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1. Executive Summary

The *Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development* project assesses the impact of academic knowledge mobilization on key gaps and barriers to rural Southern Ontario’s economic development and growth. The project aims to increase rural competitiveness and innovation in two ways. First, by evaluating the local and regional impact of research on rural economic development. Second, by mobilizing effective tools and resources to overcome existing barriers to growth and knowledge gaps.

Through community-based Discovery Workshops, interviews, and surveys conducted from 2011-2013, The Monieson Centre at Queen’s School of Business:

- Measured concrete progress made in rural economic development as a result of the Centre’s *Knowledge Impact in Society* (KIS) and *Identifying Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement* (RRP) projects as well as through other academic knowledge mobilization efforts.
- Increased the awareness, availability, and accessibility of knowledge resources, tools, and expertise targeted to local community needs.
- Helped address priority economic development challenges in individual communities across Southern Ontario by mobilizing knowledge tools.
- Deepened the existing knowledge base on rural development research gaps.
- Identified opportunities to increase rural competitiveness by facilitating the development of community action plans to address specific development barriers.
- Built regional learning and cooperation by expanding economic development networks and partnerships.
- Expanded the reach of rural economic development innovations to a national level through regional, provincial, and national partner organizations.

By engaging economic developers, community leaders, business people, and policymakers through a series of 20 Discovery Workshops in rural communities across Southern Ontario, the project identified emerging needs in rural economic development. In particular, it revealed an evolving set of research needs in Eastern Ontario that can be compared against research priorities first identified in the KIS project (2008-2010):

**Table 1: Evolving Rural Research Priorities in Eastern Ontario**

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<td>2. Sustainable Economic Development</td>
<td>2. Skills Training/Education</td>
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In 2008-2010, three overarching themes emerged in Eastern Ontario, which were shared in Southwestern Ontario:
1. A need for assistance in developing **sustainable economic development** strategies. This reflected a shift away from “smokestack chasing” models, whereby large multinational corporations might be enticed to open regional offices or manufacturing facilities by means of tax incentives, towards locally-based businesses that could be depended upon to remain in the region for the long term.

2. Strategies to identify and leverage **local and regional competitive advantage**. In short, rural communities were seeking ways to understand their unique economic, social, and geographic character, as well as ways that that their social fabric could be reflected through a clear brand to attract tourists, residents, and investment.

3. A need to develop a more **diversified economy**.

The 2011-2013 series of workshops revealed the continuing resonance of these needs, while also highlighting an emerging nuance in how these economic development trends are perceived:

- An understanding that **entrepreneurship may be the best route forward** in developing sustainable, diversified rural economies. The emphasis on small business development moved from research priority No. 4 to No. 1.
- As rural communities look to entrepreneurship, they are also recognizing that a broader support network is needed to encourage entrepreneurial ventures. Thus, **skills training**, particularly to equip an entrepreneurial workforce for the digital economy, is needed (priority No. 2).
- An increasing focus on **innovation** (priority No. 10). Particularly, how new technologies, partnerships with universities and colleges, and emerging industries create new economic opportunities.
- A continued recognition of the **impact of demographic challenges**: both the need to attract and retain youth (moving from priority No. 9 to No. 4) and the need to provide cost-effective services to an aging population (priority No. 8).

Through interviews and surveys, the project further explored best practices in building effective university-community partnerships, which emerged as research priority No. 7 in the Discovery Workshops. A series of interviews with the Monieson Centre’s partnership network of economic developers and policymakers revealed several key themes:

- **Building Community-University Partnerships**
  - Presence in Communities and Community Presence in the University – Successful partnerships benefit from an academic presence in communities as well as opportunities for community members to be present at academic institutions.
  - Crossing Boundaries – Mutual understanding between academics and communities is a precursor to making academic research useful in rural economic development.

- **Making Partnerships Productive**
  - Effective Communication of Knowledge – Clear communication is essential to making academic knowledge useful.
  - Partnering for Research Use – Academics and economic developers each bring key skills and perspectives to creating, and implementing, knowledge. More work must be done to efficiently implement knowledge.
• Economic Impacts of Community-Academic Projects – Through community partnerships, academic projects can have significant positive economic impacts on rural economies.
• Uses of KIS Resources – Resources developed through the KIS Project are used in specific ways as tools of rural economic development. As warehouses of knowledge and conduits for making connections, websites are especially important for disseminating these resources.
• Continuity in Research Partnerships – Long-term research partnerships provide a necessary foundation for knowledge creation and mobilization in rural economic development.

Future Directions in Partnerships for Rural Economic Development: Key Community Interests
• Engaging Students – Partners and academic institutions find value in engaging both local and incoming students in rural economies.
• Workforce Development – Workforce development, addressed through effective academic-community partnerships, shows promise for rural economic development.

A survey of the Centre’s broader rural economic development audience emphasized the value of academic opportunities for rural communities. Monieson Centre resources were valuable to participants because they provided access to experts and expert resources, facilitated networking activities, raised awareness of community issues, and improved organizational credibility and visibility. In particular, participants indicated that community-specific data and resources are of greatest value. Such resources, however, require the greatest resources to produce.

Interviews with businesses who received free consulting from Queen’s School of Business students reported positive experiences with the Monieson Centre’s program. Future success can be ensured through

• Thorough, ongoing communication from beginning to end: including confirmation of project goals and objectives at the outset
• Clear explanation of the consulting process
• Input into the final report; and
• Post-project follow-up

Surveys of students involved in the project affirmed the need for effective communication. Student surveys also highlighted that field projects with rural businesses enhance classroom learning experiences through the practical application of course materials and positively influence student interest in taking courses with similar community-based projects in the future. Moreover, participating in field projects with rural businesses assists some students in preparing for future careers because these real-world opportunities encourage the development of practical skills, greater comprehension of workforce environments, strengthened organizational skills, and industry connections.
2. Project Overview

2.1. Purpose

The *Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development* project assesses the impact of academic knowledge mobilization on key gaps and barriers to rural Southern Ontario’s economic development and growth.

**Long-term Goal**

- To increase rural competitiveness and innovation by evaluating the local and regional impact of research on rural economic development and by mobilizing effective tools and resources to overcome existing barriers to growth and knowledge gaps.

The project was designed to

- Measure concrete progress made in rural economic development as a result of the Monieson Centre’s *Knowledge Impact in Society* (KIS) and *Identifying Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement* (RRP) projects as well as through other academic knowledge mobilization efforts.
- Increase the awareness, availability, and accessibility of knowledge resources, tools, and expertise targeted to local community needs.
- Help address priority economic development challenges in individual communities across Southern Ontario by mobilizing knowledge tools.
- Deepen the existing knowledge base on rural development research gaps.
- Identify opportunities to increase rural competitiveness by facilitating the development of community action plans to address specific development barriers.
- Build regional learning and cooperation by expanding economic development networks and partnerships.
- Expand the reach of rural economic development innovations to a national level through regional, provincial, and national partner organizations.

2.2. Benefits

**Short-term**

- Understanding of gaps in the mobilization of rural development tools and resources
- Improved access to rural development tools and information
- Identification of local action plans to overcome barriers to growth
- Improved channels for knowledge transfer from academia to rural communities
- Nation-wide community access to best practices from Southern Ontario

**Long-term**

- Improved knowledge mobilization strategies
- Increased rural economic development and business development through reduced competitive barriers and better access to information and tools
- Strengthened partnerships between universities and rural communities
- More competitive rural communities through the implementation of strategic action plans
2.3. **Target Audience**

Increasingly, successful “partnerships between agencies, schools, universities, businesses, government and residents are a vital part of community growth” (Buys and Bursnall, 2007). As competitive funding frameworks require, the successes of university-community partnerships are being realized in numerous ways (Buys and Bursnall, 2007):

   a) new insights and learning;
   b) better informed community practice;
   c) career enhancement for individuals involved with the partnership;
   d) improvement in the quality of teaching and learning;
   e) increased opportunity for student employment;
   f) additional funding and access to information;
   g) more frequent and higher-quality publications; and
   h) more rapid speed of internationalization

The *Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development Project* targets rural economic development professionals, business people, entrepreneurs, community leaders, rural policymakers, and academics.

2.4. **Acknowledgements**

The Monieson Centre thanks the survey, interview, and workshop participants who have made this project possible. The project was funded with generous support from the Government of Canada’s Rural Secretariat, as well as additional financial support from the Prince Edward/Lennox and Addington Community Futures Development Corporation, Northumberland County and RDÉÉ Ontario. The Rural Ontario Institute provided expertise in developing the project’s policy assessment (see Section 10). The workshops were supported by the Monieson Centre’s network of partner organizations, in particular the Rural Ontario Institute, who assisted with the development of workshops in Southwestern Ontario. The project assesses past research coordinated by The Monieson Centre, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs through the University of Guelph, and is indebted to the support of Queen’s School of Business and Queen’s University. Elizabeth Harris (BComm, Queen’s School of Business), Hillary Morgan (MPL, Queen’s School of Urban and Regional Planning), Reena (Usha) Rungoo (MA, Queen’s University, PhD, Yale University), Greg McPherson (MSc, Queen’s School of Business), and Susie Cui (BComm, Queen’s School of Business), provided invaluable support as Research Assistants.

2.5. **References**

3. Literature Review

The *Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development* project addresses an important gap in the literature: how to effectively transfer knowledge across the university-community divide, and within and across communities, to promote the successful application of this knowledge with long-term community benefits. There is a growing body of work on participatory research, particularly in the area of health, and a pertinent academic discourse on assessment and evaluation. Nonetheless, few published works align these interests with this project’s business perspective and few business publications offer community-focused perspectives on knowledge transfer to foster innovation and competitiveness in economically disadvantaged rural regions. This literature review is organized into the three arenas of fostering innovation in rural economies, participatory research and evaluation, and assessing research impacts, and ends with the methodological conclusion of situating an innovative photo-based methodology in the literature.

3.1. Fostering Innovation in Rural Economies

The reward system for academics in many research-intensive academic institutions is such that the application of research is not fostered and academics have few incentives to focus on transforming their local communities. The Monieson Centre, Queen’s School of Business, Queen’s University, breaks this mould. The research centre facilitates research projects that assist businesses and communities in practical ways.

Rural communities in Southern Ontario are working to forge new trajectories of economic development. The spatial distribution of innovation and the mechanisms by which it operates have sparked great interest (Ratanawaraha and Polenske, 2007). As helpful considerations have arisen regarding regional knowledge spillover (Fuchs and Shapira, 2005; Boschma and Frenken, 2011; Tripl and Maler, 2010; D’Este et al., 2012), within Canada, little attention has been paid to the ways in which innovation is emerging in novel forms within rural communities themselves. The complex economic phenomena interacting with, and producing, the diverse geographies of Southern Ontario require careful consideration.

Path-dependent regional economic development is highly mediated by historical contexts in which the “trajectory of specific regions and cities is rooted in a series of economic, social and cultural factors that affect their development over time,” such as institutional endowments (Wolfe, 2013). The resilience of regions depends on these factors. Wolfe advances a rethinking that identifies innovation as the “centre piece” of place-based regional economic development policy. With the growth of Canada beyond the Staples Theory (Innis, 1956), and a shift away from traditional sources of industrial development, the emphasis is now on innovation and competitiveness in the knowledge economy as keys to regional resilience.

Cities are recognized as drivers of Canada’s economic growth. Urban areas are hotspots of creativity and innovation in the knowledge economy. Florida proffered the proliferation of a new creative class: people who are “primarily paid to create and have considerably more autonomy and flexibility than the [working and service] classes” (Florida, 2002). Florida brought together the concept of the knowledge worker, first articulated by Drucker, and the “bohemian” arts and culture sector of the economy (Drucker, 1959, Florida, 2002). In short, Florida reasons that where the artists go, knowledge workers will follow. Florida’s theory, however, was developed in an urban context whereby artistically flourishing neighbourhoods like Toronto’s Queen St. West attract an inflx of knowledge workers such as high-earning software developers and architects.
These urban neighbourhoods commonly exhibit three “T”s: tolerant society, talented workforce, and technological innovation.

While attention has been given to “peripheral areas” in Europe, which have “been involved or even have become prominent building blocks of the regional innovation systems theory,” rural and remote regions are too often treated as colourless spaces on the imagined map of Canadian innovation (Petrov, 2011). When they are contemplated, Canadian rural communities are frequently posited as appendages to urban areas.

Petrov’s (2011) work on Canada’s northern periphery observes that knowledge creation in remote areas themselves “appears to lie outside the major theoretical debates and empirical generalizations.” Nonetheless, peripheral communities demonstrate their “capacities for community-based, independent innovative activities that dwell on local entrepreneurship, leadership, artistic and scientific creativity” (Petrov, 2011). Petrov argues that, in remote regions, creativity and innovation are “more vital” for economic health than in traditional industrial-economic urban cores. Within peripheral areas, the innovative efforts of specific individuals are especially influential as communities engage in novel entrepreneurial and civic forms.

Within this literature with a primarily urban focus and the exciting new work being done on the Canadian North, a more nuanced understanding of “peripheral” is needed. Although less remote than the “far North,” many communities in Southern Ontario are nonetheless geographically peripheral: they can be physically, economically, technologically, and culturally set apart from urban areas. Internet access may appear to be one of the triumphs of globalization over the constraints of geographical location; however, to “recognise a spatial ontology freed from thinking of space in purely territorial terms – bounded and scalar – is not to disregard the significance of urban, regional, and national space” (Amin and Roberts, 2008). Despite the recognition that “global communication networks under rural conditions contribute to the integration and sustainability of the community, as much as to processes of expansion and differentiation” (Jansson, 2010), many rural communities in Southern Ontario have found securing broadband Internet access problematic. Frequently, rural communities in Southern Ontario are dismissed as peripheral in the academic literature and peripheral to the larger Canadian economy. Nevertheless, in the knowledge economy, innovation and knowledge-creation should be more broadly and contextually defined.

Innovation shapes economies in “multi-dimensional ways, requiring more comprehensive means than most analysts currently use to conduct measurements of innovation” (Ratanawaraha and Polenske, 2007). Research conducted at Queen’s University by Donald (2009) indicates that the rural creative economy exhibits a fourth “T”: terroire. Donald suggests that rural communities’ unique sense of place provides a competitive advantage in attracting artists and knowledge workers. Rather than larger-scale industry clustering, Prince Edward County, an area of relatively low population density, has found creative means of establishing fruitful small-scale clusters. Examinations of the rural creative economies of Stratford and in the Muskoka region find that food clusters are “a form of creative economy that is particularly suited to place-based development in small towns and rural areas” (Lee and Wall, 2012). Quite literally, combined with the abilities of local individuals, organizations, and connected academic institutions to mobilize knowledge, the terroire of rural communities provides a grounding out of which many creative economic possibilities may flow.

This literature review critiques the assumption that peripheral communities are not economic innovators within regions. Rural areas have been marginalized as “generally not locations of
new knowledge production” beyond the migration of the creative class to rural areas of high amenities and “smokestack chasing” (McGranahan et al., 2011). On the contrary, The Monieson Centre’s approach aligns with Petrov’s assertion that “transformative events” for regional economic development can originate in local innovation outside of Canada’s cities (2011). Recognizing that “universities are... vital components in regional and national systems of innovation” (Wilson, 2009), The Monieson Centre has become an important facilitator in this transformation. In Southern Ontario, the Monieson Centre’s community partners are ambassadors and learning models for combining local innovation, a rural creative class, and academic partnerships for community economic development. The funding model of CFDCs in Ontario, first through FedNor, later through FedDev in the South and FedNor in the North, supported projects involving knowledge transfer between peripheral communities (Petrov, 2011). The dynamic nexus between local innovation, government, community, and academic institutions is at the centre of this research.

3.2. Participatory Research and Evaluation

Participatory research is vital to understanding the economic development of rural Southern Ontarian communities and to evaluating the impacts of knowledge mobilization in these communities. Participatory research strategies aim for the co-creation of knowledge: an interactive process where all parties learn about the interests and values of the others so that they can come to agreements and chart paths for future cooperative action. In the Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development project, participatory evaluation builds knowledge of effective means and strategies for bridging academic research with community economic development practice. Participatory evaluation is in keeping with Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS), Identifying Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement (RRP), and other innovative academic projects’ propensity towards community-based participatory research (CBPR) method that “balances research with action” (Butterfoss, 2006). CBPR can be compared to “a modern egalitarian marriage, where both community and researchers recognize they each have responsibilities and resources” in the research process (Delemos, 2006).

Participatory methodologies demonstrate an awareness that knowledge translation goes beyond expert knowledge, emerges through interaction, and becomes a responsive capacity where rural stakeholders learn how to mobilize the resources they need to address issues and strengthen everyday management beyond “firefighting” problem-solving (Wielinga and Vrolijk, 2009). Stakeholder participation is the axis around which action-research CBPR methodologies cycle because community members are involved in every part of the process; however, community members are not the sole driving force of the research. Participatory evaluation differs from community-values driven evaluation because researcher values, and other external frameworks, are the underlying impetus for evaluation (Butterfoss, 2006). While the Monieson Centre’s approach is participatory and its process values the co-creation of knowledge, the Centre recognizes that it is situated within academic structures and paradigms.

It is increasingly apparent in the evaluation literature that research knowledge outcomes are broader and more difficult to track than narrow academic reward structures have traditionally acknowledged (Buys and Bursnall, 2007; Adler and Harzing, 2009). Government funding bodies desire “real-world” evidence of knowledge use and influence outside of university settings (Meagher et. al., 2008). For less-quantifiable knowledge transfer from social science-funded research to non-academic policy and professional practice, new methodologies and measures are necessary (Meagher et. al., 2008). In consequence, cutting-edge evaluative techniques and mixed-methods systems are being developed and refined.
Participatory evaluation bridges long-established and innovative academic evaluative methodologies. Well-used methods such as surveys and key informant interviews are valuable vehicles for gathering certain types of evaluative data yet they can be restrictive and do not necessarily fulfill the requirements of participatory evaluation if used in isolation (Butterfoss, 2006). Creative, customized, participatory methods are entirely appropriate to the goals and contexts of the Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development project.

In this co-creative knowledge mobilization process, along with expert knowledge, “the images and experiences of individual actors play an important role” (Wielinga and Vrolijk, 2009). Wielinga and Vrolijk (2009) found that statistical data was insufficient as they tried to get into the deeper processes of knowledge translation between researchers, policymakers, rural businesses, and innovative rural individuals. As an alternative, they designed a reflexive evaluation that combined a timeline method with a learning histories method. Participants in their rural networks were “asked to list all remarkable moments in the process since the start, both positive and negative, and to place them on a line indicating the calendar” along with “‘penny-drop' moments” (Wielinga and Vrolijk, 2009). They then used the timelines to analyze and comment on their learning histories. Their combined method facilitated discussion and often encouraged the networks themselves to “take more responsibility for next steps” in this participatory process. The “penny-drop” concept behind Wielinga and Vrolijk’s methodology became part of the innovative methodology of the Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development project.

3.3. Assessing Research Impacts

Assessing the wider societal impacts of academic research is highly relevant to research conducted in partnership with rural communities yet the literature reveals that these less-quantifiable outcomes are difficult to evaluate. As a result of the methodological challenges “associated with tracking and measuring the societal outcomes of research, this area has lagged other types of evaluation that seek to assess other aspects of research, such as quality, relevance, and productivity” (Williams et. al., 2009). Challenges arise in four areas (Williams et. al., 2009):

- **Time** – There is a significant time gap between research and its full societal impact.
- **Attribution** – It is difficult to unequivocally attribute outcomes or effects to research when the relationships between research and its effects are indirect. Impacts are the result of research quality, dissemination to those who can use it, and, importantly, the capacity of research users to use findings to their maximum advantage.
- **Bias** – It can be difficult to evaluate research impact without allowing undue bias towards positive impacts.
- **Theory** – There is a need for more program theory that fully traces the ways and means by which programs are implemented to achieve their goals.

The growing body of research on knowledge mobilization indicates that qualitative, as well as quantitative, assessment of research impact is crucial to enhancing the practical value of academic research (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2003.) For example, Carpiano (2009) notes that, despite the prevalence of quantitative approaches in health research, qualitative studies of neighbourhoods and local areas are increasingly important because they meet researchers’ needs to
a) study local areas with specific social, cultural, or historical contexts...
b) understand and address facets of local contexts for which standard survey methods are insufficient...
c) develop (from inductive and interpretive standpoints) and refine theories that are firmly grounded in the lived experiences of the people who inhabit these contexts...
d) generate knowledge... that relies on an evidence base obtained from a variety of theories and methods, each of which complements the strengths and limitations of the others.

For these reasons, qualitative methodologies are part of a well-rounded evaluative strategy for assessing academic impacts on rural economic development.

Qualitative methodologies may be seen as the preferred approach for evaluating the impacts of socio-economic research projects; however, they must be carefully crafted because qualitative assessments that involve direct lines of questioning may result in a harvest of qualified statements (Meagher et. al., 2008). Nonetheless, less-tangible changes, such as evolutions in how people think, are “not less important than more instrumental forms of use” in public policy or practice (Meagher et. al., 2008). Meagher, Lyall, and Nutley (2008) outline the challenges of quantifying the range of knowledge uses that they categorize as “non-academic” impacts of research:

Timing – it is generally recognised that the impact of academic research is long-term and often indirect.
Problems identifying additionality – would the ‘effects’ we are trying to measure have occurred anyway?
Serendipity – the outcomes, and therefore the impact, of research activities are by their very nature unpredictable. Serendipity is an important element but it may be difficult to trace the results of such chance uptake.

As knowledge is co-created between communities and academic institutions, it becomes increasingly evident that a broader range of knowledge uses are not necessarily beyond the pale of “academic” impacts.

The complexities of knowledge flows, and knowledge impacts, must be delineated. Campbell and Fulford demarcate six forms and stages of knowledge development in the research use of the Ontario Ministry of Education (2009): knowledge generation through original research, knowledge mobilization of existing research, knowledge contextualization in differing circumstances, knowledge adaptation to meet specific purposes, knowledge application in policy and practice, and knowledge integration into everyday discourse and standards.

In addition to these forms of knowledge development, research and knowledge will impact stakeholders in particular ways. Nutley provides a useful conceptual diagram of research impact assessment that can be applied to each stakeholder group in this evaluative study (Figure 1).
Each field of Nutley’s conceptual diagram can be applied to the stakeholder groups in the *Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development* project to bring balance to the evaluation of research impacts. Evaluations of research and knowledge impacts are often uncomfortable with attributing causality or suggesting standards of practice beyond the programs at the centre of any given study (Davies et. al., 2005). Considering Nutley’s model of forward tracking, tracking back, and the evaluation of initiatives results in a more nuanced critical perspective of the data gathered in this study. Through this multifaceted model, areas where Monieson Centre and other academic knowledge initiatives have been especially effective are revealed, pitfalls become more apparent, and targets for future growth can be identified. The methodological tools used in this evaluative project are designed to gauge satisfaction with project process, outputs, and outcomes in order to make any needed improvements to future academic knowledge mobilization projects.

3.4. **Methodological Response: Situating a Photo-based Methodology in the Literature**

Working with a more diverse conceptualization of the impacts of academic knowledge mobilization on rural economies led to the realization that, in addition to the foundational methodologies of academic investigation, innovative approaches would result in useful data. In order to draw out the ways in which community members engaged with academic knowledge in rural economies and observed knowledge impacts, a tailored photo-based methodology was
developed to dovetail with the Discovery Workshops (see Methodology). The photo-based methodology is, in itself, an outcome of reviewing the literature on participatory evaluation.

Photo-based methodologies take many forms. Photolanguage is a tool for facilitating the generation of qualitative data by providing a visual stimulus that generates discussion. Photolanguage “can be effectively used for evaluation and research purposes” (Bessell et. al., 2007). In a group setting, researchers provide photographs in order to encourage participants to reflection on everyday knowledges that might often otherwise be taken for granted. Photo-based approaches recognize that knowledge users “are not passive recipients of research output” and fluctuations in research engagement depend on a variety of dynamic factors: the fit between new research and individuals’ existing technical and social knowledge, the role of knowledge intermediaries, political context, policy agendas, and timing (Meagher et. al., 2008). With skilled facilitation, photolanguage can aid groups in airing differing perspectives, articulating concerns, and engaging with their real-world experiences of deep analytical concepts (Bessell et. al., 2007).

The methodology for using photolanguage for evaluation developed by the Education Evaluation Team at the University of Miami is instructive yet was not quite amenable to the already established Discovery Workshop community engagement process continued into the Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development project (Bessell et. al, 2007; Bessell and Burke, 2005). The first step of the photolanguage methodology is photograph selection. Four or five photographs are selected per participant by researchers familiar with the proposed group. As photolanguage sessions progress, an experienced facilitator may add other photographs in order to draw out discussion in particular areas of interest. The second step is photograph and room arrangement. Before participants arrive, numbered photographs are placed in the room with enough spacing to make each image visible as an individual entity. At this stage, the facilitator is prepared with recording tools and consent forms. The third step is group assembly and focus questions. The facilitator asks the group to reflect on a focus question. The group members are told that, in the next step, they will be asked to select a photo which they feel is connected with this question. Bessell, Deese, and Medina (2007) explain that group members can, potentially, choose a range of photographs from a retrospective response, or “preprobe (what the person remembers it was like before the intervention or event), a current probe (how the person feels at the current time), a postprobe (how the person felt at the conclusion of the intervention or event), or a future postintervention probe (the person’s perceptions of what it will be like in the future)”. The fourth step involves participant viewing, and choice, of photographs. Participants view all of the photographs for five to ten minutes in silence, without touching the photographs, record the numbers of their selections, and return to their seats. At once, they are asked to retrieve the photographs that they selected. Those who selected the same images are asked to sit together. The fifth step is the exchange of reflections in the group. Without requiring any individual to do so, group members are invited to display their photographs and describe why they made these particular selections. The final step is the academic interpretation and analysis of the data gleaned in this process. Photolanguage gives “voice” to research participants as they use photographs to articulate their own knowledge. Although photolanguage relies on these visual tools, it elicits verbal interaction as it reduces anxiety about participation, has been used successfully with a wide range of groups, and is especially helpful with groups who may be uncomfortable communicating through reading or writing (Bessell et. al., 2007).

The images created in photo-based methodologies have the potential to facilitate knowledge transfer in a variety of academic and “non-academic” environments. The Monieson Centre operates in a technological context that allows images to be captured, transmitted, interpreted,
and displayed through a variety of common devices. In a much more fluid manner than the photolanguage methodology described above, community participants, partners, and academic engaged in the Monieson Centre’s work can contribute to, and mobilize knowledge through, the sharing of photographs.

Photovoice, a methodology gaining in use, particularly in health studies, more closely approximates the Monieson Centre’s research contexts (Lal et al., 2012; Novek et al., 2012; Cabassa et al., 2013). Photovoice is designed to “tap into daily realities and the core meanings and significances of these realities” and has the potential to challenge researchers’ preconceptions as participants “both define the phenomenon of interest and then share why they chose to focus on that particular aspect of their life and the meaning it has for them” (Nowell et al., 2006; Guilleman and Drew, 2010). Arguably, photovoice may elicit “additional information not available in traditional qualitative approaches such as interviews and focus groups” because photographs offer an additional entry into participants’ insights (Nowell et al., 2006). Photovoice is an able medium for university-community co-creation of knowledge because it is “effective... for sharing power, fostering trust, developing a sense of ownership, creating community change and building capacity” (Castleden and Garvin, 2008; Hergenrather et al., 2009). The ubiquity of social media makes photo-based methodologies not only effective, but perhaps necessary, vehicles for participant expression.

Photovoice methodologies can involve several steps (Goodhart et al., 2006):

1) Conceptualize the problem.
2) Devise initial themes for taking pictures.
3) Define broader goals and objectives.
4) Conduct photovoice training.
5) Take pictures.
6) Facilitate group discussion.
7) Engage in critical reflection and dialogue.
8) Select photographs for discussion.
9) Context and storytelling.
10) Codify issues, themes, and theories.
11) Recruit policy makers as the audience to learn photovoice findings.
12) Prepare photos and captions for presentation at reception.
13) Reach policy makers, donors, media, researchers, and others who may be mobilized to create change.

Goodhart utilized a four-step photovoice methodology (Goodhart et al., 2006). The first step was introduction and training. An individual “with an expertise in photography discussed the ethics of obtaining consent to take someone’s photograph and how to compose an interesting and clear photograph” and four research themes/questions were presented to participants. Participants were supplied with consent forms and given three weeks to take and develop their photographs. The cost of photograph developing, in this case, covered with a coupon, is less of an issue when digital technologies prevail. The second step was selection. Participants had small-group discussions about the photo-taking process and then selected the photos that they wanted to discuss with the group. They were given three weeks to write titles and captions for two to four selected images that “best represented their own responses to the research questions.” Participants were given research-relevant guidelines for creating captions. The third step was contextualizing and codifying. In a group, participants discuss the specific research-question relevant, story-telling, or significant photos and identify recurrent themes, issues, or ideas. Participants selected a number of photos that best represented these themes and “identified policy makers... with the power to influence these issues.” The fourth step was
engaging the policy makers. Policy makers, participants, leaders, and media were invited to a reception where photos were displayed. Participants were encouraged to convey the meanings of their photos to the policy makers.

Photovoice has notable methodological limitations. Some important issues, transitions, or relationships are difficult to capture in a photograph; however, this limitation can inspire important discussion. While, in some studies, participants may feel compelled to create certain kinds of “positive” or “pretty” pictures, these images should not be considered to be less useful for obtaining knowledge or as offering less insight into the research questions (Guell and Ogilvie, 2013). Castleden and Garvin (2008) find that photovoice methodologies “whether traditional or modified” require a time commitment for participants and researchers because participants agree to a process of training, photography, discussion, and action that is “much more than a survey, an interview, or a focus group typical of some data collection methods.” Funding constraints can limit researchers’ ability to fully involve participants in the later coding and analytical stages of the research (Cabassa et. al., 2013). The quality photographs can also be a challenge of this methodology.

Out of this literature, the Monieson Centre’s photo-based evaluation methodology tailored existing photo-based research techniques in order to make them appropriate to the complexities of engaging multiple communities across the geographical area of rural Southern Ontario. Participants were given simple guidelines and asked to send photographs to The Monieson Centre in advance of a Discovery Workshop. Usually digital images were sent via email along with a brief informal description of “what the photo shows” in relation to the KIS, RRP, or other community-academic knowledge impacts. The questions, topics, or themes conveyed to participants in this methodology are intentionally broad. In response to broad questions, participants may reveal issues that are relevant to the evaluation, yet have not been considered or articulated by the researcher. Broad topics may also minimize undue positive bias.

Through community partners, potential Discovery Workshop participants were invited to participate in this photo-based methodology with the following message:

In advance of the workshop, you are invited to contribute a photo that speaks to how academic resources and tools are impacting your community. Your submission will be shared with the workshop participants to spark discussion. If interested, please send in a photo of one of the following at least one week in advance of the workshop (photos can be emailed to monieson@business.queensu.ca):

1) One way that The Monieson Centre, or another academic partner (e.g., local university or college), has impacted your community. Please include a short description (one sentence) of how the knowledge or resources were helpful.

2) One area where your business or community could benefit from more research from academic partners or institutions. Please provide a short description of the potential benefit that your photo represents.

3) A representation of a ‘penny-drop’ moment where you saw the connection between research and community development. Please provide a short description of the remarkable moment and its impact.

These “penny-drop” moments demonstrate the deeper learning and effectiveness of co-created knowledge (Wielinga and Vrolijk, 2009). A Research Assistant developed a Facebook page for this element of the Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development project. The Facebook page enabled participants, and those interested in the project, to comment on the issues, themes, and knowledge revealed in photographs. Images became useful tools in the Discovery Workshops in which they were used to illustrate
community priorities, focus discussion on knowledge benefits, demonstrate best practices, highlight areas of growth, and address community development issues. Subsequently, these images were used in conference presentations and in publications.

3.5. Conclusion

This literature review brings together somewhat divergent strands of scholarly work through the lens of efforts to mobilize academic knowledge for the purposes of economic development within the rural communities of Southern Ontario. Innovation is a cornerstone of this development. Knowledge is being sought out, and implemented, in particular place-based ways in Southern Ontario. The particular assets and characteristics of communities matter in economic development as they do in any appropriately participatory research conducted in these communities. Assessing research impacts in rural Southern Ontario communities requires a commitment to partnership and a working recognition of the co-creation of knowledge. Taken together, relevant literature on the themes of innovation, participatory research, and assessing impacts, require innovative approaches. An outcome of this perspective is found in the use of a modified photo-based methodology in the Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development project.

3.6. Bibliography: Resources for Further Reading


The Harris Centre at Memorial University, and Irish Loop Regional Economic Development Board. 2007. Harris Centre Regional Workshop Report: Memorial University Partnering with the Irish Loop Regional Economic Development Board (Zone 20). Bauline East, NL: The Harris Centre.


4. Methodology

The two-year *Impact of Academic Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development* project pursued a mixed-methods approach developed by The Monieson Centre to better understand how interactions and partnerships between universities and communities can support rural economic vitality. The growing body of research on knowledge mobilization indicates that qualitative, as well as quantitative, assessment of research impact is crucial to enhancing the practical value of academic research (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2003). Accordingly, this project utilized mixed qualitative methodologies as well as quantitative measures.

The methodology assessed the outcomes of two initiatives coordinated by the Centre, along with the work of other post-secondary institutions in Southern Ontario with rural communities and organizations. The first, the 2008-2011 *Knowledge Impact in Society* (KIS) initiative, mobilized research-based economic development resources in Eastern Ontario. A second, 2009-2010 project, *Identifying Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement* (RRP), extended KIS resources to rural communities in Southwestern Ontario.

The *Impact of Academic Knowledge* project evaluated the knowledge impacts of both of these initiatives along with any other knowledge initiatives that rural communities had engaged in with other academic institutions. Performance indicators of the KIS, RRP, and other academic projects included:

- Use of and satisfaction with research findings by community stakeholders and policy makers to enhance rural economic development
- Type, volume, use of and satisfaction with dissemination vehicles including the website/knowledge hub, newsletters, practitioner conferences, data reports and requests, interaction with policy and decision makers, and media coverage
- Additional research projects and research funding generated by on-going consultations with researchers, community partners, etc.
- Partner satisfaction with project processes, outputs and outcomes, and collaboration as well as new, sustainable research partnerships developed as a result of the project.

Since the diversity of innovative accomplishment in peripheral areas presents a challenge to documentation (Petrov, 2011), mixed-methods and creative research strategies were appropriate. This began with a literature review of existing research on impacts of university-community partnerships and innovation in rural economic development (Section 4).

4.1. Discovery Workshops

The Monieson Centre engaged over 480 community leaders, economic developers, policymakers and business people through a series of 20 Discovery Workshops in communities across rural Southern Ontario (Section 5). These workshops allowed researchers to revisit communities first engaged through the KIS and RRP projects, understand the changing nature of rural economic development in the region, elicit feedback on the impact of academic partnerships and resources, and discover opportunities for new partnerships. The Centre joined with the Queen’s Executive Decision Centre to use electronic decision-making technology to facilitate efficient brainstorming, prioritizing of ideas, and planning. A sample agenda is provided in Appendix A.
The workshops also incorporated a participatory photo-based methodology, in which users submitted photographs illustrating existing or potential impacts of academic partnerships on economic development in their communities. The photos fostered creative thinking in the workshops and later engendered learning across communities through the Rural Knowledge Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rural-Knowledge/110749018964273). This approach stems from the growing understanding that research knowledge outcomes are more difficult to track than narrower academic reward structures have traditionally acknowledged (Buys and Bursnall, 2007; Adler and Harzing, 2009), and the call of government funding for “real-world” evidence of knowledge use and influence beyond the university (Meagher et. al., 2008). Participatory research processes promote interactions in which, along with expert input, the “images and experiences of individual actors play an important role” in the co-creation of knowledge (Wielinga and Vrolijk, 2009).

4.2. Interviews and Surveys

The workshops were complemented by further community consultation enabled through a series of surveys and interviews. First, the Centre’s network of over 30 partner organizations was interviewed to gather in-depth feedback (Section 6). Phone interviews were conducted with steering committee/advisory board members, as well as project partners, from KIS, RRP, and other academic projects to assess partner satisfaction with and usage of tools, measure reach and impact, and identify lessons learned from this partner-based approach to knowledge mobilization. Comments about the community impact of other forms of academic knowledge
mobilization were also solicited. In addition, partners were requested to recommend, the best sources/types of quantitative data on their region’s economic development.

Second, organizations featured in student consulting projects and the business success story initiative were interviewed to assess the impact of student work and knowledge resources on their organizations (Section 7).

Third, the Centre’s network of over 400 participants in past rural economic development events was surveyed (Section 8). A web-based survey assessed satisfaction with development resources and community usage of tools; measured relevance and impact in communities and businesses; and determined reach. These provided all members of the Centre’s KIS and RRP mailing lists the opportunity to comment on the immediate and lasting value of their KIS and RRP involvement, as well as benefits resulting from other university knowledge mobilization initiatives.

Last, an online survey reached graduate and undergraduate students who developed tools and resources for the KIS project to assess learning value and generate lessons learned in developing high-impact, academically rigorous practitioner-oriented tools (Section 9). Their previous involvement in KIS and RRP work included provision of consulting to rural small businesses, development of knowledge syntheses, and editing and analysis of Discovery Workshop reports. As Ibanez-Carrasco and Riano-Alcala (2009) observe, however, a challenge of evaluating students acting as research-workers in community projects is that, although they “are apprised of the overall venture, they are witnesses to only one section of it.” Accordingly, student surveys were designed to draw out the specific nature of the task/tool/project and the learning process as it relates to that small section, and contrast that perspective with questions gathering data on the place of that section within the larger venture. With this perspective, the surveys provide insights into student engagement itself and the role of The Monieson Centre in promoting student engagement in community-based research.

4.3. References


5. Discovery Workshops

5.1. Workshops Overview

In 2012-13 a series of 20 Discovery Workshops was held across rural Southern Ontario. The goal of the workshops was three-fold:

1. To evaluate the impacts of the Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) and Identifying Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement (RRP) projects as well as other academic projects and partnerships in rural Ontario.
2. To provide participants with practical economic development tools and resources relevant to their community’s economic development priorities.
3. To assist communities in identifying priorities for future action, both in partnering with academic institutions, and in generating local engagement in economic development.

Workshop idea generation was supported through the use of electronic decision-making technology provided by the Queen's Executive Decision Centre. A sample agenda is provided in Appendix A.

For the most part, Discovery Workshops held in Eastern Ontario addressed economic development broadly. Workshops held in Southwestern Ontario, as well as in a few Eastern Ontario communities, concentrated on a specific issue relevant to the local community.

5.1.1. Economic Development Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bancroft</td>
<td>November 15, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verona</td>
<td>November 22, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrew</td>
<td>December 7, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belleville</td>
<td>December 15, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napanee</td>
<td>March 6, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picton</td>
<td>March 6, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montague</td>
<td>April 16, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almonte</td>
<td>April 16, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>June 14, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>July 11, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>October 31, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kawartha Lakes</td>
<td>January 23, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keswick</td>
<td>January 23, 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.2. **Topical Workshops**

**Table 3: Locations, Dates, and Themes of Topical Workshops**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>April 18, 2012</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliston</td>
<td>October 24, 2012</td>
<td>Downtown Revitalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fergus</td>
<td>October 25, 2012</td>
<td>Rural Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillsonburg</td>
<td>November 15, 2012</td>
<td>Newcomer Attraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatham-Kent</td>
<td>November 16, 2012</td>
<td>Newcomer Attraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gananoque</td>
<td>December 5, 2012</td>
<td>Workforce Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haliburton</td>
<td>December 6, 2012</td>
<td>Green Economy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2. Rural Economic Development Research Priorities

5.2.1. Research Priorities Overview

The thirteen economic development workshops in Eastern Ontario highlighted a wealth of issues in need of support from academic institutions. These priorities speak to both areas where communities would like research support and/or a form of partnership with universities through student projects, training programs, collaborative initiatives and the like.

In each workshop, participants brainstormed and ranked areas where they could use support from academic institutions. To develop a global priority list, the top ten academic priorities from each workshop were given a weighted score (10 points for a top-ranking issue to 1 point for a tenth-ranking issue). These were tallied to reveal the following ranked list of desired academic support for rural economic development:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New business development</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Education/skills development</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Youth retention and engagement</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Local data/statistics/demographics</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>University/college partnerships</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Agriculture/local food</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Seniors/aging population</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Regional collaboration</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Innovation/Science support</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investment attraction</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Student internships</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Green economy</td>
<td>20.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Urban-rural connections</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Broadband/Online opportunities</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
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5.2.2. **Research Questions and Academic Support**
For each of these priorities, Discovery Workshop participants outlined specific research questions and topics in need of support from academic institutions. Each priority, then, refers to a broad range of community interest as detailed below. The individual Discovery Workshops, which detail the full brainstorming process and results from each session, are provided in English and French in Appendix F.

New Business Development (59):

- End user tools for research for new business opportunities are needed. How do we interpret such information? How can such data be well-communicated?
- Need to address infrastructural barriers to attract new business.
- Market analysis and research into creative cost-effective ways of promotion and market analysis (for individual businesses).
- How can we effectively retain business leaders and their operations, and assist them to expand or diversify, in order to keep their business viable in the community, to avoid closure?
- How do we get successful former residents who have moved away and set up successful businesses to relocate their businesses back to the community?
- What business ventures are feasible in a given area?
- Can we show possible investors what type of business could succeed in our economy and why?
- Need access to student support systems for creating marketing strategies, sales strategies and business development (for small and micro business).
- Identification of ways to increase funding for SMEs from de-centralized government sources.
- Look at more resources for de-centralized government support of SME’s. More people in the field are needed.
- What are best practices elsewhere that have more impact?
- What are the best ways/means of accessing funds for business development, training, and marketing?
- How can we attract employers that want to provide career paths to skilled young workers?
- How can we attract employers to provide high level jobs that provide career paths for our graduates?
- How can employers revitalize their workplace to keep youth interested and stimulated for a longer term?
- What are the opportunities for local companies if our community is focused on nuclear, water, or agriculture?
- How do we increase the risk tolerance of Canadians? What is the best age to increase risk tolerance?
- How do we support entrepreneurial activities for new graduates?
- Study early entrepreneur development/attraction (e.g., startup assistance, incubation, infrastructure support).

Education/Skills Development (56):

- Expanded curriculum at local college or bring in another satellite to offer post-secondary courses to retain youth.
- Need research assistance to develop regional training programs at a college or university level e.g., mineralogy, which create a win-win-win for community, region, and institution.
• How to attract various academic programs to our region?
• What are the virtual education opportunities we could benefit from?
• How do we integrate and align local education and workforce development strategies?
• Local employers need to be shown how to find resources at universities (for employees, research needs).
• How do we commercialize innovation in universities so that economic impact is created (applied)?
• How can innovation impact SME's more?
• What further academic or career preparation is needed to ensure local graduates gain local employment?
• How do we bridge the gap between the liberal arts and science graduates and the local labour market? In particular, what skills should they come with and what skills can the employer train them for?
• Are we focused on the right skills training? Are we training for the future skills jobs?
• How do we help high school students understand early on what they need to prepare for the jobs they want down the road?
• Expand on local delivery of post-secondary courses based on skills gap analysis over next 18 months

Tourism (46):
• We need research on off-season tourism opportunities: How do we increase sustainable year round attractions and visitor-ship?
• Study of accommodation options.
• Are there academic resources available to help research business models for tourism?
• Options to develop our harbour as a recreational space integrating boating tourism with a historical focus, i.e., capitalize on the harbour’s ship-building and shipping beginnings.
• A study to identify tourism packaging clusters e.g., cycling and trails tourism maps.
• Are historic re-enactments and authentic heritage interpretation an overlooked tourism sector?
• Conduct research on best practices in tourism development.
• Quelles sont les meilleures pratiques de marketing touristique visant à promouvoir le développement régional par la création de destinations touristiques?
• Investigate how attractive tourist destinations are built
• How does one find innovative idea on becoming a specialty destination?

Youth Retention and Engagement (40.5):
• How do we engage youth in community economic development and strategic planning?
• How do we find out what youth want and how do we attract youth here?
• How could we form youth focus groups to evaluate and validate ideas or concepts?
• How can the culture of an organization change to utilize the energy of Generation Y in combination with the intellect/knowledge of boomers?
• What is the long-term impact of the “electric youth” on the workplace environment?
• How can we better assist with transfer of knowledge from an aging workforce to new graduates?
• Quel est l’impact économique de l’exode rural?
• Quels bénéfices économiques apportent les jeunes qui reviennent s’établir au sein de la collectivité?

Local Data/Statistics/Demographics (38.5):
• We need statistics that are current and relevant.
• What demographics shifts will we see in the market place that will affect development in our rural community?
• What is a person looking to relocate actually looking for in terms of resources, lifestyle, etc. Can this information be broken down into different demographic categories and give us detailed information on these individuals? How/where are they finding their information?
• We need resources for businesses who are creating Business Plans that need competitive information, statistics on local demographics and purchasing patterns.
• How can we best engage StatsCan?
• Study local demographics to better understand complementary segments of the population (e.g., “retired” persons’ expertise and educational needs of other elements of the population) Drill down or focus specifically on local stats, e.g., labour, demographic, geographic, transportation.
• How does labour mobility work in a day?
• Conduct a localized long-form census.

University/College Partnerships (36.5):
• We need a satellite campus here (mostly trades and skills development focus), and the educational institutions’ support would be critical.
• Develop a long-term partnership with a business school/institute to provide business advice and information to local businesses.
• Attract a rural business school.
• Carleton University satellite campus in Mississippi Mills.
• Develop more onsite rural campuses which target specific sectors.
• Need for Ontario’s universities and colleges to actively connect with local community and employer needs in rural areas. Listen to the needs of the community/project and come to the table without pre-conceived “academic outcomes” and prejudices.
• How can we create a better mechanism to connect academics, students, and researchers with the needs and interests of local organizations? Why aren’t they more involved in local economic development initiatives?
• What is the best way for academic research to be presented to communities to inspire action?
• Partenariat en enseignement virtuel, dans les communautés, avec La Cité collégiale et l’université.
• Partner with academic and research institutes in building local capacity
• It is most important for academia and other research institutes to work with communities to build local capacity in broad and specific collaborations
• Internships, partnerships, projects etc. have end dates: what we need are organic, long-term and sustainable solutions to complex challenges.
• Study knowledge facilitation between business and the academy (how better to broker between the silos).
• Need to develop a standard research contract model to transfer research results to applicable users, e.g., giving BIA’s access to relevant academic database.
• How can businesses connect with educational institutions - to promote their business and understand where the funding opportunities reside?
• We need to promote understanding with personal connections with each Educational Institute in our area.
Agriculture/Local Food (35):
- Business case studies on topics such as winter/indoor/year-round farmers market in Kingston, aggregation site for local foods, or cold storage facility for locally-grown produce.
- Need to research what we can and should do with underutilized farmland across the region to put it to some sustainable use.
- What specific crops are most suitable to sustainable production in our county.
- In what ways can we build/leverage our unique advantages in agriculture? e.g., greenhouses, soils.
- Support for sectoral growth, agri-food, taking added value food businesses to the next level, supporting development of hobby farms.
- Agricultural land base study: What is currently in production, where, and for what use? What is the current state of our land (e.g., how much is fallow and where; soil types and consistency; best potential crop uses)?
- Quel serait un bon modèle de “vacances à la ferme”?
- Comment offrir une expérience agricole et rurale?
- Peut-on offrir de la formation de courte durée pour appuyer le développement de produits à valeur ajoutée pour le secteur agroalimentaire?

Seniors/Aging Population (31):
- Senior-specific research that will help define market strategies.
- What services will be required for the aging population to keep them and maintain them in the communities?
- What are the specific needs of a growing, aging population?
- Research could be used for understanding and creating balance between young families and aging population.
- Conduct study on retirees as drivers of economic growth and development.
- Pursue research on housing development, beyond retirement homes and condos, geared to aging.
- Seniors housing development for rural communities.

Regional Collaboration (27):
- Coaching on collaborative efforts.
- Feasibility study to examine municipal -regional structure and are there more attractive models in use in Ontario that are more economic development friendly?
- How can we show the power of collaboration? For people to understand why we work together?
- The identification of shared deliverables within community organizations would allow a pool of resources that engages a cross section of the community. E.g., regional symbiotic relationships e.g., local heritage redevelopments could be a living classroom for local college programs.
- Place making research - how do we build a sense of community in a largely rural municipality with no large settlement areas? Secure help in imagining a better future for the area.
- Hold a big well-run creative workshop with municipal government and people.

Innovation/Science Support (23):
- Help us with innovative solutions for local challenges (i.e., Transportation, Energy, Food).
• What is the international best practice for national science and technology labs and their economic spin-off in the community, and the country?
• How to best integrate a national laboratory into the business community to capture the most jobs?
• How do we capitalize on spin-offs and attract the right types of businesses that would support or be related to large local employers?
• Create co-op practical learning in conjunction with technical and skills training to have youth apprentice while learning
• We need STEM career programming
• Developing arts training to provide foundations in the creative economy
• If we want to build a research/innovation park, what businesses should we target? What are the barriers? What are the first steps? How can we move forward with the Community to accomplish this? We also need to study the apparent disconnect between research and the commercialization of research.
• How do we derive economic development from the presence of a university, centre of excellence or innovation centre?

Investment Attraction (23):
• Is a Foreign Direct Investment attraction strategy of benefit?
• What strategies are being used currently that we could duplicate?
• Review and recommendations of specific sectors for investment attraction based on the region's assets (immediate opportunities that create jobs and investment not chasing opportunities that are not fully developed)?
• What characteristics do various businesses look for when investing in a community and how to best market our communities as attractive investment areas for businesses and individuals?
• Theories / other means to attract investors to your community?

Student Internships (22):
• Enhance local student internships and job shadowing.
• Encourage more apprenticeships and co-op placements from post-secondary institutions so that the placement is supported but also to introduce rural life to students.
• Can the local labour market support a university co-op program?
• Are there enough jobs and capacity for providing supervision/coaching?
• How can we retain locally-educated youth through exposure to/work opportunities with entrepreneurs?
• Launch ongoing/rolling internship programs to facilitate consistent staffing
• Have University senior-year students assist in consulting studies that are often too expensive when outsourced to consultants.
• Need for internship/mentor bridging programs for post-secondary students - What are the best practices for internship programs?

Green Economy (20.5):
• What are the best alternative energy possibilities at all levels?
• Where is the market potential in green energy, e.g., biomass, wood pellets?
• What strategies can rural municipalities initiate to incorporate green industry innovation into their infrastructure?
• Biomass as a renewable energy, bio-crops. Develop model building sites for green technology
Urban-Rural Connections (19.5):
- Study the urban-rural connection to understand/demonstrate the connections (e.g., Food to Cities).

Broadband/Online Opportunities (19):
- How can we best develop Internet collaboration tools to allow the collaboration necessary across rural distances? Includes high-speed broadband.
- How can rural communities raise/invest money to help support infrastructure development (e.g., legal options for municipalities and/or community organizations)?
- How do you attract more private businesses to invest in infrastructure?
- How can we access emerging broadband technologies?
- What opportunities are we missing with respect to technological advances that could be beneficial to businesses?
- How do we make technology available to ALL students?
- Now that we have broadband in Eastern Ontario, how do we encourage increased use of the “pipe” for business development? Training and strategies?
- How do we measure the impact of the online economy on rural business?
- How many businesses in our community utilize the online economy as a means or expanding their unique or niche market?

Economic Development Engagement (16.5):
- Educate the community about economic development projects; build local recognition and support. Need more sense of what the actual residents of the local communities want for their area, not what others may think they want or need.
- Grassroots buy-in: In what ways can we solicit input from residents who don't come to these sessions and get their priorities? Create understanding, and then buy-in, as to how economic development works and the benefits that it brings.
- How do we engage local leadership (including politicians) in accessing education about holistic economic visions and processes?
- How can we encourage collaborations with solid common grounds and clear processes?
- How do we determine the ROI for a municipal tax-payer due to investing in economic development? How does it come about and a range of ROIs that may be obtained.
- Identify positions of power and influence that can facilitate and support local development.

Financing (16.5):
- Secure sustainable funding for research.
- Create a “one stop” shop for industry and researchers to work together to navigate funding, pilot sites, and marketing.
- Quelles sont les formes de financement les plus pertinentes pour favoriser le développement économique local?

Labour Market Development (15.5):
- How can we identify the specific issues inhibiting the labour market?
- Apprentice programs: In the last Discovery Workshop the question was how can the educational system encourage students to consider skilled trades. We now need to ask the question of how we encourage employers to invest, i.e., under what conditions do
employers invest in a community? How do we get companies to step up and accept apprentices?

- Research on existing infrastructure (transportation, housing, entertainment and cultural) as a base for retention of youth and high skilled labour to the region, evidence-based results to be shared among existing stakeholders, private, NGO's, municipalities for the creation of an strategic plan to be implemented and cover the gaps.
- Study women’s economic security in rural areas.
- What degrees or programs of study would be most useful to produce graduates that fill local employment gaps? Unfortunately most youth do not have the skills that local employers desire.
- Quelles sont les meilleures stratégies pour attirer et retenir de la main d'oeuvre qualifiée en milieu rural?

**Transportation (13):**
- Transportation options: how do we better move people around the region? Are there best practices for similar size rural regions? Inter-community approaches?
- Study and survey the viability of public, hub-and-spoke transit.
- Study alternate uses of rail lines.
- Delve into community transportation alternatives/enhancements and how community density and design affect sustainability and adoption of shared transportation

**Economic Development Strategies (12):**
- Help us with setting baselines, definition and track and trace results (metrics on how Frontenac is developing).
- What are the major factors that will affect economic development in the region over the next 5-10 years and how have other regions successfully addressed similar issues?
- Economic impact analysis: it would be most beneficial to a number of community-based initiatives if a research group could measure the economic impact of the various

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*Figure 5: Photo and Caption Submitted by Montague Participant*

“A rail road line that runs from Smith Falls to Mattawa (~200 kms) is being ripped up as we speak. This line could provide great economic benefit to the rural communities that it runs through, little thought is being done to expand the line’s use from more than just a recreational trail. Problems are the large geographic size, cost and sustainability of the trail.”
community-based initiatives. We need to gather the before/after data and then showcase the results/impacts.

- Étudier les facteurs qui expliquent les conditions d'obtention de financement ou d'échecs dans le domaine du développement économique.

**Immigrant Attraction (12):**
- How do we engage with many of the new business owners in our community who have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds?
- How can we grow through immigration?
- All colleges, universities, and school boards recruit international students. How could we tap into this source of new residents?
- Work together in joint effort to target unemployed youth for immigration purposes.
- Pursue research on the delivery of services for newcomers
- Study the motivations of newcomers who transition into new professions/careers.
- Comment doit-on accueillir les immigrants en milieu rural? Quel est leur apport économique?
- Develop best practices for, and facilitation of, cross-cultural competency in employers, managers, and human resources professionals.

**Knowledge Based Economy (11):**
- Given the shift to 'knowledge worker' what are the right programs that universities and colleges need and how do we ensure that these universities/colleges engage with businesses to develop right curriculums?
- Facilitate using the doctor recruitment model to create a creative economy recruitment model.

**Accessible Research (10):**
- Create a one-stop compilation of City reports, plans, studies, maps, etc.

**Export Markets (10):**
- Need to look at how companies export goods and services- strategy and logistics.
- Need help identifying and developing markets beyond our region to get the highest value out of local resources.
  Where are the export markets that best tie into the products and services that our region can offer? How do we best connect entrepreneurs with contacts in those markets? How do we best prepare them for these interactions and what community assets can feed into this process?

**Sustainable Development (10):**
- Form partnerships between communities and universities to create Sustainability Plans.
- What assistance can universities/colleges provide to ensure sustainable development?
  E.g., our village has a new sewage treatment plan. How do we determine the right balance of residential development and commercial business growth?
- How do we make living in a more healthy way a growth industry?

**Francophone Development (10):**
- Quelle est la valeur des francophones pour le développement économique?
- Comment rédiger les politiques culturelles, économiques et d’activités physiques?
• Comment peut-on faire valoir la valeur ajoutée de la francophonie auprès des partenaires et entreprises anglophones?
• Quelle est la force économique des francophones dans une communauté donnée?
• Quels sont les obstacles au développement économique en milieu francophone?

Heritage Economy (9.8):
• How do we in rural communities build a heritage economy?
• What are the strengths, strategies, connections, and networks necessary to expand upon our unique heritage and heritage economy opportunities in our community?
• What programs might offset the operating costs of heritage buildings?
• Assist local Historical Societies in developing best practices for archiving and storing their materials to be used by local individuals, Heritage Committees of Council, and tourism organizations.

Environmental Issues (9.5):
• What are the best sources or Life Cycle Analysis tools to support sustainability efforts?
• Research on onsite services/sustainable technologies for central services, e.g., small businesses (restaurants, agri-food, waterfront resorts) are limited by the area required for septic fields

Waste Issues (9.5):
• Waste diversion and ways of disposal -plasma, methane gas other ideas.
• We need to look at environmental issues with respect to garbage; Recycling, Composting, Waste to energy, Vermicast Stabilization. These things need to replace dumping into landfill.

Best Practices (8):
• Studies that make “best practices” recommendations.
• Educate communities regarding change and highlight local success stories.

Seasonal Residents (5.5):
• Seasonal resident research - needs, opportunities.
• What is a workable model for snowbird accommodations, i.e., “reverse tourism”? How to accommodate snowbirds who have to come home for 6 months plus a day?

Brownfields (5.5):
• Re-use study for the vacant industrial properties such as the former Hershey Chocolate factory.

Housing (4.5):
• New lodging facilities are a must.

Non-profit Support (4.5):
• Engage university or college students to (a) help in fund raising (b) develop business plan for non-profit organization (e.g., New Leaf Link), (c) do internships with organization or otherwise serve as resource people or volunteers.
• Research opportunities in adapting technology, e.g., computer mice for those with Dev disabilities.
• What is the status of the charitable / not-for-profit sector in our community? Specifically, what needs are being met by the sector, what needs remain to be met, what are the
strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats? What kinds of support is needed by organizations, at what stages in their development? We need a tool that will allow for more efficient and effective communication and collaboration among organizations as a starting point for answering these questions.

- Quel est l’impact économique des organismes à but non-lucratifs au sein d’une communauté.

Recreation (4.5):
- Trails impact research: A study of the potential economic impact of the KandP trails development by Township in Frontenac County.
- Assistance to develop a plan for a “Cattail” trail park and connect to KandP trail.

Local Action (3.3):
- How do you move from knowing you need to collaborate to actually doing it?
- Build capacity with a core of researchers to do research right here so that our local needs are met.

Business Support (3):
- Identify, document and communicate the research and collaboration opportunities that Colleges and Universities can offer businesses.

Downtown Revitalization (2.5):
- Storefront facade improvement plan

Program information (2.5):
- What programs and services are available to support economic development?

Local Spending (2):
- Economic spinoffs for businesses in our community.
- Investigate consumer spending. I want to know about a “local gross domestic product”: how much money are we spending on energy, housing, transportation, food, communications utilities? How much can we save here to put into local economy?

Emerging Business (1):
- In this fast-paced changing world where are the trends going in different businesses? For example, in a four year academic program, by the student’s third year what the student has learned in their first year is obsolete. Businesses need to know, anticipate, and be aware of these factors.

Healthcare (1.5):
- How do we understand the role our hospitals play in economic development?

Aboriginal Issues (0.5):
- What will be the implications to the rural economy of aboriginal land claim settlements?

Volunteerism (0.3):
- Create action plans to address the problems of volunteer burn-out coupled with an aging population.

5.2.3. Eastern Ontario Top Rural Research Priorities, 2008-2010 vs. 2011-2013
Compared against research priorities first identified in the KIS project (2008-2010), the workshops reveal several emerging trends in rural Eastern Ontario.

### Table 5: Emerging Research Priorities in Rural Eastern Ontario

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<tr>
<th>Eastern Ontario 2008-2010</th>
<th>Eastern Ontario 2011-2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive Advantage</td>
<td>Small Business Development</td>
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<td>Sustainable Economic Development</td>
<td>Skills Training/Education</td>
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<td>Economic Diversification</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
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<td>Small Business Development</td>
<td>Youth Retention</td>
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<td>Labour Migration and Attraction</td>
<td>Local Data and Demographics</td>
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<td>Regional Strategies</td>
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<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>University and College Partnerships</td>
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<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Aging Population</td>
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<td>Youth Retention</td>
<td>Regional Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills Training/Education</td>
<td>Innovation; Investment Attraction (Tie)</td>
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In 2008-10, three overarching themes emerged in Eastern Ontario, which were shared in Southwestern Ontario as well. First, communities indicated a need for assistance in developing sustainable economic development strategies. This reflected a shift away from “smokestack chasing” models, whereby large multinational corporations might be enticed to open regional offices or manufacturing facilities by means of tax incentives, towards locally-based businesses that could be depended upon to remain in the region for the long term. Second, communities were looking for strategies to identify and leverage their local and regional competitive advantage. In short, they were seeking ways to understand their unique economic, social, and geographic character, as well as ways that that social fabric could be reflected through a clear brand to attract tourists, residents, and investment. Third, communities in Southern Ontario expressed a need to develop a more diversified economy and looked to academic institutions to support them in this work.
The 2011-2013 series of workshops reiterated these needs, while also highlighting an emerging nuance in how these economic development trends are perceived. Most notably is an understanding that entrepreneurship may be the best route forward in developing sustainable, diversified rural economies. The emphasis on small business development moved from research priority No. 4 to priority No. 1. In Eastern Ontario, there has been an emergence of enterprise facilitation – the “Sirolli method” – to support the development of entrepreneurs, including in Lennox and Addington County and Hastings County (Sirolli, 2009).

Other communities, such as Prince Edward County, with its Innovation Centre, have used incubators to support entrepreneurial start-ups. The City of London is using a business accelerator to integrate recent immigrants into the community while concurrently supporting them in launching new businesses.
As rural communities look to entrepreneurship, they are also recognizing that a broader support network is needed to encourage this. Thus, skills training, particularly to equip an entrepreneurial workforce for the digital economy, is needed (priority No. 2). Belleville’s Pathways to Productivity program, for example, is integrating local training workshops with the specific needs of the area’s managers and manufacturers.

“By partnering with Queen’s, we have given young people the boost they need to grow their idea from concept into reality, and we brought out the best entrepreneurs and business ideas at Queen’s.”

Alongside skills training, there is an increasing focus on innovation (priority No. 10), particularly, how new technologies, partnerships with universities and colleges, and emerging industries

“Innovative programs at Fanshawe College and other local institutions can help address labour market needs and skills gaps.”
create new economic opportunities. The Eastern Ontario Regional Network is a landmark investment in rural broadband to ensure that the region’s rural communities have affordable access to broadband. The Innovation Cluster assists in advancing environmental, life sciences, and other innovative research in Peterborough and the Kawarthas, to help promote and sustain the strong regional knowledge-based economy.

Further north, the Haliburton Forest is working with academics at the University of Toronto’s Forestry program and Trent University’s Ecosystem and Design program to use sawdust to produce methane, wherein the waste product is used as a fertilizer to foster forest growth.

A final larger trend that has emerged in recent years is a continued recognition of the impact of demographic challenges, both the need to attract and retain youth (moving from priority No. 9 to No. 4) and to provide cost-effective services to an aging population (priority No. 8).

“WRAIN – Water Research and Innovation Network (partnership between The Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster, City of Peterborough, County of Peterborough, City of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton County, Trent University and Fleming College). WRAIN will identify current and emerging recreational water and wastewater issues and determine the best ways we can support new technologies to address those issues.”

Figure 10: Photo and Caption Submitted by Kawartha Lakes Participant
Belleville is developing a *Turning Junk to Funk* program, whereby youth learn five key business skills. In Northumberland County, the Scientists and Engineers in Business Initiative targets recent graduates and seeks entrepreneurs who have a product they would like to commercialize. The Wilmont Township Active Living Centre for Seniors and Youth utilized renovations to the Wilmont Recreation Complex to create an opportunity for these two demographics to cooperate. Elsewhere, the Young Professionals of Chatham-Kent Networking Group developed a *Boards aren’t Boring* event to educate youth on the benefits and opportunities of participation on community volunteer boards.

“We need to create the right support and educational opportunities to engage youth in the agricultural sector.”

"Succession planning: We really need to look hard at what are the skills we are going to be losing and how do we transfer the knowledge of those folks that are going to walk out the door to the next generation of workers. Let’s get some strategies around some of those things so industry remains strong and the knowledge that needs to stay there stays there."
5.3. **Key Resources and Best Practices**

In response to the emerging trends in Ontario’s rural economic development priorities, the Discovery Workshops identified a wealth of best practices in connecting communities and academic institutions to advance economic development needs in rural Ontario. The following section summarizes best practices in rural economic development and partnerships between academic institutions and rural communities found through these workshops. This list is organized in the following categories:

1. Tourism
2. Youth Engagement and Employment
3. Healthcare
4. Local Economic Development
5. Green Infrastructure
6. Arts, Culture, and Community
7. Partnerships with Academic Institutions

This report concludes with a list of organizations and programs that can provide support for rural economic development initiatives.

5.3.1. **Tourism**

Interactive Promotion

- Ontario Highlands Tourism Group has developed a mobile travel app for iPhones and iPads.
- Mississippi Mills has developed touch screen kiosks for promoting a website that highlights where to eat, what to do and where to stay (www.exploremississippimills.ca). These kiosks can be placed at festivals, events and venues.
5.3.2. Youth Engagement and Employment

Engaging in Business

- Belleville is developing a *Turning Junk to Funk* program, whereby youth learn five key business skills that will help them to build, market, and sell artistic creations using recycled and junk materials.
- Northumberland offers the *Camp Enterprise* initiative that sponsors local youth to spend time with business people.
- Lennox and Addington Economic Development work with local high schools to instill confidence in students and give them the tools and resources they need to be successful in finding employment or starting a business.
- Norfolk County and Norfolk Community Futures Development Corporation are developing the Terms of Reference for a Youth Entrepreneurship and Support Advisory Committee.

Engaging in Government

- Young Professionals of Chatham-Kent Networking Group developed a *Boards aren’t Boring* event to educate youth about service on voluntary boards and committees.
Engaging in Heritage

- Almonte Rideau roundtable runs voyageur canoe programs for youth to teach them about heritage and history.

5.3.3. Healthcare Services

- Belleville Community Well-Being Centre has been built on Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and offers a range of programs for community members.
- Chatham-Kent have partnered with local greenhouse operations to provide on-site primary care to immigrant workers.

Attracting and Retaining Healthcare Professionals

- London Gateway Rural Health Research Institute encourages medical students to engage in rural health research to promote practicing medicine in rural communities.
- Mount Forest offers medical training at local facilities that can lead to permanent positions.
- Huron County’s HealthKick program provides rural work placement for healthcare undergraduates to encourage healthcare professional to live and work in rural Ontario.

Aging Population
• Wilmont Township Active Living Centre for Seniors and Youth was developed as part of renovations to the Wilmont Recreation Complex.

5.3.4. **Immigration**

![Photo and Caption Submitted by Chatham-Kent Participant](image)

“Lambton College, located in Sarnia, has seen a marked increase in international student enrolment in recent years and this has impacted our community greatly. The community’s response to date has been to enhance existing services available to the students and to partner with local service providers to support them.”

Figure 15: Photo and Caption Submitted by Chatham-Kent Participant

**Employment**

• Oxford County developed website ([www.welcometooxford.ca](http://www.welcometooxford.ca)) to provide resources and support for recent immigrants.
• Grand Erie Immigration Partnership (GEIP) created an Employment Guide for Newcomers.
• London is developing a Business Accelerator for New Canadians to provide services and mentorship as well as subsidized shared space where possible.
• Windsor International Educated Health Professionals (IEHP) Committee assists immigrants in obtaining the necessary paperwork to practice in their field in Ontario (includes physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists).

5.3.5. **Local Economic Development**

**Skills Training**

• Georgina Trades Training, Inc. ([www.gtti.ca](http://www.gtti.ca)) is an innovative non-profit organization based in Sutton, ON. Working in partnership with York Region, local school boards, South Lake CFDC, and a number of other partners, it ensures training is available for local skills priorities, and engages youth in future career opportunities.
Figure 16: Photo and Caption Submitted by Almonte Participant

Business Support

- Brock Economic Development Committee has started a Red Welcome Wagon program for new business owners. The program welcomes businesses to the community, answers questions, and provides resources.
- Prince Edward County Innovation Centre works with start-up companies through one-on-one mentoring with seasoned entrepreneurs.
- Belleville’s Pathways to Productivity program offers training workshops for local managers and manufacturers.
- An “Enterprise Resource Facilitation” coordinator was hired to work with Hastings, Lennox and Addington. The coordinator helps new and existing business address challenges that they face.
- Napanee’s Enterprise Facilitation program offers free, confidential business coaching services to all new and existing businesses.

“Queen’s Business Consulting (QBC) was retained by The Town of Mississippi Mills (Mississippi Mills) to create a local economic development plan. Mississippi Mills wanted to adopt a structured approach to business development that fosters ‘selective growth’, complementing the cultural, artistic, natural and geographic assets of the community.”
Forestry

- Haliburton Forest is working with academics at the University of Toronto’s Forestry program and Trent University’s Ecosystem and Design program to use sawdust to produce methane; the waste product is used as a fertilizer to foster forest growth.
- Almonte County Forestry makes every effort to keep tenders local and has re-invested funds into trail development.

Local Food

- Almonte Farm Gate Tours and Verona Regional Open Barns Tours increase awareness of local food growers.
- Verona Food Down the Road newspaper and website raise awareness about local food and connect people to local growers.
- Kawartha Lakes has developed a Food Action Plan, a Food Charter, and a Food Policy Council.
- Montague held the Organic Growers Conference, which drew a lot of young people.
- Harvest Hastings is a group that supports local farmers and connects consumers to farmers (http://www.harvesthastings.ca/).

“We had a good sense of our local marketplace and its opportunities; however, the material developed by the QSB students allowed us to present potential tenants with hard data on the strengths of the local economy and why our property was a good fit for their business.”

Figure 17: Comment by Trenval Participant
Manufacturing
- Greater Quinte Region 10 Point Plan from Manufacturers outlines 10 actions that can be taken to support manufacturing sector.
- Belleville Quinte and Bayside secondary schools are developing Skills Majors programs in Manufacturing. This will raise awareness of manufacturing in the school body and with parents.

Agri-Business
- Kawartha Region is planning the International Symposium for Agriculture Exports from Kawartha Region to be held in summer 2013.
- Kawartha Region led the creation of regional livestock export initiative to create an alliance focused on export of superior livestock.

Creative Economy
- The Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation used community studies to identify, define, build and start to market 5 emerging industries of focus; these include fire, water, air, earth and the creative economy.
- Picton developed a Creative Rural Economy Community Improvement Plan that facilitates the development of work/live spaces and encourages investment in green industries.
- Kawartha Region created a Manager of Innovation position.
- Renfrew County held the 2011 Creative Economy Conference (SPARK).
Attracting and Retaining Young Professionals
- Community Futures Development Corporation in Northumberland launched the Scientists and Engineers in Business Initiative. This initiative targets recent graduates and seeks entrepreneurs who have a product they would like to commercialize; participants can receive up to $30,000 non-repayable performance-based contributions.
- The Young Professionals of Chatham-Kent have launched the Incubation Centre to attract and support young entrepreneurs.

5.3.6. Green Infrastructure

Buildings and Planning
- Napanee is seeking bids to install solar panels on municipal building’s rooftops.
- Northumberland County developed a Cycling Master Plan, recognizing that young professionals are less inclined to buy cars and more interested in cycling.
- ecoPerth is working with youth centres and schools to establish community gardens.
- Trent and Laval University students helped convert gravel pit into a community garden (Abbey Gardens).

Trails and Outdoor Recreation
- Montague has developed an inventory of trails in Lanark County and is developing Master Plans for trails to benefit tourism, recreation and youth. Montague has also developed new Cycling Tours.
- Kawartha developed Hub and Spoke trail system for off-road vehicles.
5.3.7. Arts, Culture, and Community

Public Engagement
- Chatham-Kent Community Development Forums offer a free speakers series to provide education and information to Council, community, and administration on topics that relate to improving the quality of life and economic development in the community.
- Kawartha developed a Healthy Eating Display and Interactive Touch-Screen Computer Game for use at public events.

Arts and Culture
- Hastings County has an award-winning Arts Route marketing initiative to promote local artists.
- Mississippi Mills Community and Cultural Centre Corporation is a non-for-profit initiative to promote arts and events and to share ideas and opinions.

Community Partnerships
- Picton has experienced continued expansion of wineries with greater collaboration between wineries, local artists, and events.
- South Frontenac Community Services are leasing-to-own the Grace United Church in Sydenham for office space.
- Festival groups in Almonte are working together to share resources, equipment, signage, tents, etc.
- Quinte, Northumberland, and Kawartha Manufacturers' Associations have jointly taken part in two regional training rebate programs and an annual manufacturers’ conference.

"Young professionals flocking to cities today are less inclined to buy cars and 'more likely to spend money on smartphones, tablets and $2,000-plus bikes.' These young people represent the 'creative class' talent pool that many companies covet. Northumberland’s business and political leaders need to pay attention to the next generation’s wishes for lively, livable places to work and play including cycling. A great step towards this – in 2012, Northumberland County developed its 20 year Cycling Master Plan with one of its visions being ‘to inform the public of the various benefits of cycling and active transportation to build a happier, healthier and more sustainable County for current and future generations’”
Students as Consultants

- Fanshawe College students have worked with local business and municipalities on urban design and integrated land planning.
- St. Lawrence students completed research to assess the demand in training to support Verona’s Invest in Cheese Initiative.
- University of Waterloo Environment and Business undergraduate students work with local community organizations and businesses on sustainability and developing the green economy.
- University of Waterloo Business students helped local businesses write and develop business plans.
- Queen’s University history and geography students assisted in developing the local food economy in Verona.
- University of Guelph students are researching a variety of crops that could be developed in Renfrew (e.g., hemp).
- Fleming College students provide expertise, well-drilling, and Board Membership in the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery as part of coursework.
- Loyalist College has developed the Helping Entrepreneurs Reach Complete Success training seminars for the Trenton Military Family Resource Centre. The students developed seven high impact seminars to teach family members how to start a portable business that they can take with them on their next deployment.
Renewable Energy Research

- Fleming College and University of Toronto students helped convert the former Donald Standard Chemical Plant in Haliburton into the Donald Eco-Innovation Centre. The new building will act as a green construction cooperative that showcases and researches the best in Stewardship, Green Technologies and Integrative Building Solutions.
- The Monieson Centre, Queen’s University completed the Renfrew County Renewable Energy Research Study focused on biomass and pellet power.
- University of Guelph has a Biomass Working Group in partnership with Kawartha Region. The Working Group is investigating the development of purpose grown biomass crops for use as energy, bio-product, and bedding sources.

Curriculum

- Fleming College has partnered with Alderville First Nation to develop a solar panel technician program.
- Loyalist College has partnered with Edward, Lennox and Addington and Whistle Stop Productions to incorporate post-secondary and corporate 3D video training.
- Fleming College has developed a $40 million skills-training centre in Peterborough that links local education to youth needs.
Figure 23: Comment by Renfrew Participant

“I have no doubt that the Renewable Energy Report will be very useful in getting the needed hearing on FIT rates for biomass. The Queen’s and Monieson name will lend it some much welcomed gravitas.”

5.3.9. Resources and Support

University of Guelph Biomass Working Group
- Investigating the development of purpose grown biomass crops for use as energy, bioproduct, and bedding sources.

The Monieson Centre at Queen’s School of Business
- Rural Economic Development
- Rural Knowledge Economy
- Local Food Economy
- Renewable Energy

Greater Peterborough Innovation Cluster
- The Innovation Cluster assists in advancing environmental, life sciences, and other innovative research in Peterborough and the Kawarthas, to help promote and sustain the strong regional knowledge-based economy.

Loyalist College has developed the Helping Entrepreneurs Reach Complete Success
- Training seminars (developed for the Trenton Military Family Resource Centre)

University of Guelph Agricultural Research
- Ongoing research on crop development

University of Waterloo Environment and Business undergraduate students
- Sustainability and Green Economy

Queen’s University history and geography students
• Local food and Rural Economic Development

Northumberland’s Scientists and Engineers in Business Initiative
• This program targets recent graduates and seeks entrepreneurs who have a product they would like to commercialize. Participants can receive up to $30,000 non-repayable performance-based contributions.

Huron County’s HealthKick Program
• Provides rural work placement for healthcare undergrads to encourage healthcare professional to live and work in rural Ontario.

U-Links
• Community-based research program connecting Trent University with Haliburton County

“My ‘penny drop’ moment was at a meeting with Dr. Brent Wootton at The Centre for Alternative Wastewater Treatment. He commented how demand for their services had increased significantly and they were in the process of hiring more researchers. I believe that there is a perception in the community that much of the work they do is by students. This is an opportunity for the City of Kawartha Lakes to attract the ‘best and brightest’ in water and wastewater research to our area.”

Figure 24: Photo and Caption Submitted by Kawartha Lakes Participant

5.4. References

6. Partner Interviews

6.1. Executive Summary

The Monieson Centre’s research into rural economic development has benefitted from key community partners. Partners collaborated with The Monieson Centre in holding workshops throughout Eastern and Southwestern Ontario, advised the Centre on community-based knowledge, shared contacts, and facilitated the co-creation of new knowledge on rural economic development through innovative research. By sharing their expertise with The Monieson Centre, Queen’s University, and other academic institutions, these partners provided significant insight into academic-community partnerships. It is this knowledge mobilization for rural economic development that The Monieson Centre wished to delve into through a series of interviews.

In 2012, eleven partners made themselves available for interviews:

- A Director of Economic Development and Tourism
- A consultant for a County Development Corporation
- Two administrators for municipalities
- Three Executive Directors of CFDCs
- A representative of FedDev
- The project leader of a non-profit organization
- A Regional Director of a Francophone economic development organization
- A director of a rural advocacy organization

All of the interview participants had been in partnership with The Monieson Centre for at least three years. All partners are influential leaders in rural economic development. The structures of partner organizations varied from a prominent volunteer-centred not-for-profit organization to an organization with over 240 full-time employees. Partner organizations had been in operation ranging from two years, in an organization that was created through the merger of two organizations with much longer histories, to a municipality founded in 1810.

Through the contributions of these partners (see Appendix B for Interview Schedule), useful knowledge was co-created on academic-community partnerships for rural economic development throughout Eastern and Southwestern Ontario. Themes emerged in several relevant areas:

- Building Community-University Partnerships
  - Presence in Communities and Community Presence in the University – Successful partnerships benefit from an academic presence in communities as well as opportunities for community members to be present at academic institutions.
  - Crossing Boundaries – Mutual understanding between academics and communities is a precursor to making academic research useful in rural economic development.

- Making Partnerships Productive
  - Effective Communication of Knowledge – Clear communication is essential to making academic knowledge useful.
• Partnering for Research Use – Academics and economic developers each bring key skills and perspectives to creating, and implementing, knowledge. More work must be done to efficiently implement knowledge.

• Economic Impacts of Community-Academic Projects – Through community partnerships, academic projects can have significant positive economic impacts on rural economies.

• Uses of Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) Resources – Resources developed through the KIS Project are used in specific ways as tools of rural economic development. As warehouses of knowledge and conduits for making connections, websites are especially important for disseminating these resources.

• Continuity in Research Partnerships – Long–term research partnerships provide a necessary foundation for knowledge creation and mobilization in rural economic development.

• Future Directions in Partnerships for Rural Economic Development: Key Community Interests
  • Engaging Students – Partners and academic institutions find value in engaging both local and incoming students in rural economies.
  • Workforce Development – Workforce development, addressed through effective academic–community partnerships, shows promise for rural economic development.

6.2. Findings

Partner interviews were designed to align with the Impact of Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development Project goals: first, increasing rural competitiveness and innovation by evaluating the local and regional impacts of research on rural economic development and, second, mobilizing effective tools and resources to overcome existing barriers to growth and knowledge gaps. Interview questions elicited both qualitative and quantitative data as measures of progress in rural economic development resulting from KIS, Identifying Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement (RRP), and other academic knowledge mobilization efforts. Questions were intended to probe knowledge use, and knowledge-use gaps, in order to better understand knowledge mobilization in rural economic development. Information gained through this research can be used to increase the awareness, availability, and accessibility of knowledge resources, tools, and expertise targeted to local community needs. Questions put to interview participants made it possible to identify, and begin to address, economic development priorities in individual communities across Southern Ontario. Through the interview schedule (see Appendix B), partners reflected on past, present, and future potentials for mobilizing knowledge resources. Interview participants offered insights into making academic-community partnerships productive and mutually beneficial.

Although these research findings contain important quantitative data, partners were encouraged to reflect on their experiences throughout the interview process. Therefore, in keeping with qualitative research methodologies tailored to small sample sizes, the “voices” of interview participants are highlighted in this report. Whenever possible in this analysis, partners’ words remain intact. While the list of partner interview participants is not anonymous since they are known community leaders and partners of The Monieson Centre, only some partners gave permission for their names to be used beside quotations. In consequence, the inclusion of names of those who have given permission may give rise to the mistaken apprehension that
these individuals are predominant in the analysis. All partners, whether quoted anonymously or not, have, nevertheless, been quoted and their contributions to this report are equally valuable. The decision to use each quotation was based on its content. The interview schedule was applied in a semi-structured manner and, in addition to the thematically-connected nature of the questions themselves, partner responses flowed from one question to another. Approaching the analysis of partner interviews thematically has allowed profound knowledge to emerge from this appropriately small sample of community leaders.

6.3. **Building Community-University Partnerships**

As one Monieson Centre partner put it, community-university research partnerships result in beneficial “grassroots intelligence.” Dan Borowec describes how community partnerships have built research capacity by empowering partners themselves and by “making communities aware of what a power there is to be had in community renewal by establishing partnerships and relationships with academic institutions.” Partners identified keys to building healthy community-university partnerships: academic presence in communities balanced by community presence in universities and crossing conceptual and organizational boundaries in order to build mutual understanding.

6.3.1. **Presence in Communities and Community Presence in the University**

Discovery Workshops hosted by community leaders and facilitated by The Monieson Centre and Queen’s Executive Decision Centre were vital to this partnership relationship. For one partner, these workshops were a factor in their evaluation of whether The Monieson Centre produced expected deliverables. The partner considered the workshops “well run.” Norman Ragetlie reported that councillors from local municipalities found the workshops quite useful. Martine Plourde notes the desire of Francophone communities to see an increased academic presence in their communities. Academic knowledge would be made more useful if, in response to the feedback that this partner received following Monieson Centre workshops, there could be more interaction with the community, more presentations, and additional workshops that empowered the community by “training the trainers.” In this way, academic knowledge would be “more available not only from the website but in presence” in rural communities. The ability of community partners and community members to be involved in relevant conferences held at Queen’s was a corollary to The Monieson Centre going into communities.

6.3.2. **Crossing Boundaries: Mutual Understanding**

For many communities across Southern Ontario, The Monieson Centre facilitated unprecedented access to academics and academic research. Craig Desjardins explains,

> Up until this project it was a silo driven, the community was in a silo, the academics were in a silo, government were in a silo, business were silo. What the Monieson has really done is provided access and facilitated the access to the silo that is the academy. That was something we were having problems with before. So just giving us entrance into that world.

Desjardins describes a mutual process of becoming aware of differing calendars, performance indicators, motivations, and reward structures. Cooperative efforts at truly understanding and bridging these worlds was very important to Desjardins’ strong satisfaction with the partnership.
Nonetheless, bridging differing systems remains a challenge. One community experienced an “eye-opener” when The Monieson Centre presented possibilities for working with the university; however, the partner cited a subsequent turnover in local elected officials as a reason why their community may not have used academic resources to their full potential. When individuals or positions shift, potential momentum may be lost, and “it does affect the level of commitment… and resources available to economic development and you almost have to start all over again in terms of relationship development.” Despite this transition, positive relationships between this particular community and The Monieson Centre were created and maintained. Another partner cited a community context in which an elected council that “didn’t see any shovels in the ground and therefore did not want to be attending needless meetings even though we have brought a new industry to their door.” The need for continuity is important on both the academic and community sides of partnerships.

Academic-community research projects can also be limited by financial constraints and by partner expectations of each party’s financial circumstances. Craig Desjardins explains that communities need to “understand that universities have financial realities as well.” Communities that request research to solve specific problems “can only expect so much pro bono work” and must not “come hat in hand without resources” because the university does not have the capacity to work in this way.

Many partners addressed the need for mutual understanding between academics and communities in order to make academic research useful. Several partners favour a locally-driven, geographically-delineated, model of research over one that involves academics finding communities that fit into their individual research interests. As one partner reflects, “I guess the most useful thing in a community is really asking the community what questions it needs answered.” Norman Ragetlie critiques the academic culture where researchers “are asking questions: they are not trying to solve problems.” Likewise, another partner notes that “professors have a particular area of research” and create connections with communities based on how they might connect to existing lines of research rather than asking communities what research they require.

One partner candidly states, “the research is more for you guys than the community and I don’t think that is appropriate.” The partner feels that the community and The Monieson Centre did not agree on the purpose of holding workshops. The partner asserts, “I love the fact that Queen’s is out here and doing stuff in the community but nothing sticks so the agenda should be the community’s agenda, not your agenda.” This partner would have preferred that one local item be chosen as the focus of the Monieson Centre’s research. They had thought that their community’s central issue would be the focus of the Discovery Workshop; however, the scope of the workshop was wider. The partner remarked, “part of the problem is we have people here that don’t quite work out together and you get stuck in the middle of all that.” A teamwork approach, subscribed to by all community and academic participants, is needed in order to make the relationship more productive.

When asked about making academic knowledge useful, the same partner elaborates that workshop agendas should to be tied to clear action items because “very little happened” after the first workshop. Although the partner acknowledges that “it’s up to the local players, actually, to take the report and run with it,” it is evident that “some pieces that day need to be who is going to do what and who owns this: the research is great but who owns the next step?” While this partner contends that, when The Monieson Centre is in their community, “you guys are down here to satisfy your contracts with whoever and however and do certain things but, again,
it was your agenda,” a different partner compliments the Monieson Centre’s “good engagement sessions” involving “community forums for us, as well, in conducting the research.” While Discovery Workshops and open discussion may be helpful approaches in the early stages of academic-community partnerships, increased community pre-planning and facilitation of next steps would make knowledge co-created in subsequent workshops more effective.

A relevant limitation raised by one partner regarding academic partnership focuses on the issue of time. When “outside folks” hold forums, workshops, or focus groups, small businesses and community agencies “want to know… how does this have immediate practical application to us” because they have limited time to lend to academic research which tends towards longer-term impacts on policy. Although the partner recognized “the incredible importance of the research,” they found that “it’s just really hard to convince people that this is going to be a good use of your time” without specific short-term benefits to the participants. Dan Borowec conceptualizes this issue as the challenge of possessing the communication infrastructure to “translate the research into action.” The challenge of knowledge translation “takes a fair amount of facilitation and some real speed work” within individual rural economies.

In many ways, the preceding concerns are about community ownership, grounded through practical use, of knowledge generated through academic-community partnerships. Ragetlie asserts that “we don’t have strong enough mechanisms to have the stakeholders drive the agenda” and academic knowledge would be made more useful if the research were structured in a more community-centred way where “academics appreciate the problem that the community is trying to solve before research design and the resulting information is passed on.” In this model, Ragetlie sees the academic role as akin to that of a consultant working with a community. Ragetlie prefers a “middle approach” where consultation moves towards community ownership and co-participation without entirely going to “extremes” where “some community researchers are community activists… running a project and doing community activism as part of their research.” Since the precise balance is different for every community, finding middle-ground may involve a certain amount of getting “stuck in the middle” between differing approaches and interests.

6.4. Making Partnerships Productive

The knowledge generated through partnerships between rural communities and The Monieson Centre is groundbreaking. A partner found that “data for just Southern Ontario, all of Southern Ontario… it doesn’t drill down enough to demonstrate how different the East is from Southwestern Ontario.” The Monieson Centre “does a good job in helping us develop that data.” Dan Borowec explains,

before The Monieson Centre engaged in that activity there was virtually no form of research going on in Eastern Ontario that could lead to activities that could benefit our communities whether that was the utilization of technology… awareness of the creative economy… to research specific in our aging population to determine healthcare needs to transportation studies … I think it’s the collective work that has gone on that has brought presence to key issues that impact all of Eastern Ontario.

Martine Plourde agrees that a benefit of engaging in academic research projects is gaining “specifically researched and specifically aimed” knowledge of rural economic development in Ontario.
For organizations like that of Typhany Choinard, partnership with The Monieson Centre was “the first time actually engaging with an academic institution.” Partnership with rural communities benefitted The Monieson Centre which, early partner Craig Desjardins recognized, was “with our partnership... able to leverage those early successes into subsequent rounds of funding.” These academic structures and funding regimes have helped partner organizations for whom, like Choinard, “the knowledge resources are a very big thing that we use” because, for their own grant applications, “it’s just pulled a lot of information together, easy to find, it’s all in one spot.” Partners have found this very valuable.

While, as Norman Ragetlie explained, some initiatives have a much greater impact than others, the Monieson Centre’s work in rural research is “really important.” Typhany Choinard is very satisfied with the partnership because “we are so well informed even if we are not able to always get away to attend some of the seminars and different things that have been going on we always feel like we are in the loop.” Rural communities can feel separated from academic resources because of their geographical contexts. One partner reflects,

in a lot of ways it’s great to have that ongoing relationship and we are on the far Northwest of Eastern Ontario... get left out of a lot of things so it’s really great to be involved in conversation and included when opportunities come up so that we get contacted saying, ‘would you like to be involved with this, this is what we are doing,’ or, ‘here are some opportunities for students to come do some research in your community.’ So, that’s a great benefit for us to just be included.

The Monieson’s Centre’s experience is that partnering with communities for rural economic development has been mutually productive; however, in many cases, these partnerships are somewhat novel and have only begun to advance towards an even more transformative future of knowledge mobilization.

6.4.1. Effective Communication of Knowledge

Participants identified effective communication as an important precursor to making academic knowledge useful. Although they recognize that academic knowledge is useful to economic
developers and municipal governments, one partner expresses doubt as to how it can be best passed on to the community. The partner explains that, in their municipality, “we take the information and we synopsize it, we assess it we make that information palatable in the community depending on the subject that we are talking about.” When asked about making academic knowledge useful to communities, one partner advises, “right of the top of my head is abandonment of the typical academic writing style… not dumbing it down, just writing things.” The Monieson Centre “is really good at this.” Craig Desjardins agrees that The Monieson Centre translates “academic language into ordinary language.” The Monieson Centre has also engaged in conventional translation.

Martine Plourde, a partner working with Francophone communities, expresses appreciation that efforts had been made to translate academic knowledge into both French and English. Plourde cites work on tourism strategy as a benefit of academic projects. In Eastern Ontario, “you can see tourism and tourism strategy in a wide variety in a general way but they have really researched and presented it in a specific way” that could enable the region to “really blossom.” Moreover, by cooperatively working between both languages, Monieson Centre workshops and knowledge syntheses facilitated the dissemination of “French knowledge” and raised awareness in Francophone communities “that they can be part of the economic development of their region and they have a partner that has knowledge that they can tap into, even if it is not always in French.” Any analysis of rural economic development in the region would be incomplete without the knowledge of Francophone communities.

Academics should take a straightforward, evidence-based, approach in both writing and conversation. For Dan Borowec, it is a tale of two communities. An effort needs to be made by the economic development community to “invest in the outreach in what that research means to communities and constantly communicate the benefits that are associated with that.” Borowec suggests that, for the academic community,

> what might help to support their activities even more is have that information presented in such a way as there are recommendations, or examples of, a practical example, of an actionable item that could take place. That’s why, on the website, for example, some of the success stories or best practices have been tremendous because, as soon as you can tell a story, it’s far more than the pure research.

Another partner agreed that success stories and grounded practical explanations of best practices are particularly helpful communication tools because they “help people picture… wow, yes, we should be doing that, or should be thinking more about doing that, or thinking what is it that we need to have some research done on and apply to or community to do.” Knowledge is co-created by these success stories as businesses, organizations, governments, and academic institutions contribute to rural economic development.

6.4.2. **Partnering for Research Use**

It is evident that, unless knowledge impacts are overtly discussed through joint initiatives, in many communities, “most are just getting on with their day: they aren’t using academic research or they don’t realize they are using academic information because it’s so far down” a perceived continuum from lofty academic research to practical application in everyday life. Nonetheless, community partners do utilize the “tangible” resources of the KIS project and request that knowledge continue to “be presented like that in tools we can use.” When asked about the extent to which academic partnerships enhance community research capacity, one partner
observes, it is “a very uneven thing… in some cases I think the learning is really direct and clear and in other cases it’s pretty hard to find real learning: after a year, where did that go?”

Impact of Academic Tools and Resources on Partner Organization

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being no impact and 5 being significant impact, to what degree do academic tools and resources impact your organization?

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Partners qualified their quantifications of the above question. As Dan Borowec notes, tools are “readily available and it’s our capacity to use them at the appropriate time to our benefit” that informs his ranking. For one partner’s organization, “it’s providing good knowledge to our board of directors to make informed decisions.” For Craig Desjardins, although academic tools benefit his organization, they are “more for my clients as opposed to me,” as his relationship with The Monieson Centre is “at a more strategic level.” Other partners give lower scores because there had not been enough time to fully realize impacts. For example, a ranking of 2 was assessed with the comment that the ranking can definitely rise and “strategic policy can benefit from the work that is going on at The Monieson Centre.” One partner gives a mid-range ranking because, in their case, “it’s early and impacts take a long time in any kind of economic development initiative for the results to really be felt.” Another gives a 3.5 or 4 commenting, “the knowledge we can bring to projects, it has had a big impact there… it did enhance our community diagnoses of our growth.” Colleagues in other regions have been encouraged by this partner’s experience with Queen’s University to seek their own partnerships with universities. A partner who gave top marks explains, “we have been able to approach potential operators, developers, investors with high-quality research business plans etcetera that we wouldn’t been able to do on our own.”

When asked about making academic knowledge useful to their community in the future, one partner advises, “if [we] could get those shovels in the ground and be able to incubate and move… what we want to do is help the academic researchers who have invented wonderful new products… new ways to look at First Nations housing, which is one of the most horrible messes in Canada, that would be a huge help.” Craig Desjardins appreciates SSHRC’s provision of resources for knowledge creation and suggests that “[o]ne of the challenges left which might not be SSHRC’s responsibility is to actually implement knowledge; maybe that is other academic programs, maybe it’s part of the new innovation strategy the government of Canada has to create.” Queen’s University is only one of several Canadian institutions working with rural communities to conduct useful academic research. Whether from academic programs or as part of the federal government’s innovation strategy, Desjardins calls for new knowledge
implementation mechanisms to quickly, and productively, exploit specific applications of knowledge in order to create wealth and contribute to a prosperous Canadian economy.

Expectations: Organizations’ Experience of Partnering With the Monieson Centre

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being “did not meet your expectations” and 5 being “exceeded your expectations,” to what extent did your organization’s experience in partnering with The Monieson Centre meet your expectations?

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Partners elaborated on their evaluations of whether partnering with The Monieson Centre met expectations. Martine Plourde gives the relationship top marks due to the “extent and the quality of the network with Queens the professionalism in which they work and the mobilization they can get around their product.” Several partners found it awkward to quantify their experience in this area because “there is a shared responsibility there.” As one partner explained, “it’s a two-way street, like did we take advantage of opportunities in that partnership and did they deliver what they said they were going to deliver.” The partner ranked the Monieson Centre’s delivery at 4 yet considered their organization’s use of that opportunity as a 2.5 or 3. Another partner evaluated, “I would say at least a 4…. I think outstanding work has been done, I say 4 or 5.” The partner clarified, “the reality for us is the flip side: sometimes our own organizations are so flat in terms of capacity to do things once the research activity is completed.” A partner who assessed a 2 explained that it is not reasonable to “look at one project in isolation because it’s more what to do and what’s stuck and what came out of that, so it’s the ripple impact, so I have been very satisfied with some of the work.” Although the hospital in this partner’s area benefitted from the partnership “through a difficult time,” the partner expected more for their organization out of partnership.

Communities have put a great deal of effort into economic development. Referring to the Discovery Workshops, a partner remarks that, because their community already provides opportunities for interaction and civic engagement, The Monieson Centre “delivered what they said they were going to deliver but how useful that was to us, or how well we did use it is a different thing.” Another partner considers the level of awareness of economic development “very high” in their community. Despite this awareness, because it is, for the most part, “amateurs” working in economic development in rural Eastern Ontario, sometimes they “really don’t understand the role that technology is playing in the economy of today and around the world.” In this partner’s estimation, “having that professional knowledge in society really was a huge help” for a community pursuing the creative economy. For this particular community, partnering with The Monieson Centre opened up further avenues to the University of Toronto’s
Martin Prosperity Institute. Nevertheless, while serving as a panelist on a television show examining declining employment in their region, the partner found that, when they raised creative efforts at technological innovation and development in the arts,

that’s not what they wanted to hear: that we were trying to be creative. That we did buy into their report that Ontario commissioned through the Martin Prosperity initiative. It was quite interesting. Actually, we were being pigeon-holed as very pretty, rural, landscape, with the thousand islands sparkling on our southern border but not really being recognized as working in the creative economy in the arts... science innovation.

While these are certainly assets to the region, the partner found it unproductive to focus solely on these assets when thousands of manufacturing jobs have been lost and the region has been intentionally pursuing a diverse creative economy.

As Craig Desjardins observes, making academic knowledge useful “is the whole purpose of the KIS program.” Succinctly put, the dissemination of knowledge “is a big thing.” While recognizing that there is a problem with a separation between academic knowledge and practical implementation in the workforce, Typhany Choinard concludes that “this project has done a really good job at making academic knowledge useful and I’m not sure what else possibly to do to get it any clearer and in really tangible things we can use... it is really practical and there are tools that can be used.” One partner asserts that many businesses have not recognized academic knowledge as “a potential business opportunity” and need to be encouraged to work with academic institutions. Beyond the broader issue of enhancing communication between academia and rural communities, relationships must be developed with businesses in order to effectively commercialize knowledge.

6.4.3. Economic Impacts of Community-Academic Projects

Partners explain that their involvements with The Monieson Centre leverage connections, funding, and opportunities. As one partner reveals, “it gave us creditability that we might not have otherwise had because we are very much a rural region.” Another partner agreed that engaging in academic projects

adds that gravitas to what we are doing here... the fact that you have respected institutions like The Monieson Centre actually paying attention to things that are significant to us and also looking at those things in other rural communities and also giving us access to academic research that we can look at and see how that applies to us, that has been beneficial.

Craig Desjardins agrees that independent academic reviews, papers, and studies are “an important part of building understanding of rural challenges.” Instead of appearing to be “complaining out of self-interest,” when a rural area has independent research behind it, “it certainly gives credence and support to arguments you’re making.” Moreover, institutions other than Queen’s are engaging with rural areas for economic development. One partner describes how, for employers, the ARC program out of UIT “nurtures and nudges them forward on an innovation agenda” and places them within a context of global competitiveness.
When asked about the economic impacts of academic projects, a partner comments that The Monieson Centre was really professional in the way they went about it and things have been able to continue looking ahead here in terms of destination development and product development and those sorts of things… often it takes something like that to say, ‘oh, why don’t we enter into a larger project?’ A lot of the time we find, the projects that involve students, they generate a conversation, they do a report, and it leads to something else which leads to something else.

Craig Desjardins reports “some real businesses and revenue generated.” For example, partnering with The Monieson Centre to hold a business competition in which interest-free loans were offered to three start-ups resulted in one company being bought out by the Toronto Star for one million dollars. Another partner has “not yet” seen economic impacts in their own community; however, they have elsewhere and they are in the process of conceiving a project that they hope The Monieson Centre will consult on.

The “greatest academic support” gleaned by one partner was through a project-oriented team involving technology, engineering, and management. Several productive projects were carried out through interdisciplinary teamwork. It was helpful to the partner to be recognized as “worthy

### New Opportunities for Organizations

On a scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 is none and 5 is many, to what degree have partnerships with academic institutions created new opportunities for your organization. For example, have they resulted in a new network for your organization?

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Partners found this difficult to quantify. One partner separated their own experience from that of their organization and, with that stipulation, gave a ranking of three. A three was also given by a partner who commented that “absolutely” networks were being set up and, further, there are opportunities for municipalities to work with academic institutions. Since the question was designed to include a breadth of academic institutions, another partner assessed a four and explained that they had networks outside of Queen’s University. A four was given by one partner because “you see Eastern Ontario working much more collectively than previously.” A high ranking was given by a partner whose organization has made national and international contacts and developed programs that impact the Canadian economy.
of support” by The Monieson Centre and personally accompanied by a representative of the centre when they approached the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering. In a Monieson Centre meeting, this partner was seated beside a Vice-Principal of Queen’s University who, upon introduction, said that he had already been told that “we should be in touch with” the partner’s organization. The partner then asked if the Vice-Principal would serve on the board and the Vice-Principal agreed. For this partner, it was “a really human example” of how academic connections lent credibility and helped their organization.

Another partner also notes that academic projects have “added a lot more strength and opportunities” for them since, when a problem arises, they “can say we have a really good relationship with Queen’s University… we know who to call and have that conversation with which is completely different than having a university there and having no idea how to bridge that gap.” In their partnerships with Queen’s, the University of Toronto, and Trent University, this partner found that relationships with particular people in the universities were essential to success. Another partner confirms the importance of professional relationships with individual academics by remarking that former Monieson Director Yolande Chan ensured that “[e]very project was valued and worth looking after.” Bridging the gap between academic institutions and communities results positively impacts rural economies.

6.4.4. **Uses of KIS Resources**

KIS resources, created in partnership with communities, are instruments of rural economic development. Partners used KIS resources to “see what is happening and where we are at,” to set goals, and to build community development plans. One partner found that it is “very handy to be able to go and quote, you know, that this research has been done: providing strength and support” when preparing a grant proposal or writing a report for their Board of Directors. Grounded information provides substance to articulations of what communities want “to move ahead with.” Typhany Choinard’s organization used the Annual KIS Showcase at Queen’s University as “a training session” for staff. Referring to Francophone KIS workshops, Martine Plourde affirms, “every time it was a great success.” KIS resources fit well with Craig Desjardin’s organizational focus on business development. KIS “provides resources and templates, ideas of support for either the creation of new business or expansion and maintenance of business.” KIS resources have been used in tangible ways.

Desjardins cites contacts made through The Monieson Centre as an “intangible resource” that led to connection with the Office of Research at Queen’s. The sharing of this resource went both ways: Desjardins’ organization also shared contracts with The Monieson Centre. Commenting on the Monieson Centre’s professionalism, another partner states that their organization has “been able to network through The Monieson Centre with other territories.” In this way, the deep positive impacts of the community-academic partnership spread beyond the geographical borders of this particular KIS project.
While individual partners gave knowledge syntheses, success stories, student consulting, Discovery Workshops, KIS showcases, or networking one vote each for the most valuable resource, three partners found the Monieson Centre’s websites the most valuable. Partners used the websites themselves, put them to use within their organizations, and referred others to this resource. Possibly, this choice encompasses other potential answers since many resources can be accessed through the website. As Typhany Choinard explains, “it gives so much information right there, right at our fingertips.” For example, how-to documents can be pulled from the website and put into practice.
The uses of KIS resources demonstrate that academic research projects have significant positive impacts on rural economies. Several partners use KIS resources for program development and in pursuit of funding opportunities. Business success stories have been used by Craig Desjardins “as leverage and as a product to gain more funding. Since “dimensioning success is usually a condition of providing additional resources,” documenting success stories is “a very important exercise.” One partner highlighted the success stories, “in particular, the tourism ones, where they partnered with students with a business and come up with a marketing plan” because many of the businesses involved “would not have had access” to this type of expertise. Many businesses subsequently “shared it with their colleagues so they were able to share best practices and the ideas that were generated there… to promote new ways of thinking and especially in terms of social media and using that to better market themselves.” Clearly, the benefits of KIS resources have disseminated beyond direct contacts between The Monieson Centre, partners, and community members.

KIS resources have been used in policy work. One partner used rural research as a framework to articulate, and advocate for, rural priorities during the last federal election. Dan Borowec has used KIS resources when “looking for money and also… indirectly in terms of part of the overall attraction to new business” because an ongoing research partnership with The Monieson Centre is “a valuable resource to any new business coming to the area.” Information grounds this decision-making process. Moreover, Borowec is “a firm believer that if you don’t have research then you don’t have any way to affect policy” and research has “directly or indirectly, no doubt, had an impact on funding opportunities.” Research has to be planned, carried out, and harnessed effectively.

Despite the successes of KIS resources, the opportunities and potentials uncovered by this success reveal that more research, facilitation, and practical implementation of knowledge resources is needed. One partner has used KIS resources to “help us attract investors in the bio-economy of Eastern Ontario” and cites the need for a natural resources inventory for Eastern Ontario or Southern Ontario. Working in a similar economic sector, a partner remarked that economic “impact we haven’t really felt yet but the tools have been developed to go out there and attract some interest” from investors. Typhany Choinard observes, “there are a lot of tools and things that have come out of the projects and experience that have been really valuable for us especially for us in the smaller communities… we just don’t have the resources to do all that work.” One partner asserts that the success stories of cooperation between academia and communities should encourage more projects to be launched. It is a relationship that needs to be promoted through academic outreach in communities because, otherwise, “people don’t know where to start.” The Monieson Centre plays a role in bringing people together, providing academic resources, and facilitating knowledge awareness, creation, dissemination, and implementation.

6.4.5. Continuity in Research Partnerships

Partners unequivocally call for long-term research partnerships. As one partner underscores, the strength of a partnership depends on maintaining on-going communication with communities and “saying, what are the leading trends right now, what is it that you are looking to do, how do we fit into your strategic planning, and just keep asking the questions, how can we change what we are doing in order to maximize the potential” for everyone involved. A partner confirmed that locally-driven academic research, especially if undertaken in circumstances where a lead faculty researcher is working with a team of graduate students, allows “more longitude: they can take on a significant project and then come up with a significant product.” Communities would benefit most from research undertaken with significant depth and longitude.
Partners assert that lasting relationships are vital to the success of community-academic partnerships. Typhany Choinard places the responsibility with her organization to make the “academic partnership a little less cyberspace” by making “the resources available to engage that partnership because… there is an open invitation to grow that partnership” from The Monieson Centre. Craig Desjardins observes, “it takes time to build up trust and understanding…we constantly grow our relationship every year with new projects and new ideas and people coming and going… it is crucial that this is not just a one-offer, temporary thing.” One partner makes the salient point that longevity is fundamental to producing consistent data and reliable research. Another partner notes that, in the process of growing these long-term partnerships, it stood out that “action needed to be” taken in “interdepartmental interdisciplinary interactions.” Although the “silo is still there… The Monieson Centre helped to break down those silos” in a way that helped rural communities see the connections within academic contexts. From his experience in this area, Norman Ragetlie observes, “different universities have found ways to offer rich resources to communities and I think those universities need to be networked to one another that they can learn from each other on how it works.” Continuity and connection are keys to knowledge mobilization.

6.5. Future Directions in Partnering for Economic Development: Key Interests

When partners imagine future paths for rural economic development, the potential of community-academic partnerships are unmistakable. One partner took a creative approach when questioned about the limitations or concerns that arose from taking part in academic projects: they did not realize how much knowledge was needed until they started to purposefully pursue it. After one “excellent study” on business retention and expansion, they found, “we have a lot of other areas we need to study… we were only able to look at a small portion of the

### Lastingness of Partnerships

*On a scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 is short-term and 5 is long-term, how long-lasting have your partnerships with academic institutions been?*

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Partners answered this question in reference to all academic partnerships: not just partnerships with Queen’s University. The partner who gave the lowest ranking, a three, reasoned that their relationship with The Monieson Centre is long-lasting but underdeveloped, their relationship with Fleming College is both “highly successful” and long-lasting, and their relationship with UIT is new and very promising. Overall, partners have established relationships, seen growth through partnerships, and want to continue this positive trajectory.
overall information that we need.” A benefit of partnering with The Monieson Centre is that they will “continue to get that information that digs down to the core of information that we need to have in order to justify and support our strategic plans” because “we have anecdotal information and what we need is that substantiation that actually what we have on the ground is what we think we do.” Partners identified student engagement and workforce development as two key directions that they would like to pursue as their partnerships progress.

6.5.1. Engaging Students

One partner cited student placements as the single most valuable academic resource that they accessed through KIS. Statements reflecting the importance of connecting students to businesses were made throughout the partner interviews. While these interviews reinforced the principle that student engagement is central to rural economic development, they also confirmed that a great deal of work must be done by academics and communities in order to improve in this area. As Craig Desjardins makes plain, although he has subsequently seen many students working with businesses, “that would not have been possible without that very first development of facilitation mechanisms to actually let those things happen.” These facilitation mechanisms need to be evenly, and extensively, applied throughout rural Southern Ontario.

The engagement of secondary and post-secondary students, in general, in rural areas must be distinguished from the engagement of students in their own local communities. Both types of student engagement are important factors in knowledge production, knowledge dissemination, and workforce development in rural communities. In the process of collaboratively designing, and improving, programs to promote student engagement, academic institutions and rural communities must include facilitation mechanisms which ensure that both local and incoming students have internship, mentoring, and consulting opportunities. Community-university relationships can function in an integrated way in which students from both outside and inside communities realize opportunities. Desjardins describes how partnership with The Monieson Centre grew beyond dissemination of existing knowledge into creation of new knowledge to almost an integration of community within different aspects of the university including teaching and learning curriculum. We have had so many students that come out working with companies and communities again that would not have been possible without that very first development of facilitation mechanisms to actually let those things happen.

In many rural Southern Ontario communities, these mechanisms are still somewhat new or underdeveloped.

An information session detailing the types of research that students might conduct in one region left a partner with the feeling, “that was really a very good opportunity to… utilize the students and collect some really necessary data.” The experience of this partnership allowed specific aspects of the community to be addressed, raised community awareness, and was “an excellent learning experience for both of us.” For this partner, the gathering of “factual information” has been “hugely beneficial.” Student engagement in research projects has economic impacts because these experiences are “key elements of people having a sense of, this is a community that is welcoming to new business and new endeavors.” The partner envisions a new municipal department that assists in connecting students to research opportunities and co-ordinates projects so that knowledge gained through these engagement opportunities is consistently built upon.
Martine Plourde’s Francophone communities were not included in most institutions’ English-language academic research strategies; however, “KIS was so welcoming” and facilitated “raising the awareness with their students and researchers about, well, there is a Francophone community as well: we need to answer their need and look at our research and be included in it.” Plourde gives the example of a business experiencing phase-two growth “because we have had students come in.” The business has gained credibility and become a success story. Nevertheless, although The Monieson Centre is “more than willing to include Francophones and to bring their research knowledge and capacity to their Francophone communities… there were not many students who were sufficiently able to work in French” within the business language contexts of Francophone companies. In practice, some of the work within Plourde’s communities still had to be carried out in English. Although The Monieson Centre worked towards the goal of inclusive French-English knowledge mobilization, more extensive mechanisms are required to foster French-language student engagement with Southern Ontario’s Francophone communities.

6.5.2. Workforce Development: Positive Growth

A promising thread is found in the critical assessments of partners who find that academic research too mired in the prerogatives of the institution or the interests of the individual researcher. The partners who desire a more community-directed, problem-oriented, approach to research suggest that this path would effect real change in rural economies. For a partner who emphasizes this perspective, the most pressing issue requiring further research is workforce development. The partner explains, in a county where the “quality of our workforce is not strong,” it is “almost embarrassing to admit how many of our people don’t finish high school and if they do not go on to anything else.” If “we all” were to “work on that together for the next four to five years, it would make a change.” The partner’s helpful critical insight offers a way forward and identifies a concern shared by several other partners.

Research is needed to pursue workforce development within rural economies. As Martine Plourde discerns, “[w]e all know in economic development, in a general sense, we are going towards workforce” and immigration is an important strategic solution. Academic research in Eastern Ontario, currently being carried out through The Monieson Centre SSHRC-funded Partnership Development Grant, is targeting immigrant attraction to the region. Immigration can bolster the workforce “to double up our assets for economic development” in Eastern Ontario.

Partners require more data for tracking employment and strategically planning workforce development. A partner reveals the need for this data in the remark, “I definitely think that jobs have been created because of the partnership.” Also responding to the question of new ventures or jobs created from academic partnership, another partner predicts, “there is huge potential for that if we can just get the counsel turned around.” Referring to published statistics, one partner describes the difficulty of finding accurate data on employment when their population tended to be mixed in with larger population data. The demise of the long-form census does not appear to be a positive step for communities looking for this type of precise local information. In addition, as Craig Desjardins points out regarding the information that has been gathered, it is an expensive proposition for communities to purchase government statistical data. Dan Borowec suggests that one area of growth for The Monieson Centre website might be to gather and disseminate information for inquiries into industrial relocation. Rigorous research, precise data, and effective knowledge mobilization are indispensable groundwork for effective workforce development strategies within rural economies.
**6.6. Conclusions**

Partner interviews reveal that important advances have been made in rural economic development as a result of academic-community partnerships in Southern Ontario. KIS projects encouraged the formation of these partnerships and the creation of resources that, in the case of The Monieson Centre, fostered rural economic development. The Rural Secretariat project allowed the limitations and achievements of this partnership to be assessed and the operation of knowledge mobilization through academic partnership to be better understood.

The evaluative strategy of the Impact of Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development Project has indeed found success in partnerships according to elements of Buys and Bursnall’s inventory (2007):

a) new insights and learning;
b) better informed community practice;
c) career enhancement for individuals involved with the partnership;
d) improvement in the quality of teaching and learning;
e) increased opportunity for student employment;
f) additional funding and access to information;
g) more frequent and higher-quality publications; and
h) more rapid speed of internationalization

The project has met its objectives of

- Measuring concrete progress made in rural economic development as a result of KIS, RRP, and other academic knowledge mobilization efforts.
- Increasing awareness, availability and accessibility of knowledge resources, tools, and expertise targeted to local community needs.
- Helping address priority economic development challenges in individual communities across Southern Ontario by mobilizing knowledge tools.
- Deepening the existing knowledge base of rural development research gaps.
- Identifying opportunities to increase rural competitiveness by facilitating the development of community action plans to address specific development barriers.
- Building regional learning and cooperation by expanding economic development networks and partnerships.
- Expanding the reach of rural economic development innovations to a national level through regional, provincial, and national partner organizations.

The frank and thoughtful insights of Monieson Centre partners have, once synthesized, allowed the identification of several areas of limitation and future potential for growth. Partners are interested in expanding existing lines of research and expanding competencies in the areas of student engagement and workforce development. The compilation, and dissemination, of knowledge resources and place-specific data are key to addressing these issues. While this report contributes to awareness of how knowledge can be mobilized through community-academic partnerships, it reveals that these are complex, long-term, and evolving relationships and much more can be done to bring together networks of communities and academics for mutually beneficial research. Through their generous contributions to the project, partners make it clear that continuous growth is necessary if the project is to meet its ambitious long-term goal of increasing rural competitiveness and innovation by evaluating the local and regional impacts of research on rural economic development and mobilizing effective tools and resources to overcome existing barriers to growth and knowledge gaps. There is always room for growth.
Partner interviews conducted for the Impact of Knowledge Mobilization in Rural Economic Development Project bequeath a legacy of identifying the potential for stronger partnerships and illuminating new opportunities to dismantle barriers to growth and overcome knowledge gaps.

6.7. References

7. Business Interviews

7.1. Executive Summary

This section documents the results from 30 phone interviews with businesses and organizations who took part in Queen’s student consulting projects. Throughout the interviews, the need for communication emerged as a common theme both in the area of student projects but also in the area of academic resources used by partnering organizations. Although the majority of interview participants reported positive experiences with the Queen’s student project program, areas of improvement revolved around the need for more effective communication between universities and partners, students and partners, and communication between students and their universities.

Many interview participants observed that they were unclear of the course details before taking part in the student project and, therefore, did not have a full understanding of their role in the partnership and what type of work the students would be completing for them. With regards to communication between students and organizations, the scope of the project and the time allocated to it did not always align and commonly resulted in areas being missed or skimmed over. In addition, many organizations noted that the lack of communication between their organization and the students resulted in the miscommunication of objectives, the inability to provide feedback before getting the final report, and the student’s lack of understanding of the complexities of the specific industries. Finally, with regards to student projects, participants discussed the need for communication of expectations and progress between the university and students to ensure that expectations are upheld.

In terms of academic resources, four priority areas revolving around the theme of communication were identified. These included the need to provide follow-up services for student projects to ensure that information is accurate and remains relevant, the need to increase awareness of available resources by developing a resource hub for rural businesses, the need to bring together rural businesses for information exchange and networking, and the need for bilingual resources.

7.2. Interview Summary

The following sections summarize the research findings of the 30 interviews. We begin with questions relating to the specific student project that was conducted in order to understand why the organizations took part in the program, what type of information they expected to get from the students, the desired outcome of the project, satisfaction with the Queen’s partnership and the Queen’s students, how the project helped the organization, and the feasibility of the recommendations made. Having answered these questions, we ask participants what changes they would make to the student project process to make it more useful to their organization. The next section discusses knowledge that organizations have gained from other academic resources. We conclude with a discussion of future initiatives with regards to alternations to academic resources and participation in future student projects.
Reason for Participation

One of the goals of university-industry partnerships involving business schools is to provide students with opportunities to apply their business education to a real business case while, at the same time, providing industry partners with valuable consulting work. Industry partners reported three main reasons for taking part in a student project. First, a group of partners stated that their motivation for taking part in the partnership stemmed from providing students with an opportunity to apply their education to a real-world problem. This group recognized the importance of practical experience as a part of business education and opened their businesses to students to create a learning environment. Although this group reported that they were primarily interested in helping students as opposed to being provided with consulting insights, many were surprised by the value that students were able to provide.

The second major reason for participation was to have students solve an existing business problem or to provide an outside perspective for a specific question or direction. Many respondents reported that the students conducted projects that they would not have been able to do themselves due to limited time, resources, and expertise. Moreover, students were able to provide a third-party perspective and were, therefore, able to analyze new business, marketing, and operations directions as well as provide insights into future business directions for industry partners. Participants valued the ability to draw on students’ education and have them provide non-biased recommendations with regards to the vision and direction of the organization.

Finally, a small proportion participants were asked to participate by The Monieson Centre or their local Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC). Of this group, some were able to determine what type of work they wanted students to do; however, others were asked to participate with a specific project in mind. For the second group, most organizations took the approach that they would be providing students with a learning opportunity.

Of the 30 participants, 6 stated that their primary reason was to help students, 13 wanted help from students, 7 were approached, and 4 had more than one reason for participating.

Participants were keen to provide students with a learning opportunity by opening up their businesses. Participants noted,

I thought the practical application of the training would be a good thing for the students. – Dan Stanford
And,
I wanted to give back to the community and provide the students with a learning environment.

With regards to looking for assistance from students for their business needs, interviewees discussed the importance of having an outside perspective.

We were getting ready to launch a new product line and wanted to get a third party opinion...to make sure nothing was being missed for the launch. – Alain Mernard
And,
I wanted to get a different set of eyes looking at the business to see if they could do things differently. – Dan Fellini
Others discussed bringing new business theory into current business practices.

I was interested in seeing what theories are coming out of business schools and see how they relate. – Peter May

And,

I wanted to have people look at the business that had no interest in the business but still has a sound understanding of business.

Some discussed the value that they could get from working with Queen’s students.

Queen’s has a great reputation for helping small businesses and we wanted to take advantage of that.

Some participantss were approached by The Monieson Centre, their local CFDC, or another organization to take part.

My business was approached to take part in the project and I was curious to see what the students would come up with.

Finally, participants also gave more than one reason for their participation.
It was a way to take advantage of a win-win situation – hands on experience for the students and useful for the area that has a limited budget and limited resources. – Andrew Redden

7.2.2. Type of Information Expected from Students

The information expected from students varied based on whether the organization self-selected for the program and provided the students with a specific problem or if Queen’s approached the organization to have a specific function within their business examined. In addition, the nature of the course through which the projects were conducted affected the specific business area examined. For example, projects completed through the MBA operations course were focused on efficiency planning and an examination of business operations whereas projects completed through the Queen’s Business Consulting course focused on a wider scope of business functions.

With the exception of three cases, organizations were aware of the business function that students would be examining and understood what type of projects the students would be providing. For the majority of partnerships, communication between course leaders and organizations ensured that those involved in the program understood course objectives. However, on three occasions, partners were unaware of what the students would be analyzing until they first met with or talked to their assigned student team. Although this was clarified after the first discussion, poor communication regarding the nature of the project resulted in some organizations having different projects completed than they had originally intended or wanted.

After clarification of the intended project, 3 organizations expected marketing research or demographic work, 4 expected a marketing plan, 11 expected a business plan, 11 expected efficiency planning or a review of their organization, and 1 expected a report discussing how to link academic business theory to their current practices.

Desired Outcome

The desired outcome of projects strongly correlated with the reason for participation. Organizations that either wanted to provide a learning opportunity for students or who were approached by the university or CFDC commonly had an unclear vision of what they expected as an outcome from the students. In many cases, these participants did not join the program with the goal of receiving consulting work that they would apply to their organization and, therefore, usually did not articulate exactly what outcome they wanted from the students. Many respondents within this group noted that they approached the project differently than they would have had it involved hiring a professional consultant. For many established firms that hoped to provide students with a learning opportunity, the scope of the projects was, too large for the time allocated. Therefore, they didn’t see the student project having an impact on their organization. Finally, those approached by Queen’s or their CFDC also didn’t have a clear vision with regards to the final product.

On the other hand, organizations that self-selected into the program with the intention of having students solve a specific question or provide an outside perspective on a specific business function had a much clearer idea about what outcome they desired. Projects included developing business plans which would be used to apply for grants, developing marketing plans for product launches, and increasing operational efficiencies to reduce waste. Additionally, organizations reported that they wanted students to analyze a business decision or direction that they were taking in order to get an opinion from a non-biased third party. In short,
organizations that self-selected for the program had a strong vision as to what outcome they were hoping to get from the student projects.

With regards to the organizations that did not have a clear vision for their project, one interviewee commented,

Because it was a student project I approached it differently than I would a consulting project – I had different expectations and an unclear idea about what type of work they would produce.

For established firms with a clear business vision, the desired outcome of the project was to provide students with an experience and, therefore, the organization didn’t have any thought that the business was going to benefit. A local entrepreneur stated,

The students would have needed to complete a lot more of an in-depth study for the work to be beneficial. The students were coming in without any knowledge and were, therefore, learning at the same time. The project was intended as a learning project as opposed to something that would be used by the business.

The lack of expected organizational benefit that firms, primarily hoping to help students, alluded to, also held true for organizations that were approached to take part in a student project. On the other hand, organizations that chose to take part in a project because they wanted support from Queen’s students had a much stronger vision of what they wanted out of the project. Participants noted the importance of validating their business decisions and having a business-educated third party look at their work.

We wanted the students to reinforce the market research the company had done and pick up on new ideas. – Andrew Kotsovos

And,

As new shareholders, we were looking for validation for the path we were taking and the gathering of new ideas. The company has always been lax in marketing and finding ways to expand. We were looking for a new perspective on these issues from people who were educated in business.

Others wanted Queen’s students to conduct research and develop business plans that they themselves were unable to create as a result of limited time and resources. Andrew Redden stated that they wanted the assistance from students to develop a business plan for a craft brewery so that they could pass the business plan along to a local entrepreneur to implement. He wanted to see entrepreneurs expand and grow and saw the opportunity to work with students as a way of taking advantage of students’ business knowledge.

7.2.3. Experience with Queen’s Partnership

Overall, most participants were satisfied with the Queen’s partnership. Many were unclear as to what exactly the partnership would entail and, therefore, did not set an expected standard for the final product. Although many were satisfied, there were a number of comments made with regards to areas for improvement, especially in the area of communication. Common observations were that partners were unaware of the details of their involvement in the program and, as a result, did not always have a clear understanding of what type of work the students would produce and what their level of involvement would be. In many cases, the scope of the project did not match the timing allocated which resulted in students not fully understanding the complexity of a specific industry or organization or not going into sufficient detail in specific parts
of their reports. Finally, participants commented that students did not have enough opportunity to meet and discuss the project objectives and organizations’ backgrounds in order to incorporate feedback.

Although many participants were satisfied with the Queen’s partnership, there were occasions in which organizations had negative experiences. These were the result of poor communication between Queen’s and the organizations as well as between students and the organizations. With regards to communication between Queen’s and its partners, some respondents noted that they did not understand what their role was in the partnership and that, consequently, they agreed to take part in the program with different expectations of what their involvement would be. For a select number of teams, the students did not deliver a satisfactory project and, in some cases, acted unprofessionally, which, according to participants, was not corrected by the university and professors in charge.

### Expectations: Queen’s Partnership

Individuals were asked to rate their experience with the Queen’s partnership on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being “did not meet your expectations” and 5 being “exceeded your expectations.”

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Average: 3.87

Multiple participants remarked that they did not really understand what the partnership would entail before the project started and, therefore, did not have any expectations going into the partnership. One respondent noted,

The course was not what we originally thought it was going to be. It turned out to be appropriate to what we wanted but we originally thought we were taking part in a mentoring course. When we officially started our participation in the course we had clarified what our role was, however, when we first confirmed our participation in the course we were unsure.

Many participants that were unsure of the calibre of the students or the specific nature of the partnership were very pleased with the results.

My expectations were not very high and the product delivered was of an excellent calibre.
– Dan Stanford

However, on multiple occasions, interviewees noted that their expectations regarding the communication and timing of the projects was a problem. Given the time pressure caused by
course deadlines, many organizations felt that the scope of the project did not fit with the time scheduled for the students. Although many organizations still had their expectations met, one participant noted,

We were very pleased with the project. However, given more time there could have been some more in depth information in certain areas.

And,

The problem wasn’t matched to the time available.

Similarly, with regards to communication, many participants discussed the fact that students either did not take the time, or were not given the opportunity, to fully understand the organizations’ specific business environments.

The students were good note takers and incorporated a lot of information into the report. But, two hours is not long enough to come up with information that could be of use. The business was too complex to be understood in only a short visit.

In addition, for many projects, the only contact that students had with their client was one initial interview and the final presentation. Many respondents observed that there was not enough room for exchange between the two parties and that it would have been beneficial to have an opportunity to provide feedback before the final presentation. Finally, for some organizations, the lack of communication about the nature of the project as well as between themselves and the students resulted in very negative interactions. Doreen Wagner participated in two projects – the first of which was a disaster and resulted in her contacting the school to complain. Despite her negative first experience, she stated that her second partnership was much more positive as a result of the students’ increased communication with regards to project expectations.

7.2.4. Satisfaction with Queen’s Students

Participants were asked to comment on their experience working with the students. Again, with the exception of a few participants, many were very satisfied with the professionalism and quality of work produced. However, as mentioned above, comments were made with regards to the scope and timing of the project and the inability to ensure communication throughout the project and provide feedback. Many commented that the ability to see a working copy of the report before the final presentation would have allowed for valuable feedback and amendments. Communication throughout the process could have ensured that students fully understood the industry and organization and that students were adapting the academic and theoretical frameworks used in their recommendations to better suit the individual characteristics of their clients’ organizations.

Some participants had negative experiences with students acting unprofessionally, not producing high-calibre work, and bringing a “big city attitude” to the project site. After discussions with respondents, these negative experiences could have been eliminated with increased guidance and monitoring from professors and more clearly defined guidelines and expectations for students laid out by both the partner organization and the university itself.
Satisfaction: Working With Queen’s Students

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with working with Queen’s students on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very unsatisfied and 5 being very satisfied.

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Average: 3.93

Those that had positive interactions with students made comments such as,

These kids really blew me away...they took a personal interest and really wanted to see something happen. – Paul Hogan

And, the students were,

Very positive and pleasant – they were a pleasure to work with.

However, there were instances where communication and logistics affected the level of satisfaction.

The report was excellent and identified a lot of similar gaps that we had identified. However, the students didn’t really get the information until I called for an interview. The information then didn’t get to me once it was submitted. I’m not sure if the students attempted to do a final presentation but I didn’t receive the information until I called to have it sent over. The communications of the findings didn’t get where it had to be in the end. – Steve Beauche

A few respondents commented that students were unable to apply their knowledge in a real business and that the projects produced that were not directly applicable to their specific business. Many felt that the students were benefiting more from the partnership than they were.

The students were pleasant and polite but it seemed like they were getting an education from us about what it means to be a small business.

And,

The students were drawing upon theoretical information that could have been improved upon by having some real experience to support it. So the theory was great, the end result was good, but the reality aspect could have been improved upon. – David Townsend

Finally, there were instances of students not taking their role seriously and producing unsatisfactory work. On a few occasions, organizations noted that students brought a “big city” attitude with them and were, disrespectful of the calibre of the small business they were visiting.
Other organizations felt that the students did not address the problem at hand or simply regurgitated the information that they were given. One participant observed,

I don’t think the students listened to what we said. They went off on their own tangent, the presentations were very low level, and there was no opportunity for a good exchange between the board and students. I left feeling like the project was a waste of time.

Another stated,

I expected more of an interaction with the students. It turned out to be more of a survey. The students just provided my business with a regurgitation of what the company provided them. - Pat Storms

7.2.5. Organizational Impacts of Student Consulting Projects

Has the project helped your organization going forward and what actions have been taken?

Informants had mixed responses with regards to how the project helped their organization going forward. There was a strong correlation between projects that helped organizations and those that had either a well-defined project objective or involved groups that maintained communication with their client throughout the process. Those that had a clearly defined project were able to communicate their objectives to students ensure that they were getting a final product that could help their organization. For those who maintained communication throughout the experience, organizations were able to ensure that the direction that students were taking with their projects met the organizations’ specific needs.

In addition, many economic development agencies, as well as some small businesses, had a strong success rate as they were able to use the students to assist them in areas in which they had limited time, knowledge, and monetary resources. For these groups, the ability to bring in a team of students allowed them to research and work on areas that they otherwise would not have been able to investigate.

For Alain Menard, the report confirmed what the company saw in terms of the challenges and opportunities of their product line launch. The students placed more emphasis on export opportunities than the company had originally believed they should. The company took the students’ advice and has now moved into the US and Hong Kong markets. In addition, as a result of engaging with these student consultants, Menard now has a document that he has been able to use for grant applications.

Another participant discussed the students’ assistance in creating a business plan for their community ice rink. The students brought business knowledge and time to the organization and produced a business plan.

The students have given me something I can take to people- we have facts and figures on paper...we were fumbling around in a dark alley- where do we start, how do we start – they have laid out who to approach, the fundraising side of the project...everything was covered. – Paul Hogan

Similarly, it was noted that,

The students helped to get a plan in place. Before it was just me knowing that there was something there...the ideas were put on paper so that they could be shared with
entrepreneurs. The students put the numbers down and made the case more justifiable.

– Andrew Redden

However, for businesses that had complex systems or that operated in niche sectors, students were often unable to provide valuable assistance. Organizations commented that this was a result of students’ inability to apply their academic knowledge to an unknown business and a lack of communication and time to fully understand the nature of the business. This trend was especially true for projects relating to efficiency planning and operations. Students struggled to apply their academic knowledge to the specific businesses and, commonly, provided information that was applicable in theory but not in practice. One interviewee remarked,

I found that the students who came had no way of knowing about the environment we operated in so the feedback they gave us was very ‘textbook’-like and not specifically applicable to our manufacturing business.

Moreover, organizations that were unclear about the type of work the students would be doing, who provided the students with a broad problem, or who went into the partnership with the intention of providing students with a learning opportunity, received consulting reports that either reiterated what the client already knew, or had told the students, or that lacked depth. Finally, there were a few occasions in which the students simply did not produce high-quality work and, therefore, left their client with information that could not be used. In these instances, students were not being monitored by the university to deliver on their work.

7.2.6. Value of Student Consulting Projects

How did the students help in a way that the organization couldn’t have accomplished themselves?

The abilities of students to help organizations in ways that they could not have accomplished themselves varied. Common responses were that students were able to look at the business as an outsider and, therefore, could make recommendations that were often overseen by those engrossed in the business. Students brought academic frameworks and knowledge to businesses and were, in many cases, able to apply current business theories to organizations. However, in many other cases, the complexity of specific industries, in combination with the limited time and extensive scope of the projects, prohibited students from effectively adapting their business education to the specific organization. It was suggested that this could have been mitigated through increased communication and a decreased project scope.

Many organizations discussed the students’ abilities to analyze the business and look at specific aspects in an unbiased way. One participant observed,

We are guilty of working in our business and not on our business. My belief is that the students came in with a completely blank mind in terms of what we have done and why we have done it. They look at it from the perspective of what should be done and I don’t think we can actually step back far enough to do that. – Dan Stanford

Others noted that the students were able to put the time into a certain project that they otherwise would not have been pursued due to limited time and resources. A participant stated,

When you’re a small company and growing fast you don’t have the time to write down your ideas. – Alain Menard
For organizations run by individuals without formal business educations, the students brought new insights and placed importance on business opportunities that had been overlooked. In addition, organizations valued the students’ ability to bring in current business theories and knowledge. One respondent noted,

The students made a recommendation that we use our waste water for washing. They eliminated the waste water and allowed the business to have zero water waste. They also included the information for other business doing the same thing so that we could apply their model to our business. – Dan Fellini

However, for others, especially those that had projects completed relating to efficiency planning and those that opened their organizations to provide students with a learning opportunity, students were not able help the organizations in ways that they could not have done themselves. For some, the project provided a valuable tool for discussion and verification of current practices but did not bring any new information to light. In other cases, projects did not provide any assistance to organizations and were simply an educational opportunity for students. Finally, due to a combination of miscommunication of project objectives and a lack of effort from students, a small number of projects resulted in organizations feeling as though they had wasted time and resources by taking part. In one case,

The students went off on their own tangent. The presentations were very low level and there was no opportunity for a good exchange between the board and the students. I left feeling like the presentation was a waste of time. The students didn’t provide any useful advice and were not able to help us in a way that we couldn’t have done ourselves.

7.2.7. Feasibility of Recommendations

There was a split between participants who observed that the recommendations they received were feasible and those who determined that the recommendations given were not feasible. In many cases, the student’s inability to understand the complexity of specific industries, given the scope and timing of the project, prohibited them from developing recommendations that were feasible for the organizations. However, for those groups that maintained communication and clearly defined their project objectives, the ability to produce feasible recommendations increased.

Feasibility of Student Recommendations

Of the 30 interview participants, 13 reported that the students’ recommendations were feasible, 12 reported that they were not feasible, and 5 did not received recommendations as part of their report.

Groups that had a strong grasp of the specific business and its operating environment were able to provide valuable suggestions. Paul Hogan remarked,

I think that is what impressed me- everything was an obtainable goal.

However, lack of understanding of the operations of the business was a common factor leading to unfeasible suggestions. It was noted,
They made recommendations that were always sound. But, some of them were not possible because there was a lack of cooperation between agencies. – Sandra Lawn

In other cases, students failed to understand the monetary constraints of the specific business.

Some of the recommendations were only feasible with limited money. The resources were not there to follow through with the recommendations.

Conflicting views also led organizations to disregard recommendations.

The students wanted to create a narrowly focused business strategy in terms of where we were headed...we believe that our vision at this stage is well focused. – Dan Stanford

Finally, on a few occasions, students did not understand the nature of the work they were doing and provided organizations with recommendations that did not align with what the organizations wanted. One interviewee stated,

The students didn’t have an understanding of the business so no recommendations were applicable – it felt like everything was made up.

7.2.8. **Recommended Changes to Project Process in Future Partnerships**

Communication between Queen’s, participating organizations, and students was a theme of participants’ recommendations of changes to be made in future projects. In many cases, organizations were unclear about the nature of their involvement in the Queen’s partnership. Although many were satisfied with their participation, poor communication of project objectives resulted in organizations being unclear as to what type of work students would be doing and what the nature of their involvement would be.

Informants also stated that increased communication between students and organizations would have enhanced the value of the consultation project for both parties. There was a strong correlation between groups that maintained communication with their client and benefit to the client. Increasing communication would reduce the possibility of miscommunicated project objectives and would allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the business. Moreover, presenting information to clients in a rough draft would allow clients to make necessary changes and suggestions in order to ensure that problems are addressed before students present their final findings. Given that clients are often outside of Kingston, Ontario, where Queen’s University is located, giving students access to long-distance calling could help mitigate these problems.

Finally, communication must be increased between Queen’s and its students to ensure that students understand the importance of professionalism and project delivery. Although there were very few occasions in which students were seen as being unprofessional, there were two instances in which students acted in a disrespectful manner. In addition, to emphasize the importance of these projects, Queen’s must ensure that students deliver on their work and understand the potential impact of their project on the business they are working for.

7.3. **Knowledge from Other Academic Sources**

7.3.1. **Partnerships with Other Academic Institutions**
Just over half of the organizations had engaged in partnerships with other academic institutions or with departments at Queen’s outside of the Queen’s School of Business. Of the 16 that had other partnerships, 11 worked with Ontario Colleges including St. Lawrence, Loyalist, Durham, Fleming, Laurier College, Algonquin, and others in Mississauga. Partnerships often took place in the form of hiring co-op students; however, examples were provided of work done with economic development committees, IT departments, marketing students, engineering technology technician programs, and business consulting projects similar to those conducted by Queen’s students.

Four interviewees discussed partnerships made specifically with universities. Engineering partnerships existed with Carleton University, Queen’s Chemical Engineering TEAM course and the Queen’s Mechanical Engineering program. Two respondents referred to work with the Guelph Social Enterprise Centre. With regard to the field of forestry, partnerships existed between the University of Toronto, State University of New York, and the University of Ottawa. The University of Ottawa was also discussed in relation to an IT partnership. Finally, Queen’s University’s Department of Mathematics and Statistics is currently working on a program to compress the amount of data resulting from scanned documents to allow for material to be sent through the Internet and the Faculty of Law was mentioned in relation to assistance from the Queen’s Law Clinic.

7.3.2. Other Resources Used

Organizations rely heavily upon other resources to ensure that they continuously improve their operations and knowledge. Many reported the use of online and in-person industry forums that allow for the sharing of best practices. For organizations working in the tourism sector, the Ontario Highlands Tourism organization was cited as a valuable resource. Others stated that they relied on either online or workshop-style courses to educate themselves and their staff members, including courses such as customer service and gallery development. The Harvard Business Review was also mentioned. Finally, government resources, including Statistics Canada and local CFDCs, were noted.

7.4. Future Initiatives

7.4.1. Improvements to Academic Resources

When asked how academic partnerships could be improved, respondent’s answers fell into five categories: the need for follow-up, increased awareness of resources, the bringing together of rural businesses, the need for bilingual resources, and the need to increase links between academic fields.

Interview participants noted that follow-up on student projects would be of value to their businesses. In many cases, the recommendations and reports provided by the students were no longer of use due to changes in the business and the business environment. Additionally, for students, having the opportunity to see the impact of their project would be valuable with respect to understanding both the successes and failures of their recommendations. With regards to increasing awareness of academic resources, participants discussed the difficulty in finding relevant resources. One interviewee noted,

People are not fully aware about what is going on within different universities and need to know how they can create a link between themselves and the resources.
Others discussed the need to have one central place for organizations to find information about university partnerships. It was stated that,

Information needs to be more attainable- the available resources are unknown and it would benefit to have them in one place so that people can know what’s on offer.

In addition to creating awareness, one participant observed the need to promote the type of resources that are available to ensure that businesses understand what is being offered to them. The participant added that examples of past projects should be available to encourage people to take part and increase positive awareness.

Businesses also need to be brought together to discuss best practices for small businesses. Although many of the organizations operate in different environments, the opportunity to meet with other rural Ontario businesses is beneficial. Creating awareness of these opportunities is essential. The need for bilingual resources was also addressed as operating a business in both French and English is extremely difficult because of a lack of French-language government documents.

Finally, the need to increase the interdisciplinary nature of resources was discussed. David Townsend observed,

Queen’s is a well-rounded university and has resources that help most of us out in whatever field we are in. We need to find a way to match the learning needs with the needs of our own organization.

Businesses often have needs that can only be addressed by understanding multiple academic fields. For this reason, increasing partnerships between faculties could lead to better approaches to student consulting projects.

7.4.2. Participation in Future Student Projects

Participants were asked if they would take part in a project in the future and what type of information would benefit their organization most. The majority of respondents welcomed the opportunity to partner with students in the future and stated that marketing, business plans, and IT planning were their highest-ranked priorities with regards to student projects.

Willingness to Participate in Future Projects

Of the 30 interview participants, 26 welcomed the opportunity to take part again, 3 stated that they would take part under certain circumstances, and 1 would not because although the students benefited, their business did not.

Interview participants who stated that they would participate in future projects under certain circumstances discussed the need to have rules set out at the outset and the fact that they could only take part in alternating years due to the time commitment involved. Doreen Ashton Wagner stated,

I would like to understand more about the course objectives and would like to have a relationship with the professor so that I can self-determine whether or not to take part.
For the 26 that encouraged future student projects, the type of work requested included Marketing Research, Marketing Plans, Business Plans, IT Planning, Efficiency Planning, and Strategic Planning.

**Priorities**

The need for marketing plans ranked as the highest priority and included the need to understand how to integrate new technology into marketing strategies and how to target international markets. IT and Business Planning ranked as the second priority with respondents discussing the need to have short and long term planning done for their businesses. Efficiency and strategic planning were the lowest priority for respondents with only 3 organizations listing this as their first or second priority.

Multiple interviewees discussed the difficulties that businesses face in integrating new technology. One respondent noted,

> many companies have a hodgepodge of software and they are taking the long way around to solve needs… but none have the skills or the IT department large enough to solve their problems. – Dan Stanford
8. Participant Surveys

8.1. Executive Summary

This section identifies and examines the impact of Monieson Centre activities on various aspects of rural economic development efforts in Eastern Ontario. The Monieson Centre sought to improve rural economic development initiatives through the following methods of knowledge dissemination: online content delivery, knowledge syntheses, rural business success stories, free student consulting, business how-to documents, the Creative Communities blog, Discovery Workshops, and the annual Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) project showcase.

Participant feedback was used to assess the effectiveness of the Monieson Centre’s rural economic development efforts. Feedback was received on the following topics: desired information, usage of KIS and Identifying Rural Research Priorities through Community Engagement (RRP) resources, value of KIS/RRP and other Monieson Centre resources, partnerships with other academic institutions, and improvements to the future relevance of academic resources.

The following list highlights key findings from the survey data:

- The Monieson Centre addressed participant requirements for economic development information but were unable to provide statistical data due to current levels of funding.
- Resources that offered specific information were used more often than resources that provided general information.
- Resources that offered specific information were considered more useful than resources that provided general information.
- KIS resources were valuable to participants because they provided access to experts and expert resources, facilitated networking activities, raised awareness of community issues, and improved organizational credibility and visibility.
- Monieson Centre efforts provided the same benefits as partnerships with other universities and colleges.
- Future academic efforts would be considered more relevant if they provided and disseminated even more specific or macro-level community information.

8.2. Most Desired Information Among Participants

This question asked respondents to identify which knowledge their communities needed the most prior to their partnerships with The Monieson Centre. The following table identifies the most important topics for rural community economic development information:

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<tr>
<th>Desired Information</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data on rural communities</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community strategy plans</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that sixty-four percent of respondents indicated that their communities required information on how to develop rural economies more effectively. Participants desired information on basic
economic development knowledge, lists of economic development priorities in other communities, and economic development literature on specific communities.

The Monieson Centre has attempted to meet their needs through numerous knowledge dissemination methods. First, general economic development information can be obtained through knowledge syntheses. For example, the Community Economic Development (CED) knowledge syntheses introduces the CED model and explains how rural communities should exploit certain factors that are important to successful rural economic development efforts. Specific information on numerous economic development topics can be found on The Monieson Centre’s website, www.economicrevitalization.ca.

Second, lists of economic development priorities can be found online at www.economicrevitalization.ca in Discovery Workshop reports from KIS, RRP and this project. These reports identify the top five economic development priorities within twenty Southern Ontario communities, explain local community actions to achieve these objectives, and identify top priorities for research from each community to promote more economic development.

Third, Discovery Workshops and free student consulting projects provide communities with specific information about their local economic development efforts. The Discovery Workshops help focus and synchronize economic development, business, and academic initiatives with the achievement of top community economic development priorities. Furthermore, free student consulting activities attempt to help make local businesses more prosperous through best practice business principles.

In addition to requests for economic development information, twenty-nine percent of participants wanted The Monieson Centre to provide statistical data on their communities. Requests for data included many demographic, business, and geographical topics. This data would presumably be used to help rural communities develop strategies to achieve various specific objectives.

Finally, seventy percent of participants wanted a community strategic plan that included assessments of potential business opportunities that are available to communities.

8.3. Usage and Utility of KIS Tools and Resources

Respondents were asked to identify which KIS tools and resources they used to achieve their objectives. The following table displays the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Number of Participants Who Used the Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery Workshops</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.easternontarioknowledge.ca/www.ruralknowledge.ca">www.easternontarioknowledge.ca/www.ruralknowledge.ca</a></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Business Success Stories</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Student Consulting</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Communities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual KIS Showcases</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Syntheses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business How-To Documents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note that resources that contain specific information are used more often than resources that contain general information. Discovery Workshops, rural business success stories, and free student consulting all provide information that addresses specific development issues within communities. The Creative Communities blog, annual KIS Showcases, knowledge syntheses, and business how-to documents all provide more generalized information that participants must extrapolate to achieve their objectives.

The subsequent question indicates that the most frequently used resources were also considered the most useful resources. Participants were asked to indicate the three resources which were most useful to achieving their objectives. The following table displays the question results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Number of Participants Who Chose the Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discovery Workshops</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.easternontarioknowledge.ca/www.ruralknowledge.ca">www.easternontarioknowledge.ca/www.ruralknowledge.ca</a></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Business Success Stories</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Student Consulting</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Communities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual KIS Showcases</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Syntheses</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business How-To Documents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results suggest that future university economic development initiatives should provide community-specific information to clients. Clients may consider community-specific information to be more directly applicable and thus useful to achieve local development priorities. Participants may have found general information less useful for a few reasons. First, participants may not have the time to analyze and extrapolate general information to resolve specific community issues. Second, participants may not have the requisite experience to transfer academic knowledge into practical initiatives. Finally, general information may have been too macro-level to be applicable to many local community contexts.

### 8.4. Value of KIS and Monieson Centre Resources

The next series of questions ask how KIS resources and The Monieson Centre provided value to respondents. The following table displays the ways in which KIS resources provided value to participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Value</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to experts and expert resources</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate networking opportunities</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve organizational credibility and visibility</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise awareness of rural community issues</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KIS resources are valuable to fifty-three percent of respondents because they provide access to experts and expert resources. Respondents indicated that access to business consultants and academics either helped achieve desired objectives or provided information that will help achieve future goals. Twenty-four percent of participants used KIS resources to develop economic development strategies. Fourteen percent of participants used expert resources to develop community strategic plans. Another seven percent used consultations to take greater advantage of the rural creative economy concept. Other respondents did not elaborate upon how they use expert information to achieve objectives.

KIS resources are valuable to seventeen percent of respondents because the program facilitates networking opportunities within rural communities. KIS resources facilitate networking opportunities in three ways. First, experts provide ideas for partnerships with other community organizations. Second, experts provide respondents with contact information for businesses that have potential common interests. Third, the Discovery Workshops and annual conferences create environments which allow participants to communicate with local like-minded individuals. Thus, these Monieson Centre activities appear to have indirect value that can further promote effective rural economic development efforts.

KIS resources are valuable to fourteen percent of participants because they raise awareness of issues that face rural communities. Awareness is essential to initiate and help guide rural economic development efforts to successful conclusions.

Finally, eighteen percent of participants believe KIS resources provide value because they improve the credibility and visibility of rural organizations. These individuals believe that increases to visibility and credibility result in increases to successful government funding applications. This factor is likely to affect the level of government funds received by organizations.

8.5. Partnerships with Other Universities

Respondents were asked to identify whether they use resources from other universities and colleges to meet various objectives. Some respondents have partnerships with Loyalist College, Algonquin College, the University of Western Ontario, or other departments at Queen’s University. Respondents appear to use these resources in the same manner as KIS resources. Specifically, respondents used other university resources to help develop strategies, conduct networking activities, and increase visibility and credibility of organizational profiles within the public and private sector. Thus, KIS activities appear to assist rural organizations in the same manner as other university and college resources. More information will be required to determine whether or not KIS resources help rural organizations complete these activities more than other universities or colleges.
8.6. Improvements to the Future Relevance of Academic Resources

Respondents were asked what would make future academic resources more relevant to their communities. The following table highlights the ways in which future academic resources could be made more relevant to rural communities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways to Increase Relevance of Academic Resources</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific information about rural communities</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater dissemination of materials</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More macro-level information</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No changes required</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-six percent of respondents believed that more specific information should be provided about their local communities. Respondents indicated preferences for economic revitalization information which addresses specific local issues or that provides statistical data that can resolve local issues. The following list identifies some topics for local economic development information:

- market local businesses, services, and programs;
- develop local revitalization strategies;
- provide local environmental assessments; and,
- help plan a potential waste management facility.

"The legal workshop for rural small businesses hosted by Queen's law students was outstanding."
Another thirty-six percent of participants believed that economic development information should be more widely distributed throughout rural communities. Some participants indicated preferences towards free workshops, studies, and presentations within rural communities. Furthermore, some participants indicated that greater measures must be taken to ensure that all relevant local decision-makers attend economic development events.

Not all participants requested more specific information to be more widely disseminated throughout communities. In fact, fourteen percent wanted more generic information on business development and other business issues within rural communities. These requests could be accommodated through knowledge syntheses but more information is required to identify the topics of these reports.

Finally, fourteen percent of respondents stated that The Monieson Centre should simply continue their current approach to rural economic development. The Monieson Centre can continue to achieve this endorsement if it maintains, or further improves upon, current economic revitalization efforts.
9. Student Surveys

9.1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this section is to determine how The Monieson Centre’s economic development initiatives affected student learning and student job searches. The majority of student respondents completed either knowledge syntheses or business consulting projects for COMM 401 – Business Strategy, a course or summer employment with Queens’ Business Consulting, or MBA841 – Operations Management as part of the Centre’s Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) project.

Participant feedback was used to assess the Monieson Centre’s impact on student learning and job searches.

The following list highlights key findings from the survey data:

- KIS projects enhance classroom learning experiences through the practical application of course materials.
- The Monieson Centre should conduct more business consulting projects in order to further increase enhanced student learning experiences.
- Both business consulting and knowledge syntheses projects positively influence student desires to take courses with similar community-based projects in the future.
- Business consulting projects enhance student desires more than knowledge syntheses.
- KIS projects helped some students prepare for future careers through the development of practical skills, greater comprehension of workforce environments, strengthened organizational skills, and the provision of industry connections.
- KIS project impacts upon student job search efforts are mixed.

9.2. Effect of Projects on Classroom Experiences

These survey questions asked respondents to identify how KIS projects enhanced their classroom experiences. The following table displays the ways in which KIS projects enhanced student course experiences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhanced Experience</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced the learning experience</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided practical application of course material</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased comprehension of course concepts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.2.1. Enhanced Learning Experience and Practical Application of Course Material

The two greatest benefits that KIS projects provide to classroom experiences are enhanced learning and the practical application of course material. Qualitative data reveals, however, that these benefits are, practically, synonymous. Student answers from a previous question indicate that everyone who responded “yes” to enhanced learning experience stated that the greatest value they received from their projects was the application of theory to practice. For example, one participant identified three company core competencies that can be leveraged to achieve high levels of sustainable revenues. Another student developed a complete marketing strategy
that helped increase client sales revenue. Thus, enhanced learning experience appears to be synonymous with the practical application of course material in this case and this is the greatest benefit from business consulting projects.

Statistical analysis also reveals the types of project affects whether or not students felt they had an enhanced learning experience. More specifically, Fisher's exact test results indicate that consultant projects were 1.25 times more likely to enhance learning experiences than knowledge syntheses projects. Thus, statistical analysis provides some support that The Monieson Centre should conduct more business consulting projects in order to further enhance future classroom learning experiences.

Future research can provide greater insights into the relationship between the type of project and benefits to enhanced learning experiences. Likert-scale questions would allow researchers to conduct point-biserial tests that can determine the existence and size of a statistically significant correlation these two variables. This test can provide insights into the extent to which different types of projects enhance learning experiences. Additionally, interviews or new surveys can help identify specific ways to make KIS projects enhance classroom learning experiences. This insight is important because less than half of the total number of participants received these benefits from KIS projects.

An educated guess may shed some light on this latter issue. In essence, some knowledge syntheses and business consulting projects may have been unrelated to course content. Knowledge syntheses included a wide breadth of topics that ranged from rural broadband to youth engagement. Furthermore, some business clients may have had very specific needs that were unrelated to classroom concepts. Perhaps knowledge syntheses and business consulting projects would enhance classroom learning experiences if greater alignment can be achieved between course content, rural economic development research requirements, and rural business needs. This might be achieved through greater communication between stakeholders, insights from the organizational survey best practices report, or insights from an additional research study.

9.2.2. Increased Comprehension of Course Concepts and Workload

In addition to the two aforementioned benefits, a minority of student consultant respondents believe that KIS-related projects increased their comprehension of course concepts. Respondent feedback does not provide insight into how or why some respondents received this benefit while others did not. Insights into these questions can be obtained through additional survey data or interviews. Two respondents did comment that such projects increased a typical course workload.

9.3. Effect of KIS-Related Projects upon Student Desires to Take Similar Courses

Students were asked whether their project affected their desire to take courses with similar community-based projects. Students provided responses on a Likert-scale that ranged from 1-5. An answer of 1 indicated that the student would be strongly discouraged from taking these classes while an answer of 5 indicated that the student would be strongly encouraged to take these classes. Histogram, skewness, and kurtosis tests indicate that the data is normally
Thus, parametric tests can provide insights into the ways that Monieson Centre activities impact student desires to take classes with similar community-based projects.

Point bi-serial correlations can identify the extent to which consulting activities or knowledge syntheses affected student desires to take courses with similar community-based projects. Separate tests were used to identify the existence and extent of the relationship between business consulting projects and knowledge syntheses upon student desires. Point bi-serial tests only included data from participants that answered this survey question.

The statistical tests infer that both business consulting and knowledge syntheses projects have a positive effect on student desires to take courses with similar community-based projects in the future. Both types of projects likely strongly and positively influence student desires to take future classes with similar community-based projects.

However, these results must be considered alongside two caveats. First, the sample size for both test groups is quite small. Each sample contains less than ten responses. Second, the ratings from participants that did not respond to the question may be different than the responses from participants that did answer the question. This may impact the existence and size of the correlation between project type and student desires to take future courses with similar community-based projects. That said, the point bi-serial tests probably provide accurate insight into the fact that consulting and knowledge syntheses projects increase student desires to take future courses with similar types of community-based projects.

Additionally, an independent t-test was used to determine whether consultant activities or knowledge syntheses have a stronger effect on student desires to take courses with similar community-based projects. Equal variances are not assumed between the two groups because the significance value for the Levine's test is less than .05. Given these parameters, the independent samples t-test value of 2.309 surpasses the critical t-value of +/- 2.20 and has a significance value of .05. Thus, the test results indicate that students that complete consultant activities have stronger desires to take courses with similar community-based projects in the future.

This result provides an important insight into how rural economic development projects can improve classroom learning experiences. The Monieson Centre can increase student desires to take courses with similar community-based projects through greater emphasis upon business consulting activities. Greater facilitation of student consultant projects should also increase the utility of Monieson Centre activities for rural businesses (See Section 8).

9.4. Impact of KIS Projects upon Student Preparations for Future Careers

This set of questions asked respondents to indicate whether or not KIS projects helped prepare them for future employment. The following table indicates the ways in which students believed KIS projects helped them prepare for future employment opportunities:

---

1 More specifically, the z-score of skewness is 2.30, the z-score of kurtosis is .4, and both values fell within the threshold of +/-3.29. Thus, the data is normally distributed and can be used to conduct parametric tests.
2 Note: The critical t-value was picked because degrees of freedom = 11, equal variances are not assumed, the test is two-tailed, and the confidence interval is 95% (or \( p \leq .05 \)).
Table 12: Contribution of KIS Projects to Student Employment Preparedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manner of Employment Preparedness</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helped develop practical skills</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enriched understanding of workforce environments</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthened organizational skills</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided real-world experience that is applicable to desired careers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided industry connections</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents believed that Monieson Centre activities helped develop practical skills. Future research can provide insights into how KIS projects develop practical skills. Perhaps the other four benefits are related to this one. For example, students may believe that the development of practical skills are related to greater comprehension of work atmospheres, greater organizational skills, greater real-world experience that is applicable to desired careers, and more industry connections. This theory could be confirmed if students provided Likert-scale data that could be analyzed with regression or correlation tests. Furthermore, interviews could help identify specific ways that students received these types of benefits.

Students were asked if their KIS-related work helped with their job search. The following table depicts student responses:

Table 13: Benefit of KIS Project to Students’ Job Search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did KIS Projects Help with Job Search</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four students agreed that Monieson Centre work helped advance their respective job searches. Students believed their work helped in different capacities. First, a student believed the prestige of the KIS project would help them achieve employment at another organization. Second, a student believed that the KIS work would help advance their career if they chose to become a researcher. Third, a student states that KIS work has been an important topic of conversation in every job interview. Fourth, a student believes that the work experience will help set them apart from other candidates. Other students did not provide insights into why they did not feel, or were unsure, that their project helped with their job search.

Fisher’s exact test did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the type of student project and student perceptions that it helped them on their job search.

9.5. Potential Improvements for Future Community-Based Learning Opportunities

Students were asked whether community-based learning opportunities, such as KIS projects, could be improved in the future. Four students identified the following potential improvements:

- more publication of successes;
• better due diligence to ensure the whether the company is a good “fit” for the consultant projects;
• greater feedback from users of the information; and,
• greater dissemination of KIS materials within rural communities.

However, none of the student responses overlapped. Thus, additional research could be conducted to determine whether these are popular or outlier ideas for improvements to community-based learning projects. Interviews can also provide additional insights into how these four students specifically felt about these topics and about any specific suggestions to improve KIS projects.
10. Policy Assessment

10.1. Executive Summary

The results of 20 rural community workshops held across rural Southern Ontario in 2012 were reviewed to assess whether there were policy implications related to rural community development arising from the sessions.

The workshop results were found to link to policy in five categories:

- Delivery of Human Services (e.g., health and education access & availability)
- Infrastructure Investment (e.g., broadband, transportation)
- Program Support & Technical Assistance (e.g., program training and resources)
- Project Funding/Incentives (e.g., RED, EODP)
- Broad Socio-economic Policy (e.g., EI, welfare, poverty – income support)

The policies of all three levels of government (municipal, provincial, federal) were identified as relevant. Many comments spoke to the importance of collaboration – both across municipal jurisdictions in a regional context, and between levels of government – to respond to significant widespread human capital challenges such as labour force development and demographic realities such as aging, out-migration of youth and insufficient in-migration. Likewise, the levels of coordination and cost-sharing needed to respond to on-going complex infrastructure and service priorities such as transportation, broadband improvements or affordable seniors' housing pointed to principles and practices of "governance" as much as they also spoke to specific "government" policy barriers. Strikingly, the rural community economic development focus of the workshops did not lead to narrow discussion of business competitiveness but rather to the linkage of overall community vitality with the availability of health and human services such as education.

The workshops were not designed to elicit policy suggestions from participants as they were primarily focused on the relationship between post-secondary institutions and the local community economic development priorities in the rural regions where they were held. Thus the many policy implications which are drawn from the record came forward in an indirect way and are not presented here as specific recommendations but rather highlight recurring themes and concerns.

10.2. Introduction

The Monieson Centre at Queen’s School of Business conducted 20 Discovery Workshops in 2011-13 on knowledge mobilization in rural communities. The primary focus was to understand how research was assisting progress on community economic development priorities within each of the Ontario rural communities where the workshops took place. They also posed the question of how the working relationships between rural community stakeholders and post-secondary institutions could be strengthened as they related to those community economic development priorities in each community. This resulted primarily in ideas and suggestions for the possible directions of future local projects and priorities for research and engagement of post-secondary institutions to support those community based endeavours. The full set of workshop results are provided in Section 5 and are also available on the Monieson Centre’s website, www.economicrevitalization.ca.
10.2.1. **Purpose**

An important by-product of the stakeholder discussions concerned linkages between the community development priorities and the policy context in which those are situated. This section assesses the workshop summaries from that perspective. It considers the results comprehensively, seeking to identify if there are recurring themes and concerns common across the individual locations which point to policy implications with respect to:

- a) How current policy supports the evolution of resilient and prosperous sustainable rural economies;
- b) Opportunities to adjust policies for greater impact; and/or
- c) Identified policy challenges or barriers.

The aim of preparing this policy assessment is to highlight important areas for policy makers at each level of government to consider on the presumption that there is a shared goal of seeing rural communities achieve their socio-economic potential, and to ensure that the policy environment enables local businesses and organizations to create and contribute to a vital local economy that supports a high quality of life and well-being. Approximately 20% of the Ontario population lives in small towns and rural communities.

In addition, it is anticipated that the potential readership of the report will extend beyond the policy units of provincial and federal departments and ministries and that the assessment will be of interest to the many associations who are actively engaged in supporting the economic development of Ontario communities – e.g., the Economic Development Task Force of AMO, ROMA, EDCO, the OCC, OACFDC, Workforce Planning Boards, EODC, SCOR, SWEA, EOWC, the WOWC. The findings of the assessment may serve to feed in to their own priority-setting processes or provide additional information or reinforcement for their current attention to particular policy matters in their dialogues with government.

Following the results and implications is a short discussion of the relevance of the implications to a northern Ontario context. Evidently there may be some elements which are potentially shared concerns and others for which articulating the common interest might be too long of a stretch. The discussion offers some reflection on that question.

10.2.2. **Methodology: Creation of a Policy Assessment Framework**

A preliminary review of the workshop results suggested that the record of the workshops included comments and observations which could be grouped into five areas. The workshop results were then more systematically assessed to sort them by organizing the policy related content into these five dimensions. (See Section 10.3 – Policy Assessment below for a description of the categories.)

The participants in the workshops raised issues and spoke to the role of government programs impacting rural community economic development across a wide spectrum, dealing with all three levels of government and the various ministries and agencies carrying out public mandates. Where possible the comments were tagged as primarily dealing with Federal (F), Provincial (P), or Municipal (M) policy mandates.

Further, the participants’ statements were assessed to identify whether they reflected one of three particular stances towards that policy domain, i.e., that the policy:
- Was recognized as having local benefit or was valued;
- Could be strengthened, extended or improved; or
- Was perceived as a barrier/impediment in its current state.

Hence the assessment included in Appendix E reflects these elements:

I. A five-category policy typology;
II. Identification of which of three levels of government is primarily responsible for that policy; and,
III. Indication of one of three stances toward that policy which was voiced by the workshop participant.

Note that many of the workshop results as produced in recorded statements through the Queen’s Executive Decision Centre’s facilitation approach had no discernible policy linkage or the possible linkage was considered too distant to subject it to further assessment. Also due to a ranking process occurring at the workshops, some statements in the workshop results are re-iterated and re-grouped. Where there were such policy related perspectives being evidently carried forward and repeated in the subsequent sections of each workshop report they are only picked up in this assessment the one time.

10.2.3. Limitations

Taken in their entirety the rural stakeholders gathered at the workshops make up a credible, substantive and diverse group with considerable insight and understanding of the reality of the local circumstances. The host or sponsor organizations, for example a number of Community Future Development Corporations, had pre-existing relationships and contact networks within their regions which were in turn reflected in the make-up of the participants. Those who responded positively to invitations to participate were clearly predisposed to be engaged in the development of their community in various ways. A mix of small business owners, agency representatives, local government staff, Chamber or BIA members and staff, volunteer economic development committees, tourism organizations, health service delivery organizations and workforce planning boards were present. As such, the participants might be expected to have had a more knowledgeable and direct understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of government programs and services and the progress of local initiatives and projects than others in the community. Nonetheless, the perspective drawn from the workshop participants does not necessarily accurately represent rural views and opinions as would be the case if the comments were collected through a random sample chosen for statistical purposes. That was never the intent of the workshops.

Note also that the aim and structure of the workshop process was not to solicit perspectives on policy so those policy themes which did emerge came forward in an indirect way. Consequently the commentary in this assessment stops well short of making any specific recommendations. Nor is this assessment a complete analysis of the range of policy alternatives available to governments for particular objectives and it should not be interpreted as such.

The policy implications review in this section is based solely on the workshop results. It does not for example deal with the partners interviews element of the project which was more oriented to the nature of the relationship between rural community organizations, local
government, entrepreneurs and university-based researchers surrounding the focus, ownership and orientation of the research being done.

The partner interviews addressed questions around how academic studies and community action could be better linked. There are few if any explicit government policies that actually speak to these matters especially with the curtailment of the Community University Research Alliance funding programs of SSHRC which hitherto attached some importance to community leadership and equity within study processes (http://www. sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/cura-aruc-eng.aspx).

The set of principles that could inform this discussion is more about “governance” and less about “government” …i.e., less about policy and more about practices. For an excellent discussion of the principles of rural governance see Eight Principles for Effective Rural Governance...And How Communities Put Them into Practice (RUPRI Rural Governance Initiative, 2006).

10.3. Policy Assessment

10.3.1. Description of Policy Framework

The preliminary review of the workshop results suggested that participants were offering remarks linked to policy in five categories. This typology or framework for sorting the participant perspectives is:

- Delivery of Human Services (access/availability)
- Infrastructure Investment (e.g., broadband, transportation)
- Program Support & Technical Assistance
- Project Funding/Incentives (e.g., RED, EODP)
- Broad Socio-economic Policy (e.g., EI, welfare, poverty – income support)

10.3.2. Human Service Delivery

This category consisted primarily of statements related to access to and or availability of human services, particularly health and post-secondary education services. The discussion of the health aspects of this policy dimension and the implications derived from it is lengthier than for the other policy categories. It is disproportionate for three reasons:

1) the province has a number of articulated rural health policy goals and explicit rural programs (i.e. it is a policy rich subject area);
2) several thematic concerns such as transportation or affordable seniors housing came up in relation to health strategy – e.g., “aging in place” strategies – and so are first addressed within this section even though they could have been placed in the Infrastructure category; and,
3) the broader social determinants of health take rural health policy matters into diverse policy arenas (transportation, income, poverty etc.).

Most often the comments on health services concerned the location of services and/or the recruitment of health professionals. There were specific statements which reflected a positive view of the benefit of the Rural Ontario Medical Program, Underserviced Areas Program (UAP) and HealthForce Ontario initiatives. Similarly, the long-term value of the linkages of local health services to urban based research and training institutions through on the job training or locum
placements was perceived to build relationships for ongoing transfer of expertise and an important support for rural practitioners throughout their careers.

Policy Implication: The widespread belief in the effectiveness and value of support programs for medical practitioner recruitment by small towns and rural communities argues strongly for the continuation of these programs.

Rural placement of future professionals while they are in urban-based training/education programs is an important bridge and recognized as such by stakeholders in rural communities as are the incentive programs to place trained practitioners in rural and small town practice.

Provincial policy has established that the Under-serviced Area Program (UAP) uses the Rurality Index of Ontario communities as the basis for determining the eligibility and amount of the incentives on a sliding scale with more remote/rural places having higher incentive levels (http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/northernhealth/rio_score.aspx). The UAP was last reviewed/revised in 2009 and was at that time thought to be essential for northern communities as well as benefitting southern communities (http://www.cranhr.ca/pdf/HealthForceOntario_UAP_Consultation_-_CRaNHR_submission.pdf).

At the time of those consultations a significant number of rural southern census subdivisions were close to the lower cut-off of 40 on the Index and some northern stakeholders argued that a higher cut-off should have been used to exclude the more urban proximate rural communities so that the program could have its intended impact for the most hard-pressed communities and not be diluted. With 2011 National Household Survey results recently released it can be anticipated that rural and small town stakeholders will be keenly interested in monitoring the creation of any updates to the index and/or any review of the eligibility and level of incentives associated with it. Based on the generally positive perspectives voiced at the workshops about rural medical practitioner support programs any future proposed changes would likely engender debate about the geographic share and distribution of finite health program resources.

Policy Implication: The transparency and breadth of public consultation surrounding any forthcoming MOHLTC review of the RIO index or UAP eligibility should be proportionate to the high level of rural stakeholder sense of importance of the programs linked with it.

At another level, the participant perspective on the benefits of these programs also speaks to the need for information sharing and public discourse on the actual evidence of effectiveness. Are these perceptions borne out by the evidence? Is anyone collecting the evidence? Can rural citizens access it? The stated provincial policy goal is “equitable access”, including geographic equity. For example, see recommendations concerning these matters from the Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research (Wegenhofer and Hogenbirk, 2010).

Informing stakeholders of the results of any such evaluation results would create a more focused and rational debate on policy options and implications. The Ontario Health Quality Council report from 2011 recently raised the concern that the data available to ascertain the gap in outcomes between different groups in society is not available. However, in the following year’s report they point out that rural health outcomes are poorer but do not comment on whether inequitable access is the reason for this – commenting instead on a rather narrow element of the risks inherent in ATV use (Health Quality Ontario, 2012).
Other studies have concluded that poorer rural health outcomes are due not necessarily to relatively poorer access to physicians and hospitals (which is the case) but also to the underlying broader social determinants of health and lifestyle and that these are exacerbated by the distance/isolation faced by many living in rural regions (Smith, et. al., 2008). In this respect, successful policy initiatives focused solely on equitable access for rural citizens may not actually change the fact of poorer rural health outcomes if there is not also a parallel effort dealing directly with these other factors such as increasing availability of rural transportation, raising income levels, reducing high rural school drop-out rates, reducing poverty, etc. These factors are the broader social determinants of health and that was specifically the priority concern of the Discovery Workshop in Fergus where the local host was the Waterloo-Wellington Rural Health Network.

These matters are clearly on the agenda there and the discussion at the workshop demonstrated that there is recognition that improving the social determinants does not belong solely to health planning or delivery organizations, i.e., it relates to policy across many organizational and ministry mandates. In terms of broad government policy, the eight measures being used to track progress on the Ontario Poverty Reduction strategy include many of these social determinants of health including high school drop-out rates, housing and income measures, among others. Unfortunately for rural stakeholders these measures are not reported for specific geographies (Breaking the Cycle, 2012).

**Policy Implication:** Government agencies and Ministries hoping to have informed rural citizens to consult with, or engage in helping guide policy, need to support effective communications which provide more accessible data about geographic health outcomes and differences as well as reporting indicators of progress on the broader social determinants of health for discrete geographies.

The relationship between local quality of life and the community ability to attract newcomers, including medical practitioners, was voiced on numerous occasions. Provincial government investment in improved health care service delivery (e.g., new family health teams or community health centres) was seen as important not just for improved accessibility of services in and of itself but also because of the positive reinforcement in the ability of the community to maintain its viability by attracting newcomers and also because of the relatively stable and higher incomes health professionals bring into the local economy. This is a recognition of a “virtuous circle” linking perceived local quality of life with on-going economic success. Furthermore, it was observed that hospitals, for example, also have substantive local economic impact in their local procurement activities, staffing levels and of building construction.

**Policy Implication:** Rural community stakeholders at the workshops highlighted the important linkage between community viability, economic development and local accessibility of health services. Several expressed the perspective that this understanding should inform health delivery planning.

Any policy dialogue around this theme, as took place recently with the 2011 consultations on Rural and Northern Health Care Framework/Plan, reflects the constant tension and balance that exists between the allocation of resources over geography, how many points of service the public purse can afford, and/or who makes the decisions about those questions. Regionalization of resource allocation decisions to LHINs and the reconciliation of these allocation decisions with individual/community interests is likely to be a continuing matter of policy debate and of real engaged advocacy by community stakeholders. Much of the Ontario health services planning and allocation decision making takes place over levels of geography.
that do not correspond to the particular boundaries of the rural communities represented at these workshops. Local health integration networks and community care access centres are organized at scales above that of the individual community and there are probably efficiency and effectiveness rationale behind this as well as counter arguments about the scale of some of the LHINS and the reality of shared interests between disparate places at polar ends of the 14 LHIN geographies. Policies designed to increase equitable access and respond to the under servicing of rural areas demonstrate that fairness can be sought in a number of ways despite this lack of direct jurisdictional correspondence. (See UAP discussion above.)

Still, as the Province follows a cost control agenda to counteract the burgeoning proportion of the overall budget which healthcare consumes, it can be anticipated that more efficiency will be sought. If this drives a dynamic of further regionalization or centralization of specialized services it can be expected that there will be clashes with the community-based concept expressed at the workshops. Notions of distributive fairness underlie this policy question and matters concerning the range of limited “core” services versus the desirability of comprehensive care in community hospitals have previously generated significant controversies (e.g., Ontario Health Coalition, 2007).

The viewpoints expressed at the workshops indicate that the underlying dynamic which produces this kind of debate remain. Because of the linkage people make between their economic viability as a community and the human services available in them, the debate isn’t just about the fairness as expressed in “dollars per capita” but also reflects expectations about how the range of local services stack up in individual communities – making them more or less desirable places to live or start a business.

Ultimately whether the balance among competing interests is being appropriately struck is something citizens in a democratic society expect the political system to adjust or refine when necessary. Following-up this policy implication could presumably lead the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care to review the application of criteria for allocation decisions and evaluate to what extent they might be informed by consideration of levels of service within communities and the comparative concentration and distribution of services among communities. This implies that decisions regarding the localization/centralization of discrete health services ought to be also looked at through the lens of potential broader community impacts. However, the recently published Health Equity Impact Assessment Guidelines from MOHLTC which would presumably be an important tool to build this capacity in the system refers specifically to Remote/rural or urban core populations as opposed to communities (Health Equity Impact Assessment, 2012). The bulk of the guidelines document is concerned with socially marginalized population groups without reference to geographic communities. On the other hand the MOHLTC strategic directions do stress the importance of equity on a geographic basis.

Population-based distance and drive times service levels are important benchmarks but obscure or do not capture these community impacts. Moreover, not everyone can actually drive and with seniors populations in rural areas growing by on average 2.6% annually the use of drive time as a benchmark may prove to be an increasingly misleading indicator of access (Focus on Rural Ontario, 2013). A recent spate of initiatives surrounding development of rural regional transportation options often connects to, in health jargon, “non-urgent” transportation issues and presumably has been developing in response to perceived service gaps. A number of the solutions which are emerging are coming from non-profit and healthcare associations and not necessarily from municipal system-wide public transit investment which in urban settings is the policy locus for transit planning. Transit has traditionally been practically unavailable or very limited between rural places due to density/usage realities which generate high subsidy
requirements. Workshop comments speaking to the need for improvements in public transit infrastructure were noted under the heading of Infrastructure Investment rather than Human Service delivery but in at least one instance that policy suggestion was linked to the LHIN aging at home strategy, the success of which was thought to be dependent on better availability of transportation.

**Policy Implication:** The effectiveness of health care service provision and availability of transportation are inter-connected implying the need for focused cooperation between health service delivery agencies and the municipal governments who possess a clearer local transportation mandate but limited financial capacity to subsidize rural transit systems. It also suggests the potential requirement for inter-municipal collaboration where service geographies cross municipal jurisdictions. Rural transit options and new models will likely require a mixed source of subsidy – intergovernmental dialogue through organizations like AMO surrounding the use of Federal Gas Tax monies for this type of initiative may require pilot funding.

Services to seniors and responding to the service needs of the aging population was identified as a concern in four workshops. One specific policy barrier was identified in the lack of available resources for in-home care of the elderly. This led one participant to identify the fact of a municipally sponsored “elder care” position being created in the community. Affordable seniors housing also clearly showed up in numerous workshop comments which were categorized into the “infrastructure investment” policy category rather than “human services”. The two are, however, closely linked. The creation of supportive housing environments that create a continuum of care services for seniors has both capital infrastructure and program elements. All three levels of government have roles to play with respect to this and the policy coordination challenges are significant and complex. The value and importance of coordination and cooperation is reflected, for example, in the creation of the Housing and Homelessness Resource Centre through the Ontario Government/MMAH and the Ontario Municipal Service Managers Association among others (http://hhrconline.com/hhrc2/welcome/). This resource will support the creation of Local Plans by 2014. Comparative policy research from the Canadian Policy Research Network also includes mid-size/rural Ontario case studies (Jones, 2007). A number of calls to action and reports are also available through the Ontario Rural Housing Action Network (http://www.orhan.ca/index.resources.htm). Meanwhile, in the affordable housing policy arena, generally we have the federal government disengaging, having announced an explicit scheduled withdrawal and reduction of federal dollars for affordable housing.

**Policy Implication:** The creation of sufficient supportive housing programs for seniors is already a complex challenge involving non-profit organizations, health service providers and funding mechanisms from all three levels of government. Upcoming housing planning by the municipal service managers is an opportunity to further build the integration and collaboration necessary to deal with this challenge. Coordination and collaboration models or “best practices” would assist in stimulating the innovative partnerships which will be required. Aging at home strategies imply significant investments in transportation in non-metro settings.

The location of and distance to post-secondary education programs in rural communities was raised at the workshops many times. This concerned the desirability of satellite or main campus recruitment by the rural communities as well as respect for the contribution made by particular programs to local economic sectors in those regions. At several workshops the benefits of the local community college programs was recognized. Likewise, there was a high degree of value placed on those post-secondary programs where a clear linkage to place-based economic
strengths was evident and employers and young people both benefitted from placement programs, internship and the like.

In other instances workshops participants voiced an equally strong concern over the lack of alignment between the post-secondary programs offered in the region and the labour force and skills needed by critical industrial sectors which might provide jobs and growth in that region. This was identified as an area needing improvement. Why these problems exist and whether they are a matter of policy or reflect variable approaches between main campuses and satellite campuses or idiosyncratic levels of engagement of the college leadership with local business and industry sectors is beyond the scope of this paper. Better information on the role and impact of community colleges in local economic development would be of benefit to rural communities advocating better alignment. An organization such as the Ontario Community Colleges Association may be in a position to undertake an assessment of where these relationships are working well and how they could be strengthened. The 2013 Ontario budget included a commitment to a $25 million Business-Labour Connectivity and Training Fund to pilot initiatives to strengthen this linkage. Rural economic development stakeholders will need to work with partners to take advantage of the fund and the youth employment strategy funds generally.

Policy Implication: Perceptions of the alignment of community college and university programs with the industry sectors in the surrounding rural regions is apparently very uneven. Whether rural stakeholders can use recent project funding allocations to catalyze projects which strengthen alignment remains to be seen.

Policy Implication: The level of effort being expended by local stakeholders to recruit programs and campuses to more small town locations is not reflected by any clear systematic policy thrust at the Ontario government level. Geographic equity in terms of increased regional accessibility to Ontario post-secondary colleges for rural Ontarians may become a more salient policy concern in education as it currently is in the health system where there are explicit criteria about service levels and distance to points of service.

Settlement services to new immigrants and labour force recruitment was a very prevalent preoccupation among the workshop participants. At least two of the workshops had established a focus on that topic beforehand and the linkage to recruitment of health service providers was also a specific pre-established priority in another workshop. The value of Local Immigration Partnership funding for coordinating and planning local efforts and the funding for municipal immigration/newcomer attraction portals was recognized. Given the level of effort and importance that rural communities are placing on the attraction and integration of newcomers as evidenced at these workshops it is likely that the demand and advocacy for provincial and federal strategies by local stakeholders for programming that supports small towns to be more successful in attracting and retaining newcomers can be anticipated.

Policy Implication: Provincial programs which support newcomer attraction, the coordination of settlement services on a regional basis and provide financial support for the integration of newcomers are well-utilized and were appreciated for their benefits by workshop participants. The mechanisms for coordination and collaboration established through the federal, provincial and municipal cooperation underlying this program can continue to be built on – providing a mechanism for consultation by senior governments on program design and to provide a conduit for communication regarding the effectiveness of immigration policy.
Reverberating throughout the workshop results is a set of inter-connected concerns around labour force and demographics. The aging demographic/retirement of skilled workers, youth out-migration, how to better foster in-migration were all themes which speak to the overall importance workshop participants placed on the potential impact on rural businesses and their communities from potential future shortfalls in the labour force and the level of importance they placed on programs that fostered a well-trained, high quality local labour force. That these issues are on the minds of the workshop participants is not surprising given that statistical data from the recent National Household Survey results are pointing to the growing dependency ratio in many rural Ontario census divisions (proportion of the non-working population to those in the workforce) as well as only a very small set of rural jurisdictions showing positive net in-migration numbers.

Labour force issues cross many policy arenas such as education and immigration settlement and integration, birth rates/maternity supports and participation rates/child care availability. It comes up in all of the five policy categories used for this assessment. Understanding how all these policies are currently impacting rural Ontario is an important but complex challenge. The Labour Market Partnership funding, Local Immigration Partnership funding, Provincial Nominee Program and several support programs surrounding welcoming communities (CIRRO/CAIN) are all components of this and were recognized by participants at the workshops. These programs and policies reflect both federal/provincial agreements and provincial/municipal agreements as well as inter-ministerial coordination.

MTCU and the Ministry of Community and Social Services have a number of financial arrangements with service providers and the municipal service managers to coordinate employment services. Similarly Ontario has a network of workforce planning boards who work to identify labour force issues, build understanding of potential solutions and foster relationships among regional stakeholders to implement integrated programs and initiatives. The Boards have been created and funded by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities. Given the scope and importance of their mandate and the fact they have very small core funding budgets raises a policy question about whether these organizations have adequate resources to do the job expected of them. The need for regional and community labour market analysis requires intensive data collection processes and technical knowledge. Often the necessary data is not available at the levels of geography for which planning decisions need to be made. This problem can also make for opaque policy development since it can lead to more technocratic processes rather than public discourse about what needs to be done.

For example, the recent closures and centralization of employment resource centres as a result of the Transformation of Employment Ontario by the province was announced without any publicly available, system wide analysis of the consequences on rural communities. It illustrates the challenges of having a coordinated and collaborative approach to regional labour force planning in an information poor environment because even while the internal and technocratic transformation process had been underway since at least 2008, local stakeholders still reacted to the local closures without an overall sense of whether the system-wide changes meant the local needs were still going to be addressed (http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/eotransformation/transformbackground.html).

The lack of information or evidence that such policy decisions are rationalized in the context of understanding the impact on the rural client base for service can create fertile ground for the growth of sentiments around disenfranchisement and feelings that people living in small centres are “second-class citizens”. The background documents concerning the transformation process suggest MTCU and delivery partners did have an emphasis on regional planning to
assure service needs were going to be addressed – the results of that emphasis however are not easily located in the official announcements. It is probably safe to assume that most rural Ontarians accept that service levels are going to be different in their home communities compared to larger urban centres simply because of distance and density reasons. If this is the case then the possibility of a policy dialogue or communications about service changes framed by notions of fairness rather than equity would be welcomed.

Policy Implication: Responding adequately to rural labour force challenges has and will require an inter-governmental and cross –ministry approach. The lack of any clear provincial rural strategy makes coordination, communication and dialogue about what’s fair more difficult to sustain.

Given the high level of importance rural stakeholders at the workshops placed on these issues any future strategy should also speak to the adequacy of the resources available to the Workforce Planning Boards for collecting, analyzing and sharing local labour market information and include an exploration of how they believe their effectiveness could be improved.

10.3.3. Investment in infrastructure

Associated with human service delivery are the capital investments that provide the “bricks and mortar” for school buildings universities, health centres, etc. Workshop participants made this linkage between the infrastructure for human services, local quality of life and positive economic development outcomes for their communities. Since these were discussed above they will not also be dealt with in this section.

The workshop comments spoke to these additional types of infrastructure in descending order of frequency:

- Broadband telecommunications (9)
- Affordable housing/seniors housing (6)
- Public transportation (4)
- Roads (4), Provincial highways (2), Local roads and bridges (2)
- Renewable energy (4)
- Cycling and trails (3)
- Industrial parks (3)
- Railways (2)
- Wastewater treatment (2)
- Ferry service (1)

In a number of cases the participants were referencing projects which had been initiated or were soon to be completed in the region. They were expecting these would benefit local development by attracting more economic activity. In other cases they were pointing to a gap in the available infrastructure that they thought was a barrier to further development. (See Appendix E for colour coding of these barriers.)

Access to high-speed broadband in rural Ontario remains very uneven. Adoption of Internet by rural individuals and businesses lags urban Canada by some 10%. This is both an economic development issue, as more commercial activity and business takes place through the Internet, and a social development issue, as government seeks to increase accessibility to government services in remote areas more efficiently through broadband.
There are several levels of government policy surrounding the issue of broadband. At one level it relates to the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commissions role and approach to ISPs and regulations of telecommunications providers of broadband over wireless. At another it concerns the spectrum auction rules and associated requirements for rural deployment. This policy was directly referenced at one workshop (e.g., http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/064.nsf/eng/07292.html).

What is less clear cut in the division of responsibility among government levels is the management of the public-private partnerships and who pays for what within broadband infrastructure improvement initiatives. There are roles for individual municipalities to play as well as senior levels of government. The Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) and Northwestern Broadband Expansion Projects involved significant investment from federal agencies, provincial government and the private sector. The EORN project required significant initial upfront local government collaboration for planning and a substantive contribution from a number of municipalities for implementation to leverage the larger senior government contributions. The feasibility study underway by the Western Wardens Caucus for a southwestern network, and the work of the Southwest Economic Alliance in highlighting the “rural imperative” for broadband improvement to support economic development, demonstrate the levels of collaboration required to achieve the significant improvement needed for rural Ontario. Historical experience with full scale network development of telecommunications infrastructure, such as phone land lines, indicates that it takes persistence and consistency in policy and investment to develop universal access. Moreover, in a context where there is widespread recognition that the current benchmarks established for “high-speed” rural broadband are not adequate to support intensive data uses that are becoming increasingly necessary for businesses, the situation will demand long-term goal setting and leadership if the ultimate goal of fibre for all is to be realized.

Policy implications: Senior government leadership and clarity on the ultimate desired network capabilities, potential capital contributions and long-term cost sharing frameworks are needed to facilitate regional broadband infrastructure improvement. Upper and lower tier municipal government initiatives alone will be unlikely to create a fully functional system.

This policy issue of cost-sharing arrangements between levels of government is also a common thread surrounding roads and water/waste water systems. While the actual levels of rural or urban “infrastructure deficit” can be a matter of debate no one seems to be arguing that all three levels of government will not have to continue to play a role. A $100 million provincial fund for rural and northern roads and bridges was recently announced in the 2013 Ontario budget. The institutionalization of the federal/provincial/municipal gas tax transfers also illustrates that the dialogue on the mechanisms to cost share infrastructure projects will continue (e.g., http://www.amo.on.ca/wcm/AMO/AMO_/AMOAdvocacy.aspx?issue=Infrastructure).

The rural share within these broader inter-governmental transfers will likely continue to be a matter of concern in smaller municipalities as the narrower local tax base makes for ongoing fiscal management challenges of anticipating and periodically tackling large scale projects. Municipal advocacy organizations such as ROMA/AMO have repeatedly called for long-term stable and predictable funding arrangements with the province and the federal government rather than more of the competitive, application-based, project-by-project based approach that the stimulus funding for infrastructure witnessed.
Policy implications: Provincial-municipal mechanisms for dialogue concerning the evolution of cost-sharing frameworks of infrastructure will be important for rural stakeholders seeking predictability. In order for them to effectively monitor and participate in these processes the capacity for applying the rural lens to proposed policy changes needs to be maintained within both the provincial bureaucracy and AMO. (A clear locus for this capacity federally has been largely removed with the disbanding of the Rural Secretariat.)

One infrastructure policy implication which emerged from the workshops was about the adaptive re-use of infrastructure and the rules surrounding it, i.e., the community use of schools. The protocols surrounding rural school closures and the opportunity for others to buy these surplus facilities from the school board is well established and many are being re-purposed as community assets. Likewise the Ontario government has promulgated a program through which non-profit groups can use school space after hours at lower rates or even for free if they are on priority list (http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/community/schoolfree_space.pdf).

A cursory review of the list of “priority schools” shows that the vast majority are within the larger cities but that there are a number in smaller rural towns. It is unclear whether this list is generated on an “on demand” basis or through pre-determined criteria reflecting need in the school area. How the program can best be utilized in a rural community context, where non-profits are fewer and farther between, and are also challenged by a growing scarcity of volunteers to lead the organizations, could become a focus for review by an organization such as the Ontario Non-Profit Network in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. Given demographic challenges in a number of rural communities across the province we can expect the issues surrounding alternative uses of under-utilized public infrastructure to be an on-going issue. The corollary will be debate over the sustainability of maintenance costs in a context of under-utilization. Meanwhile, in other near urban rural areas anticipating growth there will be demand for additional infrastructure.

Policy implication: Policies are in place which provide a framework for community use of schools. Information resources on effective practices to promote the uptake of the program are available and should include material relevant for a rural context based on objective assessment of what is working well.

Note that the infrastructure policy implications of seniors housing and public transportation were discussed in the previous section and will not be repeated here.

10.3.4. Program Support and Technical Assistance

This category of policy implications relates to local economic development initiatives referenced by participants that were undertaken with tools and advisory support such as First Impressions, Business Retention and Expansion, Premier Ranked Tourism, Municipal Cultural Planning, etc. Generally this support would take the form of:

- Information resources – tools and guides as well as statistics and economic analysis
- Coaching and mentoring – training
- Transfer of best practices – models, case studies, on-line exchange among peers

Many of these programs were developed by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food building on the historic tradition of research and rural extension. More recently a number of other Ministries have developed training and analytical tools that support local priority setting and strategy development such as Tourism and Culture. Participants also referenced some
business planning and strategic planning services available from CFDCs and a similar reference to the planning and coordination activities surrounding a TOPs report by the local workforce planning board. In addition there were several technical assistance programs referenced which are offered not to community organizations but directly to businesses or entrepreneurs.

This “service and program” category may not sound like policy as such but it is included because the mere fact that some Ministries and Departments have staff dedicated to serving rural regional areas and/or provide financial resources for regional organizations, such as MTCU does with the workforce planning boards and Industry Canada (FEDNOR/FEDDEV) does through the CFDC program, is an implicit policy choice to support regional or community approaches to economic development.

MEDT and Industry Canada support some 100 small business enterprise centres across the province, many in rural communities. This specific support program was only mentioned once, but there were several positive references to local entrepreneurship development programs which may or may not include the service centres as partners.

There were many comments about recent hirings of new local economic development officers at the municipal level. There has been a noticeable and remarkable progression in the economic development profession in rural Ontario over the last 15 years with an increasing number of lower and upper tier governments supporting community economic development through dedicated staff. The workshop comments suggest that this trend is continuing. Unlike many other areas of municipal services, economic development is not a mandated requirement. There is no provincial requirement that communities have an economic development plan the way that they need an Official Land Use plan or Capital Asset Management Plan prepared by accredited planners and engineers.

There is perhaps a co-evolutionary process underway here with provincial program support and technical assistance encouraging specific types of projects or processes which in turn necessitate the training of local coordinators which then reinforces the long term desirability of having permanent local staff who can lead the local initiatives so as to access provincial project funding.

Policy implication: To the extent that the “bench strength” of rural community economic development practice is increasingly dependent on the willingness of municipal Councils and CAOs to support local staff in this non-core function, then the implementation of provincial or federal programs and uptake of voluntary initiatives will depend on a shared sense of effectiveness and priorities. The measurement of program effectiveness and relevance to local circumstances can be expected to drive the relationship and as a consequence top-down program development and design will be less tolerated.

One area of improvement which was noted by several participants was the need for better local data to support local priority setting and analysis – this is consistent with a growing interest in monitoring effectiveness and inconsistent with increasingly complex and awkward geographic definitions driving government data collection and dissemination efforts. (See for example the number of suppressed "small areas" arising from the sampling approach taken by the National Household Survey).

Policy implication: Provincial and local governments will need to become more familiar and involved in the methodology of Statistics Canada data gathering processes to ensure data quality and availability for local economic analysis. The importance of the Labour Force Survey,
Tax File, and Business Pattern data and other non-census data sources will become more important to enable geographic consistency and comparative research. Local surveys and data collection initiatives will likely be an increasingly common phenomena.

10.3.5. Availability of Project Funding

This category showed up in the framework because of the multitude of references to project funding from participants.

The specific funds that were noted came from each level of government:

- Federally this included:
  - Community Futures program, Eastern Ontario Development Program;
  - FEDDEV, the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund; and,
  - Industrial Research Assistance Program.

- Provincially this included:
  - Rural Economic Development program;
  - Cultural Planning;
  - Regional Tourism Organization funding mechanism;
  - Underserviced Area Program;
  - Local Immigration Partnership program;
  - Labour Market Partnership program;
  - Rural Summer Jobs, Summer Company, Internship and Youth programs; and,
  - Communities in Transition.

- Municipally this included Community Improvement Plans.

There was reference made to broadband funding without a specific fund being named and it should be noted that the LIP and Municipal Immigration Portal funding is a collaborative program involving all three levels of government.

Generally speaking the participants referenced these programs as being positive contributors to the achievement of community economic development priorities. There were some workshops which resulted in more references to different funds than others and several communities in which only one fund was identified. Whether or not this actually reflects variance in the success of different localities in attaining project funding cannot be surmised from the workshop content but it does raise the question. As discussed above there is also a distinct possibility that the increase in number of local EDO positions noted by the workshop participants is related to the availability of these funds and it is acting as an incentive to build up this local capacity. Research on the geographic distribution of funds from all these programs might serve to identify success factors in development of approved project proposals or also where capacity might need to be built.

Policy Implication: The flow of financial resources from senior levels of government to local economic development projects appears significant and widespread. Concomitantly the withdrawal of funding would presumably have serious consequences for the number of local rural projects. Research is needed to determine if the flow of funds is going to places that need it or to places that are able to make the case for local opportunity more successfully.
The other reality the workshop results highlight is the many different funding sources. Presumably, these funds have both different aims and potentially overlapping or compatible aims. This potential compatibility is indeed reflected in the fact that the funds need to have rules over “stacking” and/or sourcing of matching funds. In practical experience this can mean that project applicants watch funding announcements to ascertain what actually succeeds in being funded rather than paying attention only to the written program objectives. Similarly a careful watch can yield necessary information to help determine if eligibility rules or program priorities are shifting. Some funds provide considerable Ministerial latitude and others are more criteria driven with approval resting within the public service. All of this makes for a situation where a great deal of energy and time is spent by local organizations in making the case for financial support for local economic development. Strictly from an outcomes perspective it is difficult to measure whether the hoops and strings attached to all these programs displace potentially more relevant or impactful initiatives which don’t quite fit the program parameters. Other jurisdictions turn this around by offering funding programs which finance local strategic planning and then any initial projects which flow from that plan to a set limit (e.g., the Alabama Communities of Excellence program, http://www.alabamacommunitiesofexcellence.org/). The success of the RTO model will be interesting to track in this respect because it establishes a coordination mechanism and funding source but does not specify the nature of the initiatives which should receive funding.

*Policy Implication: Objective third party research would be needed to assess the relative impact of different funding program approaches on rural economic development.*

A barrier noted by a participant was the lack of available sustainable core funding as opposed to project funding. This is a perennial and ongoing concern of the non-profit sector. What makes it possibly more acute in the rural context is the fact that most rural places have an older demographic and have a higher senior dependency ratio. This means there are fewer energetic innovative leaders around to constantly renew the fundraising enthusiasm.

*Policy Implication: Funding for employment of young people/recent graduates in rural non-profits could have a two-fold impact, possibly reducing the need for other program supports and keeping services in rural communities and potentially offering employment opportunities so more young people return to their home towns during their family formation years and so build on-going community vitality.*

10.3.6. **Broad Socio-Economic Policy**

Two particular suggestions were noted:

a) the need for improvements in access to capital for business; and

b) financial incentives for businesses to hire new immigrants.

10.3.7. **Absence of Regulatory Policy in the Framework**

Notable by its absence from the framework is the regulatory policy role of government. This reflects the scarcity of statements from the participants about this.

We might have expected rural stakeholders to speak to this role of government and policy as it relates to, for example:

- Requirements on businesses: registration, reporting/monitoring, environmental approvals, and inspections, specifically how these impact key rural business sectors such as agriculture/mining/forestry/manufacturing, etc.
• Land use approvals, building permits and sewer/water

Clearly the regulatory role of government with respect to particular industrial sectors is a policy arena which is often hotly contested, and no more so than in rural contexts – recent battles over the province’s regulation or lack of regulation on the siting of wind turbine projects being a case in point. Another example being the province deciding to require an environmental assessment for the Melancthon-Highland quarries proposal and citizen advocacy for changes to the Aggregate Resources Act.

Given the “Open for Business” initiatives of the provincial government, for example, to reduce the perceived burden of duplication or excessive “red-tape” requirements on businesses, the registration, reporting/monitoring, environmental approvals, inspections and so on, it might have been expected that these aspects of policy might have been raised more often. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture for example recently made regulatory reform one of their four key policy priorities based on a survey of members (Wales, 2013; Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2010).

The fact that this did not arise at the workshops may reflect the orientation of the process to focus on local economic development priorities and initiatives. This is not to say that regulatory policy did not emerge as a concern at the workshops at all. There was, for example, a reference to local land use policies and to telecommunications licensing rules regarding the lack of rural service requirements on broadband providers but these were notable exceptions.

10.4. Relevance to Rural Northern Ontario

This report includes some reflections on the policy implications and the potential relevance of the findings to the northern context. Since the Discovery workshops were all held in rural Southern Ontario communities based on the availability of funds and the project parameters these reflections are largely extrapolation. The workshop locations were also geographically more concentrated in eastern parts of Ontario given the extent of pre-existing collaboration between The Monieson Centre and the communities in that area.

The discussion of the relevance of the findings to the northern context is based on the notion that some fundamental characteristics of rural communities are shared between north and south. These are also the principle characteristics that differentiate rural, small town Ontario from urban settings, i.e., geographic distance from high density centres and lower population density. The sparser presence of agencies and service locations is a common reality. Therefore, for example, one might extrapolate that access to services or local availability of skills training that emerged in the southern workshops might also be a shared policy concern because they are linked with the distance and population density realities. Similarly, the challenges of maintaining municipal infrastructure on a narrow tax base is a common reality that could be anticipated to lead to common cause surrounding policy concerns such as the inter-governmental formulas for cost sharing infrastructure development.

On the other hand, the relative scarcity of organizations involved in economic development in the northern context might be expected to enhance the importance and centrality of those government programs and institutions which are at work in individual communities. For example the significance of the CFDC loan programs could occupy a larger role in business development in the north than in the south because private sector financial institutions are simply less present. These types of differences should be kept in mind when considering the relevance of the workshop results to the northern context.
Clearly there are real specific differences between the north and the south in Ontario where regional economic development priorities differ significantly depending on the resource base, the competitive position of the key industry sectors and make-up of the labour force, proximity to markets and transportation costs. Community economic development starts from the premise that local assets are the building blocks of sustainable local economies. Therefore the sector specialization of different regions of the province needs to be kept in mind. For example the infrastructure requirements and markets for lumber and forest products or capital requirements of mining businesses are distinct from those of agriculture or manufacturing and therefore the policy regimes and Ministries that impact those particular sectors and goods are not necessarily relevant across all geographies.

Also the relatively strong presence of first nations communities in the north is a significant factor; it certainly points to a stronger federal policy mandate because of the Constitutional and treaty obligations of our federal system. Nonetheless, half of the aboriginal identity population lives in urban centres and many in southern cities. Remote fly-in communities simply do not exist in Southern Ontario and the relative high proportion of youth in some of those places is not necessarily a shared experience with the south and so important demographic policy concerns that emerged in southern workshops may not have emerged if Discovery Workshops had been held in the north and vice versa. Still, the larger centres in the north (Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury for example) are struggling to attract people just like many southern smaller centres, so there is likely to be a similarly high priority placed on labour force planning, newcomer attraction and youth out migration for education dynamics we did see emerge at the southern workshops.

Likewise rural regional economies seeking to diversify can often gravitate to similar strategies, e.g., tourism development. The necessity of coordination and the governance models/policy barriers for that type of collaborative development may be transferrable even if the tourism product in northern regions is different than in southern regions.

10.5. References


Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). Communities by Rurality Index for Ontario (RIO) Score.


http://www.rupri.org/Forms/RGIreport.pdf


http://www.ofa.on.ca/media/news/Placing-rural-priorities-on-the-next-%20premier%e2%80%99s%20agenda

http://www.cranhr.ca/pdf/UAP_baseline_data_collection_requirements.pdf
11. Appendix A – Sample Discovery Workshop Agenda

_Pre-Workshop Photo Submissions_

In advance of the workshop, you are invited to contribute a photo that speaks to how academic resources and tools are impacting your community. Your submission will be shared with the workshop participants to spark discussion. **If interested, please send in a photo of one of the following at least one week in advance of the workshop (photos can be emailed to monieson@business.queensu.ca):**

1) One way that The Monieson Centre, or another academic partner (e.g., local university or college), has impacted your community. Please include a short description (one sentence) of how the knowledge or resources were helpful.

2) One area where your business or community could benefit from more research from academic partners or institutions. Please provide a short description of the potential benefit that your photo represents.

3) A representation of a ‘penny-drop’ moment where you saw the connection between research and community development. Please provide a short description of the remarkable moment and its impact.

_Agenda_

Welcome

Supporting Economic Development with Academic Partnerships – Resources and Best Practices in Rural Economic Development
- Jeff Dixon, Associate Director, The Monieson Centre, Queen’s School of Business

Facilitated Brainstorming and Discussion
- Facilitated by the Queen’s Executive Decision Centre, Queen’s University

1) Economic development progress
A previous Discovery Workshop in your community identified the following economic priorities in your community:

1. Regional Branding/Market Readiness
2. Investment Attraction/Job Creation in Emerging Industries
3. Innovation and Sustainable Communities
4. Rural/Urban Linkages
5. Newcomer Attraction and Integration

Thinking of these priorities, what local action has been taken to increase competitiveness, build competitiveness, or remove barriers to growth in these areas?

2) Impact of academic tools and resources
Reflect on the photos shared in the group. How have tools and resources from The Monieson Centre, other academic research centres, universities, colleges, or individual academics themselves, supported this economic development activity?
3) **Future directions**
   i) Where is more research or assistance needed for local economic development?
   ii) What are the best ways academic knowledge and resources could assist your community or business?

**Closing Remarks**
12. Appendix B – Partner Interview Schedule

Permissions
Would you be willing to have your name appear next to quotes or would you like your information to be kept anonymous?

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Background

Confirm name.

What is your position within _____ organization (if they have more than one position, list the one most relevant to economic development)?

To confirm, you are operating in ________ region?

How long has your organization been operating?

How many employees are in your organization?

When did you first partner with The Monieson Centre?

Evaluating Academic–Community Partnerships

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being “did not meet your expectations” and 5 being “exceeded your expectations,” to what extent did your organization’s experience in partnering with The Monieson Centre meet your expectations?

What are your reasons for this ranking?

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied, how satisfied are you with your experience partnering with The Monieson Centre?

What are your reasons for this ranking?

To what extent have community partnerships built research capacity (e.g., through access to data, the development of new skills and knowledge, and the empowerment of community partners)?

Evaluating the Organizational Impact of Academic-Community Initiatives

What benefits have the KIS, RRP, or other community-based projects brought to your organization?
Please provide specific examples if possible.

In what ways have KIS, RRP, or other community-based projects raised awareness of economic development initiatives or issues in your organization?
Please provide specific examples if possible.
What limitations or concerns have resulted from academic projects in your organization/community?

Have you had increased engagement of students?

Have any of these students been hired afterwards?

Have academic projects had any economic impacts?

For instance, have any new ventures been started or jobs been created?

To your knowledge, have Monieson Centre projects, or other academic initiatives shaped policy or legislation affecting your organization?

If so, how? How has the partnership with The Monieson Centre helped address these needs?

And on a scale of 1-5 1 being no impact and 5 being significant impact. What degree does academic tools and resources have on your organization?

**Assessing the Use of Academic Resources**

What KIS resources have you used (check all that apply)?

How have you used these resources in your work?

What KIS resources have been of the greatest value to you? In what ways?

What other community-based academic resources do you currently use in your work? In what ways?

How can academic knowledge are made more useful in your community?

How can academic institutions be more useful to your organization?

What would make future academic resources more useful to your organizations?

How can partnerships with community organizations be made more useful to your research organization?

On a scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 is short-term and 5 is long-term, how long-lasting have your partnerships with academic institutions been?

And do you think these relationships should be long lasting?

On a scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 is none and 5 is many, to what degree have partnerships with academic institutions created new opportunities for your organization. For example, have they resulted in a new network for your organization?

And what would make future academic resources more useful in your community?
Sources of Statistical Data

Can you recommend any sources of statistical data on the region's economic development? If so, how can The Monieson Centre access these sources?

What kinds of published sources of information or statistical data do you wish existed or you wish you had access to?
13. Appendix C – List of Survey Questions

What is your name?
What is your position within your organization?
What is the location/region in which your organization operates?
When did you first interact with the Monieson Centre (approximately)?
What research or knowledge did your community need the most prior to your interactions with the Monieson Centre?
Which Knowledge and Impact in Society (KIS) tools and resources have you used? Please select all that apply
What KIS resources has been the greatest value to you? Please select your top 3 choices
In what ways have KIS resources been of most value to you?
What other resources from universities or colleges (if any) do you currently use in your work?
How have these resources impacted your organization?
What benefits has the Monieson Centre brought to your organization?
How do partnerships with other academic institutions benefit your organization?
What would make future academic resources most relevant to your community?
What academic resources do you anticipate that your community will need in the future?
What is your email?
14. Appendix D – Student Survey Questions

1. I was involved in the KIS project through:
   a. COM 401
   b. Queen’s Business Consulting
   c. MBA Operations Management

2. Please select the tool that you helped develop:
   a. Knowledge Syntheses
   b. Business Consulting
   c. Small Business Success Stories (note: sample size too small to include in analysis)

3. How did the KIS project enhance your learning experience?

4. What challenges did you encounter in developing the project?

5. How did your KIS-related project impact your course experience?
   a. Provided practical application of course material
   b. Make it easier to understand course concepts
   c. Enhanced the learning experience
   d. Increased the course workload
   e. Other

6. If you were considering taking a course in the future, how would the inclusion of a similar community-based project affect your decision?

7. In what ways has your involvement in the Monieson Centre’s KIS project prepared you for the working world?
   a. Helped develop practical skills
   b. Provided me with industry connections
   c. Gave me real-world experience that is applicable to my research
   d. Strengthened my organizational skills
   e. Enriched my understanding of the working world
   f. Other

8. Has your work with the Monieson Centre assisted you with job opportunities?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Unsure

9. How has it been helpful in pursuing job opportunities?

10. How can community-based learning opportunities, like the KIS project you participated in, be improved in the future?
### Types of Policy Connections Referenced by Workshop Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Location</th>
<th>Delivery of human services (access/availability)</th>
<th>Infrastructur e</th>
<th>Program Support and Technical Assistance</th>
<th>Project Funding Incentives</th>
<th>General socio-economic policy</th>
<th>Comments/Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hastings/Algonquin</td>
<td>Post-secondary programs should build on local strengths and resources. Youth retention. (P)</td>
<td>Housing for seniors - (M, P, F)</td>
<td>Lack of coordination among tourism orgs. (P)</td>
<td>Downtown Community Improvement plans (M)</td>
<td>Enterprise facilitation and revitalization committee working across municipalities and with County collaboration key.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local data availability a barrier- investment in accessibility of data necessary. (F, P, M)</td>
<td>From OMAFRA, BR+E, First Impressions (P)</td>
<td>Rural Economic Development, Tourism Development fund, Eastern Ontario Development Fund (P)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching on collaboration and models of regional economic development desired. It was noted that partnerships are driven by funding.</td>
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<td>CFDC grants and business loans and EODP (F)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shifting government priorities a concern - implies stability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frontenac</td>
<td>New High School has community element (Township participation) (P, M)</td>
<td>Eastern Ontario Regional Broadband Project (F, P, M)</td>
<td>OMAFRA First Impressions and BR+E (P)</td>
<td>Poverty - welfare</td>
<td>Local food - provincial policy direction w/r municipal procurement</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Energy project (P, M)</td>
<td>CFDC business planning (F)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Regional tourism collaboration - Ontario highlands (P)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renfrew</td>
<td>Joint Township and Health District purchase of clinic to attract doctor (P, M)</td>
<td>Desire for sectoral information - e.g., new crop outlook</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arterial roads study (M)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Housing for seniors (M,P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ferry and Wolfe Island Canal (P, F)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Renfrew</th>
<th>More post-secondary education needed - e.g., for first nations (F, P)</th>
<th>Importance of local government investment in EDO staff noted. (F)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement in transportation infrastructure (roads, rail) and energy (P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Labour market analysis and workforce development strategy - TOPS (P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Broadband funding (P)</td>
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<td>Workforce and demographic themes very prevalent - comes out in education, placement, skills</td>
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<tr>
<th>Renfrew</th>
<th>Enhancement of Pembroke Hospital has increased competitiveness and provides market for secondary procurement (P)</th>
<th>Federal facilities at AECL and CFB Petawawa are huge drivers of economic vitality in the area (F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Digital access to information fundamental (F, P, M)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CFDC strategic plan stress cooperation (F)</td>
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<td>Local Immigration Partnership funding for resident attraction and settlement (P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Legal options for joint private and local government investment in infrastructure (broadband) (P, M)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IRAP (F)</td>
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<td>Algonquin land claim settlement (F)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Renfrew</th>
<th>Services for seniors (F, P, M)</th>
<th>Importance of local planning policy on permitted uses on industrial land for manufacturing was noted.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quinte region</td>
<td>Small Business Centre (P)</td>
<td>Various new health centres are improving delivery - more health professionals needed. (P, M)</td>
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<td>Newcomer integration - learning assessment through Loyalist and with workforce planning board support (P)</td>
<td>Expansion of Belleville industrial park (M)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inter-community transportation options need study. (?)</td>
<td>Local EDOhirings and staffing of two county enterprise facilitation initiative (M)</td>
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<td>Lennox and Addington</td>
<td>Future needs of aging population need to be taken account.</td>
<td>FIT Energy program (P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support from educational institutions needed for the development of satellite campuses. (P)</td>
<td>Investment in regional broadband (EORN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Prince Edward County</td>
<td>More and larger government support for model programs and knowledge exchange (?)</td>
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**Prince Edward County**

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<tr>
<th>Seeking a campus of post-secondary institution (P)</th>
<th>Housing affordability - particularly for youth and young families impacting labour force. (F)</th>
<th>CFDC business planning/incubation (F)</th>
<th>CFDC loans (F)</th>
<th>Access to capital. Possible changes such as CEDF. (P, F)</th>
<th>Local governance is a topic - accountability and possibility of amalgamation still being discussed (M, P)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipality CIP encourages redevelopment (M)</td>
<td>Municipality land use - winery policy (M)</td>
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<td>Tourism coordination (P)</td>
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**Montague**

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<tr>
<th>OPP Eastern Ontario Regional Headquarters - foundation program (P)</th>
<th>High speed broadband accessibility. (F, P, M)</th>
<th>Hiring of local tourism staff EDO (M)</th>
<th>Rural youth job wages/subsidy programs ... Rural Summer Jobs and Youth Internships (P)</th>
<th>Creation of regional tourism organizations (P)</th>
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<tr>
<th>Development of more rural campuses with programs specific to local industry sectors or projects. (P)</th>
<th>Highway 7 widening - road improvement. (P)</th>
<th>Municipal support for Farmer’s Markets (M)</th>
<th>Communities in Transition program for Smiths Falls (P)</th>
<th>Variety of inter-municipal economic development cooperation activities...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Post doc program in heritage project mgmt. Algonquin College (P)</td>
<td>Participation in OMAFRA First Impressions program (P)</td>
<td>Lanark County broadband - identified as priority project (M)</td>
<td>Improving transit infrastructure connections with Ottawa (P, M)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Almonte</td>
<td>Perth campus of Algonquin expanding - local access to programs compatible with local priorities.</td>
<td>Wastewater treatment plant upgrades (M)</td>
<td>Upcoming hiring of EDO (M)</td>
<td>Provincial funding for Cultural Planning (P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Local hospitals have huge local ec. Devt impact - professional incomes, local procurement and attraction. (P)</td>
<td>Trails, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure improvements (M)</td>
<td>Regional Tourism Organization (P)</td>
<td>Youth centre program funding by County for ec. Dev. (M)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carleton satellite campus market study required. (P)</td>
<td>Farmer’s Market infrastructure (M)</td>
<td>Entrpreneur development assistance and incubator needed (M)</td>
<td>Summer Company (P) and EODP Youth Internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Youth retention and their economic value to the community is considered critical …best practice models needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New seniors lodging facilities</strong></td>
<td>a must (M, P)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Focused on diverse and broad practices among academic institutions of support regional economic development - internships, studies of community issues, training, sector specific research commercialization etc… Community engaged action research networks not well known or effective in linking communities to researchers (inter university knowledge of successes very low.) Regional Innovation Centres not focused on community agendas but industry agendas.</td>
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<td><strong>Public transit improvement</strong></td>
<td>(P,M,F)</td>
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<td><strong>Newcomer integration programs</strong></td>
<td>delivered in partnership (F,P,M)</td>
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<td><strong>Hospital investment</strong></td>
<td>(P)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism partnerships with Ottawa</strong></td>
<td>(P)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Micro-credit fund (?)</strong></td>
<td>NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Key Support</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casselman</td>
<td>Downtown Revitalization - OMAFRA</td>
<td>Community economic development financing tools need to be more available/better understood. (P, F)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>High school entrepreneurship program with municipal and college partners (M, P)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peterborough</td>
<td>Seeking placement of provincial correctional facility in the region for the employment (P)</td>
<td>Collaboration framework of GPAEDC - no provincial guidance or institutional recognition for this</td>
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<td>Sewage treatment expansion will facilitate job creation (M)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Workforce planning board support for entrepreneurship - Ontario Centres of Excellence program (P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Local immigration partnership very necessary and important (F, P, M)</td>
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<td>Regional hospital expansion - new services bring new jobs (P) Health center student job placements keep youth in the area</td>
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<td>BR+E projects undertaken locally with provincial technical support(P)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Culture mapping project (P, M)</td>
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<td>MNR headquarters builds partnerships for research - e.g., water resources (P)</td>
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<td>Innovation cluster - commercialization (P)</td>
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<td>Eastern Ontario Development Program accepting non-youth internship applications (F)</td>
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<td>Support of the BIA from OMAFRA (P)</td>
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<td>Federal support for rural-urban partnerships e.g., MaRS/Trent (F)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Culture mapping project (P, M)</td>
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<td>Industry-education linkages being driven by Ontario Chamber of Commerce summit follow-up</td>
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<td>Labour force, skills training linked to business development opportunities thought to be critical linkage.</td>
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</table>
### New Tecumseth
- **Seeking location of post-secondary education facility** in under-utilized downtown building (P)
- **Georgian College Entrepreneurship Program** as business incubator.
- **Formation of Regional Tourism Organization** (P)
- **Local CIP - façade improvement** (M)

### Business community
- **Investment in seniors housing is real need** (F, P, M)
- **CFDC support for entrepreneurship and business resource network** (F)
- **Formation of RTO7 - regional branding positive** (P)
- **Transportation, Truck diversion policy** (M)

### Fergus
- **Municipal sponsorship for elder care position** - responding to lack of resources for in-home community care (P, M)
- **LHIN aging at home strategy identifies access to transportation as important barrier - needs study and solutions.** (P, M)
- **Healthforce Ontario (P)**
- **Underserviced area program funding** (P)
- **Physician recruitment partnership - collaboration between hospitals and municipalities on recruitment**
- **Guelph-wellington catalyst group focussed on social determinants of health. New collaborative model enables joint strategic planning ----**

### NB... degree of reference to County involvement in local initiatives relatively low comparatively... reflects focus on downtown business invitees?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic differences across region has impact on service needs and access - CCAC access review (P)</th>
<th>Telemedicine partnership between rural communities and addictions agencies (P)</th>
<th>tours critical (P, M)</th>
<th>joined up governance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>Linking up service providers and new immigrants (F, M, P)</td>
<td>Implementation of Broadband project key (F, P, M)</td>
<td>CFDC launched program targeted at recent graduates in sciences for placement in business (F, P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Employment Resource Partnership (F, M, P) Network for coordination of service delivery.</td>
<td>Cycling strategy (M)</td>
<td>Port Hope business incubator (M)</td>
<td>Summer company (P)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFDC brought Elearn to County part of Contact North (F, P)</td>
<td>Youth employment programs (F)</td>
<td>Local business receiving EODP funding (F)</td>
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<td>Ag BR+E (P)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tillsonburg</td>
<td>Variety of employment service providers are connecting people and businesses e.g., SBEC (P)</td>
<td>3 BR+Es in region (P)</td>
<td>Grand Erie Immigration partnership linking up agencies and target groups - importance of LIP and municipal portal programs (F, P, M)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth activity and Technology Centre (P, M)</td>
<td>WISE5 program for immigrant entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Incentives to business to hire immigrants (F, P)</td>
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<td>Workforce development strategies through planning boards (P)</td>
<td>Understanding by prov./fed levels of regional demographic challenges and why sustainable not project based funding is needed (F, P, M)</td>
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<td>CFDC program - offering youth entrepreneurship program (F)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chatham-Kent</td>
<td>HealthForce Ontario coordinator with LHIN (P)</td>
<td>Incubation Centre for young entrepreneurs (V)</td>
<td>Local immigration partnership - engaging youth, health centres, volunteer and municipal government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haliburton</td>
<td>Create green energy business park (M)</td>
<td>Desire for model projects - funding for green building projects (F, M, P)</td>
<td>Range of non-profits working with schools, community groups on energy, local food, recycling, natural building etc.</td>
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<td>Clarification of provincial regulations for renewable energy (P)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Role of local land use and community plans central to achievement of green economy goals as is municipal leadership - e.g., adoption of local food charter (M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Attract advanced educational institutions to the region with relevant programs (P)
- Workforce planning report/strategy (P)
- Newcomer portals (P, M)
- Alignment of federal provincial immigration policy (F, P)
- Municipal staff position created - youth and immigration coordinator (M)
- Access to CIRRO, OMAFRA economic tools (P)
- Student placement programs at Public Health and international educated health professionals support. (P)
- Clarification of provincial regulations for renewable energy (P)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kawartha Lakes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approval of new Family Health Team (P)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dedicated local health recruitment program (P, M)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Various service providers offering employment readiness, career and education programs (F, PV)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High school majors program having impact (P)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attract business school and training facility for businesses (P)</strong></td>
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<td>South Lake</td>
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<td>Attract a university (P)</td>
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</table>
16. Appendix F – Discovery Workshop Reports

Locations of Discovery Workshops

- Bancroft
- Verona
- Renfrew
- Belleville
- Napanee
- Picton
- Montague
- Almonte
- London
- Ottawa
- Peterborough
- Alliston
- Fergus
- Northumberland
- Tillsonburg
- Chatham-Kent
- Gananoque
- Haliburton
- Kawartha Lakes
- Keswick