

Taking the Leap

Learning to Innovate in a Risk Averse Environment



Written By:

Jessica Linthorne, Ec.D. and Laura Thompson, Ec.D., CEc.D.

About the Authors



Jessica Linthorne, Ec.D.

With a focus on building relationships and continuous learning, Jessica successfully attracts businesses to the community and helps make existing local business even more successful. She works closely with developers, investors, business owners and other economic development stakeholders toward mutual success. As Manager, Strategic Initiatives with the Town of Saugeen Shores, her portfolio includes economic development, strategic communication and organizational effectiveness. In addition to formal education in Economic Development, Public Relations and Special Event Coordination, she learns every day from her three young sons.



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jessica-linthorne-ec-d-a1a51456/>



jessica.linthorne@saugeenshores.ca



Laura Thompson, Ec.D., CEc.D.

After graduating from York University, Laura's passion for community building led to an initial career in Land Use Planning before transitioning into Economic Development. Laura is currently the Manager of Real Estate and Commercial Development for the City of Orillia and applies her enthusiasm for seeking creative and innovative solutions through the creation and implementation of programs such as the Downtown Tomorrow CIP Grant Program, City of Orillia Waterfront Redevelopment Project and TEDxOrillia.



www.linkedin.com/in/laura-thompson-ecd



lthompson@orillia.ca

Introduction

Innovation, simply defined, is a novel method, idea or product. From healthcare to construction, financial services to economic development, every industry has the opportunity to consider new processes through innovation. Original ideas, inventions, and creative solutions are developed to provide a better product or service to a customer, a better produce a product or service or simply improve efficiencies.

Municipal government is increasingly stepping into the innovation space in a more conscious way. More municipalities are declaring themselves as innovators, and are finding new process to deliver age-old services. Municipalities are tinkering with technology, leveraging digital services, learning from the private sector and perhaps most importantly, municipalities are communicating and collaborating to learn from each other's experiences.

As service providers, a municipal government's role has traditionally been to deliver services to taxpayers. Government organizations such as municipalities, regions and district aren't typically in the business of building widgets and expanding widget sales, and aren't at risk of "losing customers". Innovation in municipal government therefore often lags behind private sector innovation. Additionally, municipalities tend to be more risk averse. This hesitancy to take risks is often the result of a combination of factors including political apprehensions, concern of public outcry, fear of failure, outdated reporting structures, and a communities which are resistant to change.

As Jason Reynar succinctly asked in his TEDxCollingwood talk, "what if we expected innovation as a need to have in local government, rather than a nice to have?"

When we consider how innovation has changed the private sector, (digitalization of widget production as an example), it becomes increasingly obvious that municipal government does have space to innovate.

The public sector can learn from the private sector and can leverage strength and knowledge of creative thinkers and can collaborate for mutual success. Organizations like [Open North](#) and [Evergreen](#) are coming together to leverage learning and encourage 'smart city' initiatives between municipalities. These organizations are connecting local municipal challenges with globally tested solutions. They're connecting entrepreneurs with municipal government, and turning challenges into exciting opportunities.

Across the province there are municipal innovation groups taking shape. In the case of the [Municipal Innovation Exchange](#), this collaborative group is formed to exchange knowledge and smart city initiatives. These groups are not restricted to 'think tanks' but rather they are the 'doers'. Innovation groups are seeking results to common problems, and they are implementing new solutions in their communities.

In Bruce County, the newly formed Municipal Innovation Council has formed between eight area municipalities. A collective MOU has been signed to "...support collaborative staffing, research, and implementation during a three year project".

With a financial and staff contribution, these municipalities are ready to address common challenges, and will be leveraging Nuclear Innovation Institute to do so.

Exercising innovative thought, and implementing change does not come without challenges and a cultural shift. However, the opportunity to find efficiencies in municipal government outweighs some discomfort associated with change.

When asked which skills do you feel need to be developed in order to enhance an individual's capacity to innovate, respondents said:

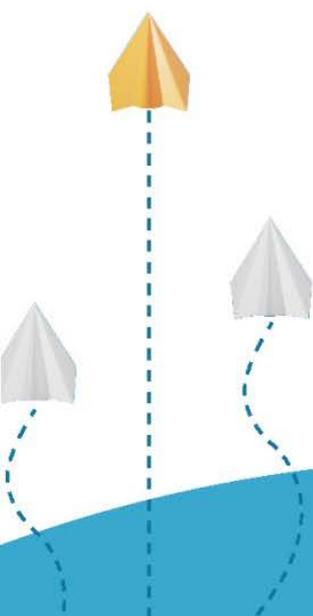
“Allow” creativity within and among employees, staff and colleagues. This begins with trust. Trust in an organization breeds innovation.”

“Open mindedness, people need to listen and know they can speak freely without being judged or dismissed. A person would need to understand something in depth to be able to truly innovate and make change. Others must share what they know with no judgement and be willing to assist even if it was not their chosen idea or innovation. Sharing and caring, remove the egos.”

There are a number of challenges to consider and skills to development in order to enhance an individual's and organization's capacity for innovation.

There is opportunity for innovation in any industry, and although a young concept, intentionally municipal innovation is gaining momentum. With an increase of citizen engagement and expectation, and the opportunity to update process to reflect technological advances, municipalities are embracing the opportunity to work collaboratively with innovation institutes, entrepreneurs and to work with other municipalities.

It's time to take the leap, and strive to make municipal government professionals, leaders in innovation.



Taking the Leap

Acknowledgements

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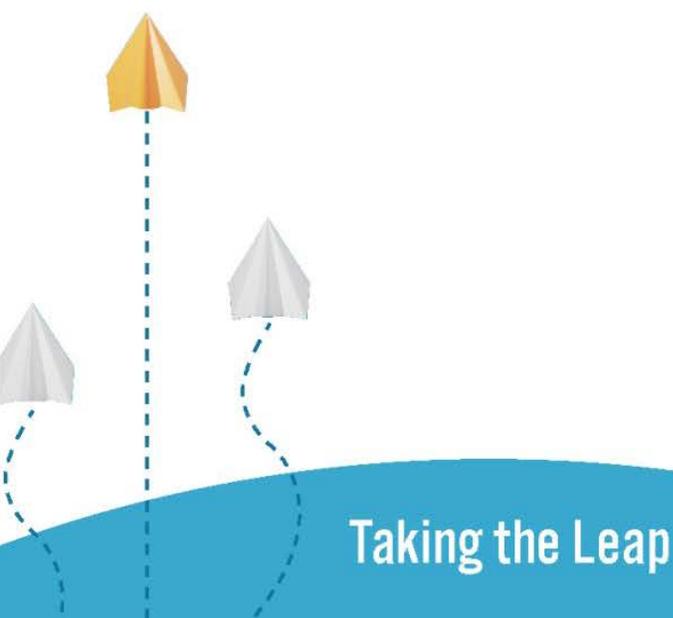
Alison Anderson	CEO, SXNM Succession Matching Ltd.
Amanda Maxwell	HR Generalist & Retention Specialist, Bruce County
Anitta Hamming	President, Creative Nomad Studios
Catherine Oosterbaan	Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Advisor, OMAFRA
Debra Lemme	Owner, Well in Hand
Heather MacKenzie-Card	Program Manager, Fanshawe College
Jenelle Bannon	Business Development Coordinator, Bruce County
Jill Roote	Manager of Economic Development, Bruce County
Kate Cammidge-Irwin	Realtor, Remax Land Exchange Ltd. Brokerage
Laura Kranenburg	Supervisor of Asset Management and GIS, Town of Saugeen Shores
Manpreet Sangha	Economic Development Officer - Business, Bruce County
Mark Paoli	Manager of Land Use Planning, Bruce County
Marlenea Wynnyk	Sea Buckthorn Orchardist, The Healing Arc Inc.
Melanie Robinson	Owner/Chef, Eclectic Cafe
Nicole Norris	Manager, Centre for Changemaking & Social Innovation Georgian Coll.
Renee Recoskie	Manager of Environmental Compliance, City of Orillia
Rick Talbot	New Services Development Manager, Softchoice
Risha Yorke	Business and Success Coach, Yorke Motivational Consulting
Stephen Morris	Team Lead, OMAFRA
Keltie Town	Communications Division, City of Orillia
Melissa Gowanlock	Chief Administrative Office, City of Orillia

The authors of this resource recognize that there are a number of innovators throughout the province who are working on leading edge initiatives to break through barriers and evolve innovation in the municipal sector. This toolkit provides just a snapshot of best practices, recommendations, tools and resources available to municipal professionals for the purpose of the EDCO Bright Ideas Competition. If this Municipal Innovation 101 Toolkit interests you, we encourage you to review the resources provided at the back of this guide, which includes recommended reading, viewing, events and organizations which you can explore to further satisfy your hunger for innovation in a municipal context.

Toolkit

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Understanding your problem is half the solution

The ability to innovate is critical in today's fast paced, global environment. Innovation allows companies and organizations to develop new products and services, scale up production and gain a larger share of the market. But what sparks innovation? Why and when is it time to innovate?

Respondents to the MI101 survey opined that "innovation is often borne from necessity". This could be a need to be more competitive, recognition that there's a pattern which needs to change, a specific problem, or as one survey respondent succinctly put it - "asking the question 'why'".

Identifying a problem, and seeking solutions led to some of the earliest inventions, including the wheelbarrow (traced back to 406 B.C.), the ambulance (1487), the mariner's compass (1119) and the metal detector (1874).

In order to solve a problem, it's important to identify and understand the issues. According to [Smashing Magazine](#), identifying the problem may not be as straightforward as one might think. Individuals working on a problem will often "get attached to the words used to describe a problem" and get stuck on the semantics rather than the root of the issue.

[Dwayne Spradlin of the Harvard Business Review](#) noted that if a company does not take the time to define a problem, "organizations miss opportunities, waste resources, and end up pursuing innovation initiatives that aren't aligned with their strategies". For example, if a company states that there is a problem with shipping, this could imply that there is an issue getting a product from point A to point B. If this problem isn't properly defined, a vast amount of resources could be spent evaluating the labelling process, warehouse procedures, packaging and truck delivery schedule. However, if the same company states that there is a problem with the delivery instructions, a much more refined review could be undertaken to better understand how delivery instructions could be communicated from the purchaser to the courier.

Another [Harvard Business Review](#) article opines that people often jump straight into the innovation process without understanding the problem due to a general mentality and mistaken belief that "the sooner the project is started, the sooner it will be finished". The author points out that "such thinking leads companies to start more projects than they can vigorously pursue" which, in turn, dilutes resources.

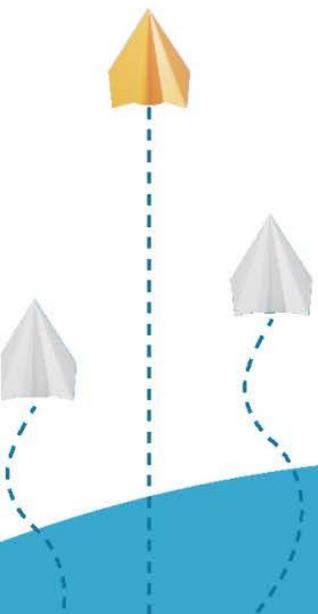
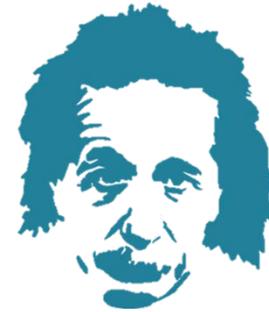
In an article examining Albert Einstein's secret to problem solving, [Litemind](#) states that Einstein alluded to the following rule, "the quality of the solutions we come up with will be in direct proportion to the quality of the description of the problem we're trying to solve".

Before jumping into the creative innovation process, it's crucial to identify and understand the problem.

Smashing Magazine recommends playing with the language used to describe the problem, reviewing data in a new way (such as a chart or graph), and “zooming out” to examine the big picture, as ways to more intimately understand the problem at hand. Try rephrasing the problem, challenging assumptions or looking at the issue from a new perspective to get to the root of the problem you are trying to solve.

“If I were given one hour to save the planet, I would spend 59 minutes defining the problem and one minute solving it.”

~Albert Einstein



Einstein Image Source: www.pngfly.com

Taking the Leap

Beyond Benchmarking

Benchmarking across municipalities has long been the “go-to” methodology when developing new initiatives, exploring a programs’ effectiveness or making funding decisions. Organizations such as [Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada](#), and programs such as the annual [BMA Management Consulting Inc. Municipal Study](#), were developed to allow municipalities to compare data such as spending, service delivery levels, financial incentives and staffing levels.

There is certainly a place for benchmarking in government, non-profit organizations and especially private businesses, however, for the most part benchmarking includes only a snapshot of any particular data set, and does not taken into account unique characteristics within a given community. For example, at a recent presentation to the City of Orillia Council, Jason Burgess of MNP Consulting advised that benchmarking only tells a municipality where they may be at compared to other municipalities. Burgess pointed out for example, that Orillia has a higher per capita spend versus on the provincial average on services such as the library and culture, however, Orillia is also home to the Orillia Opera House which most municipalities do not have and/or are not responsible for, which may account for Orillia’s higher than average spending in this realm.

In 2016, the [APQC \(American Productivity & Quality Center\)](#) asked 300 professionals about [their benchmarking activities](#) and identified the top five benchmarking challenges experience. These included;

1. “Finding true best-practice organizations for comparison”
2. “Identifying valid data for performance benchmarking”
3. “Gathering information and data for benchmarking activities”
4. “Articulating ‘the value proposition’ or benefits of benchmarking”
5. “Finding financial resources necessary to carry out benchmarking activities”

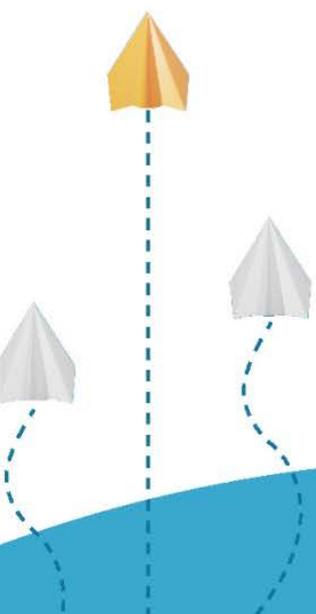
Beyond these common challenges, starting an innovative process by undertaking benchmarking, or even brainstorming, can actually hamper the creative process, rather than help. As [CoSchedule Blog](#) explains, brainstorming “leads to ideas that conform to each other, and not to novel new ways of thinking”. They further explain that a number of factors can cause this, for example, certain personalities can dominate or steer a discussion in one direction, or away from a seemingly radical idea, or members can fall prey to “group think”.

CoSchedule recommends “singular brainstorming” activities such as word play, writing down one’s “stream of consciousness” or getting out of the office to stimulate new thoughts and solutions.

Tony Schwartz of the [Harvard Business Review](#) recently shared his experience in trying to think creatively and attributed his process to the workings of Betty Edwards, author of *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*.

Edwards speaks to the importance of understanding the predominant strengths of right brain thinking (intuitive, emotional, impulsive, creative) versus left brain thinking (logical, language based, rational). Building on this concept, to truly think creatively it's recommended that we move back and forth between left and right brain thinking through the four stages of creativity, for example;

1. Saturation (left hemisphere): saturate yourself with a subject, read, view, learn about the issue in depth.
2. Incubation (right hemisphere): walk away from the problem so that your mind can digest the subject matter unconsciously.
3. Illumination (right hemisphere): let the idea come to you organically - this is often referred to as the "ah-ha moment".
4. Verification (left hemisphere): challenge the idea, test it and build upon it.



Creating an Innovative Environment

When developing an innovative environment, an organization should consider the workplaces' physical environment, workplace culture and learning environment.

Physical Environment

While the physical environments of high profile tech companies like Google and Facebook are known to include indoor slides, office masseuses, and foosball tables. These amenities aren't the perks listed as the top benefits by their employees.

Respondents to the MI101 Survey noted that often the most innovative ideas arose when they were simply outside of the formal work environment. There are likely several contributing factors which make working outside of the office a more productive and creative option. Many offices, especially those in the municipal context, have not evolved to take into account the workplace culture that stimulates creativity in today's environment. Offices which isolate and separate staff into silos, boardrooms that have to be booked in advance and sterile interior design can stifle creativity and work against the collaboration and inter-departmental cooperation which helps innovation thrive.

Even municipalities on the tightest of budgets can accommodate a more productive work environment by allowing staff to work from home, and/or encourage staff to book meetings in a local cafe once a week. Allowing employees to work from home instills trust, and according to a [Stanford University study](#), working from home could improve productivity by 13%. Staff are also less likely to take sick days or vacation.

Workplaces which placed a focus on employee mental health, fitness and nutrition, through the provision of wellness programs, on-site gyms, or discounted memberships to recreation facilities, have been shown to improve an employee's creative capacity.

Within the traditional workspace, many MI101 Survey respondents noted that spaces with white boards, idea walls and collaborative spaces with warm lighting and comfortable seating are ideal for having productive and stimulating discussions. Up to date technology, software and access to productivity apps were also identified as being conducive to an innovative physical environment.

Workplace Culture

Respondents to the MI101 Survey represented a diverse range of sectors and their responses unsurprisingly varied when asked what an innovative workspace feels like to them. Several noted that environments which are supportive, open to change, and collaborative are most conducive to an innovative workplace culture.

Overall, collaboration appeared to be the most critical factor for ideation amongst the group. Another respondent noted that “problems are celebrated instead of frowned upon”.

The following are words used by MI101 respondents to describe innovative environments:



In an article entitled [“6 Ideas to Promote Innovation in your Workplace this Year”](#) Forbes reinforces the sentiment that company culture doesn’t have to come from a “top-down” approach. By making diversity a priority in the hiring process, an organization can ensure that a range of backgrounds, experience and skill sets are present within the organization to explore problems from varying perspectives.

Work/life balance is increasingly important. In an [Insider article](#) listing Google employees “coolest perks” of working at the firm, most of the features noted were enhancements to employees’ quality of life and ability to learn. In fact, one employee told Insider that she appreciated not having to worry about the basic needs in life, and noted that Google’s perks “ ‘actually encourage’ employees to have a good balance between their work and personal lives”. Perks such as discounts to museums, ability to organize speaking events, encouragement to participate as a group in community service programs and the ability to collaborate with top talent were all listed amongst top perks. With the right partnerships, these are all perks that can be offered by municipalities and non-profit organizations at little to no-cost.

Making space for innovation

Innovation takes time, which is becoming a scarce resource in government organizations due to the increasing reliance on performance metrics. However, as noted in a recent [Inc. headline](#) “Businesses do not innovate. People do. And people need time to innovate”.

People need time to generate ideas, undertake research, have discussions and test ideas. The resulting innovation can become invaluable, so why is the time it takes not given equal priority? Inc. put it simply: “treat time as time invested”.

Companies such as Google and Intuit actually take this a step further and encourage employees to work site projects during work time. In 1948, long before Google encouraged employees to devote 20% of their time to idea generation, 3M launched the 15% program which allowed employees to pursue “something they discovered through the usual course of work but didn’t have time to follow up on”.

Respondents to the MI101 survey noted that in addition to time, organizations should invest in developing skills which promote and support innovation, including problem solving and critical thinking skills, communication, facilitation. Many government organizations have limited professional development budgets, and in many cases employees use these budgets on the same annual conferences each year as required by their professional specific designations. Professional development should be considered an investment, and employees should be encouraged to source new and different opportunities which hone their creative thinking and innovation skillsets.

“Make sure that your employees are set up for success. If they are stretched thin as it is, you'll get nothing innovative. Innovation requires space to breathe.”

~Risha Yorke, Business & Success Coach, Yorke Motivational Consulting

Spotlight: Creative Nomad Studios, Orillia



Anitta Hamming, CEO and President of Creative Nomad Studios recognized that the City of Orillia is full of creative artists and entrepreneurs but identified that the industry seemed disjointed due to a lack of collaborative spaces and coworking venues. Anitta is currently transforming a vacant building in Orillia’s downtown core into a hub for creative entrepreneurs. Members will have access to shared meeting and event spaces, promotional opportunities, networking, meetups and extensive business partnerships throughout the community. The hub has already resulted in a number of new partnerships with many more sure to follow when the hub opens in 2020.

Engaging Stakeholders

As municipalities consider advancing solutions to find efficiencies, whether through an innovative product, service or process, or practicing application of existing solutions, there is value in early engagement of stakeholders.

Stakeholders could include residents, visitors, neighbouring municipalities, elected officials, upper tier/lower tier government(s) and even the media. Resident associations, business organizations, and entrepreneurs should also be engaged in the pursuit of solving municipal challenges.

Utilizing local engagement strategies will ensure consistent and thoughtful engagement. In addition to a communication plan, an engagement strategy will help municipal innovation teams to connect with the right audience in the right way, at the right time.

A communication template, is a common tool to capture the objective and messaging for any project, and this model continues relevance for a municipal innovation process. With any project, clear objectives, tactic planning and key messaging are required for meaningful engagement.

As municipal innovation programs advance, it is critical to identify potential partners during early stages. Leveraging relationships with education institutes, innovation spaces, incubators, and accelerators is a natural first step. These institutes are well connected with entrepreneurs, problem solvers and individuals who are familiar with an innovation process to address challenges or see a bigger picture.

Additionally, there is ample room for community engagement during a municipal innovation process. Municipal staff can make an assumption on how to streamline a process, or create an efficiency, however the public will bring a different lens and share what really matters to residents, and the true public perspective of a potential challenge or solution. By having a community conversation about municipal innovation, community groups and individuals can share their expert opinion as a resident or visitor, insight which should not be taken for granted.

The Civic Innovation Office in the City of Toronto describe their efforts as “focus(ing) on creating meaningful solutions for the people of Toronto through human-centred design principles, new ideas and modern tools. We believe that enhancing the collection, analysis and availability of data helps us all understand Toronto better.” This ethos captures the need for stakeholder engagement and the benefits this brings to the broader community.

Working with professional facilitators from innovation spaces, accelerators, or leveraging facilitation experts from OMAFRA can drive a conversation to come to a result. A facilitated conversation can help to clarify challenges, set priorities and determine how a group will come to a result – whether the innovation will have a tech focus, or a social focus.

It is becoming more common for municipalities to open data to the public (web based), allowing entrepreneurs and innovators the opportunity to build tools and implement tactics leading toward a smart cities approach. Municipalities understand the power of collaboration and by creating dashboards and easy access to data, municipal government is creating a collaborative environment to work with entrepreneurs and the private sector.

Open data and civic engagement are outcomes of the sharing economy. With the increase of connection through social media, sharing platforms, and the gig economy, residents are engaged with service providers like never before.

“As dynamic ‘living labs’, communities offer the perfect container for innovation. Our experience with community change has taught us to appreciate that to be effective, Community Innovation requires an appreciation of both the issue one is hoping to address, as well as a deep understanding of the unique characteristics of the community – the place and the people within it – where the innovation will be implemented.”

~Tamarack Institute

Leveraging Technology

In addition to sharing data through open data portals, municipalities are seeking response, solutions and new ideas from residents and visitors. Digital platforms found in today's sharing economy are able to reach a targeted audience and create a safe place for individuals to rent, lease, buy and sell goods or services. Sharing platforms allow us to collect data, ask questions, and gather responses. As a society, we can post photos, videos, emergent requests and more, with ease and low cost.

One example of a municipality leveraging technology can be found in the Town of Innisfil. When Innisfil identified a need for transportation options for their residents, they recognized that traditional mass transit (such as buses) would not be a cost efficient solution for their geographically dispersed population. They formed a first of its kind partnership with the ridesharing app, Uber, branded "Innisfil Transit", which allows residents to enjoy subsidized rides. The program has been so successful that it exceeded the town's expectations and they have had to increase fees and cap rides.

In several cities across North America, crowdfunding apps such as GoFundMe are being used to fund community projects. In 2015, a total of \$81,000 was raised by the City of Fort Lauderdale for a new park, and in Toronto, more than \$60,000 was crowdfunded to keep the High Park Zoo open. The use of crowdfunding apps by municipal government has even sparked the development of the crowdfunding app Citizeninvestor, which was designed specifically to crowdfund and facilitate civic engagement for government projects.

Technology plays a role in collected data and learning from residents and visitors. Civic engagement expectations are beyond minimum standards set, and more municipalities are implementing cost effective tools to hear from stakeholders.

From leveraging social media and online survey tools, to digital engagement platforms, there is no shortage of accessible tools and tactics to increase communication with the public.

"Technology growth is fast and has become the driving force of every company for them to stay competitive – from automation to artificial intelligence (AI). Technology can also be used as a foundation to grow social impact, with just a little thought. And tying the two together means you can get double bottom line returns. People think that social impact and tech are the antithesis of each other, but it's the synergy that's powerful."

~Yao Huang, Founder, The Hatchery

Spotlight: InnoCentive

Technology can be used to quantify and qualify problems, make service delivery more accessible and/or assist with the innovation process itself. InnoCentive, launched in 2001, is an example of a company which leveraged crowd funding technologies to help businesses find multiple solutions to a problem. Through this technology, clients identify their problem or issues and present them as a challenge to a “global network of expert problem solvers”. Problem solvers then have the opportunity to earn awards of \$5,000 to \$1 million. The company now boasts more than 390,000 solvers from across 190 countries, which has resulted in more than 162,000 proposed solutions.



Exploring New Perspectives

“Diversity is a key driver to innovation and is a critical component of being successful on a global scale.”

~*“Fostering Innovation through a Diverse Workforce”*, Forbes Insights

It may sound obvious at first, but a diverse set of experience, backgrounds and demographics is crucial to exploring problems and testing solutions from a range of perspectives. Personal experiences, gender, age, abilities, sexual orientation, geographic location, financial security, and cultural backgrounds can influence how people perceive and interact with the world, and therefore impact the innovation of a product or service.

A more inclusive exploration

Due to the strong partnerships municipalities have with local community groups, they have generally become comfortable with reaching out to these community groups with surveys and opportunities for consultation on new projects and initiatives. Most municipal organizations also have a steady and reliable opportunity for advertising these opportunities through mediums such as social media, news releases and municipal websites. This routine can become stagnant however, and lack the diversity required to truly innovate and be inclusive of a diverse cross-section of the community.

When seeking innovation, consider engaging with diverse members of the community within their community. This may look like attending a new cultural festival or event, reaching out to a new professional association or advertising in new publications which cater to a specific demographic. When developing guest lists, panel discussions, invitations to an open house, or even bouncing an idea off your network of changemakers, take a moment to go through your list and evaluate how many of those people share the same experiences, gender, age, cultural background, professional industry, etc, as you and your colleagues. If you're not seeing diversity, press pause, and find an opportunity to target participants who can bring a new perspective to the table.

Diverse workplaces are more productive

A [recent article by KPMG](#) noted that “a diverse environment is also a magnet for talent”. The study noted that “great people love working in a place where their voices are heard and valued, where they get to connect with talented people and can expand their knowledge into fields beyond their own”. If municipalities aren't inclusive, not only will productivity and innovation be stifled, employee attraction and retention could be at risk.

In a [recent interview](#), Summer Anderson, Managing Partner of executive team building MiROR Partners, explained that “innovation stems from trust”. Anderson believes that “in order to build the freedom to share diverse thinking, the key is to curate an environment of social safety”. This allows all team members the safety and trust to bring up new, radical and innovative ideas without the fear of judgement or alienation.

Diversity as a tool

Diversity doesn't stop at workforces and community engagement. When exploring a problem, add diversity to your analytic tools and find a new perspective when evaluating the issue.

[Smashing Magazine](#) suggests looking at old problems through a new lens and suggests the following ways of analyzing your problem and developing solutions:

- Print related images and photos on a wall to help you visualize the problem, patterns, and potential solutions.
- Examine the language you're using to describe the problem, and try changing it up to add clarity to the process.
- Ask new or different questions.
- Display or showcase the problem in a new way (chart, geographical representation, etc).
- Zoom out to look at the problem in a larger context.

“The diversity of thought, industry and multi-market backgrounds of the candidates that we recruit directly impact our ability to innovate and give us a foundation upon which we are able to help to achieve our business goal of reaching a billion new consumers in the next 10 years.”

~Sumita Banerjee, L'Oreal USA

Practical applications in a municipal context

Even the most seemingless simplistic decisions could impact different demographics in different ways. Street lighting for example, could influence the safety of a path, influence the ability for an individual in a wheelchair to adequately see where accessible curb cuts are located, influence the path a cyclist could take versus a motorist.

Spotlight: Diversity in Innovation

One tangible example which illustrates the importance of diverse perspectives was raised in a [recent article by Gary Stevenson, of OSG](#). The article noted the health and safety industry has not been progressive in ensuring that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is inclusive of women. The article explains that PPE “is often designed with men in mind” and that “females struggle to use oversized equipment safely”. The article pointed out that if a woman could not be fitted with the correct fall protection equipment, she cannot work from heights, and that “this restriction may unintentionally create barriers to work that she could otherwise be able to perform.



By reviewing the harness from a female perspective, Honeywell Miller, a manufacturer of fall protection equipment, was able to redesign a new harness designed for women which was designed to keep shoulder straps to the side and away from the chest “to reduce breast discomfort when wearing a harness”.

Scaling Solutions

Wikipedia defines scalability as the “property of a system to handle a growing amount of work by adding resources to the system”. Colloquially, the term “thinking big” can also be used to encourage an organization to think beyond the minutiae of a single problem to apply solutions on a broader scale to realize greater efficiencies and cost savings or other targets.

Sometimes scalability is a natural byproduct of discussions, for example if an organization moves one application on-line, it makes sense to move others online. However, when examining potential solutions to a problem scalability is a factor which should be intentionally explored. What would a solution look like if you applied it not just to a departmental problem, but across the organization? What if we think bigger, and consider applying the same solution across multiple organizations?

For example, if an organization is exploring innovative ways to process a grant application for a Community Improvement Program, and an innovative solution is applied, the organization should explore if that solution can be applied to other grant programs across the organization. Beyond this, could the same metrics used to evaluate a CIP Grant application, for example, be applied across other organizations throughout the community? This could have a major impact across the community, allowing performance measures to be streamlined, the training for collecting, assessing and reporting results could be consolidated, and performance could be compared across multiple organizations resulting in even more efficiencies.

Michael Katchen, CEO of Wealthsimple, said recently that in order for Canadian businesses to remain competitive in a global context, Canadian entrepreneurs need to be better at thinking big. Katchen believes that to turn the “explosion of entrepreneurial energy into a long-lasting economic drive for Canada, we’ve got to scale more of these startups into large businesses”. He further explained that “encouraging more global winners that create thousands of jobs should be a priority for the private sector, governments and postsecondary institutions”.

One direct way in which organizations can apply this concept is by targeting economic development efforts on the scalability of small, successful businesses which have the potential for national and international growth. However, if government organizations wish to be innovative and lead by example then the opportunity for scalability within our own community organizations, policies, processes and services should be explored.

Katchen’s one piece of advice that he shares with students and entrepreneurs is “you have to be a little naive to believe that your business, which may now be only a spreadsheet...could be a big international player one day”.

Ben Hecht, President and CEO of Living Cities, has observed that “thanks to bold leadership, risk-taking and thought investment from across sectors, we have no shortage of proof points that high-performing government can play an outsized role in the economic, social and all-around well-being of residents at scale”.

Hecht opined in a [recent article](#), that he has learned three key lessons he has learned while exploring trends in municipal innovation which can be summed up as follows:

1. Local government must continue to intentionally support innovation as a catalyst for change.
2. Everyone can become involved in municipal innovation.
3. Communities of practice are invaluable and experiences must continue to be shared to allow innovation to spread and grow.



Spotlight: Renew Newcastle

The “Renew” business model is now fairly well known to most Economic Development professionals in Ontario. [Renew Newcastle](#), a program initiated in 2008 in Newcastle, Australia, was a program developed by Marcus Westbury, a local changemaker to revitalize vacant storefronts. The program connects property owners with entrepreneurs and start-ups to provide space at reduced rent, which benefits both the business owner and the property owner. After gaining recognition on an international scale, the creators developed a templated License Agreements which could be used by others.

Renew Newcastle has already achieved great success within its own community, as of February 2019, the program had a 14:1 return on investment, with 82 properties impacted, 264 participants and 174 participants who “have gone on to operate successful businesses”. The true success of this program is that what could have been a local program, has grown to have an international presence through initiatives such as Renew Adelaide, Renew Townsville, Made in Geelong and, of course, Renew New Tecumseth.

Risk versus reward

The MI101 survey asked the following question to entrepreneurs and innovative thinkers:

If/when reporting to a Board, Council or other authority, how do you justify taking risks in the pursuit of innovation?

Responses include:

“Typically, I present 'calculated risks' where I have tried to predict or estimate what the risk is and what the effect of success and failure could be. I work in Municipal Government where the appetite for risk is typically very conservative.”

“I start with the why acknowledging the data behind the innovative move. Innovation can't work unless you identify the true cause of the problem you are solving through innovation. The data collected will show the reason for the innovation so that the perceived risk is minimal.”

“There are many ways to justify change and innovation, it can be various steps such as reviewing financial costs and revenue, collecting information from competing organizations, polling people/participants, consulting experts, introducing new technology that is now available to increase efficiencies or data collection. In the end the results will help guide you as to whether the innovation is working or worth taking.”

“I first take the time to really understand what the problem is. I try to present my thoughts in a carefully constructed, tactful way. I try to also communicate that I feel strongly about my thoughts on this and that I'm willing to "own it" if it is a failure or success.”

Common themes from these responses include accountability - owning the challenge and the risk associated. Additionally, respondents reference the importance of calculated risk and having the data/evidence to back up data.

The MI101 survey also asked respondents for helpful tips for municipal professionals who are increasing capacity to innovate. The responses included the following:

“Collaborate with all levels of staff for innovation. Ideas and innovation that begins and stays at one level will struggle for success. Talk to people/staff at all levels to gain perspectives that you might not have. Encourage idea sharing and collaboration amongst all staff regardless of position.”

“Set aside budget money for direct use for innovation so it is there if and when you need it.”

“Network with other professionals in[side] and outside of your industry so that you have a team of professionals to work with on new ideas.”

“Don't be concerned with the ownership of ideas. Be willing to share and work with partners to make your ideas a reality.”

“Approach it like a startup, get group buy-in then do a weekly standup to keep everyone accountable”

“Don't stop when you hit the first bump - innovation is borne from good ideas driven by intent for positive impact but getting there may take a few tries.”

“Look to others; co-workers, community partners, or the internet to find ideas for new ways to do things. You often don't need to fine a totally unique idea to solve a problem for it to be innovative. Use the good ideas of others to solve your unique situations.”

“Trust your employees and let them do what they want to do. Empower them fully to be creative and in a way they want to be. Provide total control to them and see how successful or not successful the outcome is. There needs to be a development of corporate culture and physical collaborative spaces in order for innovation to happen.”

An objective to the MI101 survey was to learn from peers how to pursue innovative thinking and process. The questions reflected the how behind calculating risk and reward, gathering buy in, engaging with stakeholders.

A common reference in economic development of today is ‘entrepreneurial culture’, and in the context of business development, or business attraction, communities strive to support and service entrepreneurs and welcome the culture behind the maker economy.

When we look inside the walls of municipal government, fostering an entrepreneurial culture should be no different than what we support in our downtowns. As stated in [Business Insider](#), “Building a culture that encourages autonomy, risk-taking, and entrepreneurial behavior is challenging,” said Jennifer Prosek, CEO of CJP Communications and the author of [Army of Entrepreneurs: Create an Engaged and Empowered Workforce for Exceptional Business Growth](#). “For companies that want to out-think and out-pace the competition, an entrepreneurial culture isn't optional: it's an absolute necessity.”

The same can be said for municipal government - in order to advance municipal innovation, there must be acceptance to the risk and decision makers must possess vision to see the reward.

“Innovation sometimes means failure. So we have to get comfortable with that. We have to fail fast, and learn and forgive.”

~Jason Reynar, Town of Innisfil

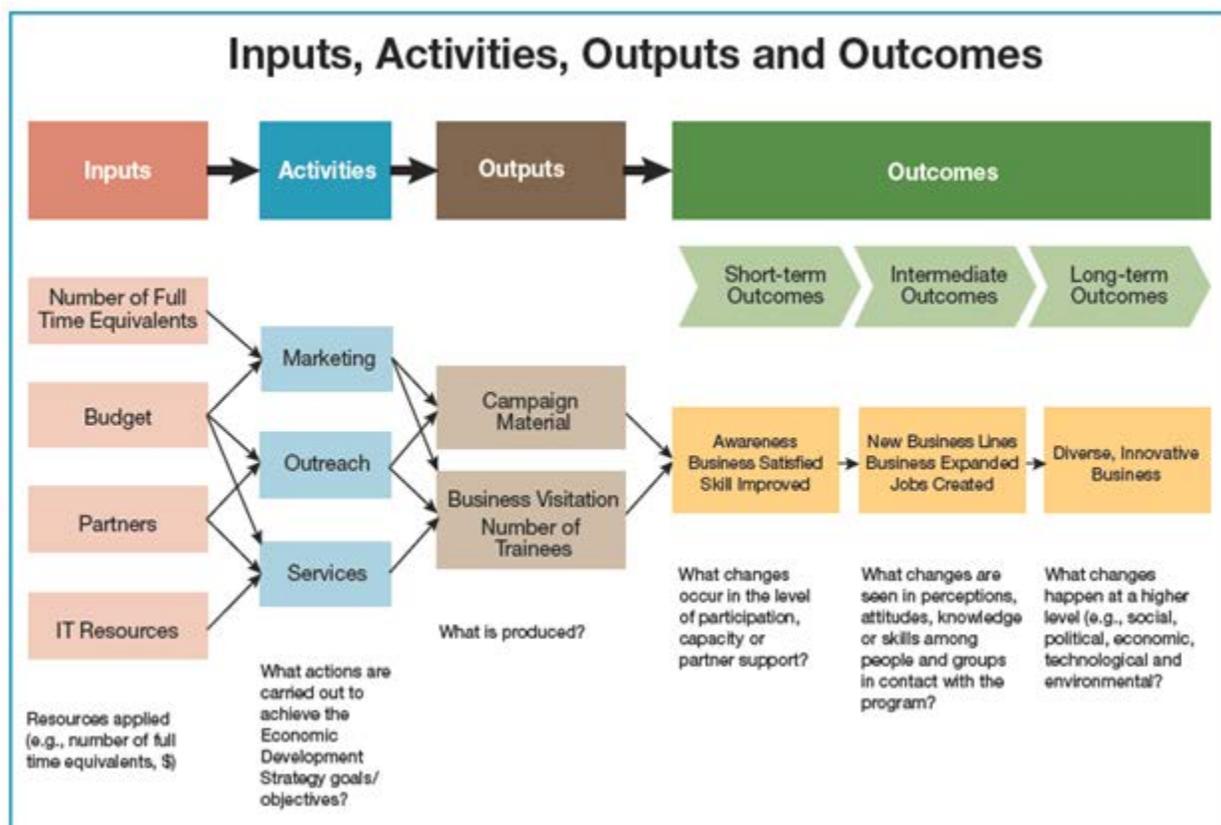
Evaluating Results

The process of municipal innovation requires evaluation and critical review, like any other project and process delivered by municipal government. Innovation partners should be closely involved in the evaluation process, and should consider initial project planning including objectives, key messaging, including anticipated outputs and outcomes as part of process review.

Collaborative efforts offer a diverse skill set, including lived experience, education and knowledge of those involved. In addition, collaborative efforts bring 'lessons learned' to the table.

OMAFRA offers economic development professionals a workshop relating to Performance Measurement, defining performance measurement as *"the process of monitoring, measuring, assessing and reporting on the progress that a plan is making toward the desired outcomes"*.

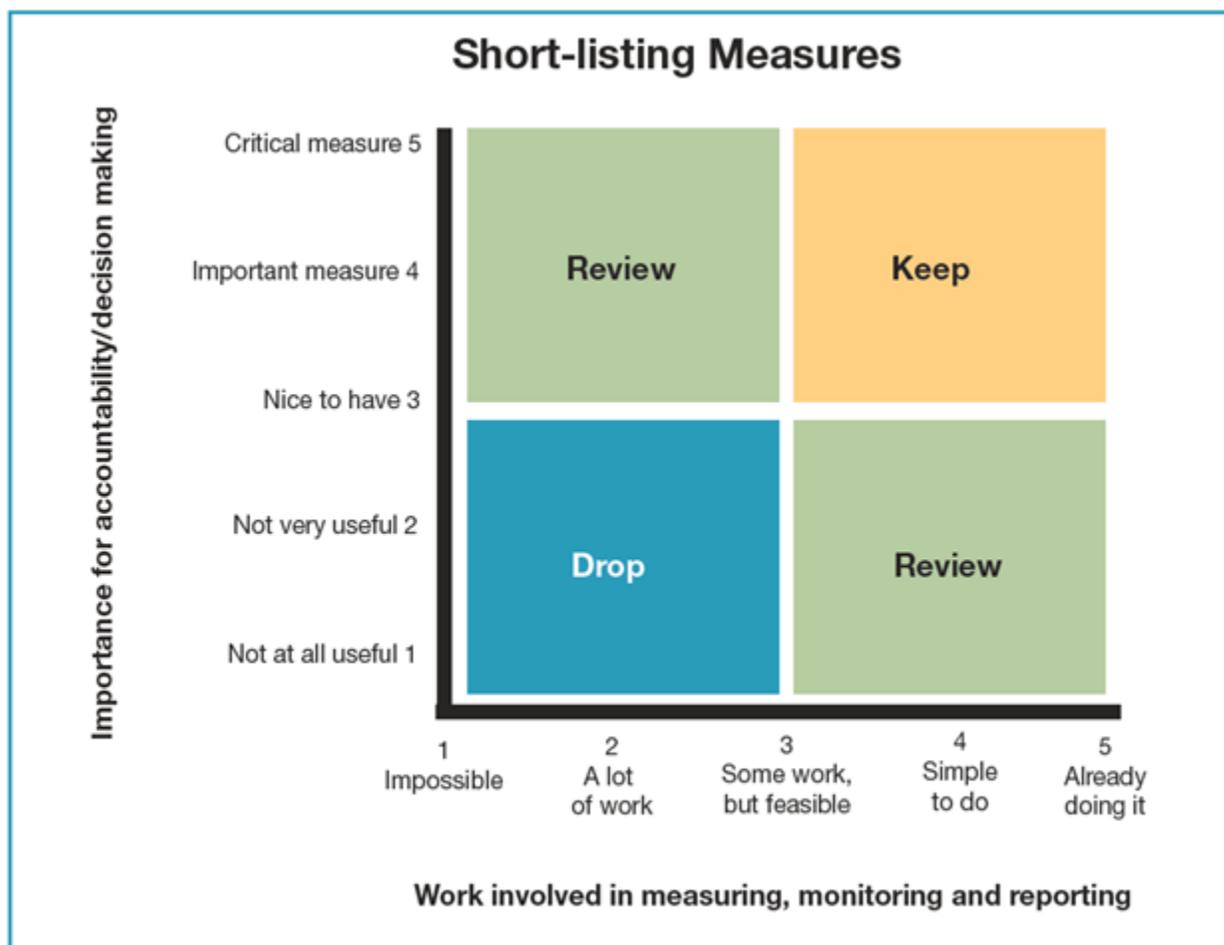
The workshop offered by OMAFRA provides training into logic model evaluation which have the potential to support project buy in, engagement, and could influence funding/support. As a best practice, logic model evaluation could be applied to a municipal innovation process, and will help the team determine the true outputs and outcomes, and the value of the work completed.



*chart provided by OMAFRA

Evaluation is a critical component for municipal innovation, in order to report with accuracy and transparency to Council and to the public. Although evaluation must occur at the assumed end of an innovation process/project, evaluation could be considered through phases of the project as well.

The OMAFRA Performance Measurement trains the audience to acknowledge evaluation as a critical component of project completion, however OMAFRA reminds the audience this process is through, requires resources and should be completed as required.



*chart provided by OMAFRA

The Cycle: Refining & Improving Solutions

Learning is a powerful experience. In many cases humans learn by failure, and conclude what not to do again. Individuals and organizations also learn by experience, by research, by gathering evidence, and by making informed decisions.

Guy Winch, Ph.D., states “the problem is failure might be a great teacher, but it is also a cryptic one. Figuring out its lesson is no easy task, especially when we’re still nursing a bruised ego and swimming in frustration, disappointment, and demoralization, not to mention the occasional embarrassment, resentment, and hopelessness” in a [Huff Post article](#).

Winch continues in this article to explain guidelines to analyze failures and identify specific issues to correct while pursuing goals or tasks going forward. He further explains 1. Re-evaluate your planning, 2. Re-evaluate your preparation, 3. Re-evaluate your execution and 4. Focus on variables in your control.

When it comes to a municipal innovation process, all partners must be prepared to learn. Teams must be prepared to experiment, to try, to test and to achieve. Each failure is a learning opportunity, and each opportunity to learn brings an innovation team closer to a desired result.

Regular project and process evaluations ensure accountability, can re-define or delineate the objectives and are a key reflection piece for improvement.

[Kevin White from IdeaScale](#) reminds us that failure is a step being innovative, “The keys to innovation from failure are to have a culture around dealing with and accepting failures, failing fast, and learning from the failure.”

A workplace culture which permits failure, celebrates lessons learned and encourages employees to express themselves through their work will welcome talent and innovative thinkers.

“I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.”

~Thomas A. Edison

Words of Wisdom

We asked our network of changemakers and innovators what tips they would provide to municipal professionals who are increasing their capacity to innovate.

“Collaborate with all levels of staff for innovation. Ideas and innovation that begins and stays at one level will struggle for success. Talk to people/staff at all levels to gain perspectives that you might not have. Encourage idea sharing and collaboration amongst all staff regardless of position. Network with other professionals in and outside of your industry so that you have a team of professionals to work with on new ideas.”

~Laura Kranenburg, Supervisor of Asset Management and GIS, Town of Saugeen Shores

“Don't worry about the vote, or the people who speak the loudest. Sometimes it is the small groups that don't want change that you will hear from, yet 90% of people who agree with you won't speak up and they are happy with your new direction. Don't be afraid, let go, and innovate because it is the right thing to do not because you may offend others or not get a vote down the road.”

~Kate Cammidge-Irwin, Realtor, Remax Land Exchange Ltd. Brokerage

“Approach it like a startup, get group buy-in then do a weekly standup to keep everyone accountable.”

~Alison Anderson, CEO, SXNM SuccessionMatching Ltd.

“Don't stop when you hit the first bump - innovation is borne from good ideas driven by intent for positive impact but getting there may take a few tries.”

~Amanda Maxwell, HR Generalist and Retention Specialist, Bruce County

“Think, Dream, listen to your own thoughts. Explore what the rest of the world is doing with amazement.”

~Anitta Hamming, President, Creative Nomad Studios

“Learn how to deal with people who don't want to be on board or are resistant. (It's not easy).”

~Rick Talbot, New Services Development Manager, Softchoice

“Practice your resiliency. In the absence of the right culture to foster innovative you need to mentally train yourself to be resilient and focus on understanding your cues for when you need help/support.”

~Renee Recoskie, Manager of Environmental Compliance, City of Orillia

“Be brave - say yes without the why. Be humble - know what you do not know and seek out those who do. Be curious - the stuff happening in the world is amazing, find it. Be thoughtful - watch your limiting thoughts. Hear them, change them. Be flexible.”

~Anitta Hamming, CEO & President, Creative Nomad Studios

Case Study

Collaborative Innovation: Municipal Innovation Council for a Purpose

The Municipal Innovation Council (MIC) is a collaborative effort between eight municipal partners, working closely with Nuclear Innovation Institute (NII). As a three year pilot project, the concept was developed to be reflective of the potential behind working together, to learn, to collaborate and to transform the way municipalities do business.

The MIC concept document was prepared in partnership with area CAOs, who identified the areas of focus being Construction and Infrastructure, IT and Digital Services, Municipal Sustainability and Liveable Communities. Each area of focus was further defined and provided priority project examples, such as affordable housing, waste management, physician recruitment, transportation and more. The MIC concept also spoke to how municipalities will innovate in order to remain sustainable through modernization and seeking efficiencies.

In addition to the concept document, the potential partners gathered to build a business plan for the MIC. This document speaks to how the MIC will function, including the recruitment and reporting of a Municipal Lab Director. The funding model was also addressed in this document, setting the model to be \$12,000 base membership fee, in addition to \$2.50 per household (2016 census). Both the business plan and the concept document were developed by area CAOs, demonstrating their desire and ability to collaborate and advance a partnership for the betterment of the region.

Collaboration: our history

We've tried..

- To streamline
- To be innovative
- To think outside the box
- To work together on common municipal challenges



Lack of assigned staff and funding have caused barriers to advance collaborative measures.

Slide from delegation to Bruce County Council, December 5, 2019

As Councils of potential partners learned of the MIC, the opportunity to leverage NII, and the collaborative desire to advance this project, eight partners have secured seats.

Collaboration: our opportunity

With the right model, we can..

- ✓ Deliver results
- ✓ Foster relationships
- ✓ Leverage strengths
- ✓ Seek advice and share expert opinions
- ✓ Collectively fund new opportunities
- ✓ Streamline process
- ✓ Be creative



Slide from delegation to Bruce County Council, December 5, 2019

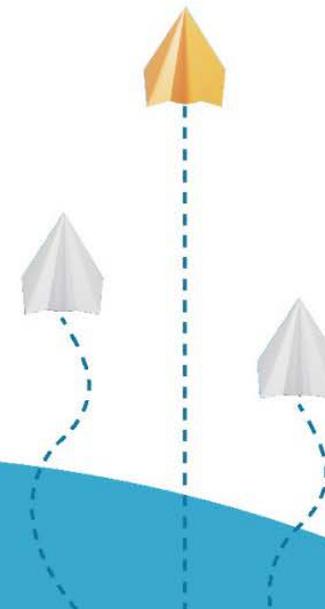
A collective MOU has been signed by all partners, and the MIC will be advancing the position of Lab Director in the first quarter of 2020. With this position filled, the MIC will be ready to move forward as planned. A launch event will take place on January 16th, and will highlight the importance of creating a culture of innovation. Following a keynote address, and a photo opportunity for the partners to celebrate their success, member of the MIC will participate in a priority setting exercise.

Collaborative project: how does it work?

- Three-year pilot project
- **Partner contributions:**
 - 1) Appoint municipal staff to participate in strategic planning discussion, collaborate with partners, advance and implement new process
 - 2) Funding MIC will ensure staffing, resources available to advance initiatives, including research, studies, implementation

Slide from delegation to Bruce County Council, December 5, 2019

Partners of the MIC are looking forward to advancing collective priority areas, and will move forward together as we learn, collaborate and will transform the way we're doing business.

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner of the page. It features a blue curved shape at the bottom. Above this shape, three paper airplanes are shown. One is orange and is positioned higher than the other two, which are grey. Dashed lines represent the flight paths of the airplanes, starting from the blue shape and pointing upwards towards the airplanes.

Taking the Leap

Beyond the Toolkit

Recommended Reading

- *Innovation by Design*, Thomas Lockwood and Edgar Papke
- *Originals*, Adam Grant
- *The Innovator's DNA*, Jeff Dyer, Hal Gregerson, Clayton M. Christensen
- *Questions are the Answer*, Hal Gregoerson
- *Scaredy Squirrel*, Melanie Watt
- *The Lean Leader*, Robert B. Camp
- *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, Betty Edwards

Recommended Viewing

- Simon Sinek, Start with Why. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKF_VuA
- The Bruce: Exploring the Future as a Community. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxV2I0q6WU0&feature=youtu.be>
- Brene Brown on Empathy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>
- Five Monkeys, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-PvBo75PDo>
- Innovation in Local Government, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqVSyhoROcs>

Recommended Organizations/Awards

- Municipal Innovators Community (MiC), www.municipalinnovators.ca
- Twenty One Toys, <https://twentyonetoys.ca/pages/empathy-toy>
- OpenNorth, <https://www.opennorth.ca/>
- Evergreen, <https://www.evergreen.ca/>
- Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators: Willis Award for Innovation, <http://www.camacam.ca/awards>
- Ontario: AMCTO - E.A. Danby Award, <https://www.amcto.com/About/Awards/E-A-Danby-Award-Page>
- CityLab, www.citylab.com

Recommended Events

- Smart Cities Reverse Pitch Day, <https://www.communitech.ca/how-we-help/acquire-customers/enterprise-collision-days/smart-cities-reverse-pitch-day-november-4-2019/>
- TEDxOrillia, <https://www.tedxorillia.com/>

Cited in this Toolkit

Some sources were also directly linked within this document.

- *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, Betty Edwards
- *How to Win Followers and Build Influence: Launching a Social Media Advocacy Program for your City Staff*, Brandon Currie. <https://publicsectordigest.com/article/how-win-followers-and-build-influence-launching-social-media-advocacy-program-your-city>
- *6 Ideas To Promote Innovation In Your Workplace This Year*, Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2012/12/31/6-ideas-to-promote-innovation-in-your-workplace-this-year/#2ba7f41a1fe4>
- *13 incredible perks of working at Google, according to employees*, Insider. <https://www.insider.com/coolest-perks-of-working-at-google-in-2017-2017-7>
- *Initiatives to increase civic engagement in Toronto*
<https://medium.com/@civictoronto/initiatives-to-increase-civic-engagement-in-toronto-cb64a70ed4c8>
- *4 key learning from failure*
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- *Learning from Failure*
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- *Building an entrepreneurial culture*
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- *Tamarack Institute*, <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/communityinnovation>
- *Inclusive Business*, <https://www.inclusivebusiness.net/ib-voices/leveraging-technological-disruption-and-innovation-scale-social-impact>

NOT The End

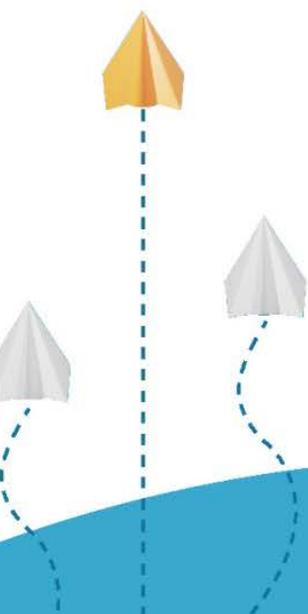
The EDCO Bright Ideas competition presented an opportunity for the authors of this document to delve into the world of innovation. The amount of resources, organizations and initiatives surrounding innovation can be overwhelming and daunting to those who are just starting to make intentional innovation a priority within their organization. We have barely scratched the surface within this document.

This municipal toolkit truly is a “101” primer on innovation, and is meant to be an easily digestible starting point for innovation “newbies”.

The authors of this toolkit recommend that the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO) take on this living document, and continuously improve and update the content on an annual basis. If there is one thing we have learned in drafting this toolkit, the Economic Development profession boasts some of the most creative and innovative people in government. We recommend that EDCO develop an “EDCO Innovation Team” to crowdsource insight and case studies from EDCO members on an annual basis until innovation becomes second nature for government organizations. The EDCO Innovation Team should consider delivering programming such as the Bright Ideas Competition so that Economic Development professionals across the province can continue to be leaders in innovation.

“Innovative workspaces are led by the top down with a collaborative and not competitive model of leadership. Innovative leaders are always confident, encouraging, real, and look to better the individual and build them up. By building up and encouraging thinking, encouraging independence, encouraging decision making, teaching and leading mindset, a corporation will trickle down and foster collaborations of strengths and not competitions of weaknesses.”

~Anitta Hamming, CEO & President, Creative Nomad Studios



Taking the Leap

