
FOSTERING A CLIMATE OF INNOVATION IN OUR COMMUNITIES

OEMC CONFERENCE SESSION HIGHLIGHTS
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REVISION O

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See participant list
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Executive Summary

Attached are meeting proceedings from an interactive session on September 12, 2007 at the OEMC Conference in Kingston. The purpose of the workshop was for participants to share ideas on how communities can foster a culture of innovation.

The group brainstormed examples of innovation in their communities and then developed a list of activities to foster a culture of innovation.

A checklist for creating innovative communities:

1. Bring people together face to face. Get everyone together in a room, have everyone introduce themselves and share roles, goals, needs and expectations.
2. Connect people with technology. Host "community forums", have municipal chat line where people can send in innovative ideas which are reported to council.
3. Involve the local media and utilized media releases.
4. Assess community strengths, assets, unique characteristics.
5. Identify leaders and key stakeholders. Know who your champions are, and learn how to get people on board. Confirm buy-in of the participants and get specialized help.
6. Set up a "committee of innovation". Important to have a facilitator who fits the needs, tap into your retirement population, Engage youth and recognize the volunteers.
7. Foster partnerships/relationships. Create partnership within the community and councils and other key players. Get the buy-in from the community and create ownership of the idea or project.
8. Develop a plan. Assess needs & capabilities and create a strategic plan with clear objectives.
9. Learn from other communities examples.
10. Find the funding sources \$\$\$...cash helps

Ideal Conditions for fostering innovative communities:

- Accepting and open-minded Council
- General willingness to take risks
- The Town has a strong identity and clear vision
- Citizenry relatively free of "baggage" (e.g. amalgamation skeletons)
- Some money available
- Local culture and knowledge are leveraged
- Diversity is encouraged and viewed as an asset
- Strong champions in the community who are willing to drive and follow through
- Driven from the grassroots (Municipal staff in support role)

Editor's Notes:

- a. The symbol // indicates that two similar ideas have been merged together.
- b. This document contains the meeting proceedings and is not intended as a "Final Report"

1.0 – Examples of innovative communities

What are some examples of innovative initiatives in your communities? or have you heard or read about!!

1. *Lakeshore*. Lakeshore small wind large wind policies attracts 600M in wind farms despite of bird enthusiasts and despite of the wind farm in Pelee Island.
2. *Deseronto*. Started a Waterfront festival : bring in tourists and those from surrounding area to Deseronto
3. *Township of Bonnechere Valley*. Village of Eganville converted former municipal building which is a historic building from 1900s (main focal point) into museum
4. *Deseronto*. Starting a Downtown Revitalization Program: Opportunity for Innovation
5. *Lakeshore*. There is a new urban village in development (Wallace Woods) with 6 developers as a consortium projected 5,200 home integrating the natural environment.
6. *Casselman*. Xmas Midnight shopping in Casselman 9am-midnight
7. *Prince Edward County*. Bed and Breakfast Registration via web site
8. *Pembroke*. Pembroke and surrounding area identified issues with waste management and together with neighbouring communities to develop a green plan.
9. *Haliburton*. Had school of fine arts in Haliburton, but had outgrown. Did not have year-round facility. Town donated and serviced 25 acres from one of the parks. Fleming College tapped into infrastructure program and built new school and offer year-round programs.
10. *Kingston*. Haunted Tours: past issues and resolution/handling as a tourism draw
11. *Grenville*. Heritage walking tours of 8 hamlets in north Grenville.
12. *Township of North Kawartha*. opened Apsley village market (produce and crafts) initiated by the citizens and proudly with no government involvement
13. *Deseronto*. Historic murals/images to mark significant moments in history?!
14. *Smith Ennesmore*. Pond hockey tournament with different activities in the town during winter season to attract people during dormant season, Smith Ennesmore Lake and fiels
15. Inventive ideas for using Brownfield sites
16. Municipality buy up land: encourage/support incubators in the area
17. *Lanark County* started program to promote local produce.
18. Develop Waterfront for tourism as well as residential use
19. Events to promote local businesses and talent
20. Sidewalk sales to promote local businesses: good idea if customers could order on line
21. *Whitewater Region*. Whitewater Eco Village on the Ottawa River - land owned by Wilderness Tours - Windmill Developments of a 36 chalet development with 1/8 and 1/10 time share
22. *Township North Storemont*. Landfill full time MOE Person Tire facility for tire shredding, waste bunkers are reusable every 50 years
23. *Killaloe* started a "LOCAL PRODUCE" concert series.
24. *Kinmount Village* have a lumber saw mill, created a park and renovated the saw mill in order to have a tourism attraction
25. *Prescott*. Five years ago the Town started the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival in our town amphitheatre on the St. Lawrence River and have just finished a successful fifth season attracting over 4500! People to our town.
26. *Deep River*. 1000 acres of Atomic Energy land in Deep River on the Ottawa River bought by the community for a preserve (raised the money in a week).
27. *Highlands East* promotes itself as geocaching capital of Canada!! Online -> find gps coordinates of properties, then go find it (physically)

28. *Edwardsburgh/Cardinal*. involved in forming a community Mill group who purchased the land and helped to rejuvenate a derelict, 100 year mill into operation.
29. *Hastings Highlands* purchased land to extend stay of visitors to municipality who usually come for a one day visit logger games and maynoth madness
30. *Minden*. In the town of Minden a straw building - The R.D. Lawrence Centre - built to house a collection of paintings of R.D. Lawrence. The straw building through Sir Sanford Fleming College. There was NO cost for labour, just materials. The students were marked on their performance at the end of the project each receiving a different ranking.
31. *Township of South Glengarry*. Put the tax payers to work: taxpayers actually formed a committee to assist with completion of market survey/study to submit for broadband funding
32. *Bancroft*. Bancroft citizens have developed a pregnancy centre to assist young people through early pregnancies.
33. *Buckhorn*. Community artists started an art show that has grown over 31 years to be very successful.
34. *LA county*. paved shoulders 1.5 meters to strengthen road also to develop Trails/cycling network
35. *Edwardsburgh/Cardinal*. industrial development which secured people into developing an ethanol plant in the Township.
36. *Nunavut*. Design for Iqaluit in the arctic (downtown streetscape - roads, sidewalks, trails for winter) definition of streetscape with special markers for whiteouts)
37. *Bourget*. created a coalition between business people, services and community persons in order to create a fund via table champetre, where the money was used to help Bourget people in need of emergency,. Churches front lawn was transform into a park with a Gazebo and an electronic sign where people can buy an advertisement. We help 8 families within 2 years in emergency help
38. *Stormont Dundas/Glengarry*. shared accounting GIS and accounting with the 6 Townships and the County. Producing to have shared asset management software.
39. *Township of Cavan-Monaghan*. Millennium project - community based trail system that connects Village of Millbrooke to 4th Line theatre (12 kms) - involved community, government and other resources - attracts people to the community
40. *Bancroft* has weekly concerts at the Millennium park throughout the summer.
41. *South Glengarry Twp*. Combined Business and recreation directory and municipal guide to tap into Celtic history...South Glengarry Twp. Advertised in Quebec. First time they had gone outside of the province
42. *Stormont Dundas/Glengarry*. developed a controlled road salt device and won an award for this innovation.
43. Exploring partnerships with other communities to improve level of services provided to area residents e.g. Infrastructure
44. Community transit system - east, west, south of Ottawa ... Not for profit bussing system...
45. *Westport*. In a small town like Westport (population 680), we have had the longest running Art Festival for 20 plus years. The village is looking for tourism branding. This year's we had a free music festival and attracted over 4000 people. Valdy did a Saturday night concert and a school concert the next morning.
46. *North Kawartha*. Relay towers for Internet access across the bay and through the forested areas.
47. Establishing a public transit system in a small municipality
48. *Renfrew County*. Recycling centre - 5 municipalities - profits back to 5 - recyclables from Algonquin Park
49. *Deep River*. Spin-off company (Atomic Energy) looking for space in Deep River did joint venture for space with the municipality
50. Adopt-a-park by service clubs
51. *Rockland*. In Rockland a mentoring in high level cuisine was created to give to young and not so young student to experience opening and running a restaurant for one night. Two

months before they have to write a business plan, train for their menu, marketing, prepare the meal, serve and write a column in newspaper. The profits goes into a bursary fund for interested student to continue their education.

52. *Perth*. Perth used the old glass Ottawa Transpo bus shelters to create the Crystal Palace on the Tay River.
53. *Cobourg*. GIS mapping for Municipal Services
54. Music Festival
55. Old jail visits
56. Dunedin, NZ - education city

2.0 – Roadmap for fostering innovation in your community

What are some ways to foster a culture of innovation? What can you do proactively?
Note: the group brainstormed ideas and then merged similar ideas together (see bullet points under each heading). These are not ranked.

1. Bring people together face to face.

- Get everyone together in a room, have everyone introduce themselves and explain what they do so there is no overlap.
- Get people together, brainstorm
- Conduct focus groups with community members to generate ideas for innovation //sell the benefits - what's in it for who is being engaged

2. Connect people with technology

- Host "community forums"
- Have a municipal chat line where people can send in innovative ideas which are reported to council
- Use technology - e.g., the computer to communicate ideas and get helpers.
- Listen to the public - don't just rely on the public officials.

3. Involve the local media and utilized media releases

4. Assess community strengths, assets, uniqueness.

- Identify strengths and assets and build on them. And identify what is unique within your community
- use your local resource - make a list of your available resources //don't forget to value the skills of your community, encourage them
- Put your ideas and resources on paper in order not to forget
- Use your local resource - make a list of your available resources
- What is unique within your community
- Assess what is available within the community

5. Identify leaders and key stakeholders ..strong leadership

- Identify key leader - idea of a "champion"
- Know who your champions are, and learn how to get people on board
- Confirm buy-in of the participants
- Get specialized help e.g., planner or lawyer before going to far. The resource is probably available in the community.
- Target stakeholders personally
- Get the champions in your community together
- Know who your champions are, and learn how to get people on board
- Be yourself rely on your own resources, including your own people. find the community champions.

6. Set up a "committee of innovation"

- Important to have a facilitator who fits the needs
- Create sub-committees in order not to demand too much from our volunteer
- Establish a steering committee - terms of reference
- Tap into your retirement population, great mentors

- Engage youth and seniors to sit on advisory committees to council
- Recognize/honour the volunteers.

7. Foster partnerships/relationships

- Create partnership within the community and councils
- Get the buy-in from the community. Give everyone 'ownership of the idea or project'.
- Work with area colleges/universities and provide shuttle bus services for students who can live at home and attend school in a neighbouring town

8. Develop a plan

- Assess the needs, what we can offer
- Identify the need
- Create a strategic plan with clear objectives, agenda and next steps
- Strong strategic plan - new councilor manual from MMAH released last week identifies the need for a strategic plan. If this is done well, strengths can be identified.

9. Learn from other communities examples

10. Find the funding sources \$\$\$...cash helps

- Community partnership fund fosters up community-based funding - more info on website town of lakeshore (townoflakeshore.ca) and chatham-kent.ca

11. Other tips & guidelines

- Balance between "talkers and doers"
- Seize the moment - don't analyze it to death. Keep it fresh.
- Become more open minded....do not judge "crazy" ideas
- Take a step at a time don't rush
- Willing to take a risk
- Don't keep the project to yourself, get help, encourage others to participate
- Validation of project before implementation
- Don't always depend on the government

3.0 – Conditions necessary for fostering an innovative culture

The group had a short discussion and identified the following conditions:

- Accepting and open-mind Council
- General willingness to take risks
- The Town has a strong identity and clear vision
- Citizenry relatively free of "baggage" (e.g. amalgamation skeletons)
- Some money available
- Local culture and knowledge are leveraged
- Diversity is encouraged and viewed as an asset
- Strong champions in the community who are willing to drive and follow through
- Driven from the grassroots (Municipal staff in support role)

Appendices

A – Session Overview

Welcome Everyone to this Session entitled Innovative Communities – Learn How Communities Can Foster a ‘Culture of Innovation’

This is an interactive session on how communities can foster a ‘culture of innovation’. We hope you will share insights and best practices on how you have created cultures of innovation in your own communities. You will be provided with a summary of today’s session so that you may be equipped to go back to your communities with ideas for immediate implementation.

Definition of “Innovation”

Innovation is the introduction of new ideas, goods, services, and practices that are intended to be useful. The main driver for innovation is often the courage and energy to better the world. An essential element for innovation is its application in a commercially successful way. Innovation has punctuated and changed human history (consider the development of electricity, steam engines, motor vehicles, et al). ...

Elements of "Innovative Communities"

One innovation does not indicate an innovative community. An innovative community is one that has developed and can sustain a wellspring of innovation that does not stem solely from one or two isolated individuals. It must have the organizational capability to stimulate, nurture, develop and productively harness the inherent innovative qualities of its people to create sustainable competitive advantage in its marketplace or arena of operation.

Innovation is about people. Communities cannot innovate - people innovate. Innovation is typically a human activity; it is natural; it is proactive, and in most cases, innovation has become a threshold for success.

Innovative communities are able to bring in new methods, ideas, etc. to improve their environment, and initiate changes through human intelligence, especially of imaginative thought or artistic ability.

In managing the local environment, 'innovativeness' is - among other things - the capacity to understand and analyze problems; partnering to bring in different resources (internal as well as external) and adapt it to the local context; involvement and active participation of all relevant stakeholders; respecting history and culture of the local area/region to find new solutions; etc.

Examples of "Innovative Communities"

I would like to give you 3 examples of innovation within communities. Two of these are from the Town of Cobourg.

The Town of Cobourg has for some years now partnered with local stakeholders and respecting our history and culture from over 100 years ago, fostered a “wellness community”. We have taken the concept formed in 1880, as part of the promotion of Cobourg as a luxury destination, Colonel William Chambliss, a Confederate officer-turned-entrepreneur teamed up with a Cobourg doctor (whose name is lost to history) and

together they did measurements, declaring Cobourg as a location possessing the second best ozone levels in the world. Chambliss and his medical associate toured the United States promoting Cobourg as a wellspring of good health. This brought visiting tourists, both Canadian and American.

In the year 2000, Cobourg resurrected this tradition by forming a Wellness Committee made up of alternative health care professionals, and accommodation providers who got together to education, package and market Cobourg as a wellness destination. We presently have over 100 businesses with over 1500 employees in the healthcare sector. This includes both traditional and complimentary healthcare. These numbers are growing and we are seeing the economic benefits of this great partnership as new businesses spring up each year and new professionals are encouraged to join our partnership.

Another example of innovation in Cobourg was when the Town took top honours in the Product Development category through EDCO for their, Cobourg - 'Steps to the Future' entry. Steps to the Future is a Northam Industrial Park Project.

This "step to the future" began with a step out of the box, taking on a challenge with inherent risk that had a positive result. We were one of the very first Municipalities in Ontario to take on such a project.

The Public sector far too often hear from private business that we should function more like they do. We have, and our story has a successful outcome to share and perhaps be a model for Municipal Economic Development.

Since purchasing this 121 acre industrial park with approximately 1,068,000 sq. ft. of leasable space at a price tag of \$13,000,000.00 we have seen huge dividends in both expansion of our industrial tenants and in profits taken into the Town coffers.

We reconfigured the park layout for additional revenue as tenants were prepared to expand with aggressive marketing, empty space was leased resulting in new revenue several of the lease documents had inaccurate square footage recorded. The actual leasable space in the park totaled 1,159,697.49 sq. ft. not as recorded in leases as 1,068,000 sq. ft. This approximately 92,000 sq. ft. presented yet another opportunity for additional revenue the owners advisors (Colliers) identified that a 30,000 sq. ft. vacant office building on the property was a risk to ownership. We identified a purpose for the building and saved the building from demolition by paying an additional \$1.00 (only). This is now a 290 seat call centre the entire project has financed itself and there have not been any municipal funds required.

I am pleased to say that I feel this project meets the definition of innovative as it is a new method of finding non-tax revenue and we have made changes to the way we do business.

A final example of innovation is with the highly successful "Elora Centre for the Arts".

Located in a restored, three-story limestone school building in one of Ontario's most picturesque villages. The school stood for 145 years and was closed in 1996. Converted into the new Elora Centre for the Arts it consists of 10 large classrooms converted to provide in total of over 10,000 square feet of dedicated space plus additional service corridors and amenities. It is now considered a home where Art lives.

The facility is envisioned as an enhancement to cultural life in the region through production and reception, and through the practice and presentations. They instill life-long learning through the arts.

Ultimately, they see the Centre evolving toward a teaching and mentoring institution of national significance. Their Mission is as follows:

Build on Centre Wellington's extraordinary arts assets to form a vibrant institution composed of working studios, rehearsal and performance facilities, and teaching venues and offer enrichment to the local community;

Complement the area's rich natural and cultural heritage by creating an environment that will inspire and stimulate artistic excellence;

Provide a focus for the strong, diverse arts and cultural community and the talented volunteer support that already exists in Centre Wellington, and provide a meeting place, showcase, and powerful voice for the arts;

Offer strong youth component to encourage interest in the arts and support young artists through teaching, counseling and mentoring;

Bring together local, regional and international artists, students and teaching masters to create synergies, and encourage excellence and innovation in the arts;

Be a source of community pride, contributing to the image of arts in the area

Now that you have a few examples of innovative communities, I am going to turn things over to Erik Lockhart who is going to lead us through some brainstorming of examples of innovative communities in your own municipalities.