

*McMaster University Office of Community Engagement*  
**Pillars of Community Engagement | Priorities<sup>1</sup>**

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:** *Build Capacity, Reduce Barriers, Communicate, Facilitate Action-Oriented Conversations*. This document provides a summary of priorities for each of these areas.

### **Capacity Building**

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.

**Priorities include:**

- **Developing a Community-Engaged Education Toolkit** (MIIETL PALAT Grant)
- **Developing community-engaged research supports for graduate students**
- **Hosting three (3) capacity building workshops** that respond to identified needs.<sup>2</sup>  
Possible workshops for 2016-2017 include:
  - Impacts Unpacked discussion on knowledge exchange strategies
  - PATHS to Research Collaboration workshop to share a guide launched in February 2016
  - Principles of Community Engagement
- **Creating an online repository of workshops** that could feature filmed footage of in-person workshops with additional material that were not covered by those workshops, such as webinars piloted to address specific capacity-building issues. The Network could also consider contributing to existing webinar series (e.g. Community-Based Research Canada webinars). The purpose of having an online option is for community partners, faculty, staff, and students to access them on their own time and thus increase the reach of these capacity-building efforts. Possible ideas to explore include:
  - Approaches to Facilitation: A video series of different facilitation styles.
  - Sharing the Community-Engaged Education Toolkit (when ready)
- **Taking part in and promoting existing meetings and events** that support capacity building

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<sup>1</sup> This document was created in September 2016 by Dave Heidebrecht (Coordinator, Office of Community Engagement).

- **Meeting with all major campus units by the end of the 2016-2017 academic year** to share tools available for supporting community engagement, especially the action-oriented principles developed through strategic plan consultations.
- **Partnering on two (2) public engagement events** that share knowledge between university and community partners.

The Office of Community Engagement will pursue these priorities by liaising with various campus units and community partners.

## 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. **Priorities include:**

- **Improving navigation** of the University in a variety of ways. Specific priorities include:
  - **Campus Wayfinding**
  - **Online navigation** of both the Community Engagement website and database, as well as the broader McMaster website
  - **Ambassador Toolkit** that provides basic community engagement information (e.g. reduced parking rate information, details about the principles of community engagement).
  - **Listing Available Meeting Spaces** that partners can use both on and off campus
- **Supporting interdisciplinary partnerships** by identifying creative ways to fund new partnerships within McMaster's budget model
- **Creating an insurance, liability, & risk management guide** to help colleagues and partners navigate barriers related to experiential education opportunities.
- **Developing and sharing a clear protocol for finding partners**
- **Directory of Services:** Providing a directory that clarifies the services McMaster provides and the appropriate contacts. This could also be used to clarify what McMaster doesn't do, so that there isn't confusion or unreasonable expectations/frustration.
- **Creating visual aides** that may include maps of where students are going in the community, how people are accessing the University, an organizational chart for navigating the University, inreach and outreach charts, or a map of community-engaged education at McMaster that shows courses and opportunities
- **Encouraging Campus Use** by partners and the community at large.
- **Ensuring Compass can serve as a welcome desk** for partners who are on campus and not sure where to go or who to talk to.
- **Improving volunteer website navigation** to support volunteer or placement positions across Faculties.

- **Clarifying definitions** of community engagement in accessible language that all partners can see themselves fitting within.
- **Improve communications and information sharing** with a focus on use of plain language.

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## 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. **Priorities include:**

- **Launching the strategic plan** in October 2016.
- **Developing a multi-pronged internal & external communications protocol** that will focus on the following:
  - *Regularly scheduled updates* provided to senior leadership, Network liaisons, and through the Community Engagement mailing list.
  - *Making use of existing communications tools*, such as regular municipal newsletters
  - *Developing a social media strategy* that is aligned with the McMaster social media accounts while also developing the OCE's social media presence
  - *Exploring the use of Hamilton-area community newspapers and blogs*
- **Creating an editorial plan** to share colourful stories and exemplars of community engagement over the course of the year.
- **Consulting on priority OCE communications projects**, including:
  - *Developing a Community Connector Toolkit* to empower campus and community partners with knowledge and information to support community-engaged activities both on and off campus.<sup>3</sup>
  - *Curating a set of case stories* that exemplify community-engaged research, education, and service projects which reflect and encompass McMaster's action-oriented principles of community engagement.
  - *Creating a set of Community Connectors videos and/or photos* that introduce McMaster's Community Connectors and what they do.
  - *Creating a community partner-oriented space on the McMaster website* that helps partners from all areas to navigate the University

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<sup>3</sup> Community Connectors are colleagues at McMaster (and perhaps in the community) who help to make connections, broker relationships, and support partnership building in any capacity.

- *Creating a This Month with the President video* in which Patrick Deane speaks to the importance of principled community-engagement
- *Creating promotional material* such as an Office of Community Engagement logo, a pull up banner, and small information brochures.

These priorities will be pursued through monthly communications meetings between the Office of Community Engagement and Communications and Public Affairs.

### **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. **Priorities include:**

- **Facilitating partnership opportunities on a regular basis** and tracking any new partnerships, projects, or other relevant outcomes
- **Plan and implement three (3) theme group dialogues** for the following themes:
  - Poverty & Inclusion
  - Healthy Spaces & Communities
  - Open Access & Knowledge Sharing
- **Contributing the organization and implementation of Change Camp Hamilton** while also having discussions at McMaster about how to integrate Change Camp into a more coordinated campus-wide approach to community-engaged education.
- **Continue to facilitate conversations and priorities of the Neighbourhood Campus Network, including visits to each Neighbourhood Hub** to explore how best to connect the neighbourhoods with McMaster partners.
- **Pursue larger dialogue opportunity through SSHRC Connections Grant** in partnership with Evergreen CityWorks
- **Respond to and track other dialogues as they arise**
- **Partner on a dialogue about principles for community engagement** as they apply to both local and global engagement
- **Develop a formal outreach strategy to encourage awareness of dialogues and other events**
- **Align work of the Office of Community Engagement with other major dialogues that are connecting with the community** (e.g. Research Showcase, Research in the City).

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