

# **Evaluating Community/Post-Secondary Collaboration in support of Community Environmental Sustainability**

Includes:  
**Final Report**

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Completed for: Trent Centre for Community-Based Education  
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Department: n/a (paid research assistanceship)  
Course Code: n/a  
Course Name: n/a  
Term: n/a  
Date of Project Submission: December 2013

Project ID: 4421



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

# **Community Environmental Sustainability Hub, Peterborough/Haliburton: First Year Evaluation Report**

Date: December 18, 2013  
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## Abstract

The Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) is a Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded research project designed to provide insights into how post-secondary institutions and community partners can establish and maintain successful relationships that ultimately maximize the value created for non-profit organizations. CFICE is organized into five self-managing research hubs; the focus of this report is the Peterborough and Haliburton section of the Community Environmental Sustainability (CES) hub. Hub members participated in interviews and a focus group to discuss the results of four first year demonstration projects. For the most part, results were favourable, especially for community-based organizations, who pointed to a high level of influence and a number of net gains such as increased capacity and the development of valuable resources. A notable finding was the important role of community-university bridging organizations, U-Links and the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education. Participants identified both organizations as a critical ingredient to the smooth functioning of demonstration projects. Challenges participants identified included delay of grant funds, delayed ethics approval and university resistance to community-based research projects in some areas.

**Contents**

Abstract ..... 3

Introduction ..... 5

1.1 CFICE and CES Hub Background ..... 5

1.2 CES Hub Year One: Demo Projects, Research Methods and Limitations..... 7

1.3 Community-Campus Evaluation Research Results ..... 13

1.4 The Glue: The Role of TCCBE and U-Links ..... 18

1.5 Challenges ..... 21

1.6 Final Thoughts and Next Steps..... 25

Appendix A..... 27

Appendix B ..... 32

**List of Tables**

Table 1: CES Hub Organizations..... 7

Table 2: Level of Influence versus Net Gains/Net Losses..... 13

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to document the results of the first year demonstration projects from the Community Environmental Sustainability (CES) hub of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) research project. The first section provides background about CFICE as and the CES hub. The second section delves into the four demonstration projects including profiles, results and the benefits partners derived from the projects. The third section highlights a re-occurring theme from the evaluation: the role of bridging organizations such as the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education (TCCBE) and U-Links and the value they offer both community and university partners. The fourth section describes the challenges participants faced, particularly on the university side of the equation, where the largest number seemed to arise. Finally, the last section looks toward the future, laying out needs to be addressed moving forward and what might enhance future demonstration projects.

### **1.1 CFICE and CES Hub Background**

In broad terms, CFICE is an action research project that aims to strengthen Canadian non-profits, universities colleges and funding agencies to build more successful, innovative, resilient, and prosperous communities. One of the principal goals of the CFICE research project is to provide insights into how post-secondary institutions and community partners can establish and maintain successful relationships that ultimately maximize the value created for non-profit community organizations. With this goal in mind, the overarching research question is how can community-campus engagement be designed and implemented in ways that maximize the value created for non-profit community-based organizations? By answering this question, the hope is

to ultimately create a set of tested refined models of campus-community partnerships that optimize outcomes and practical tools for implementing them.

The CFICE project is organized into five self-managing research hubs: Poverty Reduction, Community Food Security, Violence Against Women, Knowledge Mobilization and Community Environmental Sustainability. CFICE is a seven year project organized into two phases. Phase one (years one to four), will center on individual hub research activities related to the “issue”(e.g. community environmental sustainability) and related community-campus engagement. Each hub develops and manages its own agenda of research design and implementation, membership development and co-creation of popular, professional and academic knowledge. Phase two (years five to seven), will be more policy and institution-oriented, with CFICE working through three policy working groups: community-based organizations, universities & colleges and governments & foundations. These groups will seek to build on the research produced in phase one to implement and produce policy change through a number of methods and mechanisms.

The focus of this report is related to the first year of the CES hub. Thematically, the CES hub is broadly interested in the ways communities attempt to: transform themselves towards greater sustainability, respond to global challenges through local actions, reduce their individual and collective ecological footprint, strengthen local resilience, and mitigate and adapt to the combined effects of peak oil and climate change. The CES hub is also interested in the extent to which marginalized communities have an active voice and leadership in the environmental decision-making that affects change in the communities they live in. The CES hub is comprised of a group of personnel from non-profit community-based organizations as well as faculty from Trent University, Carleton University and Fleming College (See Table 1). All participants are

based in the Ottawa, Peterborough or Haliburton areas. Co-lead organizations are Todd Barr from the TCCBE and Patricia Ballamingie from Carleton University

**Table 1: CES Hub Organizations**

Trent University (Political Studies/Environmental & Resource Studies/Sustainability Studies)
Carleton University (Geography)
Fleming College
Peterborough Green-Up
Haliburton Land Trust
Abbey Gardens
Peterborough Social Planning Council
Community Opportunity Innovation Network
Sustainable Living Ottawa East
Trent Centre for Community-Based Education
U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research

The objectives of the CES hub are:

1. To bring service learning and academic expertise to bear on challenges identified by community groups
2. To identify sustainable funding models for the development, implementation and ongoing delivery of innovative and community-based environmental initiatives
3. To examine the potential diffusion of successful demonstration projects and best practices
4. To increase community resilience to multiple converging ecological threats.

## **1.2 CES Hub Year One: Demo Projects, Research Methods and Limitations**

The origins of the CES hub date back to November 2010. The co-leads and core members of the CES hub prepared the two-stage, 18 month-long grant application and preliminary work plans leading up to the first funded hub meeting on December 12, 2012. This meeting marked the first time all hub members were brought together. This started conversations and got the wheels rolling on demonstration project development. A report of the activities and discussions from this day was written and disseminated in early 2013.

Besides facilitating and overseeing demonstration projects, one of the primary responsibilities of hub level staff is evaluation. Hub staff includes CES hub project co-leads and research assistants (RAs) hired both in Ottawa and Peterborough/Haliburton. There were two types of RA's, at the hub level and demonstration project level. At the hub level, RA's were assigned the primary task of evaluation of demonstration projects. At the demonstration project level, RA's responsibilities pertained to facilitating and supporting their respective demonstration projects through a variety of supplemental research activities. For the Peterborough and Haliburton demonstration projects, RA's were also members of a participating class supporting two of the demonstration projects. These students were chosen based on how closely their own research aligned with that of the demonstration projects.

The Peterborough and Haliburton hub RA was hired in early December 2012. Talks around demonstration projects began at the December 2012 meeting, becoming more formal by the end of January and ultimately getting off the ground by February. Two of the four demonstration projects were single phase beginning in January, ending in April. The other two demonstration projects occurred over two phases, with phase one starting in January and concluding in June and August respectively and the second phase beginning at the end of the winter semester in April and ending concurrently with phase one in June and August respectively (See section 1.2 for elaboration). Because the hub-level RA was hired in early December, he was able to observe the demonstration projects from their inception. Along the way, the hub RA attended numerous meetings, conference calls and had several conversations informally with participants in an attempt to build a more thorough understanding of the process and operations of community-university partnerships. These observations help inform this report.



**Demonstration Project #1**

Topic: Rehabilitated Lands and Bio-Diversity
Organizations: Haliburton Land Trust, Trent University, U-Links
Place: Haliburton
Number of Phases: One
Class: Community-Based Natural Resource Management ERSC 3160H
Class Level: Undergraduate
Research Assistant: No
Description: The purpose of this project was to have Trent students develop bio-diversity checklists to help volunteers of the Land Trust monitor the ecological integrity of the Land Trust's four environmentally sensitive properties. Goals of the project were designed to help the Land Trust achieve wide stewardship of lands, a fundamental objective of its organization.

**Demonstration Project #2**

Topic: Environmental Site Planning
Organizations: Abbey Gardens, Trent University, U-Links
Place: Haliburton
Number of Phases: Two
Class: Research Methods: Collaborative Approaches SUST-CSID 5002H
Class Level: Graduate
Research Assistant: Yes
Description: The purpose of this project was to bring together Abbey Gardens trust members and additional expertise to undertake a needs assessment for the Abbey Gardens Community Trust site remediation effort and community gardens project. Individual site components were discussed to determine what is needed to proceed with these components in mind. Trent students helped facilitate a workshop and write a report to help reach this goal.

**Demonstration Project #3**

Topic: Governance and Financing Models for Social Innovation Councils
Organizations: Peterborough Council for Social Innovation, Trent University, TCCBE
Place: Peterborough
Number of Phases: Two
Class: Research Methods: Collaborative Approaches SUST-CSID 5002H
Class Level: Graduate
Research Assistant: Yes
Description: Trent students worked with the PCSI Steering Committee's Governance Subcommittee to develop and implement a community based research project that facilitated a conversation on the direction of their governance, operations, collaborations and finance strategies during their pilot project. Trent students ran two of the three workshops with the PCSI Steering Committee and representatives from other organizations interested in becoming members. The workshops focused on governance, operations and collaboration models and strategies.

**Demonstration Project #4**

Topic: Safe and Active Routes to School
Organizations: Peterborough Green-Up, Trent University, TCCBE
Place: Peterborough
Number of Phases: One
Class: Sustainable Innovation ERST 3130H
Class Level: Undergraduate
Research Assistant: No
Description: Members of Peterborough Green-Up and the City of Peterborough worked with Trent students on a project about school travel. The purpose was to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors, both policy and structural, that shaped individual choices about how children choose to get to school. Results of the project will help inform the work of a local collaborative called Active and Safe Routes to School, in which both community and municipal

organizations are members of.

Methods for evaluation were focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Initially, the plan was to have the entire hub including all demonstration projects participate in a focus group and complete follow-up interviews where necessary. This way, the hub RA could evaluate the demonstration projects while members of each project would have the opportunity to exchange findings and learn from each other's experience. Although this did happen to some degree as members from multiple demonstration projects did participate in a focus group; it was not to the extent desired. Scheduling conflicts and lack of availability were the forces impeding this. As a result, interviews had to be conducted with participants unable to make the focus group. In total, five interviews and one focus group were conducted. Fortunately, through this combination of methods, participants from each partner organization involved in each demonstration project contributed. That said, because of personnel changes at one participating organization, the researcher was unable to secure input from one organization about the first quarter of their demonstration project.

What's missing from the data is student input. Although attempts were made to procure student involvement electronically, it was to no avail. Delayed ethics approval coupled with an ethical firewall between the evaluation of the demonstration project and the professor of the courses from demonstration projects prevented the researcher from contacting students in a reasonable time frame to solicit participation. This will be elaborated upon later in the report; nevertheless, this clearly leaves a gap in the data set.

As the mantra of CFICE is community based-research, research methods were grounded in participatory-action principles including focus group activities such as the *Stakeholder*

*Rainbow* (Chevalier & Buckles 2013). Focus group and interview questions were informed by the following sub-research questions from CFICE (also see Appendices A & B):

- 1) How does community-campus engagement take place across various scales and how might successful partnerships be more widely replicated?
- 2) How do non-profit community organizations define, evaluate and utilize the value created by community-campus engagement?
- 3) How can non-profit community organizations effectively exercise or share control over the design and implementation of CSL, CBR and other engagement activities?
- 4) What processes of engagement, governance, evaluation, feedback loops and course design on the part of universities and colleges serve to maximize value creation for non-profit community organizations?
- 5) What types of impacts are generated by community-campus engagement, particularly for non-profit organizations and the interests they serve, and how might these be captured both quantitatively and qualitatively?
- 6) To what extent do marginalized communities have an active voice and leadership role in community-university projects, and as a result, in the environmental decision-making that affects change in the communities they live in?

Primary data collection occurred in May and June 2013. The focus group was held May 28, while interviews were conducted between June 5 and 20. It is important to note the timing of data collection when interpreting the findings in this report. Since there were four demonstration projects, they all started and finished at different times. Moreover, some projects had multiple phases. Although the research successfully captured the completion of both single phase demonstration projects involving the Peterborough Green-Up and the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust, it did not capture the second phases of the two phase demonstration projects involving the Peterborough Centre for Social Innovation (PCSI)/COIN and Abbey Gardens. Multiple community and university partners cautioned this while describing the results of their project.

### 1.3 Community-Campus Evaluation Research Results

This section collectively discusses the level of influence amongst different partners, demonstration project results and how each partner will use the results from their respective demonstration projects.

From each of the four demonstration projects, participants were asked to describe their level of influence over the design and implementation of the community-university demonstration project. To better understand their chosen level of influence, participants were also asked if their level of influence resulted in net gains or net losses for their organization. The outcomes are illustrated Table 2.

**Table 2: Level of Influence versus Net Gains/Net Losses**

	Net Gain +	Net Gain ++	Net Gain +++	Net Loss ---	Net Loss --	Net Loss -
High (influence)	C	C	C C			
Moderate (influence)		U U	C C C			
Low (influence)		C	U			

C = Community Representative; U = University Representative  
Total Number of Participants (N) = 11

For the most part, the demonstration project outcomes presented above are fairly positive. As a participant from TCCBE said during the focus group, “[T]he thing that jumps out at me in terms of looking at this, which is a good thing from my perspective as a broker of community-post-secondary projects is that all the community organizations have a high level of influence.” With at least half of participants from community organizations expressing a high level of influence and more than three quarters feeling like they had at least a moderate level, this affirms said participant’s observation. As CFICE’s mandate is geared broadly towards empowering

community organizations, this is a welcome development. At the same time, it is worth asking why there is a difference in the levels of influence between the community and university sector. Part of the reason for this may be attributed to the nature of faculty involvement in community-university partnerships, at least when a class is involved. A faculty member from Trent University explains,

My influence is less what the project should be and more to push the two sides together. To get the students who are in my courses interested in taking on one of the three projects. From the other side, working with community organizations and TCCBE to stimulate the community organization to want to do a project about what the course material is about. I don't really have any influence on the nature in both cases. I outline a bunch of alternatives in the courses and then they decide what they want to do, in some cases, they pick their own. In the case of community organizations, they have their agenda and my job is try and understand that agenda and see how it fits with the course material. The inter-face as someone who is trying to communicate between the students and the organization, in a way I am playing the role some of what U-Links and the TCCBE play as well but I have to pay attention to I have to evaluate students on something and I have to pay attention to the fact that I am really interested in seeing a long-term relationship between the community organization and the university, there are long-term goals, they have that are important.

Based on this description, it may not be problematic but understandable that university partners do not have a high level of influence. However, as demonstrated by this characterization, the level of influence may change if students were part of the equation. If students had participated in the development of the demonstration projects and the evaluation research above, there would only be additional insights into how much influence members from the university have. As a faculty member from Trent highlighted;

I was going to say, the missing piece, the actually interesting variable is the students. And depending on their autonomy and if we think of a continuum where a first year student might do an activity like going to a water festival or something like that to a graduate student like [who is]. Elizabeth is a competent professional in all respects so the graduate student can, would have the influence, I would defer to the graduate student because they would be spending all the time and I think a lot of the community groups would as well versus a third year student who says oh this is what I want to do and have someone review it closely. So I do think there is a need for a continuum for community/university

oversight or input and influence upon the project and maybe that's a factor here... So I think there is definitely a factor (students) that's going to be missed in this picture.

The absence of students also needs to be considered when examining the larger cleavage between university and community sectors in terms of the level of gain. As in many cases, part of the objectives of these projects is to give students real-world experience and help them develop or build their particular skill sets. Depending on the students, the gap between the sectors may have been less; yet, without their participation in the evaluation research, this is purely speculative. That said, all partners regardless of sector reported at minimum a net gain. Although it is difficult to compare equally given the larger number of participants from the community sector, the community sector did seem to derive more from their demonstration projects. As CFICE is a community oriented project whose primary research question pertains to creating value non-profit community-based organizations, this is a positive sign.

Much of these gains are evident in the results community participants reported. In the case of the Haliburton Land Trust demonstration project, six groups of students ended up producing bio-diversity checklists designed to monitor the ecological integrity of four environmentally sensitive properties in Haliburton. Although as a participant from the Land Trust stated, the lists may require some refinement. Land Trust participants also indicated other land-owners may be interested in using the checklists (i.e. land not in the purview of the Land Trust), therefore helping to meet one of the objectives of the Land Trust, which is broadly promoting land stewardships in Haliburton County. Similarly, a participant from Abbey Gardens said the workshop student-run to help their organization prepare their site plan "went really well." Another participant from Abbey Gardens found the corresponding report from the workshop to be a "fabulous" training tool. In Peterborough, a participant from Peterborough Green-Up reported that results from their demonstration project led to a... "[B]etter

understanding of the factors that influence school travel. Hopefully, we will be able to identify some leverage points that future programming can seek to influence.”

A participant from the PCSI demonstration project called the research report “useful” saying...

It’s a great reference. I can give it to anybody who joins our steering committee to give them some more information about what we are doing here. It’s going to help the steering committee make a decision but they are also going to get some nascent case studies to help them with that decision.

Clearly, positive results emanated from the demonstration projects. Furthermore, all demonstration projects seemed to meet expectations. There were no incidences of unfinished or incomplete demonstration projects and no signs of discontent. What makes this finding interesting is demonstration projects varied in terms of mandatory participation for students. Yet, this does not seem to have had a large impact on outcomes. Nevertheless, not all projects were perfect. When asked about the results of projects, a faculty member from Trent responded;

Variable; a couple mediocre; didn’t exactly go where the community group wanted them to go. A couple I suspect won’t get used very much but the others were quite good, the others were very good, nailed some important part of what was being asked of them and then there was one that was superb.

A participant from Abbey Gardens, conceded that in the collection of materials she received, there were “some better than others.”

The other caveat to results is timing. As a faculty member from Trent aptly noted, “I think one of the things that needs to be discussed with your evaluation component is the timing element of it.” Other participants raised similar concerns. When asked to describe the results of the PCSI demonstration project, a participant from PCSI stated “I don’t know if you are evaluating the first half or the second half of the research?” Herein lies the problem. Two demonstration projects were single phased - beginning in January and concluding in May. The other two demonstration projects had two phases with the second phase beginning roughly in



May. Because primary data collection for phase two of these demonstration projects occurred from late May to mid-June, this evaluation research project was not able to capture the entirety of the second phase of the PCSI and Abbey Gardens projects. Consequently, the research does not reflect the full impact of either of the demonstration projects. Despite this, early indications from participants pointed to the quality of the work and thus the effect on their organization being comparable if not superior to the work completed in the first phase.

According to participants what has made a two phase demonstration project possible is working with graduate students. A participant from PCSI elaborates, “The fact that this is a Masters program is helpful because your school year is not over. In the past, I have only worked with undergraduates on these things (community-university research projects); this wouldn’t have been as easily facilitated by an undergraduate school year.” Although there is not enough evidence amongst participants to indicate a preference for graduate students, in part because it depends on the nature of the project, as this example suggests, the structure of the graduate program, in this case, the Sustainability Studies Master of Arts program, does permit a longer and more in-depth demonstration project.

Many of the results from demonstration projects have helped organizations accomplish larger internal objectives or put in place pieces required for further development or even expansion of their organizations. A participant from the Land Trust details the impact on their organization;

It’s been highly positive for use because coincidentally, it meshes really well with the strategic plan of the Land Trust. That’s very helpful. One of the things we want to do is increase community involvement and increases the number of volunteers we have and of course increase our membership, which to me is top priority. The bio-diversity project has that potential of bringing more volunteers to the land trust. And also getting more community members out there, looking at the land, which is also good. And coincidentally that is a goal of OTF (Ontario Trillium Foundation) and we are putting a grant in, so it’s all just meshing beautifully. It has a lot of threads and it kind of, in my

mind now, it's almost the centre and bringing all those threads together. And it's really helping bring the Land Trust together and achieve goals in our strategic plan and it's really important.

A comparable level of enthusiasm was expressed by a participant from Abbey Gardens when asked if there had been any losses from participation;

I can't think of losses. Sometimes we're too slow on stuff, sometimes [students are] a little slow on stuff but you know that is just a human situation, it's not any big issue. We are hugely affirmative of the program and confident it's going to yield some really, really good results for Abbey Gardens hopefully over a long curve.

In the case of PCSI, its demonstration project has helped meet project goals from its OTF grant while the results from the Peterborough Green-Up demonstration project will serve as support and evidence for a future OTF application to complete further research on active and safe routes to school. Caveats aside, results from demonstration projects have met CFICE expectations and beyond.

## **1.4 The Glue: The Role of TCCBE and U-Links**

The Trent Centre for Community-Based Education (TCCBE) and U-Links Centre for Community-Based Research (U-Links) were both created in the mid to late 1990's. Despite being in existence for more than a decade, they still remain relatively rare with less than a dozen comparables across post-secondary institutions in North America. Although not part of the formal objectives of CFICE, the value of these organizations became quickly apparent when discussing community-university partnerships with Ottawa counterparts from the CES hub. As a result, a decision was made to delve deeper into their role and the benefits they provide community-university partnerships. The objective of this section will be to document this.

As it relates to CFICE, TCCBE and U-Links played a significant part in the groundwork in ultimately securing the SSHRC CFICE grant. A Trent faculty member explains,

If you are making a SSHRC proposal usually some faculty members take the lead and write drafts of it and send it over to the research office and then the research office will give feedback. In this case, TCCBE-U-Links did a lot of the ground work. They would involve faculty members, they would be a part of the discussion, we would give our comments, we were scribes a lot more. I think when it's a project between the community and university, I think it's really appropriate, it's a role those groups can play.

Operating between the university and community is the TCCBE's sweet spot. In the words of a participant from PCSI, one of the reasons for this is because "they understand both work cultures." While this example is specific to the TCCBE, this knowledge is equally applicable to U-Links, as evidenced by a comment from a participant from the Land Trust, "Heather has that familiarity with both sides, the university and the community, which is so important."

In fact, understanding both cultures allows each organization to navigate the institutional dynamics of the university effectively on behalf of community organizations. A participant from the Land Trust illustrates this;

So I always say, I love working with Heather because she sometimes anticipates my needs before I even know what they are. She has contacts at the university, she knows what the courses are, and all of that where it could help the land trust. And she will come to me and say there is course on blah, blah, do you have a project... is there a project you might be interested in or something. So I feel she has a lot of influence, all very positive.

According to a participant from PCSI, a similar dynamic occurs with TCCBE:

Tom Whillans and Stephen Hill came out to an initial meeting about PCSI, so they took time out of their schedule. We were invited to meet with their class. They also came out to that day in the multi-purpose room back of Scott House. So they were out there too. We were able to establish a sort of understanding of what was going on. And I know Stephen fairly well anyway and I knew Tom a bit but not very well before this. So in some ways, I just opened the lines of communication, like I feel like I can shoot off an e-mail to Tom anytime if I needed to get his input on something. But quite frankly, the TCCBE is the intermediary here and they do a really effective job of that and I see a lot of reason to have someone play that role, so if I had an issue, even though I feel comfortable going to Tom, I would probably go to Todd and either get his opinion on how to follow that up or potentially pass the buck to him.

Both organizations also play a significant communications role. A Trent faculty member demonstrates how this works;

They save a lot of time in terms of having pre-discussions, they save a lot of time in terms of making notes on the conversations, they're the ones who really drive the schedule, they're the ones that are really phoning the members saying we have to have a meeting coming up here and they're responding to either side. I might say in terms of the course, I need to have a meeting by next Tuesday, a conference call, they'll set up.

A participant from PCSI speaks to how the TCCBE performs a comparable role, "They helped us set this project, it was Todd who hosted when we met with Tom and Stephen and we had my committee members come in, he set up the process and he participated. Then I don't have to be the architect of the process." During the focus group, after a providing a great story about communication with U-Links, a participant from Abbey Gardens was asked whether U-Links helped build connectivity and replied with a simple "exactly."

Ultimately, taking on communications responsibilities and building connectivity help increase capacity. As the participant from PCSI alluded to in the above quote saying they did not have to be the architect, not having to play the role of architect frees up time to focus on your specific task in a community-university partnership. For example, asked if TCCBE and U-Links expand capacity, a Trent faculty member replied "Oh yeah, without any question. I spend more time doing the stuff I am well trained to do and they are good at what they do."

Although cut from a similar cloth, the roles of U-Links and TCCBE are not identical as it relates to the demonstration projects. Primarily because of distance, U-Links has to be pro-active because of its distance from the Peterborough campus where both students and professors meet. Because of this situation, U-Links chose to be pro-active in terms of communicating with local organizations and organizing communication between the Haliburton organizations and Trent personnel. According to a Trent faculty member, this helped ease the distance gap. The proximity of TCCBE to Trent and its Peterborough partners made this less necessary for TCCBE.

U-Links level of pro-activeness extended beyond merely addressing the distance gap. A participant explains;

There was one area and I am trying to remember what it was that we had some. Oh I know, it was just simple paperwork stuff, when we do a project we have a four party contract that is signed, so my signature, TCCBE/U-Links signature, students signature, and community organization's signature that says we all agree, this is what we are going to do. U-Links had that set up really nicely and for whatever reason, the TCCBE didn't do it. But they should have, that should be there.

This was not the only area participants felt U-Links practices should be replicated. Recording notes from meetings, having liability and other forms necessary for focus groups or workshops ready and maintaining regular contact with community and university partners throughout demonstration projects were other suggestions made. As these suggestions are made based on the first year of demonstration projects, there is a trial period; nevertheless, heeding these suggestions would seem feasible moving forward.

In sum, the benefits of TCCBE and U-Links are numerous. With that in mind, it is really not until organizations interact with post-secondary institutions that they fully realize how valuable these organizations are. An example courtesy of a participant from PCSI illustrates this;

I tried to do the same thing at Fleming, find out what's on their course list, it has been on my to do list for literally six months because there is no TCCBE at Fleming, there is nothing so because, so I am not working with Fleming, I will have to figure that out at some point. And I have made several phone calls to Fleming but none of them have been responded to, I am probably calling the wrong guy. There is no TCCBE, hopefully, one day there will be.

## 1.5 Challenges

The irony of TCCBE and U-Links providing a high number of benefits to community and university partners is the comparably few benefits they have received. Despite, according to participants, putting the most time into completing the CFICE grant application, these organizations have received the smallest benefit from its funding. The primary reason for this is

not the amount of funds but rather the substantial delay in their delivery. As a Trent faculty member stated, “The funds were a constraint because I remember for [the hub-level RA] position, there was a huge delay.” A participant from U-Links highlights the difficulties this produced;

But if I had to judge positive or negative and again I’m in the low category, one of the struggles I think we have had is with the flow of money with the paperwork involved in that. Community groups haven’t seen those funds yet so in terms of being affected on a small scale, that’s been a negative part for me. And I am lucky that we have strong partnerships and that those organizations are patient and that they’re not but that’s not hinging. To me, it’s a really important piece of the project was that if its communities first, let’s honour that and dollars flowing, you know it’s a small amount but its way to do that.

As other participants noted when funds are not distributed on time, the impact is much more profound on community organizations than it is on universities. As a Trent faculty member aptly stated, universities do not suffer from “cash flow problems.” In spite of this, as expressed by a participant from TCCBE, frustration reached noticeable levels,

If I can offer a perspective, at the program community level, there has been some hard tension in the room around the community partners myself included calling the university and the funder, the federal government getting their act together. It’s like if you are going to put this thing out there, and they’re like we are figuring out, what? You launched this whole grant program and you are figuring out, it’s called a partnership. It’s been really frustrating.

Other challenges were ethics related. Encouragingly, participants did not report any ethical issues. However, again, delays were the source of ethics challenges. As Carleton University is the academic co-lead on this project, they had submitted ethics applications for their Ottawa based demonstration projects prior to any submissions for the Peterborough/Haliburton demonstration projects and were successful. Therefore, a decision was made to submit a very similar application to Trent’s Research Ethics Board (REB). Unfortunately, this application was not only unsuccessful it required major revisions. A Trent faculty member explains,

There was confusion by the ethics board and the confusion was partially our fault in CFICE that we made a decision that the part you were working on, which is the evaluative part should be kept firewalled from the project parts because you can't have them together. So that we, Todd and I don't know who else he involved prepared the ethics form proposal for the stuff you're doing and that the hubs are doing and there just a very general ethics board proposal that had been submitted to Carleton with a promise to follow up later on. So that wasn't really informative to our research ethics board and then there was the individual project ones, so I wrote the individual project ones that I have been involved with and Hill helped out a bit. I went and met with the chair of the ethics board, shortly before submitting the hub one and ours and we agreed it would probably make more sense even if we wrote them separately to put them together in one package so it was clear the relationship between the two and have some sort of cover letter to explain the relationship between the two because the Carleton proposal doesn't do that, it doesn't lay it out for you, even though we could forward it to the ethics board, the ethics board wouldn't see how these two things fit into it. So we agreed, the chair and I agreed with that and I went to try and find Todd to do that and it was just bad timing and I couldn't get to him before he sent in the hub one, so we ended up having the two go in separately and then the ethics board scratching its head trying to figure out how the two are relate to each other. So that is not the ethics board fault, it's our fault; we didn't manage to connect in time. So it was like a Friday I was talking to the chair and the Monday the deadline was and I couldn't see Todd before that, it's as simple as that. If we had a chance to work on it together and I don't mean co-write I mean just make sure the link was clear between the two, it would have been a lot clearer for the ethics board. That's how it should have been done and it's the way the chair and I agreed on the Friday it should occur. It was just the rush and the timing that was the problem.

After this debacle, participants anticipate issues approaching this level will not emerge as a working relationship has been established with the REB. Because of the multi-year outlook of CFICE, future ethics applications should be able to be completed sooner as participating organizations have the opportunity to develop demonstration projects in advance of the academic year or even the next semester. Another interesting piece here is the fact that research completed within the class context does not have to go to the REB. In light of this, would it be worthwhile for the hub to examine if evaluative hub research could possibly fall under the same purview? If it saves time, a reoccurring challenge throughout demonstration projects, this might merit pursuing.

In the meantime, solving next year's ethical issues does not discount the negative impact ethical delays had on this year's demonstration projects. Because of lack of ethics approval, evaluation researchers were unable to approach students in any of the classes until the last month of the semester after classes had finished, easily the busiest time of year for students. To make matters worse, the majority of undergraduate students tend to go home around this time as exam period begins. At the same time, because of the ethical firewall put up between the professor and the students, the professor in any of the demonstration projects was not able to mention anything about any possible evaluation activity. Consequently, although attempts were made electronically both from evaluative researchers and partner organizations such as U-Links, recruitment efforts were unsuccessful; resulting in no samples of students for this data set.

The final challenge pertains to the participation of professors in community-university research projects. Professors who are members of the CES hub can be referred to as what one Trent faculty called 'boundary-spanners.' What is meant by this is professors who straddle multiple boundaries both within and outside the university. Most professors involved with these projects have sat on the boards of participating community organizations prior to the beginnings of this project and have been involved with them in some other capacity. This has no doubt played a part in the success of these demonstration projects. However, although demonstration projects are the beneficiaries of 'boundary-spanners,' these are a rare breed within the university.

There are a number of factors impeding professorial participation in community-based projects. In the view of one Trent faculty member, the main resistance stems from "perceived workload." This extra work can create complications especially as it relates to the collective labour agreement amongst faculty, as it perceived as extra work, some faculty will automatically tread carefully. There is also still institutional cultural resistance. As one Trent faculty member



stated, they felt one “still has to make the argument” about the value of community-based research. It is vital to note some disciplines lend themselves easier to community-based research than others, nonetheless, there seems to be departments whose subject would mesh well with community based research who still have significant reservations about engaging in such research. One Trent faculty member identified Sociology as one department. Lastly, there are barriers for professors depending on the stage in their career as participating in community-university partnerships rarely enhances the areas evaluated for professors seeking tenure. Together, these factors limit the number of eligible professors for community-university research partnerships. As CFICE has the timeline and funds to do so, it may be worth examining in a particular demonstration project how professors may be more incentivized to participate including what policies could be leveraged to solicit greater participation.

## **1.6 Final Thoughts and Next Steps**

Exploring how professors may be more engaged is but one future path the CES hub could follow. Another mentioned throughout the research included developing courses for students to engage in community-based research beyond one semester, thus, permitting them to participate in longer and more in-depth research projects with community organizations. Examining how students may work as RA's while holding a TAship during the academic year was an additional area participants discussed, as a possible change may increase student capacity for a community organization in a community-based research project. All are great ideas the question is how can the CES hub achieve them.

As discussed previously in section 1.3 of this report, demonstration projects have for the most part been driven by community partners in terms of content and objectives. Understandably as this is the first year, besides the core principles of CFICE, there was not really a formal

research agenda. Yet, CFICE has an advocacy based mandate. As this overarching research question implies the primary goal is to create more effective community-university research based partnerships not only in the present but also in the future. To accomplish this, changes will need to be made to the structure and model of existing community-university research based partnerships. As this report demonstrates, areas for possible change have been identified. The challenge will be incorporating these areas into demonstration projects while balancing the research priorities of the CES hub with the individual priorities of each community organization. Ultimately, if different demonstration projects can focus on particular issues and generate evidence to making policy and procedural changes, the likelihood of improved community-university partnerships increases.

That said, overall, with first year demonstration projects now complete, there is much to build on for the CES hub as it begins second year demonstration projects. All participants gave general high ratings to how worthwhile or valuable their demonstration projects were. On a scale of one to ten, one being the lowest, ten being the highest, the lowest assigned ranking was seven, while there were several nines and tens, all from community organizations. With most community organizations reporting increased capacity and generally favourable results, there are many examples of success. Finally, beyond success, according to one participant, there is a noticeable change in the conversation around community-university based partnerships;

And it is already showing itself in terms of other sources of funding, like the conversation around what's the project next year is, it's like a no brainer, it's not like oh well I'm not sure if I want to do something. So that's been an interesting difference between doing these projects as part of the CFICE project.

## **Appendix A**

CFICE Community Environmental Sustainability  
Evaluation Session

Wednesday May 29, 2013  
11am-2pm

Trill College, 310 London Street, Bagnani Hall (BG 101)

**Agenda**

Part A: Lunch  
12pm-12:30pm

Part B: Roundtable Discussion  
12:30pm-1pm

Part C: Stakeholder Rainbow Exercise  
1pm-1:50pm

Part D: Stretch and Snack Break  
1:50pm-2pm

Part E: Problem Tree Exercise  
2pm-3pm

**Part A: Lunch**

12pm-12:30pm

**Part B: Roundtable Discussion**

12:30pm-1pm

**Description:**

Participants will engage in a roundtable discussion on the following questions. Each participant will provide a brief response. For each question, participants will assign a 1-5 rating of their experience, 1 being the minimum, 5 the maximum.

**Objective:**

To gather a broad view of participants experiences from the different projects

**Questions:**

1. Describe the results from your community-university research project
2. How valuable was your community-university project? Please explain.

**Note:**

Nature of the following exercises will be semi-structured. Questions listed are only intended as a starting point for conversation, exercises were designed to delve into participants' comments and inputs.

### Part C: Stakeholder Rainbow

1pm-1:50pm

#### Description:

Participants will be asked to situate themselves within a designated space on a “rainbow” to document their involvement, influence, and net gains/losses within the demo project.

#### Objective:

To visualize the differences between stakeholders on given issues, examining what helps or hinders different stakeholders.

<b>Instructions</b>
<b>Step 1:</b>
Participants will be separated into two groups: community affiliated and university affiliated. Participants will be asked to write their name, their organization’s name and a ‘C’ or ‘U’ for their group affiliation on a card. Participants will then be asked the following questions (listed after instructions).
<b>Step 2:</b>
Responding to question #1, participants will then be asked on their card to record one, two, or three ‘I’ signs to indicate whether the participant has high (III), moderate (II), or little (I) influence on the question.
<b>Step 3:</b>
Responding to the question #2, participants will then be asked on their card to record one, two, or three plus (+) or minus signs (-) to indicate whether the participant is highly, moderately, or little affected by the question. Plus signs indicate net gains resulting from the question, minus signs indicate net losses.
<b>Step 4:</b>
Facilitator will retrieve cards from participants and position them according to their labels across the floor on the “rainbow.”
<b>Step 5:</b>
Facilitator will discuss the resulting picture and using a variety of prompts discuss with participants ways to adjust gains or losses experienced by each stakeholder and the level of influence some stakeholders have on the situation.

#### Questions:

1. Please describe your level of control over the design and implementation of the community-university project as well. Was it enough? Please explain
2. Would you classify the results of the project as a net gain or net loss?

### Part D: Stretch and Snack Break

1:50pm-2pm

## Part E: Problem Tree

2pm-3pm

### Description:

To use a 'tree' or flow chart diagram to help understand the cause and effects of a designated problem.

### Objective:

To dig into the multiple levels of a priority problem identified during the stakeholder rainbow exercise.

<b>Instructions</b>
<b>Step 1:</b> Facilitator will place card with key problem (problem will be chosen based on outcome of first exercise) in the center of the workspace. This corresponds to the trunk of the tree.
<b>Step 2:</b> Facilitator will ask participants "Why has this problem occurred?" Participants will be asked to identify 4 or 5 causes of this problem and describe each cause on a card using a drawing or a few key words. These will be the first-level causes of the core problem. Facilitator will place all cards in a row below the trunk showing the core problem.
<b>Step 3:</b> For each first-level cause, facilitator will ask "Why has this occurred?" Participants will identify reasons on their own cards using a few key words. These reasons will become the second-level causes responsible for each first-level cause. Facilitator will place new cards in row below first-level causes.
<b>Step 4:</b> Facilitator will use the same method (step 3) to determine causes directly responsible for each second-level cause. These reasons will become the third-level causes responsible for each second-level cause. Facilitator will place new cards in row below second-level causes. Facilitator will connect all levels with lines representing thickest surface roots and finer deeper roots of core problem.
<b>Step 5:</b> Facilitator will repeat steps (2-4) to determine the first-level, second-level, and third-level implications of the core problem. Facilitator will ask participants "What is the result of this problem or effect?" Participants will be asked to write each effect on a card and facilitator will place the new cards in layered rows above the core problem
<b>Step 6:</b> Participants will be asked to review the results and see if they can identify causes and/or effects that fit into both the roots and branches of the problem tree.

### Potential Problems:

1. University processes, enabling or limiting progress
2. Ethics
3. Inadequate input from marginalized communities in decision-making and input processes

## **Appendix B**



## CFICE CES Hub Interview Guide

1. Please describe the origins and purpose of your community-university demonstration project.
2. Please describe your level of influence over the design and implementation of the community-university demonstration project. Was it enough? Please explain.
3. Please describe the results from this project.
  - a) How will you or your organization use these results?
4. Please discuss how university processes supported and/or did not support this community-university demonstration project.
5. Please describe any ethical issues that arose during the project. How did they influence the project and what actions were taken?
6. What role did the Trent Centre for Community-Based Education or U-Links play in your community-university demonstration project?
7. What challenges emerged during your community-university demonstration project?
8. What could have made your community-university research project more worthwhile?
9. Overall, how worthwhile was your community-university research project? Please assign a 1-5 rating, 1 being the least valuable, 5 being the most valuable.
10. Is there anything else you would like to add about your community-university project that we have not touched on?