrating First Nations perspective and interests in VISIZ.

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

Community, post-secondary, government and private sector partners recently collaborated to deliver a series of social enterprise activities under the banner of Social Enterprise Catalyst. This convening of enterprise (SE) stakeholders galvanized energy for increased collaboration and SE Hub concept. Numerous studies over the last two years have identified social enterprise, co-op and social purpose business solutions to regional challenges. There is need for a centralized convening body to:

- Pro-actively engage stakeholders and support network development
- Develop and advance a strategy that embeds social enterprise and social ventures as responses to regional economic, social and environmental issues, including research and market development
- Match university students, business mentors and other knowledge holders with SE's for coaching and consulting
- Educate the public and advance supportive policies

VISIZ will strengthen the work of post-secondary institutions and develop a collaborative framework to coordinate and develop a pipeline of tools, resources and activities informed by and supportive of students and community to expand social enterprise, ventures and innovation on Vancouver Island.

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

1. Strengthen engagement, collaboration and learning between post-secondary institutions, students, government and community stakeholders to develop enterprising solutions to regional problems, through:
 - Research; Education/training for students and community; Incubators network; Coordinated mentor program; Engage students through co-op placements, work experience and student projects/research; Navigate access to grants, loans and investment capital; Special projects and competitions; Support for up to 30 ventures/year
2. To activate the network and develop a collaboration structure to enhance communication, working relationships, learning, knowledge dissemination and decision-making among partners.
3. To extend the partners across sectors and up-Island; initial interest has been expressed by many
4. To develop a multi-year strategy and accompanying business plan that combines earned revenue with research and funding grants for overall sustainability
5. To strengthen existing activities in incubation, support to social enterprise and student engagement
6. To create and implement an evaluation framework to track interim impacts, contributions to longer-term social, cultural and environmental outcomes and process learning along the way.

Proposed activities are aligned with McConnell Foundation's 6 broad objectives. Some Year 2 activities are ongoing from Year 1 but most are preliminary ideas and will be informed by Year 1:

VISIZ Year 1

VISIZ Year 2

RECODE Strategic Goal 1: To infuse a culture of social innovation and social entrepreneurship into 21st Century higher education in Canada

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross sector collaboration that engages Vancouver Island post-secondary institutions, community, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation guided by collaborative network, strategy and business plan |
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- government and industry:
- a. Engage in a process to develop a collaborative governance and decision-making framework
 - b. Ensure the engagement of representatives across sectors and up-Island through awareness-raising, relationship building and activating networks
 - c. Activate collaboration tool (gathr.ca) to coordinate communication, networking, tools and resources
- Develop a multi-year strategy and accompanying business plan that will identify and plan for mixed and earned revenue streams
 - Expand network and partners
 - Use www.gathr.ca to coordinate and collaborate
 - Confirm the backbone role of project manager and partnership development
 - Launch earned income strategy
 - Impact measurement tool—baseline determined in a number of social innovation priorities and impact goals set; measurement and outcomes process designed and integrated

Goal 2: To establish a national network of thought leaders, practitioners and researchers working with social innovation concepts, learning and practice to advance systems level change in Canada

- Symbiotic relationship with national network can lead to shared research, access to thought leaders and connection to local issues and partnerships- speakers series
- Coordinating research opportunities and partnerships that meet the needs of and are informed by the sector
- Ensure that relevant research in social innovation is visible and available to local actors and communities
- Invite champions and support sector to participate in advisory capacity
- Aboriginal social entrepreneurs to play a leadership role in the applicability of ideas both locally and through aboriginal networks; learners in residence from aboriginal communities to develop and document best practices of social innovation
- Identification of key regional issues where a social enterprising and innovation approach is warranted
- Identify and move forward community-university research opportunities on social innovation- 3 new research projects underway
- Enhance the visibility of locally-relevant research on social enterprise, venture and innovation by hosting on www.gathr.ca
- Host a speaker series of key thought leaders
- Bring champions around an aboriginal strategy to enhance social entrepreneurship- Aboriginal enp, aboriginal incubator, LEAP start-up program- that is guided by and meets the unique needs of these communities
- Showcase aboriginal businesses across the Island, and hold events to support networking and relationship building
- Social innovation process ongoing with three key regional issues, such as food sustainability/security, resource economies transition, and persistent unemployment---

principles of collective impact are integrated- three convening roles supported

Goal 3: To provide opportunities for students to learn about social innovation and social entrepreneurship

- Map and showcase the pipeline of social innovation and social entrepreneurship education, projects, research, competitions and incubation supports on Vancouver Island
 - a. identify gaps and address opportunities
- Integrate community and industry perspectives, to ground education in local experiences, through targeted co-op and practicum experiences in social enterprises and ventures
- Marketing and communications of comprehensive social innovation pipeline and resources on VI
- Address the pipeline gaps through:
 - a. New Social Enterprise graduate certificate developed by Royal Roads
 - b. Working with Deans of current business and human development programs and the integration of social innovation concepts
 - c. Expanded co-op offerings
 - d. TBD

Goal 4: To support the incubation and growth of new social enterprises and social innovation

- Strengthen the activities of ICE in supporting student-led enterprise development. Encourage new ventures by exposing students to opportunities from the community
- Create a working group of incubators across the Island to coordinate, identify gaps and share best practices
- Enhance current mentor programs by combining pools and expanding access to mentors
- Raise awareness of social ventures and provide seed capital and technical assistance through a series of competitions- both on and off-campuses- 'Pitch-It', 'Plan-It', 'Social Enterprise Catalyst 2015'
- Initiate social innovation lab approach to three identified issues
- 30 new enterprises supported through feasibility
- 15 existing enterprises supported to strengthen
- Incubator working group--- geographical gaps; focus area gaps? Launch two new incubators- early discussions include: co-op focused and an incubator targeting youth exiting high school who are not going into post-secondary education
- Coordinate expanded mentor group- ensuring a mix of skills and geographical reach
- Continue to raise awareness of social ventures and provide seed capital and technical assistance through a series of competitions- both on and off-campuses- 'Pitch-It', 'Plan-It', 'Social Enterprise Catalyst 2016'
- Accompany social innovation lab approach with measurement tool for

outcomes and impact

- Develop a process for supporting communities to convene a social innovation process

Goal 5: To foster the growth of social finance and impact investing

- Social finance working group to explore best practices in procurement and impact investing for post-secondary institutions
- Support Community Investment Fund pilot through marketing
- Navigator for access to financing and funds for social enterprises and entrepreneurs; incorporate into pipeline
- Development of aligned procurement policies and impact investing principles within the university partners
- Reach out to other large procurement bodies on VI such as hospitals and governments
- Strengthen the finance and funding landscape by partnering with local community funders; partnership expansion to other financial institutions such as Coastal Community Credit Union
- Integrate lessons learned from Community Investment Fund pilot and launch/or change

Goal 6: To provide future students and communities with tools and resources

- Host an annual capacity building Social Enterprise Catalyst 'Day of Learning' for emerging and operating social enterprises
- www.gathr.ca to host webinars and act as a clearinghouse for related expertise/knowledge; supports ongoing relationships and showcases community-based resources and technical assistance; create a space that supports the evolution of common practices
- Coordinate series of awareness-raising events both on-campus and off-campus (2 live case studies, speakers, Chamber-hosted Island tour)
- Support and showcase three operating social enterprises to grow through Social Enterprise Catalyst 2015 gala event
- Host the annual capacity building Social Enterprise Catalyst 'Day of Learning' for emerging and operating social enterprises--building on the previous year's conversations
- Host a series of webinars on social enterprise, social innovation and social ventures that build capacity, awareness and networks
- Support innovative events such as net impact, failure wake and Catalyst 2016
- Build the capacity of local consultant network in the areas of social innovation, enterprise and venture--- make the process and subsequent list transparent and easily accessible to organizations
- Marketing and communications Island-wide and beyond about VISIZ offerings and opportunities on Vancouver Island

4. How do they align with existing initiatives on campus?

UVic initiatives and activities are outlined above. This section focuses on Camosun College and Royal Roads University.

Camosun College: In 2013, Camosun College created Enterprise Point as a gateway to Camosun College's spectrum of entrepreneurial leadership services which have been collocated to support and foster innovation, and to bring an external focus to the College's goals and strategies for sustainability:

- VICAMP Centre delivers advanced manufacturing and prototyping services to local industry.
- Centre for Applied Research and Innovation (CARI) is a focal point for research and innovation at the college.
- Pacific Institute of Sport Excellence is a partnership initiative of Camosun College and Canadian Sport Centre Pacific, to focus on excellence in education, performance and innovation
- Business Development and Contract Training works with entrepreneurs, small business, industry and government to create opportunities for research, training and development with a focus on building strategic partnerships and ongoing cross sector collaboration

VISIZ will a) help us challenge our current way of delivering post-secondary and to explore the creation of new ways to deliver education and services, b) help reduce barriers created by traditional, jurisdictional and geographical boundaries and c) open the doors to innovation in education and experiential learning on and off campus.

Royal Roads University: The **Eric C. Douglass Centre for Entrepreneurial Studies** was established in 2007 with a \$1.6 million endowment from the estate of an entrepreneurial, self-made Alberta businessman. The purpose of the centre is to, "engage entrepreneurs and communities to facilitate the design and implementation of business models for new ventures that will enable a new breed of entrepreneurs to, 'make a positive difference in our communities while making a profit. Graduates of the program have established over 80 businesses across a range of sectors including those with significant focus in the areas of social venture and social enterprise. Student led research and project work in the areas of micro lending are highly aligned with proposed outcomes of this initiative.

Royal Roads University Grad Certificate: the School of Business at RRU is in the process of developing a Graduate Certificate in Social Enterprise Development (working title). This Graduate Certificate will consist of three courses, taught online, each approximately 10 weeks. The courses will include classes in social enterprise development and management, social innovation, and lean for social impact.

RRU is piloting new forms of engagement with its learning communities through the development of an integrated "**Communities of Practice**" platform. The platform "Gathr.ca" facilitates interaction between individuals and organizations of aligned mandates and interests to advance thinking and practice in areas of change and innovation. It allows for cooperation between organizations to access funding, post research and documentation and survey participants, convene events all premised on collaborative learning and practice. The

platform is being prototyped with a number of internal and external clients and will be used to support the purposeful growth of the Social Enterprise sector on Vancouver Island.