



# CCE Policy and Funding: The Challenge Ahead

A DISCUSSION PAPER

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**Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE)**, a major SSHRC-funded project, aims to strengthen Canadian communities through action research on best practices of community-campus engagement. We ask how community-campus partnerships can be done to maximize the value created for non-profit, community based organizations in four key areas: poverty, community food security, community environmental sustainability, and reducing violence against women.

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## Introduction

CCEC is an emerging national network and community of practice focused on strengthening Canadian communities by increasing the capacity, infrastructure and impact of equitable community-campus partnerships of all types, including student experiential learning, community-engaged research, and social innovation.

**Supportive policy and funding frameworks for CCE are crucial to the work.** Canadian communities will be stronger when there are better collaborative structures to link together post-secondary institutions (PSIs), community-based organizations (CBOs), funding agencies (including governmental bodies and private foundations) and other networks.

**Yet there are challenges in developing CCE across Canada.** Canada's post-secondary education system complicates singular approaches to policy generation and secure funding for CCE. Arguably, Canada has 13 (Provincial and Territorial) post-secondary systems, some clearly with more capacity, but all of which are responsible for post-secondary education policy and funding within their jurisdictions. Policy to drive CCE in Nunuvut and its Artic College will look very different than the policy and funding levers at Queen's Park.

**International experiences** have suggested that policy and funding for CCE – across various modes of community engaged research, learning and engagement – arise within wider quality assurance and accountability agendas, either through the measuring of the impacts of research (UK, Australia), or via wider system performance indicators (e.g. Ireland). In each of these cases, there is a federal government responsible for the policy and funding, and a mediating, post-secondary education body (Engage Australia, Campus Engage Ireland, Public Engagement UK) which assists the institutions articulate their CCE work to the government demands. With the possible exception of Ireland, often CCE gets subsumed in this process within wider industry serving knowledge exchange policies to link academic outputs to economic impacts.

**There are often competing rationales**, however, **for measuring the quantity and quality of CCE** practices. An institution-led approach as, for example, mapped in the REAP Tool from the UK (and as currently employed at the University of Calgary) is an attempt to *directly* improve the particular engagement mission of a university. A government-led approach instead is more concerned to *indirectly* improve societal engagement across the system through stimulating competition among universities. CCE funding from government is most likely to accompany system-wide approach of incentives and competitive comparison, which will involve the adoption of broad indicators for measurement not always appropriate to the particular engagement activities of a post-secondary institution.

## Provincial Funding

Within Canada, and in the absence of nation-wide policy for PSE, provincial government policies and funding arrangements to organize CCE are less common and visible. The Province of Ontario, through its Strategic Management Agreements with PSIs, is increasingly requiring institutions to evidence commu-



nity engagement and community engaged teaching and learning practices (e.g. Work-Integrated Learning). Into the future, PSIs in Ontario will likely be awarded competitive funding in response to their demonstrated ability to achieve business and community impacts.

At the level of the Province, it is not always those with responsibility for PSE who are the funders of CCE. In the last few years funding for community partnered engaged research and learning is just as likely to arise from economic development and innovation ministries. Social innovation practice collaborations (e.g. BC's 'Hubcap' social innovation community; New Brunswick's Social Innovation Fund, administered by Regional Development Corporation and the Department of Social Development) have often provided sources of CCE funds. CCE practitioners need to look beyond their Provincial ministries of post-secondary education to secure government funding for their work.

## Federal Funding

The Federal Tri-Councils (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada) remain the largest funders of community partnered research and knowledge mobilization in Canada. In the 2016/17 financial year, for instance, SSHRC Partnership Grants and Partnership Development Grants accounted for 13% of the total \$380.2 million allocated, or approximately \$47,460,000. The Community sector was a clear beneficiary here, as non-for-profit organizations comprised 30% of the external partners in these grants. Yet the grants remain highly competitive. Whilst there was a 37% chance a research team's project for a Partnership Development Grant would be funded, there was only a 19% success rate for the larger Partnership Grants. For both academic researchers and community partners, the investment of time and resources into applying for these partnered grants (mostly unfunded for community partners) remains a risky prospect. Those academics aiming for tenured positions at the beginning of the careers are less likely to find in community engaged research a quick publishing path to tenure.

The Federal government more recently has also invested in Work-Integrated Learning, or WIL, a form of experiential learning that links undergraduate students with the world of work during their studies. Programs such as co-ops, internships and practica, as well as community engaged learning, have been given a \$73 million boost in funding via the Student Work-Integrated Learning program (SWILP) administered, in part, via the Canadian not-for-profit organization, MITACS. There remain questions, however, about the inclusiveness of the SWILP program for student learning opportunities beyond the STEM disciplines.

## Foundation Funding

Arguably, the lack of a driving federal policy and funding regime for post-secondary education in Canada has opened up space for family and community foundations to support the linking of academic research and learning with community-based projects. Whilst the McConnell Family Foundation has been a long-term investor in Canadian higher education, in Community Service-Learning and then Social Innovation approaches<sup>1</sup>, and most recently in facilitating discussions on the wider role of universities and their role as 'anchor institutions' driving local economic and socio-cultural development, other community-based foundations and philanthropies have consistently supported CCE in Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> McConnell's Recode program to support social innovation and social enterprise projects has invested approximately \$6.5 million through 2014-2016 to 19 universities and colleges.



A recent CFICE scan of CCE units on campuses and in communities found them supported by a diverse range of philanthropic funders, from the banking industry (TD, Van City, HSBC, RBC) to Boardwalk Rental Communities, to individual donors, and also from foundations such as the Vancouver Foundation, Edmonton Community Foundation, Carraresi and Kaatza Foundations. There are many more. In each instance, the donors have invested in CCE partnerships to multiply the potential for community impacts, outcomes that could not be achieved without some connection to PSIs. Most CCE units in PSIs can only do their work with philanthropic funds to support programming expenses, to supplement institutionally funded salaries.

## A Community First Innovation Fund for Canada

CCEC has recently been exploring ways to partner with foundations and MITACS to expand student-community research and learning projects. The CFICE project has learned that embedding students within community-based organizations for their projects adds value to community. A foundation supported fund to match MITACS funding for supervised, student research projects can accelerate social innovation, address pressing social, economic and environmental problems, improve citizens' well-being, strengthen democracy, and contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Initial goals are for a \$5 million fund, which would scale up across Canada a 'community first' approach to knowledge creation where the research agenda is co-created between academics and community partners in ways that meet the priorities of the partner organizations.

### Advocacy

There remains a gap in Canada in advocacy for CCE as a distinct series of practices that achieve social innovation and community impacts. Although Universities Canada advocates for universities across the country, Colleges and Institutes Canada serves the interests of those institutions, and various peak body social sector agencies advocate for their members at the national level, there is no body that represents to federal or provincial governments the specific interests of community organizations, CCE practitioners and post-secondary institutions in their joined-up community engagement efforts. Other models exist that are worth a look.

Since 2015, the Business Higher Education Roundtable has been a successful organization of industry leaders and post-secondary leaders collaborating to promote their mutual interests in advancing a 'skills agenda' for Canada's increased competitiveness in the global economy. The BHER has been successful in achieving policy changes for PSE at both the Federal level and within the Province of Ontario for work-integrated learning funding. The interests of the social sector and not-for-profits, however, are noticeably absent in this grouping.

CCEC could be a key actor in convening a **Community Higher Education Roundtable (CHER)**, building on its regional CCE roundtables, and involving peak body civil society organizations, Indigenous organizations, PSE leaders, and, importantly, foundations that support CCE. Such an advocacy body could also equip the CCE movement and governments within Canada with evidence-informed research into the impacts of socially responsive research, learning and community engagement practices.



## Key Questions for CCEC

- How can CCEC involve the community sector meaningfully in the co-construction of classification and collective impact evaluations of community engagement agendas?
- How might a Community First Innovation Fund be governed to ensure the voices of community partners shape the funding practices that scale up socially innovative, community engaged research and learning practices?
- Would a Community Higher Education Roundtable be an effective advocacy body to Provincial governments and their PSE policies, to federal research agencies, and represent the interests of the regionally distinct CCE practices?