

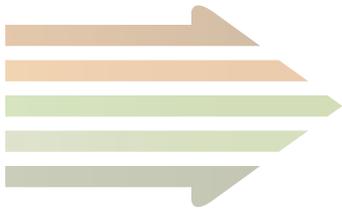
Collaboration for Rural Business Growth



Exploring the Common Best Practices & Barriers to Success

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Collaboration for Rural Business Growth

Abstract

Executive summary

The position of some post-secondary educational (PSE) institutions is currently evolving from an “ivory tower” detachment from the practical concerns of communities and businesses into a role as a regional economic development partner. As a result, post-secondary institutions have formed partnerships and collaborated with business service providers (BSP) and industry to provide businesses within their communities with the required resources by playing a role in the development of human resources, knowledge, innovative idea hubs, entrepreneurship, and centres for learning.

The purpose of this study was to discover best practices and barriers to effective and sustainable partnerships and collaborations between post-secondary institutions, business service providers, and industry.

The research methodology used was a mixed method using online surveys, phone interviews, and a literature search to gather data. Case studies, partnerships, and collaboration examples were also examined and a short summary of each is presented in this paper. Best practices and barriers extracted from the data are presented in chart form for both post-secondary education institutions and business service/industry.



Introduction

Interested Stakeholders

Olds College completed this study in 2012 for Community Futures Alberta, with partial funding from the Alberta Rural Development Network.

Community Futures

Community Futures is a national community economic development (CED) program funded by the federal government. Community Futures are non-profit organizations, guided by volunteer boards of directors and staffed with business professionals. They provide small business loans, business advice and information, and assist with economic development projects. There are 27 Community Futures organizations in rural Alberta and more than 250 across rural Canada.

Olds College

Since 1913, Olds College has been the premier comprehensive applied agricultural, horticultural, land, and environmental management College in Canada. Olds College offers certificate, diploma, and applied degree programs. Today, Olds College is a leader in integrated learning and applied research.

Alberta Rural Development Network

The Alberta Rural Development Network uses the combined expertise of Alberta's post-secondary institutions to support rural development in Alberta and help rural communities grow through learning.

Purpose & Background

The purpose of this study was to identify effective models for how post-secondary institutions and business service providers can best collaborate to meet the needs of rural businesses. This will give Community Futures Alberta, the Alberta Rural Development Network, and the Colleges in Alberta best practices that can be emulated in the future.



According to research by Michael Porter and other researchers and practitioners, effective collaboration between business support organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions is an important component of successful business development.

A 2006 report by the Wellesley Institute called *“Collaboration Practices in Government and Business: A literature review”* showed that collaboration is common. Businesses collaborate to access the capabilities of other companies, spread the risk in a new initiative, attract capital, gain scale to compete with larger competitors, gain familiarity for entering new geographic markets, and secure industry buy-in for industry-wide standards. Government collaborates to save costs, provide better customer service, to be more inclusive in program/policy development, and to

5 Critical Factors in Successful Collaboration

- 1 Clearly defined & shared goals
- 2 Leadership
- 3 Measuring performance
- 4 Strong communication/coordination/positive working relationship
- 5 Trust

*from *Collaboration Practices in Government and Business: A Literature Review*

develop integrated solutions to complex social problems. The same report says there is very little quantitative information about the practice of collaboration in the public sector and notes that it is difficult to measure success in complex collaborative activities. Evaluations of various collaborative activities show that the more “mechanistic” forms of collaboration (like supply chains and consolidation of back-office administration) have been quite successful at reducing costs and improving efficiencies but the more challenging forms of collaboration (like strategic alliances for innovation or market penetration) are less successful—partly because they require greater attention to process and less on financial metrics.

The 2006 Wellesley report found five critical factors in successful collaboration:

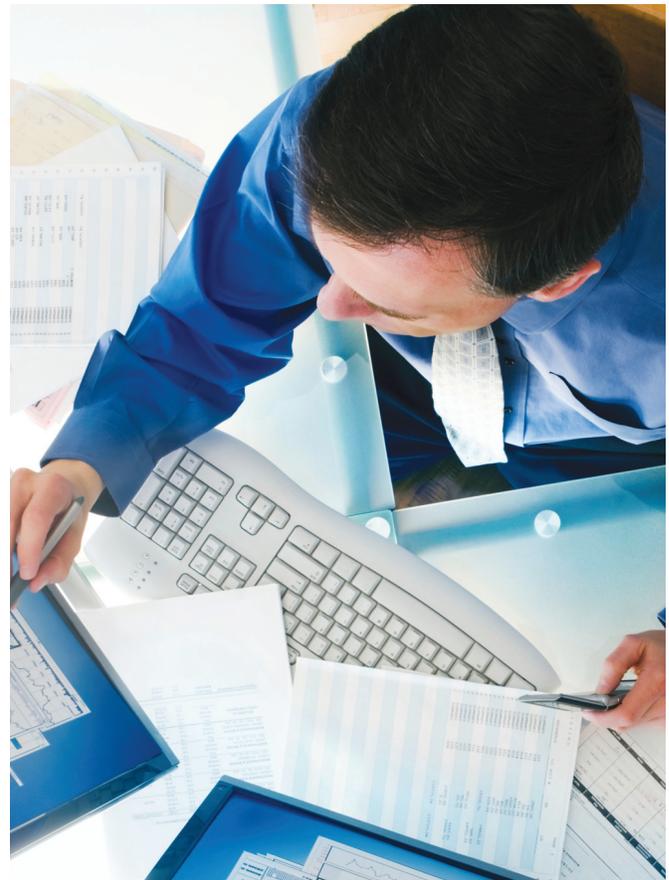
1. Clearly defined and shared goals—collaborations that set tangible targets in advance were more likely to meet them.
2. Leadership (support from the top) and a project manager.
3. Measuring performance.
4. Strong communication/coordination/positive working relationship.
5. Trust.

Based on a cursory look at the literature, we suspected that collaboration between post-secondary institutions and business services providers could result in reduced costs, better efficiencies, and better service to rural businesses. As a result, we went looking for examples of successful collaborations to see if we could identify specific best practices.

Research Questions

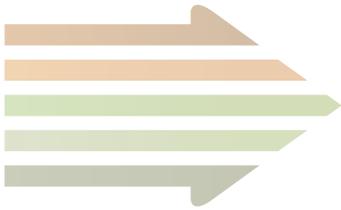
Before we could phrase our research questions, we had to define some parameters for the research. First, ideally we were looking for examples of collaborations in rural areas and, for the most part, we found examples that were more or less rural. There are some specific challenges for rural collaborators that their urban counterparts don't face—such as distances to travel/communicate and the relative dearth of potential partners.

Secondly, we needed to be clear on what we meant by “business service provider”. In the end, we defined a “business service provider” as an organization that acted as an intermediary between the post-secondary institution and the business. It is quite common for post-secondary institutions to work directly with businesses. In particular, almost all (skills based and vocational) College programs have industry advisory committees made up of industry leaders and business people, and more and more post-secondary institutions have created *Entrepreneurship Centres* to assist industry, entrepreneurs, and businesses. It is less common for post-secondary institutions to work with a business service provider such



as a Community Futures organization, economic development committee, or industry association. Most of our examples include a business service provider of some sort.

Thirdly, Community Futures Alberta had a specific interest in collaborations that resulted in building business management capacity, meeting the financial needs of business, providing business skills training (especially around commercialization and market expansion) and providing business coaching and counselling. We tried to find examples of collaborations that aimed for these types of results.



We had 5 main research questions

5 Main Questions

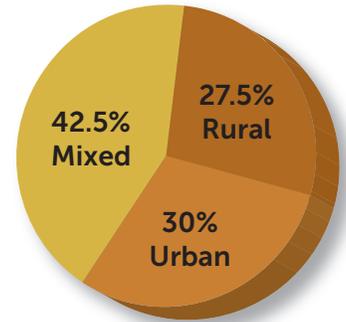
- 1 How are successful collaborations structured in terms of leadership and management? Is there a particular model that works best?
- 2 We know that communication is important. What does that mean in terms of how and when communication happens?
- 3 We know that building trust is important. How do these successful collaborations build trust?
- 4 We know that clear goals and targets are important. How are targets set and measured?
- 5 What best practices can we identify?

There is no single clear definition of what a post-secondary/business service provider/industry partnership is, due to the complexity and variety of these relationships. The partnerships host a diversity of collaborative stakeholders each seeking to obtain their own goals and objectives. The patterns of collaboration are complex and depend upon the degree of formalization of the relationship, degree of reciprocity, and the level of involvement of the participating partners. The structure and content of these collaborations must be tailor-made to produce each participant's desired results. With that said, this report will focus on attempting to find common best practices and barriers that can apply in a general sense for these partnerships.

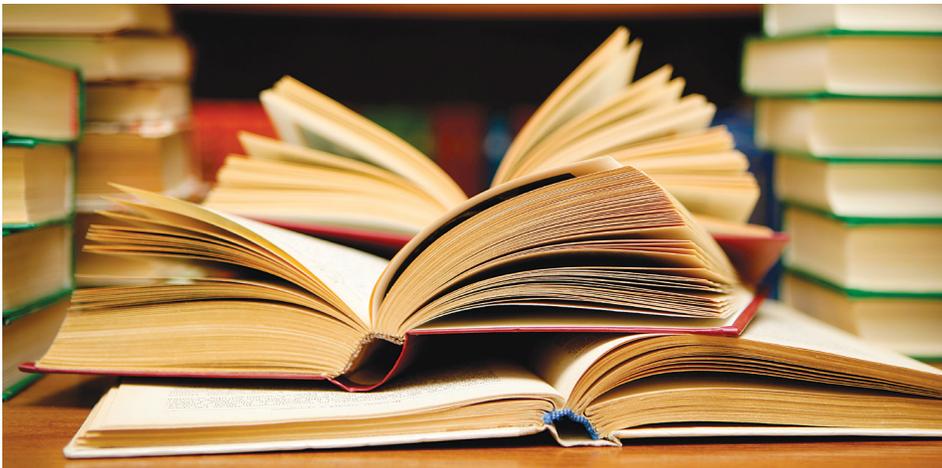
Research Methods

This research project used a **mixed methodology** approach incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. A selection of 27 case examples was chosen using a selection criteria based upon geographic location and institution type. Information was gathered on these cases from their websites, published articles, and from a **web based survey** using the SurveyMonkey® website. SurveyMonkey® was chosen for its ease of use, cost, and for the confidentiality factor (as we were required to keep the responses anonymous). **Phone interviews** were also conducted to provide further clarification on best practices and barriers for effective partnerships and collaborations. Our research also involved a combination of library and Internet searches for relevant materials which was summarized in a **literature review**. The focus of our literature review was from sources including research and policy papers produced by academics, foundations, government and non-governmental organizations, and case study examples.

Ruralness



Breakdown of Location for Respondents & Case Studies





Research Literature

Understanding Clusters

Post-secondary and industry partnerships play an important part in cluster based rural economic growth and development. Stuart Rosenfeld, one of the foremost experts on business clusters states in his article *"Yin and Yang of Rural Development"*, that most of the world's cluster models were fashioned after elements of the European network program in northern Italy. This model was taken by Denmark who used it as a prototype and formed the current models in use today. Most countries use this model and adapt it to their specific economic development and growth requirements. For example, the United States has focused on rural area economic development in response to their rural economic decline. Starting in North Carolina, where champions who had visited Italy in the 80's applied the Danish framework to rural communities with financial assistance from the state and North Carolina Rural Development Center. Unfortunately many of these early clusters ran out of steam as they ran out of funding. The funding was short lived and poor sustainability planning resulted in the collapse of the networks. It was discovered that clusters, networks, and partnerships take time to establish and time takes money. Inadequate development time

due to funding issues is one of the main barriers to successful clusters and collaborations. These networks are what we now refer to as clusters. Rosenfeld (2003) cites several reasons for the formation of clusters stating that most are formed in response to a crisis, however, some rural areas are being proactive and are forming them to strengthen their competitive advantage and add leverage for their businesses. This works by providing more access to R&D, closer ties to suppliers and customers, and access to a wider span of markets.

There are two types of networks used in business and industry clusters. **Hard networks** are generally small groups formed to achieve specific business objectives, use formal agreements for sharing resources, and are based upon making a profit in the short term. There are also **soft networks**—usually large groups that are dependent upon membership dues—which are formed around related industries, have open memberships, and look at more generic topics of interest.

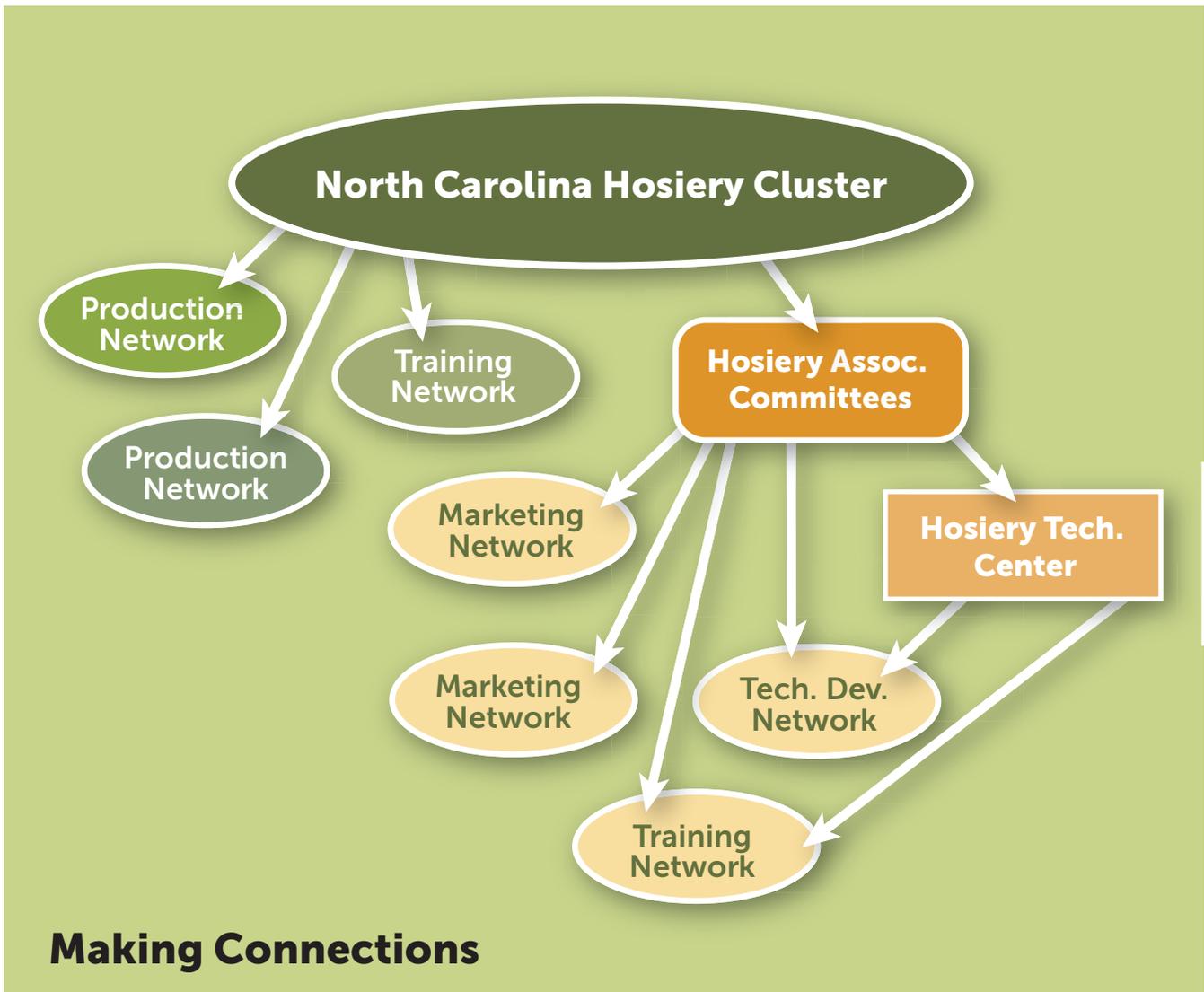
Purpose, Goals, Objectives, & Intent of the Collaboration/Partnership



Post-secondary/business service providers/industry partnerships can have many different and diverse goals and objectives. Partnership activities can range from entrepreneurial, educational, and training focus to innovation and research agendas. It is essential that post-secondary education realize their full potential for creating value in the economic development of their communities by ensuring this objective is part of their mission. Rosenfeld (2003) contends that human resources are very high in importance when considering the formation and sustainability of a cluster. Having access to a supply of qualified and specialized labour pool is a factor industry must decide when locating or expanding to a rural area. This is one of the areas where post-secondary education strengthens the chain in the network through the supply of this labour pool.

Making the Connections and Formation

Partnership formations are influenced by the intent of the undertaking, prior experience or familiarity with the partner, or through networking channels. The development of an industrial or business cluster in a region can strengthen post-secondary and business partnerships. Each partner will have goals, objectives, and expectations they will want to achieve in the collaboration. Our research found that sometimes geographical proximity between partners was an important precondition for the formation of a successful partnership. Ease of communication and other cost savings were cited as the reasons for this. Very successful partnerships **can be** developed and sustained in remote regions and throughout the world.



Sustainability

Our research found that numerous partnerships and collaboration were short lived. Formed for a specific, short-term project—or funded for a short period of time—these ventures were not sustainable in the long term. Lack of funding was the largest contributor to the short life span of some of the partnerships. Another reason was motivation for faculty and industry employees to continue in the long term. Lack of recognition, no work release, and few incentives were some of the reasons for faculty to lose interest. On the industry side, frustration with the slow pace the work, misunderstanding of common language, and lack of funding for R&D were reasons for partnerships to end.

Best Practices & Barriers

Most partnerships studied were found to have made recommendations for effective collaboration practices and identified barriers for success. Due to the diversity in context of partnerships, there are many examples of each which have been summarized and presented in the following charts. Even though each partnership is unique, there were several common themes that emerged for both best practices and barriers.



Best Practices

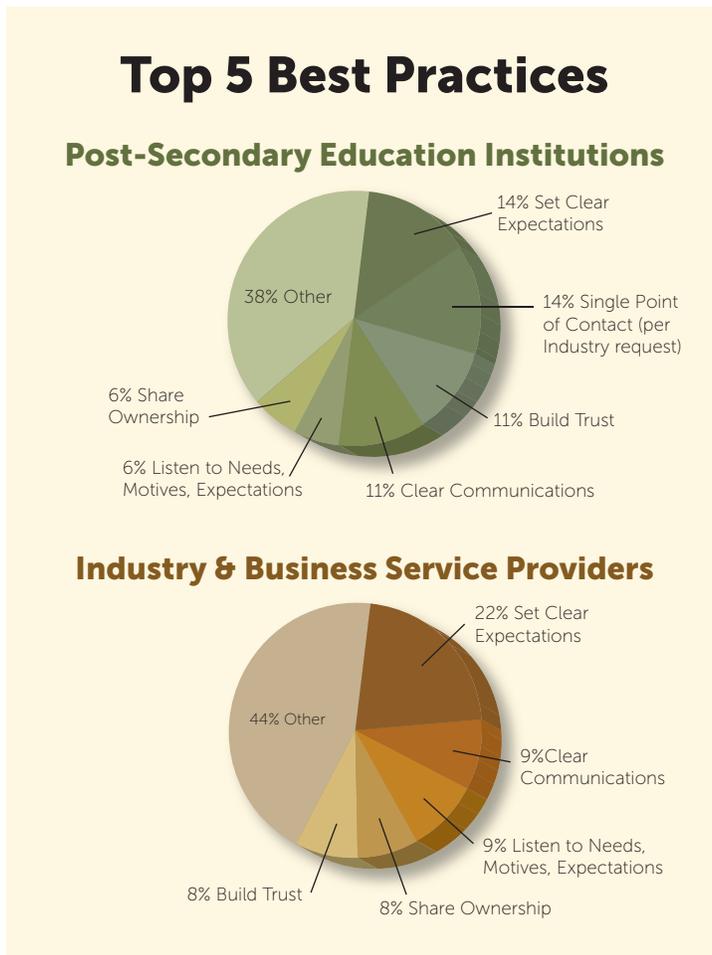
The Government-University-Industry Research Roundtable of 1999 cited several best practices for overcoming barriers to collaborative research. One of the most common best practices was to take the time to establish a solid relationship with the other

partners. This helped to build trust and open communication. It was found that those who partner with post-secondary education may lack understanding or trust when they enter into the agreements. The difference in organizational *cultures* from academics to industry was one of the main causes of misunderstanding and frustration. For example, industry time horizons were relatively shorter than that of post-secondary education. Internal structure and politics resulting in slow decision making was also a source of frustration that industry partners experienced when pairing with academic institutions. It was suggested that taking the time to get to know the other partner's culture and business was time well spent.

Barnes et al (2009), suggested that the use of critical "bridge" persons or a "one-stop-shop" at the post-secondary institution would make it easier for potential and existing partners to deal with the culture and structure of the academic institution.

They also contend that the organizational structure may have to be changed to support collaborations and partnerships.

Another success factor is managerial support for the collaboration. Most literature points to the importance of the commitment of upper management support in successful partnerships, however, it is also very important that the operational level also support the endeavor as they will provide much of the information and effort required for the collaboration. This level of support is required on both the industry and academic side. A high level of engagement and commitment is essential to the success of the collaboration.



Best Practices

Post-Secondary Education Institutions

Best Practices: PSE Institutions	Responses:		
	Literature Review n = 100	Phone Interview n = 6	Survey Monkey® n = 12
Set clear expectations, define roles, vision, goals, objectives, and responsibilities; and use contracts.	8	4	2
Per Industry request, establish a single point of contact/project manager for easier access to resources and faculty. (Clear a team or department to handle partnerships/project management).	6	3	5
Take time to build trust, respect, and relationships.	6	4	1
Continuous and clear communications; frequent reporting on progress.	4	1	6
Share ownership to build commitment (power and decision making).	6	0	0
Listen to needs, motives, and expectations of all participants; ensure value is achieved for all parties, mutual benefit.	5	1	0
Synergy between partners to ensure a good fit.	4	0	0
Gain commitment, support from management, have clear leadership.	4	0	0
Adoption of structural and strategic changes to increase flexibility and accessibility for partnerships and collaboration.	3	0	0
Share facilities, access to equipment, and labs (link resources).	3	0	0
Measurable outcomes.	3	0	0
Collect and disseminate information and success stories; measure success.	2	1	0
Promote community in the classroom—design courses to enhance community building.	2	0	0
Build in incentives and personal recognition to participants.	2	0	0
Understand current industry trends.	1	1	0
Set sights on a long-term relationship, not short-term transactions, however use short-term projects to build trust.	0	2	0
Make regional development an institutional priority, incorporate it into mission statement of the institution, and for the President's mission.	1	0	0

Best Practices: PSE Institutions	Responses:		
	Literature Review n = 100	Phone Interview n = 6	Survey Monkey® n = 12
Offer access through a web portal.	1	0	0
Partner with other higher education in the region.	1	0	0
Co-invest with regional developers and industry.	1	0	0
Offer research services to the community.	1	0	0
Provide training for participants to perform roles.	1	0	0
Be proactive and recognize opportunities.	1	0	0
Use AE (Appreciative Enquiry) to get to know the community and what will work for the partnership. Treat people in the community as knowledgeable experts of local conditions.	1	0	0
Match right expertise with correct project.	0	1	0
Conduct needs assessment, know the costs up front (collaboration is not costless).	0	1	0
Effective HR recruitment.	0	0	1
Good meeting practices.	0	0	1
Good quality product.	0	0	1
Good marketing plan.	0	0	1

One of the most common best practices was to take the time to establish a solid relationship with the other partners.

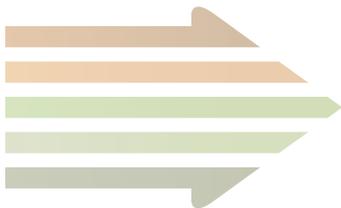
~ Government-University-Industry Research Roundtable, 1999

Best Practices

Industry & Business Service Providers

Best Practices: Industry & BSP/Communities	Responses:		
	Literature Review n = 100	Phone Interview n = 6	Survey Monkey® n = 12
Set clear expectations, define roles, vision, goals, objectives, and responsibilities; and use contracts.	8	4	5
Listen to needs, motives, and expectations of all participants; ensure value for all participants.	5	1	1
Continuous and clear communications.	4	1	2
Share ownership (power and decision making).	6	0	0
Take time to build trust, respect, and relationships.	6	0	0
Measure the impact of research, hiring grads, projects, and other collaborative efforts.	3	0	0
Synergy between partners to ensure a good fit.	3	0	0
Gain commitment and support from management, have clear leadership.	3	0	0
Collect and disseminate information and success stories. Keep partners motivated with current updates on progress and changes.	2	0	1
Regional developers and business service providers can service go-betweens and create linkages for partnerships. Serve as intermediaries. Act as a hub.	1	2	0
Make a point of reaching out to higher education institutions to invite them to participate in development efforts.	2	0	0
Formulate strategies to help better understand higher education and its culture.	2	0	0
Focus on relationships, not transactions.	1	0	0
Understand current industry and education trends for the region.	1	0	0
Identify potential joint ventures.	1	0	0
Gain short-term funding to gain a taste of what working with post-secondary education is like.	1	0	0
Be proactive and recognize opportunities in your community.	1	0	0
Incorporate post-secondary education into economic development plans.	1	0	0
Use a small, short-term project to build trust.	0	1	0

Best Practices: Industry & BSP/Communities	Responses:		
	Literature Review n = 100	Phone Interview n = 6	Survey Monkey® n = 12
Use a “systems” approach to collaboration.	0	1	0
Use a project manager.	0	1	0
Put community first, above each individual organization.	0	0	1
Clear differentiation from other initiatives.	0	0	1
Access to technology centre and resources.	0	0	1
Experienced personnel.	0	0	1
Managed expectations.	0	0	1
Reasonable timelines.	0	0	1



Summary of Best Practices for PSE Institution’s & Industry/BSPs

It was interesting to see that the results of the research showed little overlap in stated best practices between what post-secondary institutions provided and what we heard from industry and business service providers.

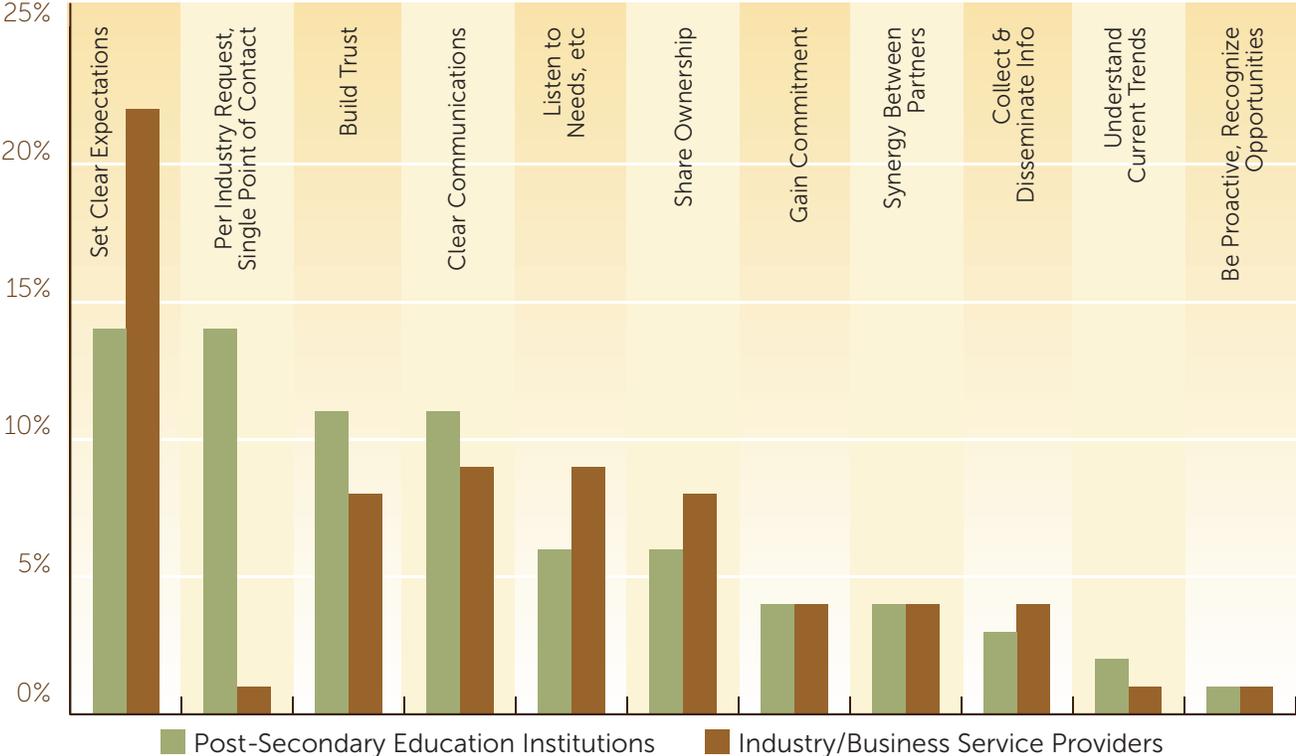
The first best practice was to set clear expectations for the purpose and intent of the collaboration or projects. Both stakeholders agreed that clearly written expectations were **vital** to a successful, long-term relationship. Unclear goals or unfulfilled expectations lead to mistrust and—in some cases—a lack of motivation to the point of collapse of the partnership. The use of a contract for partnership agreements, which spell out the expectations and responsibilities of both parties, was essential.

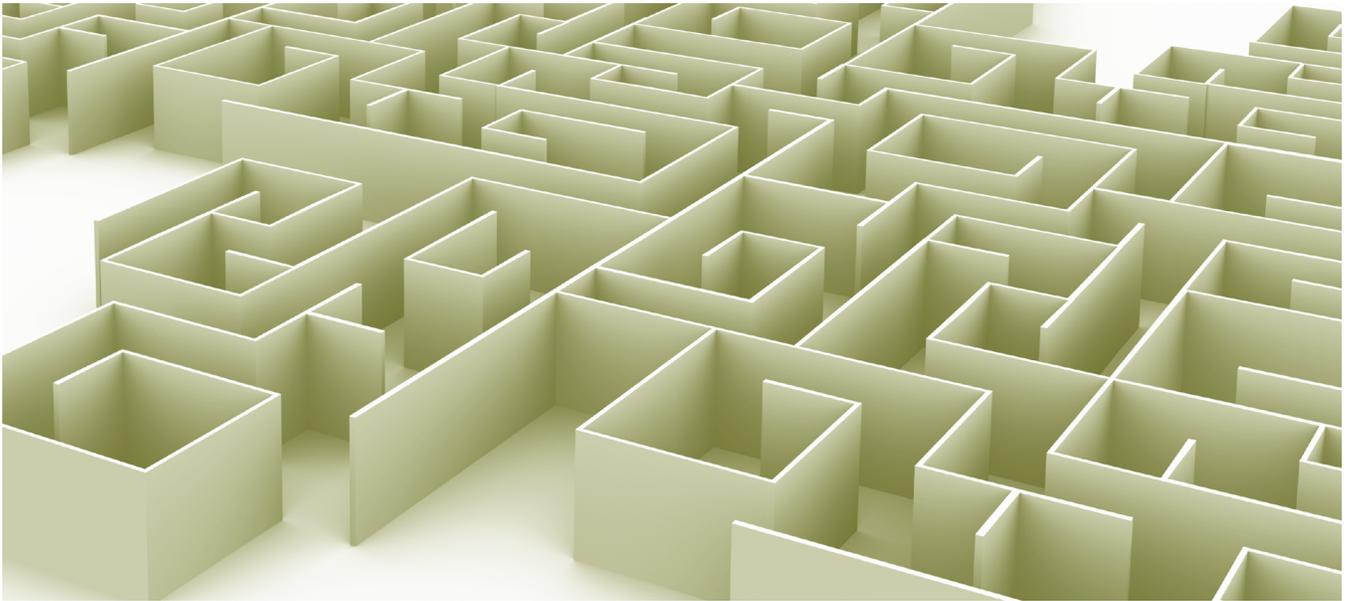
The second most common best practice for the post-secondary group was having a single point of contact within the post-secondary institution. A single point of contact such as the one we have here at Olds College within the School of Entrepreneurship, alleviates the frustration of external parties trying to gain access to resources and streamlines the processes on the institution side. **This best practice was strongly suggested by industry and business service providers** as a best practice that should be implemented by the post-secondary institutions. It was found to have positive results for the institutions that currently use the system of a “one-stop-shop”.

The third most common best practice cited by both stakeholders was the importance of building trust and ensuring clear and frequent communication between the collaborative parties. The Director of one Community College stated that working on smaller projects can be a stepping stone to build the trust needed for long-term relationships. Clear and frequent communication was an important tool to build up trust between the partners.

These are the top three common best practices, other important practices are shared in the chart below.

Common Best Practices among PSE Institutions & Industry / BSPs





Barriers & Issues

The pressures of reduced federal funding and increased costs of operation in both Canada and the United States have stimulated post-secondary management to endeavour to increase their participation as partners in economic growth and to expand their collaborative work with industry in expectation of becoming more self-sufficient. The literature research has unveiled several

barriers to effective and sustainable partnerships and collaborations. One of the barrier issues that may arise are “gatekeeper” people in the partnership who may filter some of the information, creating a high level of dependency upon them, which may affect the collaboration. A second issue is the lack of continuity of staff on both sides. A high turnover rate could affect the longevity

of the partnership. A third issue is short-term funding. The issue of longevity was also affected by the availability of funding. Many partnerships were established with short-term funding and grants that were not sustainable in the long term.

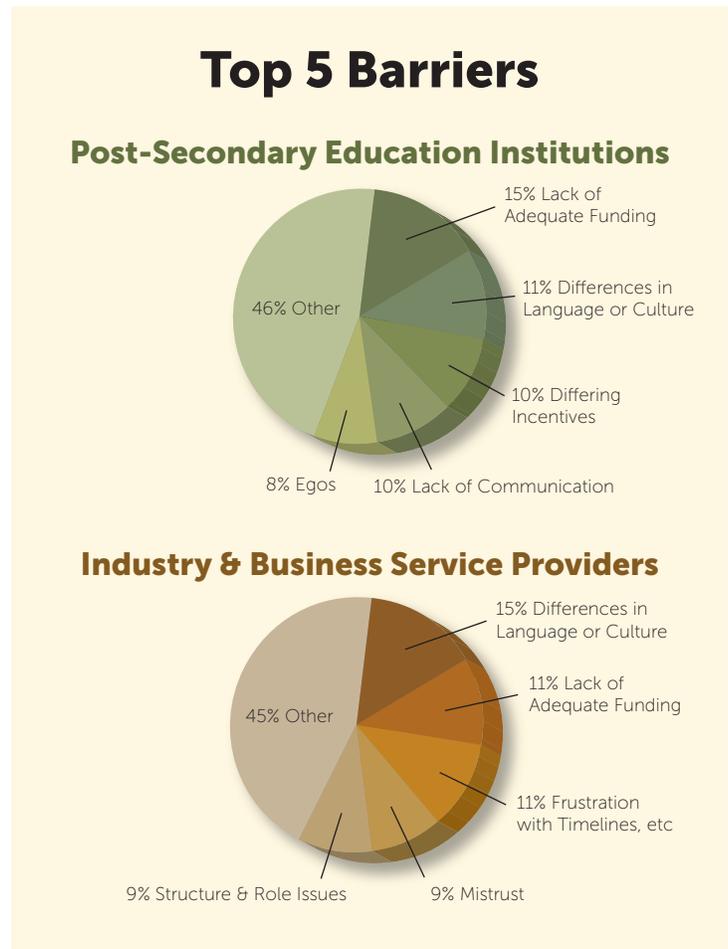
4 Main Barriers to Effective Partnerships

- 1 Differences in culture
- 2 Differences in common language
- 3 Differing incentives that inhibit collaboration
- 4 Unrealistic expectations

The US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration prepared a *Practitioners' Guide* for effective alignment of regional development and higher education. This guide cited four main barriers to effective partnerships between higher education and regional development and their communities.

1. Differences in culture between higher education and regional developers, business service providers, and industry;
2. Differences in common language;
3. Differing incentives that inhibit collaboration;
4. Unrealistic expectations that have been created by highly publicized success stories.

The AAUP (American Association of University Professors) in the US has also drafted a report—*AAUP Recommended Principles & Practices to Guide Academy-Industry Relationships*. This guide provides principle standards that encourage post-secondary education institutions to adopt robust standards when forming and dealing with this type of relationships.



A high turnover rate could affect the longevity of the partnership... longevity was also affected by the availability of funding.

Barriers to Effective Partnerships

Post-Secondary Education Institutions

Barriers to Effective Partnerships: PSE Institutions	Responses:		
	Literature Review n = 100	Phone Interview n = 6	Survey Monkey® n = 12
Lack of adequate funding for a sustainable partnership (other resource pressures).	4	2	3
Differing incentives that inhibit collaboration (need to encourage faculty to participate). Institutional reward structure may act as disincentives to collaboration.	4	2	0
Lack of clear and frequent communication. Poor communication and transfer of knowledge into usable industry information, research focus.	3	2	1
Professional egos get in the way (not willing to learn from community) or don't like to overstep as it breaks their personal relationships.	2	3	0
Differences in culture or common language; includes differences in culture between higher education and regional developers, business service providers, and industry.	5	1	1
Hidden agendas.	3	0	0
Technology transfer issues.	2	0	0
Timelines and pace of work.	2	0	0
Inability to quickly mobilize extra resources if required.	1	1	0
Not taking the time to understand the client and community.	1	1	0
Faculty may be intimidated by community partners due to lack of industry experience.	1	1	0
Unrealistic expectations.	1	0	0
Lack of time to devote to partnership.	1	0	0
Conflicts of interest.	1	0	0
Intellectual property right issues.	1	0	0
Lack of commitment to long-term goals.	1	0	0
Don't overstep the capabilities of the institution (services or product that they can provide).	1	0	0
Provide service to industry at a rate they can afford.	0	1	0

Barriers to Effective Partnerships: PSE Institutions	Responses:		
	Literature Review n = 100	Phone Interview n = 6	Survey Monkey® n = 12
Lack of managerial support or compensation for participating faculty.	0	1	0
Using students for project work. Quality of work or timeline issues.	0	1	0
Trust.	0	0	1
How to share revenue.	0	0	1
Acceptance of centralised financial administration.	0	0	1
Project oversight / management.	0	0	1
Ensuring all policies and procedures of the institution are followed at all times.	0	0	1

Barriers to Effective Partnerships Industry & Business Service Providers

Barriers to Effective Partnerships: Industry & BSP/Communities	Responses:		
	Literature Review n = 100	Phone Interview n = 6	Survey Monkey® n = 12
Differences in culture or common language; includes differences in culture between higher education and regional developers, business service providers, and industry.	7	1	0
Lack of adequate funding for a sustainable partnership.	3	1	2
Timelines and pace of work; red tape.	2	4	0
Mistrust of post-secondary institutions and their capabilities and motives. Mistrust of other partners.	3	0	2
Limited understanding of the role and opportunities offered by post-secondary institutions. Lack of awareness of resources and expertise available. Figuring out structure/roles.	1	2	2
Lack of clear and frequent communication.	3	0	0
Lack of time to devote to partnership.	1	2	0
Community partners maybe intimidated by the academic world due to lack of experience of working with them. Finding right contacts.	1	0	2

Barriers to Effective Partnerships: Industry & BSP/Communities	Responses:		
	Literature Review n = 100	Phone Interview n = 6	Survey Monkey® n = 12
Lack of commitment to long-term goals.	2	0	0
Differing incentives that inhibit collaboration.	1	1	0
Unaware of grant and funding opportunities or what College offers.	1	1	0
Intellectual property rights issues.	1	0	1
Unrealistic expectations.	1	0	0
Technology transfer issues.	1	0	0
Hidden agendas.	1	0	0
Conflicts of interest.	1	0	0
Unwilling or unable to take the risk.	1	0	0
Unclear goals and objectives.	1	0	0
Don't overstep the capabilities of the institution (services or product that they can provide).	1	0	0



Common Barriers Among PSE Institutions & Industry/BSPs

One of the most common stated barriers to effective collaborations and partnerships was the lack of funding. Both post-secondary institutions and business experienced *lack of funding issues*. Many relationships and projects were started only to run out of funding in a short period of time. Long-term, sustainable relationships not only took time to build but also funding to keep the effort going. Most funding problems stemmed from the common use of one-time grant and government funding that was provided to initiate the start of a project but was not sufficient to continue. As Debra Markley of RUPRI–Rural Entrepreneur Center in North Carolina stated “collaboration isn’t costless.”

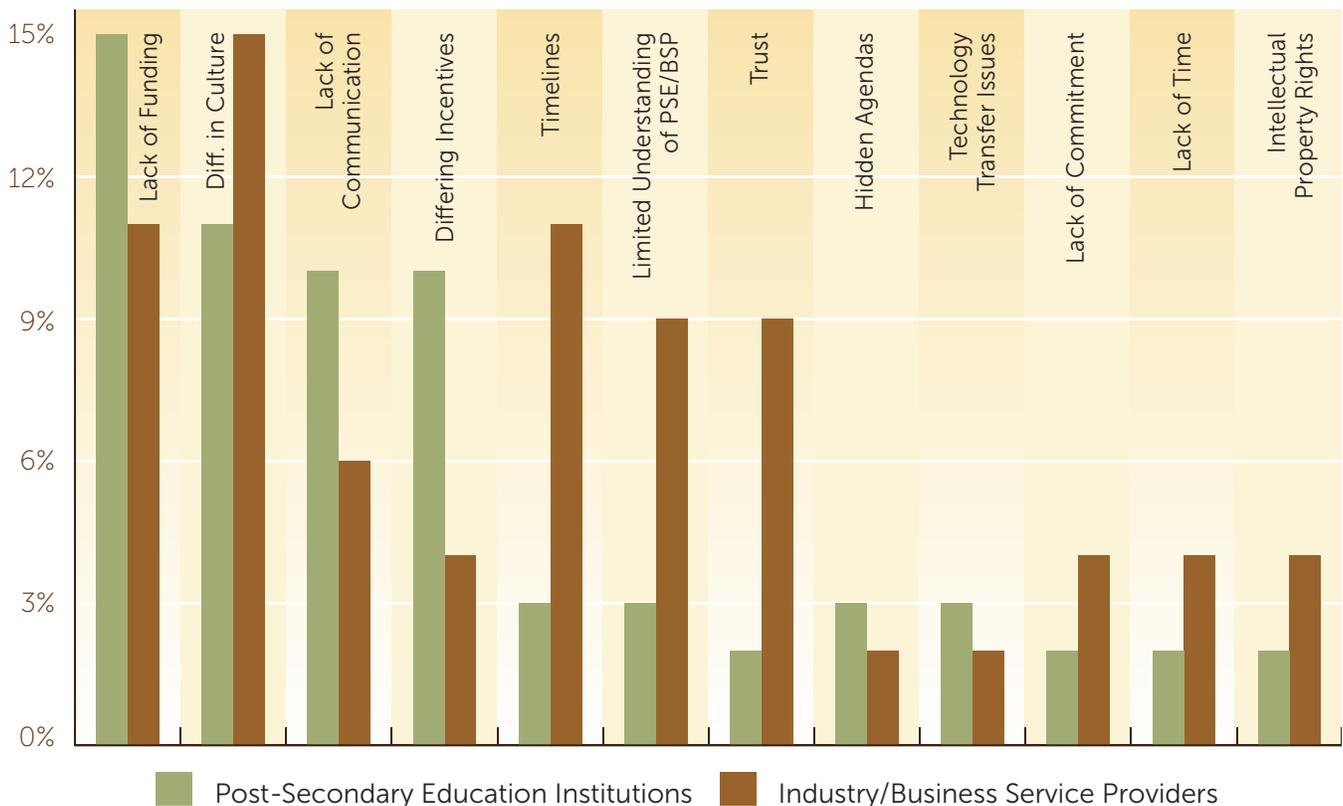
The second issue that stakeholders felt was a common barrier to collaborative efforts was the differences in culture between post-secondary educational institutions and industry or business service providers. Industry and business service providers saw this as more

of a challenge than the post-secondary institutions; however both thought it was an important barrier that needed to be addressed. Statements gathered included a mixture of issues such as the absence of common language and terminology used, different internal processes, and adherence to deadlines. Interviewee's stated that businesses were under tight timelines with deadlines to meet, the phrase —*time is money*—was used, and the frustration of academics not understanding or being on the same time schedules, was seen as a barrier to effective partnerships.

The third issue that was common to both was the lack of communication. The people interviewed and surveyed spoke of some examples where there was little, and sometimes no, communication on the progress of projects or changes made to the work. It was suggested that not only clear, but frequent, communication was vital to a long-lasting effective relationship.

These are a few of the top barriers, others are listed in the chart below.

Common Barriers among PSE Institutions & Industry / BSPs



Findings

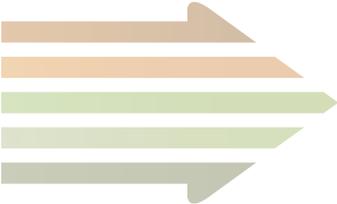
Case Studies of Partnerships & Collaborations



Case Summary

We identified 27 case examples of existing collaborations or partnerships from a variety of locations. The cases were mainly located in North America, with one example in Britain. These cases were selected from both urban and rural areas with the intent of gathering information from samples that provided a good variety of services to their communities.

The following is a breakdown of the most common services provided by the sample group:



63%	provided training (both employee and entrepreneurial)
56%	provided networking opportunities
30%	provided access to or funding (venture/seed capital/angel investments)
25%	provided commercialization assistance
22%	provided business plan development assistance
22%	provided a mentor or coach
22%	provided research services

Other services provided were use of facilities or research and testing equipment, loans, economic development assistance, management and strategy coaching, incubator services, other consulting, and marketing assistance.

Most organizations performed the role and functions of a hub or business accelerator.

SkySong & Arizona State University

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	skysongcenter.com	Urban	Start-up tech companies	Networking, venture/seed capital



SkySong acts as an innovation intermediary between Arizona State University and industry in the Phoenix metropolitan area. This newly formed partnership, just over four years old, opened in January 2008. It was initiated with the goal of facilitating networking, providing sources for seed and venture capital, and boosting the regional marketing. Acting as a hub instead of the traditional “research park”, they have demonstrated success through over 28 spinout companies and the assistance of more than 800 entrepreneurs. They work with young entrepreneurial companies by providing entrepreneurial training opportunities and workforce development. They assist in the technological innovation, industry linkages, and cross-disciplinary collaborative efforts in the Phoenix metropolitan area. They perform the following functions:

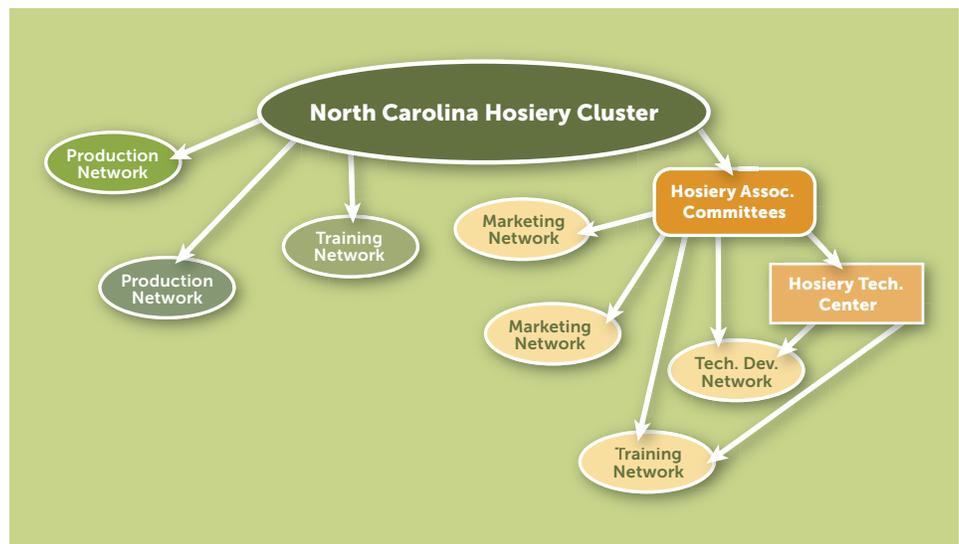
1. Provides operating mechanisms and venues for information exchange and connectivity as a neutral convener for regional growth.
2. Serves as an accelerator that advances technologies into the marketplace for regional economic benefit. To do so, it must combine scientific knowledge, market awareness business know-how, and complementary investment programs in one place.
3. Researches, identifies, and markets regional strengths to continue to refine and position comparative advantages.
4. Strategically directs and manages resources to develop core competencies in a region.

Catawba Valley Community College's Hosiery Technology Center

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.hosetech.com	Mixed	Expansion of companies in the hosiery industry	Employee training; technology and technical advice



The North Carolina Hosiery Cluster employs 30,000 workers and manufactures two thirds of the hosiery in the United States. Most of the firms in the cluster are family-owned with fewer than 75 employees. The cluster gains its strengths from joining together their technology, expertise, and cost savings. They collaborate with the Hosiery Technology Center which provides training, market services, and testing. The Hosiery Technology Center is a joint effort between Catawba and Randolph Community Colleges to help the hosiery industry compete globally through training, R&D, testing, process improvement (www.hosetech.com), and ecommerce (www.legsourc.com). The advantage to the cluster is the links of faculty relationships to businesses which helps to ensure that curricula are relevant and that the workforce is prepared. Community Colleges are the major sources of management and technical training and contribute to the region through continuing education, seminars, and networking opportunities. Colleges are also the storehouse for disseminators of information, benchmark practices, technology, and technical advisors.



Mountain Biz Works

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.mountainbizworks.org	Rural	Entrepreneurs and small businesses	Entrepreneur training, business loans



Mountain Biz Works is a non-profit organization located in Western North Carolina and was established in 1989 and assists entrepreneurs through business instruction and education, financing, and support. They have provided business training to over 3000 entrepreneurs and helped to establish over 1000 locally-owned business. Their mission is to build economic opportunities in their community through business development and capital. They bridge the gap between entrepreneurs, business, and support. They collaborate as strategic partners with Asheville-Buncombe Technical College, hosting training events and entrepreneurial classes; Blue Ridge Community College who facilitate a monthly Women's' business exchange program that includes training and consulting events; and with Tri-County Community College who provide distance learning and other training and consulting services for entrepreneurs.

*Helping smaller businesses grow
and larger businesses thrive!*

Ohio Business Extension

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	extension.osu.edu/about-osu-extension	Rural	Communities and small businesses	Research, training, and community economic development



The Ohio State University Extension is a dynamic educational entity that partners with individuals, families, communities, business and industry, and organizations to strengthen the economy of Ohioans. Its mission is that of engaging people through research-based educational programming and by interpreting knowledge and research so businesses can understand and use the information to better their lives and community. The extensions system is considered to be the world's largest non-formal educational system filling the needs of the local community through practical education programs that combines research and technical information with the community. The four major programs of the OSU Extension are family and consumer sciences, 4-H youth development, community and economic development, and agriculture and natural resources. Their objective is *"to provide the tools, training, and resources needed to develop the capacity of communities to analyze and monitor their regional and local economies, and use this information as a basis for economic development action and planning."*

Our Mission

Engaging people to strengthen their lives and communities through research-based educational programming.

Our Vision

OSU Extension is a dynamic educational entity that partners with individuals, families, communities, business and industry, and organizations to strengthen the lives of Ohioans.

CASE STUDY 5

CMA Centre for Strategic Change

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	sfubusiness.ca/cma-centre/	Urban	Businesses and industry leaders	Training in strategic change for businesses, events



The CMA Centre for Strategic Change is located within the Segal Graduate School of Business at Simon Fraser University and partners with the Beedie School of Business and the Certified Management Accountants (CMA) of Canada. The centre is committed to promoting research and the dissemination of knowledge on organizational planning and execution of strategic change. They provide essential resources for business leaders and academics in the area of strategic change and performance management. The Centre disseminates the research knowledge through events and publications.

CASE STUDY 6

BCIC: British Columbia Innovation Council

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	www.bcic.ca	Mixed	Entrepreneurs	Commercialization of technology



BCIC (British Columbia Innovation Council) develops entrepreneurial talent and commercializes technology in order to help the BC economy compete in the global knowledge economy, increase the standard of living, and provide employment opportunities. BCIC works in partnership with over fifteen Universities and Colleges within British Columbia and many industry partners. They provide support through programs that develop entrepreneurs and promote the commercialization of technology.

Springboard

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	www.springboardatlantic.ca	Mixed	Tech transfer from post-secondary institutions to industry	Commercialization of technology; leveraged funding; networking



Springboard Atlantic Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation in partnership with all 19 post-secondary institutions doing research in Atlantic Canada. Started in 2004, Springboard provides support to its member institutions by providing resources, expertise, and capacity to commercialize and transform academic knowledge and research to industry. Springboard's network connects publicly-funded research with industry experts and skilled professionals in academia and industry creating new collaborations. Their mission is to enhance the economics of their regions through knowledge transfer from the education institutions in the region to industry and through the delivery and support of research outcomes, research capacity, and technology and knowledge transfer from the education institutions in the region to industry through industry engagement. They also provide leveraged funding, subsidized support of industry engagement positions in member institutions and central support services including programs and expertise.

Springboard provides resources to Atlantic Canadian Universities and Colleges to help them transfer knowledge and technology to our region's private sector.

Our network members are from thirteen of the Universities in Atlantic Canada and the five Community Colleges.

Ontario Centres for Excellence

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	www.oce-ontario.org	Mixed	Tech transfer from post-secondary institutions to industry	Commercialization of technology; leveraged funding; networking



Ontario Centres of Excellence

The Ontario Centre’s of Excellence (OCE), established in 1987, assists in the development of the Ontario economy by creating employment, new products and services, assisting new business starts, and technologies. They partner with industry and academia and act as a co-investor with them to commercialize innovations that originate in Ontario Colleges and Universities. OCE co-invests in talent development, technology, and commercialization projects that will support the economic growth and global competitiveness. They work within the energy, environment, manufacturing, health technologies, digital media, and social innovation areas.

OCE co-invests in commercialization, technology transfer, and talent development projects in the segments of the economy that will drive Ontario’s future prosperity and global competitiveness. They work directly with post-secondary education and industry, bringing prospective partners together and working proactively by going out into industry and asking about their needs and how academia partners could fill their requirements. They consider themselves a broker of connections.

Our Mission

OCE’s mission is to accelerate innovation through game-changing research leading to successful commercialization and vibrant collaboration between industry and academia, launching the next generation of products and jobs.

Our Vision

OCE’s vision is prosperity from innovation—and Ontario—where bright minds connect to create prosperity.

CASE STUDY 9

Ryerson Angel Network

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	www.ryersonangelnetwork.com	Mixed	Young entrepreneurs	Angel investment, mentorship



The Ryerson Angel Network (RAN) actively supports businesses that have a high likelihood of success by assisting them with investor readiness services. They are the first University led angel investor group in Canada. They provide funding, resources, and mentorship to youth-led business (under 35 years old). The network also provides relationship capital management opportunities by bringing together qualified investors with youth-led businesses for investments that range from smaller deal sizes (less than \$50,000) to much larger deals (over \$500,000).

CASE STUDY 10

Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	www.nwoinnovation.ca	Mixed	Entrepreneurs and small business	Research, training, and community economic development



The Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre, located in Thunder Bay at the Centre for Change, provides support to entrepreneurs, small business, and community projects within their region. They act as a broker and encourage partnerships and collaboration between business, education, and government. They play an important role in creating networks and linkages that will promote collaborations and engage entrepreneurs, while providing support to management, training opportunities, market access, assistance with business plans, and financing sourcing.

CASE STUDY 11

RUPRI Collaborations: Rural Community College Alliance

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.rupri.org/entrepreneurship.php#	Rural	Entrepreneurs	Research, development tools, & consultation services



RUPRI, the Alliance of Rural Colleges, is a collaborative partnership between the Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA), the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), and the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI). RUPRI focuses on improving the cultural, environmental, socioeconomic, and productive workforce development in rural America. They do this through coordinating rural Colleges and institutions with community and regional development.

CASE STUDY 12

Wharton Small Business Development Center

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	whartonsbdc.wharton.upenn.edu/	Urban	Entrepreneurs and small business	Management consulting services



Started in 1980, the Wharton Small Business Development Center (SBDC), a division of the Sol C. Snider Entrepreneurial Research Center of Wharton Entrepreneurial Programs, provides business assistance to small businesses in the greater Philadelphia region. The Center has assisted over 20,000 small businesses and entrepreneurs start and grow, while enhancing the education of Wharton University students. The Center partners with experienced professionals and serves over 600 businesses in consulting services in the area of finance, management, international and global studies, life sciences, and health care.

John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers & Iowa Small Business Development Centers

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.iowajpec.org/contact.cfm	Mixed	Entrepreneurs and small business	Training, business counselling, technology development services



Iowa entrepreneurs receive resources and assistance through the collaborative approach of the Iowa Small Business Development Centers and the five John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Centers. The Centers provide business start-up and expansion services such as one-on-one business counselling, feasibility studies, and business plan preparation. They also provide education, training, and networking opportunities. The goal of these seventeen centers, with varied locations at Iowa Universities, Community Colleges, and within the communities, is to assist in the creation of sustainable Iowa companies through their work with entrepreneurs across the state. They also provide technical services such as technology development resources, intellectual property assessment, and research and development funding sources. They provide links for access to capital and create an entrepreneurial community and region.

Innovate • Lead • Succeed

CASE STUDY 14

Cleveland Entrepreneurship Center

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.clevelandcenter.com	Urban	Minority-owned small business	Networking, training, assistance with business plans



The Cleveland Entrepreneurship Center works with private, public, and non-profit resources to

provide minority-owned small business and entrepreneurs with services such as business planning, financial resources, legal services, management training, networking, marketing, and product development. The Entrepreneurship Center is part of a national program of the same name, developed through a partnership of the National Urban League, the Business Roundtable, and the White House National Economic Council.

CASE STUDY 15

Cuyahoga Small Business Development Center

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.clevelandcenter.com/programs/cuyahoga-small-business-development-center	Mixed	Entrepreneurs and small business	Networking, training, assistance with business plans



The Small Business Development Center Network of Ohio is an assistance program for Ohio's small businesses. The network is

provided through a partnership between the Ohio Department of Development, the US Small Business Administration, and selected Ohio chambers of commerce, Colleges and Universities, and economic development agencies. Today, these federal, state, and local partnerships contribute more than \$10 million in cash and resources to the support of small business development in Ohio. The Center offers training and support for start-up and existing businesses.

CASE STUDY 16

Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.goldmansachs.com/citizenship/10000-small-businesses/index.html	Mixed	Entrepreneurs and small business	Training, business support services, and loans



Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses is a program that creates greater access for small business to education, financial capital, and business support. It is an investment to help small businesses create jobs and economic opportunity by providing greater access to business education, financial capital, and business support services. The program is delivered through partnerships with local Community Colleges, business schools, non-profit, and community development institutions. The partnerships with post-secondary institutions provide education and training to assist small business and create jobs.

CASE STUDY 17

Jumpstart

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.jumpstartinc.org	Mixed	High growth companies	Direct equity investment, networking, training



JumpStart provides support to Northeast Ohio entrepreneurs in high growth companies. The centre focuses on innovative technology-based companies in the region creating jobs and economic growth for Northeast Ohioans. The industries that benefit are in the healthcare, information technology, electronics, and business and consumer products. The Center directly invests in early stage companies and provides connections for other funding opportunities. They also provide entrepreneurial development services and educational networking events. A few of their post-secondary partners are Ohio Dominican University dual enrollment program and the Jumpstart Higher Education Collaboration Council.

PREDA: Peace Region Economic Development Alliance & Grande Prairie Regional College – Centre for Research & Innovation

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Alberta	www.peacecountrycanada.com/innovation.aspx	Rural	Innovative entrepreneurs and small business	Tech evaluation and commercialization



PREDA (Peace Region Economic Development Alliance) and Grande Prairie Regional College, with significant funding from Rural Alberta’s Development Fund, joined forces to create the Centre for Research & Innovation. The intent of the partnership, which started in 2007, is to provide access to innovation service for entrepreneurs and business located in north-western Alberta. The Centre provides services in technology evaluation, intellectual property development, and market assessments.

Our Mission

To continue to grow a vibrant economy that explores, promotes, and facilitates new emerging opportunities, competitiveness, and innovation.

Our Vision

Where the Peace Country has:
 planned and balanced growth; strong stewardship of its resources;
 and the ability to proactively manage economic change.

Olds College Coffee Cluster

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Alberta	oldscollege.ca	Mixed	Coffee supply chain in the Dominican Republic	Marketing and training



Partners are: Olds College; Ramirez Coffee Company – Jarabacoa, DR; Coffee Concept – Calgary, Alberta; and the University Fernando Arturo de Merino Agroforestry (UAFAM) – Jarabacoa, DR. Olds College has had an on-going relationship with a private University in the Dominican Republic, UAFAM, for 6 years. It was through this University that the College was introduced to the coffee industry in the DR. The “Coffee Project” was hatched in the fall of 2011 and here is the basic idea: Olds College will import green coffee beans from the Ramirez Coffee Company located at Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic.

The most unique aspect of our coffee is the story: 90% of the profits from the coffee go to a Dominican Republic Education Fund. This unique fund encourages children to remain in school and supports technical farmer training (through UAFAM), to enhance both coffee quality and farm revenue.

CASE STUDY 20

The Norman Newman Centre for Entrepreneurship

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	entrepreneurship.dal.ca	Mixed	Entrepreneurs and small business	Management consulting and training



DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
Inspiring Minds

The Norman Newman Centre for Entrepreneurship promotes entrepreneurship through applied research, an outreach program, and innovative curriculum.

The program is structured around working out in the field with real ventures and projects in collaboration with other faculties at the Dalhousie University and in partnership with the Sandler Training Centre in Dartmouth. This system allows MBA students real world experience and international training which is available from the Dartmouth centre.

CASE STUDY 21

Regional Business Accelerator Lloydminster, Alberta

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Alberta	www.smallbusinessinformation.ca	Rural	Entrepreneurs and small business	Networking, coaching, training, business incubator services



The Regional Business Accelerator in Lloydminster provides support to entrepreneurs in the local community by providing connections, coaching, mentoring, and resources. The resources and opportunities made available to

business from the centre include local network connections business plan review and development, access to grant funding information, special interest groups, access to boardroom space and equipment along with other support. They work in partnership with Lakeland College, Community Futures, the Lloydminster Chamber of Commerce, and Economic Development Centre.

CASE STUDY 22

APEX: Southeast Alberta's Regional Innovation Network

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Alberta	www.apexalberta.ca/about.php	Mixed	Entrepreneurs and small business	Develop/adopt new technologies, commercialization, productivity



APEX is a Regional Innovation Network supporting growth of innovative and technology-oriented businesses in Southeast Alberta. APEX is a collaborative initiative and partnership between five core service providers: Medicine Hat College, Economic Development Alliance of Southeast Alberta, Palliser Economic Partnership, Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education, and Community Futures Entre-Corp Business Development. APEX provides business advice and path-finding support to access training, and investment capital to entrepreneurs and small to medium sized business.

CASE STUDY 23

TEC Edmonton

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Alberta	www.tecedmonton.com	Urban	Early stage tech businesses	Commercialization, business incubator services



TEC Edmonton is a business accelerator that offers expertise, resources, and connections. It is a not-for-profit enterprise started in 2006 as a joint venture between Edmonton Economic Development Corporation and the University of Alberta. They provide services and support to early-stage innovative businesses. Some of the services available are entrepreneur skills development; help with licensing and intellectual property protections, and business plans. They act as a full business incubator facility for technology start-ups.

CASE STUDY 24

Waterloo University & Communitech Hub

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	www.communitech.ca	Urban	Global digital media companies	Networking, venture capital, mentoring, facilities



The Communitech Hub in Kitchener, Ontario, established in 2010, is a digital media innovation centre that brings entrepreneurs, multi-national companies, and academic institutions together in one building to build global digital media companies. The hub has played a part in establishing over 164 digital media companies in its first year. It provides services and support such as connections to venture capital, networking, mentoring, and facilities. The hub works with the University of Waterloo, the Province of Ontario, and leading technology companies such as Research in Motion. It is a node of a more extensive network, the Canadian Digital Media Network.

CASE STUDY 25

Accelerator Centre (AC) Waterloo

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Canada	www.acceleratorcentre.com	Mixed	Start-up tech companies	Commercialization, training



The Accelerator Centre in Waterloo works in partnerships and collaboration with, and receives funding from, the federal and provincial governments, Ontario Centres of Excellence, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, the City of Waterloo, and the University of Waterloo, along with industry and academic partners. The intent of the centre is to promote commercialization of research and technology originating at the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Guelph, and Conestoga College to generate economic benefit in the Waterloo Region. The Centre provides support services and education programs through a large network of volunteer and community leaders for start-up businesses.

Wired: Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development

Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
USA	www.doleta.gov/wired/about	Mixed	Small business expansion	Networking, technical assistance, links to angel investors and venture capital



The WIRED initiative started in 2006 and included 13 regions referred to as Wired 1st Generation. They have expanded and currently support 39 regions. WIRED activities include economic development and sustainability programs, global competitiveness, management of existing growth opportunities, and small business development. They do this by bringing together federal and state entities, academic institutions, investment groups, and industry to work together to address issues and challenges in the region. They provide each region with tools and technical assistance to help them plan for regional economic growth. Other WIRED tools and resources available are support from managers and leaders for guidance, a nationwide network of foundations in regional economic development, links to angel and venture capital networks, and partnerships with Universities and Colleges.

WIRED takes a critical step in providing individuals with the tools for success, businesses with the human capital required for growth, and the American economy with the fuel for continued strength.

Silicon Fen-Cambridge Business Cluster University of Cambridge

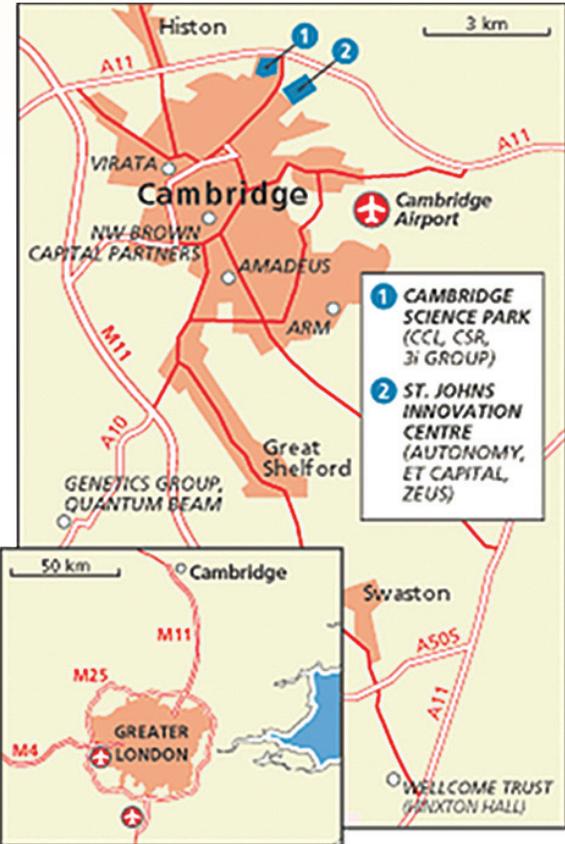
Location	Website	Ruralness	Target	Service
Cambridge, England	www.siliconfen.com	Mixed	Manufacturing companies; start-up companies	Training, business plan development, financial support

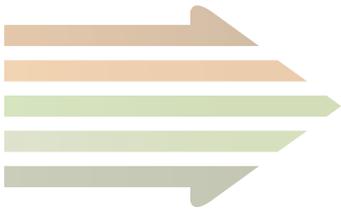
SiliconFen.com

The Rock River Region Higher Education Alliance supports manufacturing business in the depressed Rock River region. Alliance members participate in economic planning and problem solving. The Alliance institutions bring millions in federal money and faculty expertise to help manufacturers in the Rock River Region revitalize operations.

Part of the alliance is the Rock River Valley Entrepreneurship Center, an RVC-NIU collaboration, offers startup support for interested entrepreneurs seeking local innovation and training. There is also the Rock River College Small Business Development Center that helps business develop business plans and find financial support.

The success of Silicon Fen is helped by having a highly networked community, a world class University, & innovative financing.





Conclusions

Some of the conclusions from the case analysis, interviews, and literature are:

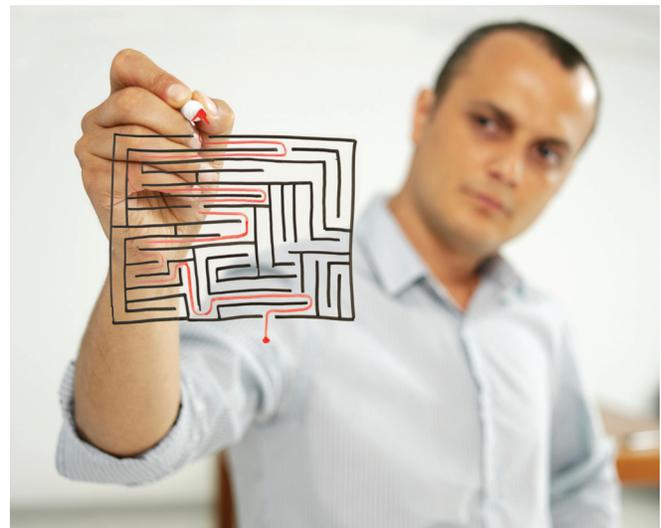
1. Post-secondary institutions operate in a different environment than business service providers. Post-secondary institutions have far more employees (usually numbering in the hundreds), larger operational budgets, and tend to have more formalized processes. Business service providers, on the other hand, are small (some have only 1 or 2 employees), with small budgets, and quick, flexible decision-making ability. Business service providers are typically able to make decisions and implement projects relatively quickly and they expect post-secondary institutions to be able to do the same.
2. Expectations also differ around capacity. Business service providers may assume that Colleges have the capacity to work with businesses but typically, instructors see teaching as their top priority and are not given faculty releases to be involved in community economic development or business development projects. In cases like this, business service provider partners can provide a lot of added-value.



3. In the US, where CED and entrepreneurship development are part of the mandate of Community Colleges, some Colleges have dedicated staff members who can provide business counselling and referrals or manage access to capital projects. This is less common in Canada but there are some entrepreneurship or tech development centres located in Canadian Colleges. In some states in the US, Small Business Development Centres (SBDCs)

are located in Community Colleges; similarly, some jurisdictions have discussed locating Community Futures offices in Regional or Community Colleges in Canada.

4. The most common pattern is that those Colleges that are interested in entrepreneurship or business development engage directly with entrepreneurs, business, and industry. This is done in several ways including industry advisory committees, tech commercialization centres, or entrepreneurship centres. The usual model for an entrepreneurship centre is a College division with one or two staff members who provide information and business counselling to the region or community, conduct business visits, and perhaps run an access to capital program. The entrepreneurship centre makes informal referrals to local business service providers but is not usually a partner with the business service provider. In fact, there may be some tension between the two over clients and perceived duplication of service. Our research was specifically interested in collaborative models between post-secondary institutions and business service providers but it should be noted that this is a rare kind of approach; the more common approach is for post-secondary institutions to engage directly with business.



5. There is a gap between post-secondary education and business service providers/industry when it comes to many of the success factors and barriers to success for collaborations and partnerships.

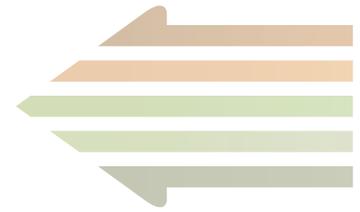
6. Both stakeholders closely agreed that clearly defined expectations and shared goals, clear communications, and building trust were important components for a successful collaboration.

7. Wider gaps in agreement, or perceived importance of, were observed in the areas of providing a single point of contact at the post-secondary institution. Interviews revealed that some faculty members did not like the use of a “one-stop-shop” at their institution as they felt it broke their personal connections and relationships with external partners. Industry felt that it reduced their level of frustration in dealing with the bureaucracy and variety of departments within a post-secondary institution.

8. Another factor that was considered by both as being relevant was shared ownership of the project or work. Being clear on who is accountable and taking ownership of those responsibilities is important to the project—to ensure tasks are completed and to keep the participants motivated. This was also important to the success of a long-term relationship and to gain commitment.
9. Listening to the needs of the rural and urban communities that the post-secondary institution is located in was deemed as an important factor to ensure relevance of the work being performed and the purpose of the collaboration. Some respondents reported that some research and projects were completed that were never actually used or viewed as being useful within the community.
10. One of the largest agreed upon barriers to the success of a collaboration or partnership was lack of funding. This was a concern to all who were phone interviewed and many that returned the survey. Once funding stopped, most collaborative efforts died out.
11. Feedback from several of the phone interviews suggested that post-secondary education institutions need to be proactive and get out into their communities to ask “what can we do for you?” They need to seek out and recognize opportunities where they can provide services to their communities.



The Five Research Questions



1. Is there a particular model that works best?

- a. The research revealed many different models depending upon the type of services that were provided. Most successful models used a business service provider as a hub that provided a variety of services to the community business and were a liaison between the community and the educational institution.

2. How and when should communication happen?

- a. It was cited many times that communication was an important part of the success of the collaborations and partnerships studied. It was said that communication must be clear and frequent. Keeping everyone involved and up-to-date on progress and changes was essential. The mode used varied depending upon the situation and stakeholder preferences.

3. How do successful collaborations build trust?

- a. Almost all study participants, including the literature research, agreed that trust between the collaboration stakeholders was very important. Issues stemmed from past experience where industry did not trust the post-secondary institution to provide the service they needed in a timely manner in a form they could apply. Some of the causes of this developed from the misunderstanding of different cultures, expectations, agendas, and time schedules. There were several suggestions when it came to building trust. The first was to start off small. Working on smaller projects allowed each participant to “get their feet wet” and test the synergy between the members. This method allowed a lower level of initial commitment of resources but helped to start the establishment of a relationship.





- b. Another suggestion was to focus on the relationship, not the transactions. This ensured a better environment to build a strong sustainable partnership or collaboration.
- c. Good communication and being proactive when providing services was also proposed as a method to build trust. Asking “*what can we do for you?*” was a good starting point.

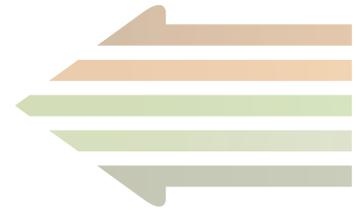
4. How are targets set and measured?

- a. There were several ways in which targets were set and measured, the method used depended upon the organization and project. The common starting point was to have clearly written common goals which both parties agreed to. The measurement again varied depending upon the project, number of businesses started, or services provided. The important point in answering this question was that both parties agreed upon the targets and measurement methods.

5. What best practices can we identify?

- a. This question has been answered in the conclusions listed above conclusions listed above.

Recommendations



According to the research, if you are a business service provider, the best starting point for a collaboration is to be proactive and to go and talk to the post-secondary institutions and industry. Developing an understanding of the culture and language along with the needs will provide a solid foundation for a relationship. The initial contact should be made with the current contact point or person, if available, or with business owners. One good example of a contact for post-secondary would be the Canadian Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship at Olds College or the Entrepreneur Development Centre at Medicine Hat College. This division of the school can provide the direction and access to resources for the rest of the institution.

The research suggested that the business service provider act as a hub or go between for partnerships and collaborations. Business service providers already have many contacts and established network systems that can guide a business in the right direction depending upon their business needs. Some of the key things that must be in place for successful collaborations are adequate funding, faculty resources, expertise, and management support.

Business and Industry are interested in services such as improving their business management capacity, financial support, business skills training, commercialization of products, and effective business coaching. Not every institution will be capable of filling the business service needs or willing to participate in collaborations. In this case, a business service provider should approach an institution that is equipped and experienced in this type of effort to ensure satisfaction.





As shown in the case studies highlighted in this report, collaborations between post-secondary institutions and business service providers can take many forms and use many different kinds of models, depending on the capacity and interests of the partners. The role that a post-secondary institution can play in a collaboration to serve businesses depends on its capacity, structures, and interest. For example, a post-secondary institution may have the following in place:

- **An entrepreneurship centre** with staff that can provide information, business counselling, referrals, and access to capital. In this case, the business service provider could contact the entrepreneurship centre and discuss various options from a formal referral process to provision of training workshops to a partnership to provide seed capital or loans to a mentoring program to a regional business incubator. Some entrepreneurship centres offer free services to clients and some are on a fee-for-service basis.
- **A technology transfer centre or innovation centre** to assist businesses in applied research and development, commercialization, and/or technology adoption. In this case, the business service provider could contact the centre to discuss various options including a formal referral process. Typically, the post-secondary institution will have unique equipment, labs, and expertise that can add-value to the collaboration. Services are offered to businesses on a fee-for-service basis but post-secondary institutions may have access to grants that cover a portion of the costs for clients.
- **A continuing education department.** In this case, the business service provider is more limited in how they can work with the post-secondary institution and discussion would probably be focussed on business training opportunities. Typically, continuing education courses are developed based on a cost-plus model.
- **A school of business.** In this case, the business service provider could talk to the Dean or the Chair of Business to see if faculty would be interested in doing student consulting/planning/marketing projects with local businesses or to see if students would be interested in various summer practicum/work experience projects with local businesses.
- **No specific centres or services to help businesses.** In this case, the post-secondary institution is probably not focussed on business or entrepreneur development.

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