CFICE Phase I Hub:
Community Environmental Sustainability (CES) - Ottawa

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Hub Structure and Governance:
- In its first two years, the CES Hub worked to facilitate comparative case studies and connect actors from its two regional nodes, Ottawa and Peterborough/Haliburton. Over time, the two nodes began to function as independent hubs, each working with half of the CES hub’s allocated budget.
- The Ottawa node supported three modestly-sized, locally-focused CBOs.
- Central to the organization of the CES Ottawa hub was the practice of ‘embedding’ graduate-level RAs in specific community-based projects to provide applied research support and develop meaningful relationships with community partners over time.

CES Ottawa Hub Phase I Activity:
- Provided research and administrative support to Sustainable Living Ottawa East (SLOE), and its sub-group Innovative Housing for Older Adults in Old Ottawa East (IHOA), both of which aim to influence sustainability measures within a large local redevelopment project.
- Assisted the Ottawa Eco-Talent Network (OETN), which aims to link environmental initiatives with pro-bono advisors and expertise, in securing Trillium Grant funding for the organization to hire a new Executive Director for three years.
- Provided seed funding to GottaGo!, an advocacy group campaigning for a larger network of public toilets in Ottawa. The funding supported the development of a report that contributed to the city’s approval to include public toilets in its new Light Rail Transit plan.

Phase I Evaluation – Key Highlights:
- Community partners credited CCE with strengthening the capacity, research base and visibility/prestige of their organizations.
- Community partners valued the continuity of relationships with CES-Ottawa hub RAs within a multi-year research project. The quality of student engagement, including the student’s ability to grasp the complex context in which community groups struggle, as well as to serve as ‘boundary spanners’ between community and academic worlds, was critical to the success of their CCE projects. Community partners would like more control over the selection of student RAs.
- All CES-Ottawa hub participants acknowledged the need for more equitable decision-making around resource allocation, and ease of access to funds for community partners.
- Community-engaged faculty work under significant strain, and lack adequate support from the academic institution for CCE work.
Community Environmental Sustainability (CES) - Peterborough-Haliburton Hub Structure and Governance:

- In its first two years, the CES Hub worked from its two regional nodes, Ottawa and Peterborough/Haliburton. Over time, the two nodes began to function as independent hubs.
- The CES Ptbo/Halib hub established and evaluated four local demonstration projects in its first year. In subsequent years, a more long-term view was taken, resulting in continuity for all participants. The immersion of RAs provided the relationship building required when working with a vulnerable population marginalized by traditional planning processes and academic engagement.

CES Peterborough-Haliburton Hub Phase I Activity:

- Supported the Active Neighbourhoods Canada (ANC) project, which developed with residents a Portrait and Vision for the Peterborough Stewart Street Neighbourhood to collaboratively reimagine the space to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.
- Helped Abbey Gardens (Haliburton) to create improvements for its market table at Farmers’ Markets.
- Supported the creation of four public event kits for Abbey Gardens and Haliburton Highlands to raise awareness and knowledge of local ecologies and sustainable ethics and practices.

Phase I Evaluation – Key Highlights:

- Community partners acknowledged CFICE funding as important -- yet it was also a relatively small contribution in the overall context of CBO operating budgets and project development, on the one hand, and the multi-year funding facilitated a longer term vision for CCE, on the other. The university held the power balance as it controlled the funds.
- Existing long-term relationships, CCE and social change commitment between CBOs and RAs increased the depth of community research, accommodated complex projects, and facilitated trust-building critical to project success. RAs were viewed as ‘integrators’ and ‘boundary-spanners’ between university and community cultures, and built connections beyond project parameters.
- Building community-campus relationships requires a conflict resolution protocol and opportunities to discuss power dynamics front-end. Language was sometimes a contributor to power imbalances in these relationships.
- In regard to knowledge-creation and mobilization: who owns the body of knowledge and outcomes from the research, how could/should the community voice be incorporated, and how can existing resources and outputs meet the different needs of both PSI researchers and community?