

Information Guide and Request for Proposals (Spring 2014 - RFP is now closed)

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INTRODUCTION

Around the world, social, environmental and economic systems are under pressure and increasingly susceptible to disruptive shocks. Heightened vulnerability and a consequent need to innovate are apparent in fields as diverse as energy, urban planning and finance; health and food security; and education and employment.

Canada, a fortunate country by many standards, is by no means exempt from such challenges, and has unique and pressing issues to address. Examples include the social and economic conditions of Indigenous peoples, a lack of collective action towards climate change, and the public's eroding trust in elected officials. We believe that such issues call upon us to transform and recode maladaptive systems and institutions and create new ones – in pursuit of a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient society.

Social innovation, understood as an initiative, product, process or program that profoundly changes the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of any social system, is a globally emerging set of approaches to this work. Social entrepreneurship, a related term,

describes the use of entrepreneurial processes to address social problems, and includes a wide range of non-profit, for-profit and hybrid ventures.

When integrated with social finance, which seeks social and environmental returns as well as financial profit, social innovation and social entrepreneurship constitute a hopeful and generative source of new ideas and pathways to transformative change, within and across disciplines and social sectors, at multiple levels of scale.*

Post-secondary institutions have pivotal roles to play in such work through teaching and research, as convenors and partners, and as economic actors in their own right.

With the foregoing in mind, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation is pleased to launch RECODE, a platform dedicated to catalyzing social innovation and entrepreneurship in higher education across Canada.

*See Appendix A for definitions of key RECODE terms.

BACKGROUND

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation has a history of granting to Canadian universities. Bursaries and capital gifts to individual institutions were the norm until the mid 1990's when we began to make grants at a sector level. Professional development for advancement staff was followed by grants to improve undergraduate teaching. Then, from 2004 to 2012 the Foundation funded 10 universities to introduce community service learning (CSL) - enabling students to integrate service with their studies, and fostering partnerships among universities, charities and public agencies.

RECODE builds on this tradition of innovation by extending eligibility to community colleges, CEGEPs and institutes of technology, and by structuring the initiative as a partnership with several other networks and institutions.

Beginning in 2012, the Foundation commissioned research that included more than 100 conversations with postsecondary executives, administrative staff, student social entrepreneurs, faculty, and international organizations, as well as several site visits. In addition, we had ongoing consultations with other networks and hosted two strategic design sessions that engaged thought leaders and practitioners in shaping the initiative.

Why now, and why this initiative?

RECODE is being introduced to address four trends:

- Growing interest in social innovation and entrepreneurship, as indicated by the proliferation of courses, social enterprise incubators, and competitions in the field.
- Changes in student needs and aspirations, as evidenced by the increasing number of young people interested in launching or working for organizations that enable them to make a living while making a difference. For some, launching a social enterprise while at school and with access to peers and other resources is preferable to waiting until after graduation.
- Investor interest in enterprises that deliver blended returns — i.e. social, environmental and financial — is growing. Institutional funds, including university and foundation endowments, can be prudently applied to this purpose.

- Finally, there is growing recognition that an innovative society is one that integrates adaptive capacity in its key institutions. The post secondary sector is a key factor in broader societal adaptation and renewal. A growing number of universities and colleges around the world view social innovation and entrepreneurship as catalysts to this end.

This initiative has six broad objectives:

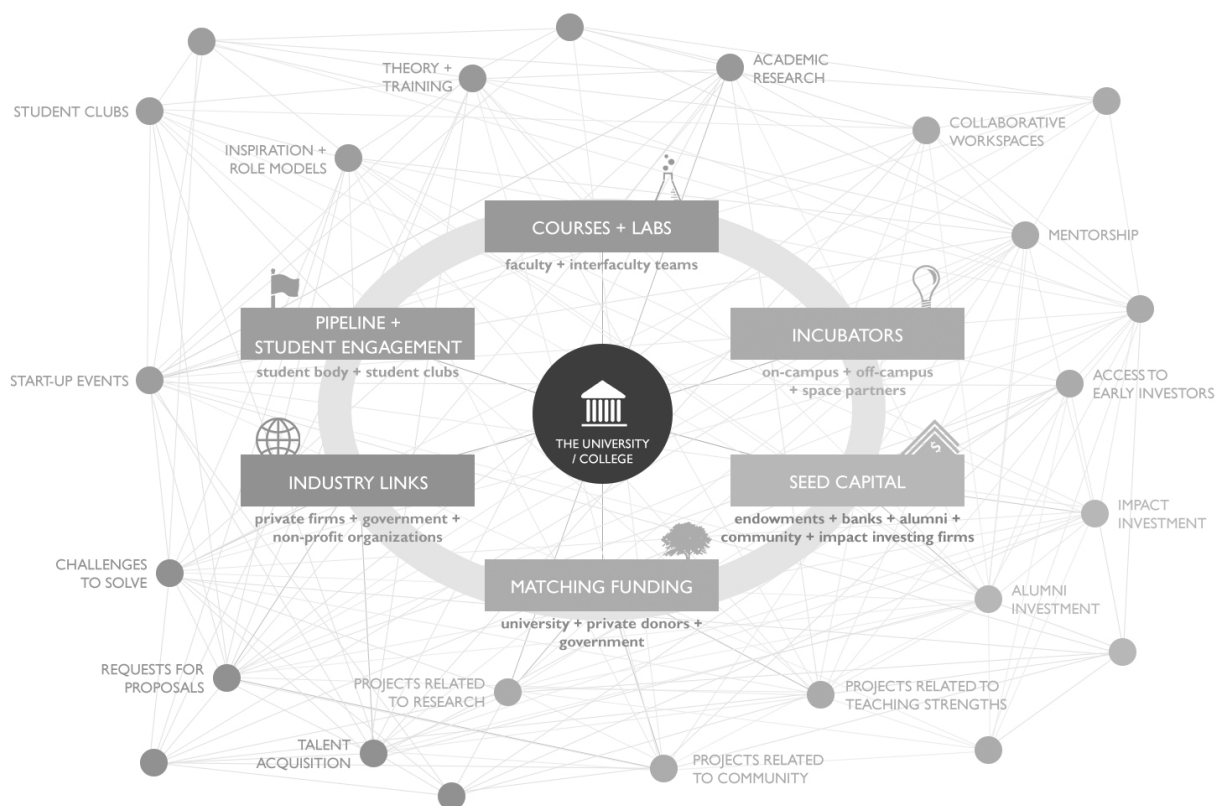
- 1 To infuse a culture of social innovation and social entrepreneurship into 21st century higher education in Canada by supporting the development of 'ecologies' of social innovation and entrepreneurship within and in proximity to colleges and universities, along with business, community and public sector partners.
- 2 To establish a national network of thought leaders, practitioners and researchers working with social innovation concepts, learning and practices to advance systems-level change in Canada through collaboration, knowledge mobilization and storytelling, research and experimentation, the dissemination of competency and capacity-building tools and the staging of social innovation and entrepreneurship competitions, exchanges and events.
- 3 To provide opportunities for students to learn about (and experiment with) social innovation and entrepreneurship through experiential, cross-curricular and multi-disciplinary learning on campus, MOOCs and other online learning platforms, student clubs, conferences and competitions, openbadge systems, etc.
- 4 To support the incubation and growth of new social enterprises and social innovations that address persistent and complex societal challenges.
- 5 To foster the growth of social finance and impact investing, including through the redeployment of institutional assets.
- 6 To provide this and future generations of students and their communities with tools and resources for carrying out adaptive change in the face of our greatest challenges.

RECODE at the campus/community level

This initiative will support the establishment or advancement of Social Innovation Zones at the campus level. These zones would consist of multiple, complementary elements, and at full scale, would consist of, but not be limited to, the following six key elements on each campus:

- Incubators and/or accelerators that support new social enterprises; and/or solutions ‘labs’ that develop breakthrough solutions to complex challenges
- Seed funds – including grants, loans and investments – for new ventures
- Connections with/to local companies, public agencies and social sector organizations
- Actively engaged student groups and networks
- Links to relevant courses
- Matching funding from additional sources to ensure sustained and enduring partnerships

SOCIAL INNOVATION ZONE



RECODE at the national level

By working together, universities, private companies, governments, foundations and social benefit organizations can achieve outcomes beyond the capacity of any one sector or individual organization.

With multiple campuses implementing Social Innovation Zones, the RECODE National Network will encourage a culture of open collaboration amongst colleges, universities and other stakeholders. The intent is to contribute to a culture of continuous innovation through such means as challenge competitions, and the provision of fora where people and institutions offering or seeking solutions can find one another.

The RECODE National Network will also support teaching through the provision of open courseware; enable research through shared data collection and knowledge mobilization; foster collaboration across organizations and sectors; and provide an array of services to communities, the private sector and governments. Subject to regulatory review, it may also serve as a portal for impact investments.

Work on these and other elements of the RECODE National Network is now ongoing, with an initial launch projected for fall 2014.



FUNDING

Recode will provide funding to establish or expand existing Social Innovation Zones linked to higher education institutions

RECODE Catalyst Fund

Up to \$250,000 in matching funds for applicants who are at early stages of development of Social Innovation Zones. This funding will support new or existing activities, processes or initiatives that contribute to development of two or more elements of a Social Innovation Zone in line with RECODE's six broad objectives.

Below are a few examples of activities that may be supported as part of the proposed strategy:

- A campus/community consultation, mapping or planning process leading to the establishment of a complete or partial social innovation zone.
- The enhancement of existing community service learning programs to include a specific focus on social innovation or social enterprise.
- Setting up or supporting student enterprise incubators, mentorship programs, etc.
- The development and implementation of a resource redeployment strategy to support a small grants fund for student-led social enterprises; alumni fundraising to create a social enterprise fund; establishment of a purchasing portal directed to social enterprises; creation of a mission or program related fund to reinvest endowment funds.

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be a post-secondary institution in Canada (colleges, institutes of technology and universities).
- Proposed work must focus on social innovation and social entrepreneurship in two or more departments or faculties AND with one or more community partners.
- Must commit to developing and contributing a competency or capacity-building resource to the RECODE National Network.
- Must demonstrate a commitment to securing matching funds from other sources for the duration of the funding period.
- The lead applicant must be a faculty or staff member, administrator or formal student group (e.g. student union). We encourage multi-stakeholder and group applications.

In addition, we look forward to working with organizations which:

- Demonstrate openness to changing work culture, structures and activities.
- Are open to collaboration, sharing knowledge and learning with others.
- Can provide a frank assessment of current leadership and organizational strengths and weaknesses.

In keeping with our desire to encourage transparency, knowledge sharing and collaboration within and across community clusters, **we will be posting all submitted Letters of Interest on the RECODE website.** As the initiative evolves, we will also be posting progress reports, case studies, investment opportunities, course material, student testimonials, lessons learned and evaluations in order to inform and inspire other communities and post-secondary institutions to get involved. In short, this is an open-source initiative.

FUNDING (CONT'D)

Application Process

Institutions interested in RECODE Catalyst Fund are asked to submit a Letter of Interest (no more than ten pages, including all appendices and budget overview) responding to the following questions, by June 30, 2014:

- What are your initial aspirations and vision for how social innovation can take root and grow at your institution, and contribute to broader change?
- What are your initial aspirations and vision for how social entrepreneurship can take root and grow at your institution, and contribute to broader change?
- What types of activities, practices, programs and/or structures are you proposing to achieve this?
- How do they align with existing initiatives on campus?
- Who will initially lead this work, and how do you see this evolving over time?
- How would your institution further invest in this work?
- If funded, how might this change the teaching, research and/or student experience on your campus?
- Who are the current social innovation and entrepreneurship (or related field) champions on your campus?

- Describe the process you undertook to create this proposal.

Applicants interested in this stream of funding are required to demonstrate institutional support by submitting a letter from the office of the Principal (or equivalent) as an appendix.

To submit a Letter of Interest, click here

Notification

- All applicants will receive a status update of their application by July 30, 2014.
- All applicants will be notified of our final granting decision by September 30, 2014.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact: recode@mccconnellfoundation.ca

For additional information about the program please visit: <http://www.mccconnellfoundation.ca/RECODE>

Please note this will not be the only window to apply for funding. Information about future opportunities will be available on the RECODE website in due course.

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FUNDING (CONT'D)

RECODE Transformation Fund

Up to \$500,000 for applicants who are already operating and implementing initiatives that support social innovation and/or incubate social enterprises at an advanced level. This funding is to support the significant extension or comprehensive integration of existing activities, processes or initiatives that contribute to enhancing impact in line with RECODE's six broad objectives.

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be a post-secondary institution in Canada (colleges, institutes of technology and universities).
- Must build on existing work in social innovation and social entrepreneurship in two or more departments or faculties AND must have one or more community partners.
- Must commit to developing and contributing a competency or capacity-building resource to the RECODE National Network.
- Must demonstrate a commitment to securing matching funds from other sources for the duration of the funding period.
- The lead applicant must be a faculty, staff member or administrator. We encourage multi-stakeholder and group applications.

In addition, we look forward to working with organizations which:

- Demonstrate openness to changing work culture, structures and activities.
- Are open to collaboration, sharing knowledge and learning with others.
- Can provide a frank assessment of current leadership and organizational strengths and weaknesses.

Application Process

Institutions interested in the RECODE Transformation Fund are asked to submit a Letter of Interest (no more than ten pages, including all appendices and high-level budget) responding to the following, by June 30, 2014:

- What is your vision for how social innovation can flourish at your institution?
- What is your vision for how social entrepreneurship can flourish at your institution?
- What types of activities, practices, programs and/or structures are you proposing to achieve this?
- How do they align with existing initiatives on campus and your institution's strategic priorities?
- Who will lead this work, and what type of governance model(s) are you considering for your Social Innovation Zone, once established?
- Who are your partners to date (public, private and social sector)? Who else do you plan to engage?
- How will your institution further invest in this work in both the short and long term?
- If funded, how might this change the teaching, research and/or student experience on your campus?
- Who are the current social innovation and entrepreneurship (or related field) champions on your campus?
- What planning process and method of evaluation will you use?
- Describe the process you undertook to create this proposal.

FUNDING (CONT'D)

Rather than a static or binding plan, through this fund, the purpose of the Letter of Interest is to provide a snapshot of the current state and future aspirations for social innovation and entrepreneurship at eligible institutions.

Recognizing the importance of continuous learning and relationship building, we expect proposals to evolve between the phases of the application process, and throughout implementation.

Applicants interested in this stream of funding are required to demonstrate institutional support by submitting a letter from the office of the Principal (or equivalent) as an appendix.

Some institutions will be invited to submit full proposals.

To submit a Letter of Interest, click here

Notification

- All applicants will receive a status update of their application by July 30, 2014.
- Applicants to the RECODE Transformation Fund invited to submit a full proposal will have until September 30, 2014 to do so. There is not deadline for final granting decision.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact: recode@mccconnellfoundation.ca

For additional information about the program please visit: <http://www.mccconnellfoundation.ca/RECODE>

Please note this will not be the only window to apply for funding. Information about future opportunities will be available on the RECODE website in due course.

In keeping with our desire to encourage transparency, knowledge sharing and collaboration within and across community clusters, **we will be posting all submitted Letters of Interest on the RECODE website.** As the initiative evolves, we will also be posting progress reports, case studies, investment opportunities, course material, student testimonials, lessons learned and evaluations in order to inform and inspire other communities and post-secondary institutions to get involved. In short, this is an open-source initiative.



APPENDIX A: KEY TERMS

A Social Innovation is an initiative, product, process or program that profoundly changes the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of any social system. Successful social innovations have durability, scale and broad impact. Society's ability to create a steady flow of social innovations that re-engage vulnerable populations; that rebalance economic and ecological relationships; and that create narratives of public possibility, contributes to social, economic and ecological resilience.

A Social Entrepreneur is someone who organizes, creates and manages a non-profit, for-profit, or hybrid venture to address a social or environmental need. The Wikipedia entry for social entrepreneurship notes: "While a business entrepreneur typically measures performance in profit and return, a social entrepreneur also measures positive returns to society. Thus, the main aim of social entrepreneurship is to further broaden social, cultural and environmental goals. Social entrepreneurs are commonly associated with the voluntary and not-forprofit sectors but this need not preclude making a profit".

Impact investments are investments made into

companies, organizations, and funds with the intention to generate social and environmental impact alongside a financial return. Impact investments can be made in both emerging and developed markets, and target a range of returns from below-market to market rate, depending upon circumstance. The impact investment market provides supports solutions to the world's most pressing challenges in sectors such as sustainable agriculture, affordable housing, healthcare, clean technology, and financial services.

Social Innovation Zones are defined as networks comprised of complementary activities that support social innovation and social entrepreneurship at the campus and community level. They are not necessarily formal spaces but are expected, at full scale, to engage multiple departments and stakeholder groups. RECODE recognizes the unique context of each campus, community and region, and encourages a diversity of approaches to fostering social innovation and entrepreneurship.

To learn more about social innovation concepts please visit www.sigknowledgehub.com