

Network for Community-Campus Partnerships
Strategic Plan 2016-2021

1.0 Introduction

One of McMaster University's goals over the next decade is to enhance the connections between McMaster and the communities we serve, locally, provincially, nationally, and around the globe.¹ Established in September 2013, **the Network for Community-Campus Partnerships was created to facilitate the achievement of the University's community engagement goals by bringing together community-involved representatives from across the University to move forward with strategic and coordinated action.** In June 2015, the Network launched a strategic planning process to develop a 2016-2021 strategic plan—this document is the culmination of this collaborative effort, setting the direction for the next 5 years of community engagement at McMaster.

1.1 Defining McMaster's Commitment to Community Engagement

Community engagement at McMaster University values the expert knowledge and passion that members of the community (from local to global) have about their communities and issues affecting them; it fosters ongoing collaboration between University and community partners on how to better understand and consider the issues identified as priorities by local and global communities. Community engagement at McMaster involves performing research, teaching and service for or with community members and partners for the public good.²³

1.2 Context

Community engaged research, education, and service activities that are intended to bring benefits beyond the campus have a longstanding history at McMaster University. Whether it is exemplified through faculty members working with community partners to develop community-based research projects that address some of the major challenges of our times, students participating in learning opportunities in and with communities, or staff developing partnerships with communities near and far, McMaster is deeply committed to community engagement.

¹ McMaster University Fact Book 2014-2015: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/avpira/factbook.html>

² <http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/network-for-ccp---overview.pdf>

³ Within this definition, we recognize that the University, along with its faculty, staff, and students, are also part of the Greater Hamilton community and thus have set goals and objectives to reflect a renewed commitment to partnerships.

Forward with Integrity

Acknowledging McMaster's commitment to community engagement, the Network for Community-Campus Partnerships was formed in response to the strategic directions identified by President Patrick Deane within his open letter to the University, *Forward with Integrity (FWI)* (2011). The Network has worked since its formation to limit duplication of efforts, identify synergies, and develop an understanding of McMaster's shared expertise and interests in community engagement. Early on, the Network was directed by the University to take on the following functions:

- **Area Liaison:** Serve as Faculty/area liaison, facilitating dialogue and collaboration within and between Faculties/areas and with community members and partners.
- **Advisor:** Provide feedback on ideas and proposals, serving as a sounding board for consultation and expertise related to community engagement, while assisting in the development of strategies to operationalize the community engagement directives of the University.
- **Sponsor:** Potentially participate in formal vetting of proposals and give endorsements or allocate funding, while also sponsoring community-campus events that create opportunities to interface with the community.
- **Knowledge Broker:** Share best practices and facilitate the preservation of existing knowledge in community engagement while maintaining an awareness of activities and opportunities and sharing these with Network members and partners in order to reduce duplication of efforts.
- **Facilitator:** Facilitate collaboration and dialogue across Faculties/areas, streamline processes to facilitate integration of community engagement into academic activities, and provide a forum for dialogue about challenges, opportunities, and issues.

During its first two years, the Network pursued these functions while also working towards specific objectives identified by the *FWI Community Engagement Task Force*.⁴ Within its report, *The Network at Two Years: Launching a Strategic Planning Process* (June 2015), the Network identified the need to continue providing these functions, while also taking time to step back, reflect on outcomes-to-date, and develop clarity on the Network's role going forward.⁵

Moving Forward for an Inclusive, Sustainable Greater Hamilton

Though colleagues from across the University and from different communities have varying understandings of community engagement, these functions have supported a broad culture shift at McMaster. As a result of the combined efforts not only of the Network, but of countless

⁴ Please see *Network for Community-Campus Partnerships* (June 2013) for details:

<http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/network-for-ccp---overview.pdf>

⁵ Please see *The Network at Two Years: Launching a Strategic Planning Process* (June 2015) for details:

<http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/the-network-at-two-years-launching-a-strategic-planning-process-%28june-2015%29.pdf>

University colleagues and partners, new and exciting mutually-beneficial community-campus partnerships have resulted in research, education, and service outcomes. This strategic plan is the logical next step in the process. Built on a clear vision, mission, and principles, this plan identifies specific goals and objectives to support our community and University colleagues as they work together for an “inclusive, sustainable Greater Hamilton.”

2.0 Vision & Mission

2.1 Vision

Working together for an inclusive, sustainable Greater Hamilton

- **Working Together:** McMaster is a proactive, responsive, and collaborative partner in our community. We connect people, ideas, and communities.
- **Inclusive:** Every person can access, contribute to, and potentially benefit from our work together, irrespective of discipline, gender, ethnicity, age, or ability.
- **Sustainable:** Healthy social, environmental, and economic systems support thriving communities. Recognizing and valuing both the interconnectedness and limits of these systems, short-term actions and long-term planning decisions are made with the health and prosperity of both present and future generations in mind.
- **Greater Hamilton:** We are embedded in and connected to multiple communities in and around the city of Hamilton. We also recognize that we are connected to and working with many communities outside of Hamilton’s geographical and political boundaries.

2.2 Mission

McMaster University is a committed member of the greater Hamilton community and broader society and recognizes that true excellence can only be achieved when we are working together with our community partners. We are mindful of the interconnectedness of our globalized world. We value community and public engagement that is mutually beneficial, supports our academic, research, service and civic outreach missions, and collaboratively leads to meaningful outcomes and sustained actions and relationships. Regardless of the discipline, graduates of McMaster will be citizens engaged in multiple communities in multiple ways but we recognize that our relationships within the community we call home are paramount to supporting the vitality and well-being of the greater Hamilton area.⁶

⁶ This mission was developed by McMaster’s Community Engagement Task Force. See *Network for Community-Campus Partnerships* (June 2013): <http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/network-for-ccp---overview.pdf>

3.0 Principles of Community Engagement

3.1 Institutional Principles⁷

Multiple overlapping strategies are required in order to integrate community engagement into the mission and vision of the University. The following principles aim to guide this integration into all Faculties and administrative areas:

1. Community engagement will be aligned with all facets of the mission of McMaster University.
2. The University will value collaborative endeavours such as research, teaching, service and advocacy activities with community stakeholders.
3. McMaster University will value working with the community for mutual benefit, build relationships based on reciprocity, trust and respect, and recognize global interconnectedness.
4. The University will respect that there are multiple definitions of “community” and that different disciplines/communities will experience, value and learn about CE differently.
5. The University will support, recognize and reward community engagement among faculty, staff, students, alumni and retirees.

2.4 Action-Oriented Principles

During the Network’s strategic planning process, community and campus partners strongly recommended that a co-developed set of action-oriented principles serve as the foundation of our work together. Informed by our consultations, the principles below will guide our work in initiating, sustaining, monitoring, and evaluating community-campus partnerships. These principles are meant to be broadly applicable for any partnership, from local to global, and can be applied across all Faculties, disciplines, and sectors.

Our Foundational Principle: Relationships Build Community

We can’t have community without relationships—these are the connections that build community. Any successful partnership must be built on trusting and respectful relationships guided by integrity. We realize that relationships take time to develop and thus we commit to providing opportunities to connect people across communities, sectors, and disciplines to foster a genuine and interconnected network of colleagues to work together for an inclusive, sustainable Greater Hamilton Area. The following principles are central to our work:

⁷These principles were developed by McMaster’s Community Engagement Task Force. See *Network for Community-Campus Partnerships* (June 2013): <http://macconnector.mcmaster.ca/docs/default-source/default-document-library/network-for-ccp--overview.pdf>

1. **Reciprocity:** From design, to participation, to the outcomes of a project, we strive to work together for mutual benefit.
2. **Equity:** We are conscious of the historical and structural inequities that exist in society and strive to provide access and opportunities to all residents and members of our communities.
3. **Continuity:** Acknowledging that different communities work on different timelines and schedules, we strive to consider both the short and long-term implications of our work together.
4. **Openness to Learning:** Change takes time. We are committed to continually learn from and evaluate our work together, reflecting on and sharing both our successes and failures to grow as individuals, partnerships, and communities.
5. **Commitment to Act:** We aspire to make a positive difference in our community by sharing and acting on our knowledge to contribute to the greater social good.

4.0 Pillars of Community Engagement

The Office of Community Engagement is responsible for facilitating partnership opportunities through the management and coordination of the Network for Community-Campus Partnerships. Through working groups and other activities, the Office's mandate will be achieved through pursuit of the following pillars:

1. Build Capacity
2. Reduce Barriers
3. Ensure Communication/Information Sharing
4. Facilitate Action-Oriented Conversations

Build Capacity

A variety of approaches are needed to support community partners as well as McMaster students, faculty, and staff who are interested in developing skills and competencies for principled, sustainable, and reciprocal partnerships. It is also crucial to develop sufficient structures and policies for recognition which will ensure that we are supporting, acknowledging, and encouraging those who pursue community-engaged education or research partnerships.

Reduce Barriers

A major barrier to any partnership development is that people (both partners and colleagues at McMaster) do not know where to go, who to talk to, or what resources exist to support partnership building. There is a need to improve access to (and awareness about) both physical spaces (on and off campus) and virtual spaces that can help partners use these pathways to navigate community-campus partnerships.

Communication

This pillar will focus on improving awareness of the work of community-engaged individuals, research and education outcomes, available resources, and upcoming opportunities and events. Communicating in plain language, being clear about steps that partners can take to engage, developing visual pathways for engagement, maintaining the community engagement database, and raising the profile of community liaisons across the University can improve partnership opportunities and outcomes.

Facilitating Action Oriented Conversations

Organized in partnership with community and campus partners, face-to-face meetings on specific themes or topics will support relationship building and ongoing relationships that can lead to potential partnership opportunities. Tying funding opportunities to specific topics can encourage ideas to move towards projects, while sharing outcomes of conversations or the conversations themselves (e.g. in an online repository) can encourage others to connect to ideas while also informing actions going forward.

5.0 Goals

Through the management and coordination of the Network for Community-Campus Partnerships, the Office of Community Engagement will work to build bridges towards alignment, partnership, and collaboration on projects that contribute to our vision. Four goals and related objectives will drive our work for the next five years:

Goal 1: Establish the Principles of Community Engagement as the foundation of community-campus partnerships.

Objectives:

1. Uphold both the institutional and action-oriented principles in all of our work, partnerships, and resources.
2. Embed the principles into undergraduate and graduate curriculum where it relates to community engagement.
3. Share principles across disciplines and communities to ensure that all community and University partners are aware of and can consider how to apply these principles in their partnerships.
4. Incorporate principles into the research ethics process as appropriate.
5. Encourage the adoption of principles within the University's formal and informal policies and frameworks.

6. Recognize and reward work done by faculty, staff, students, and community partners that aligns with the principles.

Goal 2: Build bridges between the University and the greater Hamilton community, embedding the University in the community and inviting community into the University.

Objectives

1. Improve access, navigation, and openness
 - a. To McMaster's main campus, including the use of available spaces on campus by community members and partners.
 - b. To McMaster's virtual spaces.
 - c. Between people, places, and spaces.
2. Develop a clear protocol for community engagement of which both community and University partners are aware.
3. Support regular opportunities for community-campus connections such as events that are hosted both on McMaster's main campus and at satellite campuses, as well as events hosted in community settings.
4. Explore emerging opportunities that support community-campus connections.
5. Encourage consistent use of plain language in communicating with campus and community partners.

Goal 3: Align with neighbourhoods, community groups, governments, and institutions to partner on joint ventures and collaborative projects that respond to community-driven issues and priorities.

Objectives

1. Aspire to respond to community-driven issues and requests through collaborative approaches that align with the University's areas of strength in research, education, and service.
2. Align funding opportunities and distribution strategies with partnership development and collaborations.
3. Develop a rapid response mechanism to respond to short-term community requests.
4. Negotiate curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities with community partner priorities and projects.
5. Increase McMaster's presence as an active, collaborative, and supportive partner within the community.

6. Encourage McMaster faculty members to proactively engage with communities beyond the campus as public intellectuals by contributing their expertise and knowledge to public dialogues and action plans.

Goal 4: Assess and learn from the outcomes and impacts of our work on an ongoing basis

Objectives:

1. Involve the Network for Community-Campus Partnerships in ongoing evaluation of and reflection on partnerships and collaborative projects to support continued learning.
2. Create an evaluation structure that considers outputs that are valued by different communities (e.g. academic publications, community action plans, strategic plans).
3. Communicate about our impact and outcomes of McMaster’s community engagement initiatives:
 - a. Across all areas of the University
 - b. Across the greater Hamilton community
 - c. Nationally and globally
4. Recognize, celebrate, and reward the success of community-campus partnerships.

6.0 The Network for Community-Campus Partnerships

The Network for Community-Campus Partnerships is the structure that will support McMaster’s work with our community partners to achieve our goals. Managed by the Office of Community-Campus Partnerships, the Network will foster ongoing relationship-building between community and University partners through a variety of approaches to take on short-term actions that focus on the pillars of community engagement in contributing to work towards our long-term goals. The Network will include community and University representatives within four distinct areas:

Advisory Council	Composition: 15 advisors representing the University, the Greater Hamilton community, and regional, national, or global perspectives on community engagement.
	Role: Provide advice, feedback, and direction to the Network.
Steering Committee	Composition: Faculty, staff and students from the Office of Community Engagement and co-chairs of Network Working Groups.

	Role: Coordination, Information sharing, and alignment across working groups. Decision-making body regarding working group actions and funding from catalyst grants.
Working Groups	Composition: 8-12 members co-chaired by, community and campus representatives.
	Role: Pursue actions that address pillars of community engagement to help achieve strategic plan objectives and support community-driven priorities.
Network Liaisons	Composition: Representatives from community or University units, groups, or organizations that wishes to engage with the Network.
	Role: Point of contact with the Network to support pillars of community engagement, contributing to Network activities and serving on working groups as appropriate.