



Office of Community Engagement

2023 Annual Report

Our Team

The work of our Office could not be done without our dedicated and talented team.



Karen Balcom

Academic Director,
Community-Engaged Teaching &
Learning



Ameil Joseph

Academic Director,
Community-Engaged Research &
Relationships



Sashaina Singh

Senior Manager



Ananya Yadav

Program Coordinator



Shahad Al-Saqqar

Strategic Manager of
Community-Engaged Research



Amanda Montague

Educational Developer,
Community-Engaged Teaching &
Learning



Evan Gravely

Research Shop
Manager



Carrie McMullin

Knowledge Broker
Manager



Randy Kay

CityLAB SIR
Outreach Director



Rachel Roy

Yaffle Lead



The OCE is a central service unit that sits within the portfolio of the Vice-Provost Teaching & Learning (VPTL), and reports through the VPTL to the Provost. We are grateful for the support of President David Farrar, Provost Susan Tighe, and the guidance of the Vice-Provost Teaching & Learning, Kim Dej. We would also like to thank Catherine Grisé for her contributions as the Acting Co-Director of Teaching & Learning from July - December 2023.

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Message From the Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning

As Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning, it has been my privilege to support the Office of Community Engagement's growth into a complex, beneficial resource, with deep roots in the McMaster and Hamilton communities and beyond.

Though principled community engagement has long been practiced at McMaster, support for community-engaged research (CER) and community-engaged learning (CEL) initiatives was lacking. Since its establishment over a decade ago, the OCE has demonstrated its importance by building bridges between educators, students, and community, creating space for collaboration, and supporting grassroots initiatives to further CER and CEL at Mac.

Following the [re-establishment of a co-director model](#) in 2021, several key changes have enhanced the structure and function of the OCE. Last fall, the OCE [celebrated moving to a new office](#) at 8 Mayfair Crescent – a welcoming and open space just off campus that will serve as a hub to connect campus and community. The Office also welcomed a new Educational Developer, Community-Engaged Teaching & Learning, in partnership with the MacPherson Institute. We are so fortunate to have highly-qualified subject-experts at the OCE, and others think so too – Senior Manager Sashaina Singh was recently [recognized with a YWCA Women of Distinction Award](#) for her leadership in community engagement and equity initiatives!

The outcome of the OCE's hard work, demonstrated through this report, is the enrichment of student life and cultivation of the next generation of community leaders. It is research which directly benefits the community around us, developed in principled partnership with members of that community. It is the enhancement of McMaster University's reputation as a community-engaged institution with a sense of duty to the communities it inhabits, researches, and educates.

I owe great thanks to Dr. Karen Balcom and Dr. Ameil Joseph, who have accomplished so much over their tenure as OCE's academic co-directors, and to the OCE team for their dedication over the past year. I would also like to recognize the community-engaged staff, educators, students, and community partners, whose knowledge and commitment to our shared community is integral to our progress toward an inclusive sustainable greater Hamilton.

If you haven't already done so, I invite you to visit the team at 8 Mayfair to learn more about the incredible work they do, to get support for your community project, or to simply say hello and explore the space!



Kim Dej
Vice-Provost,
Teaching & Learning

"[T]he OCE has demonstrated its importance by building bridges between educators, students, and community, creating space for collaboration, and supporting grassroots initiatives to further CER and CEL at Mac."

Message From Our Directors



Ameil Joseph

Academic Director,
Community-Engaged Research &
Relationships

Welcome to the 2023 Annual Report of McMaster's Office of Community Engagement. It has been some time since our last report in 2020, and much has changed for the university, our community and our office. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged us to find new ways to support our students and to respond to new challenges in our community, all the while respecting COVID-19 restrictions and keeping each other safe. We are grateful that through this difficult period the university supported us with new financial and institutional support for principled community engagement, evident in [President Farrar's Mission and Vision Statement](#), in the [Teaching and Learning Strategic Plan](#), and in a commitment to expanded permanent funding for the Office. We extend our thanks to President Farrar, Provost Tighe, Vice-Provost Dej, and the Deans.

With these commitments in place, we went through an exciting period of hiring and reorganization in our staff. We joined the office as academic co-directors in 2021, bringing our specific networks and strengths to our work in Teaching and Learning (Karen Balcom) and Research and Community Relationships (Ameil Joseph). We extend particular thanks to Dr. Catherine Gris  who joined us as Acting Academic Director, Teaching and Learning from July 1 – December 31, 2023. Most of the staff is new to the Office, or new to their current roles, in the last two years; we are beyond impressed with the energy, enthusiasm, and effectiveness of this team. In the summer of 2023, we moved into our new physical office, located just off campus in a space that mirrors our work connecting campus and community. We welcome you to visit us at 8 Mayfair Crescent. Our door is always open.



Karen Balcom

Academic Director,
Community-Engaged Teaching &
Learning

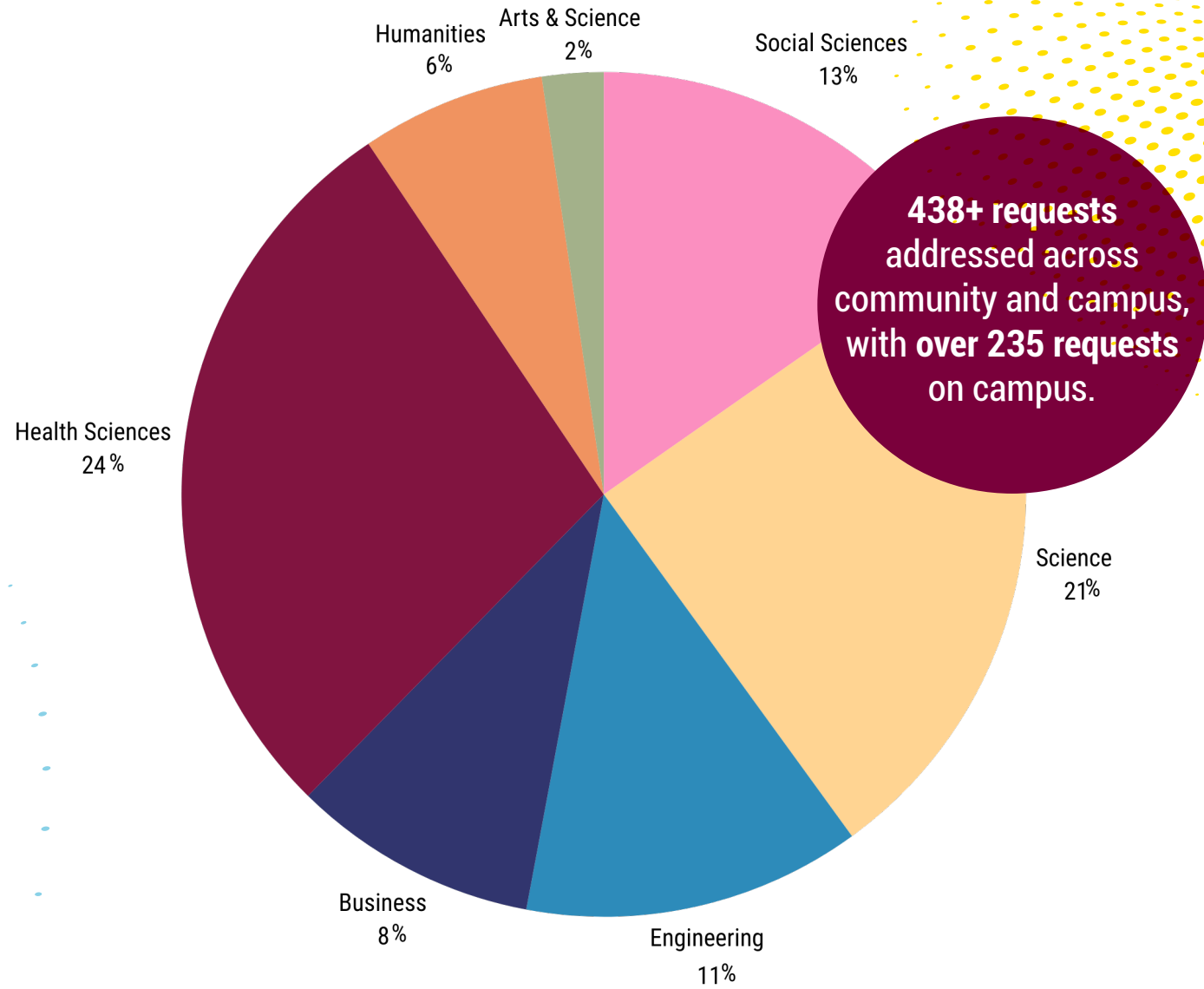
Highlights of the Year



Celebrating our new space at 8 Mayfair Crescent.

3000+ social media followers engaged.

Contributing to McMaster's Experiential Learning (EL) Framework.



438+ requests addressed across community and campus, with over 235 requests on campus.

1400+ subscribers to our Community-Campus Buzz Newsletter.

What We Do

The Office of Community Engagement connects McMaster with the greater Hamilton community as we learn how to work together to contribute to the public good.

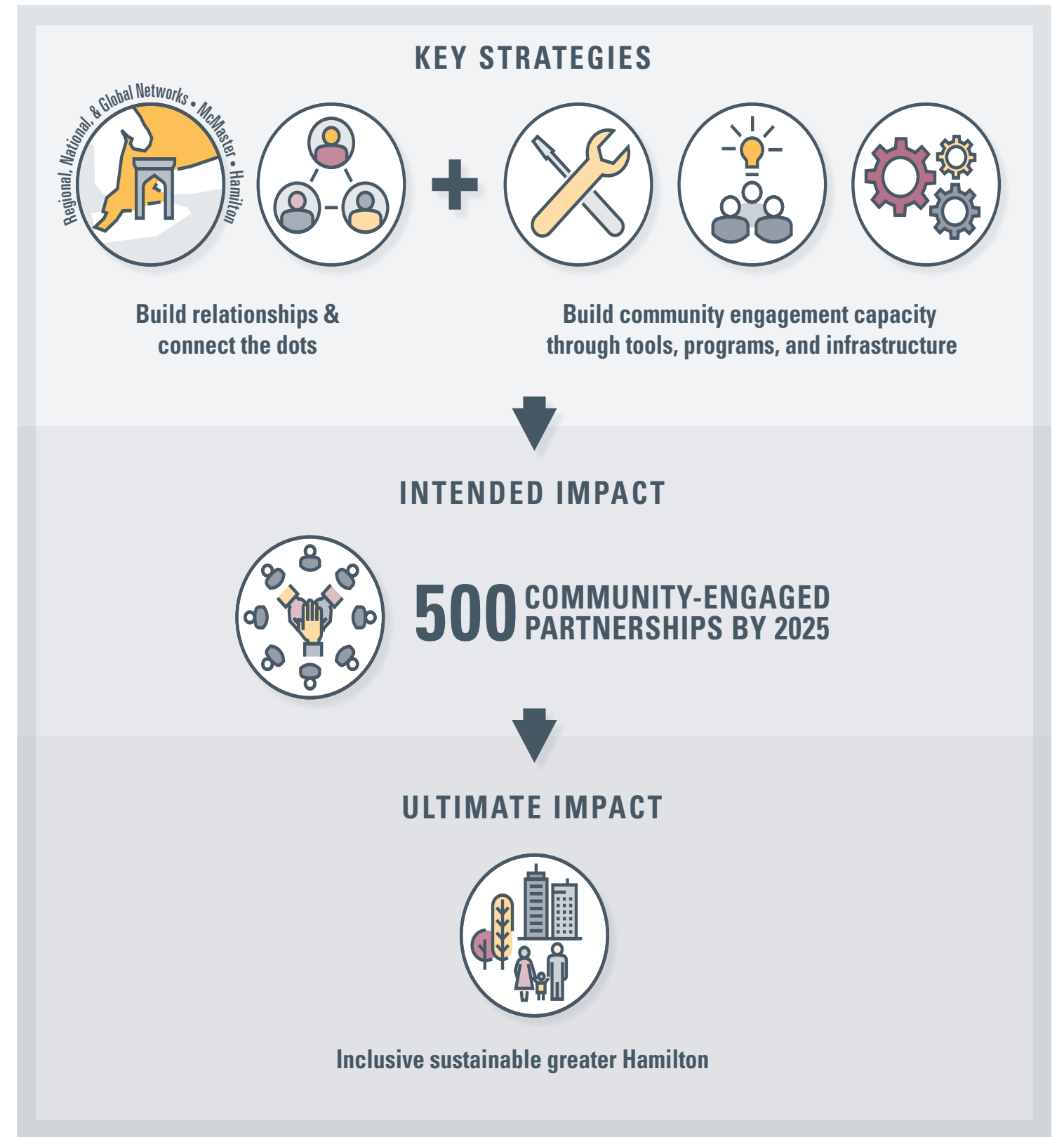
Whether helping community groups **navigate** the University, **advising** or **supervising** students who seeks to connect with the Hamilton community, or helping to **catalyze a new research idea** with McMaster faculty, our Office staff serve as **partnership developers**.



OUR MISSION

By 2025, all community-engaged partnerships at McMaster will be built on respectful relationships, address community and university-identified needs, promote equity, and be adequately resourced.

OCE 2020-2025 Strategic Plan



Our Guiding Principles of Community Engagement

Action-oriented principles of community engagement were co-developed by community and campus partners to provide a framework for how to work together. The principles include **Relationships, Reciprocity, Equity, Continuity, Openness to Learning, and Commitment to Act**. The primary goal of McMaster's community engagement strategy is to establish these principles as the foundation of community-campus partnerships.



1000+ students received training on McMaster's Principles of CE through courses, clubs, and workshops.



Community-Engaged Research

Through our [Community-Engaged Research \(CER\) program](#), we offer connections and direction to students, faculty, and community members who want to use research to contribute to the public good. We continuously support these connections through partnership agreements, CER training, and consultations on research methodologies. We celebrate principled CER through the [President's Award for Community-Engaged Research](#) (PACER) which recognizes teams of campus and community representatives who have demonstrated a commitment to initiating and supporting excellence in community-campus research initiatives.

2023 Highlights

- Delivered **interactive class presentations about community-engaged research** to over 400 undergraduate and graduate students.
- Consulted with students, staff, and faculty to **facilitate community connections, advise on CER methodologies, and provide research resources and support**.
- Presented the **fifth annual PACER award** to the Niagara HELPS program team.
- Launched the **Community-Engaged Research Community of Practice** for faculty and staff, with representation from across campus.
- Developed **collaborative partnership agreements to advance CER** with the Wilson Leadership Scholar Award program and the Spark Centre for Social Research Innovation.



Shahad Al-Saqqar
Strategic Manager of
Community-Engaged Research



Shahad helps connect the dots between campus and community research activities and serves as a liaison with regional research networks, such as [Research Impact Canada](#) and [CBRCanada](#).

"It means a great deal to have a community of practice [where] others understand and are motivated not only to discuss our experiences, but to do concrete work together that advances the cause and skill of community-engaged research."

Allison Van

Executive Director, Spark: a centre for social research innovation

Research Shop

The [McMaster Research Shop](#) is a co-curricular program that pairs volunteer graduate and upper-year undergraduate students with local community organizations to conduct research. The program offers high-quality research services to the local community while providing students with experiential opportunities to hone and apply their research, writing, and interdisciplinary collaboration skills. Student Research Associates collaborate with community partners on applied research projects, enhancing programs and initiatives with the outcomes.

2023 Highlights

54

students were involved in the Research Shop across 17 community projects.

93%

of volunteers enjoyed their experience working with the Research Shop.

83%

of volunteers felt the experience helped them integrate their classroom knowledge by applying it to a real-world example

70%

of volunteers felt the experience will help them achieve their academic and/or career goals



Evan Gravely
Research Shop
Manager

Evan oversees the lifecycle of Research Shop projects, handling intake, scoping, volunteer recruitment, mentoring project leads, and ensuring high-quality deliverables. He also manages program development and evaluation.

"The collaboration with the group was truly exceptional. The research conducted holds **significant value for our advocacy endeavors across various governmental tiers.** Many organizations similar to ours **face resource constraints** that hinder their ability to generate **work of such high caliber.** We express our sincere gratitude to the Research Shop for **alleviating a considerable burden** and actively supporting our ongoing initiatives. Without a doubt, we will continue to leverage this invaluable resource in the future."

Tabassum Wynne

Executive Director, Muslim Advisory
Council of Canada

Research Shop

Completed Projects

- 1 Disability Justice Network of Ontario: Literature review of racism and structural racism in the medical system
- 2 Hamilton Trans Health Coalition: Exploring definitions of allyship between physicians and the trans community
- 3 Hamilton Encampment Support Network: Investigating Hamilton's COVID-19 shelter hotel program
- 4 Rising Stars: Investigating the feasibility of a co-op housing project for people living with mental health
- 5 YMCA Beyond the Bell: Researching evaluation tools for the Beyond the Bell program
- 6 Adult Basic Education Association: Examining apprentices' challenges in on-the-job and in-school training
- 7 Canadian Red Cross: Researching outcomes evaluation tools for a social prescribing intervention
- 8 Hamilton Children's Garden: Data collection for the Little Planters gardening project and composting workshops

17 research projects completed in the past year



"My Research Shop experience was great! I've recommended it to my peers who are interested in research and community engagement. I appreciated this opportunity and it felt rewarding to leave with new skills and to be able to apply them immediately in a professional setting."

Student Research Associate

- 9 Hamilton Folk Arts Heritage Council: Social and economic impact evaluation of "It's Your Festival"
- 10 Paddles of the Grand: Monitoring study of project successes and challenges
- 11 Hamilton Community Benefits Network: Environmental scan of municipal social procurement policies
- 12 United Way Halton & Hamilton: Evaluating the capacity-building needs of Hamilton/ Halton area non-profits
- 13 Abrar Trauma & Mental Health Services: Scanning culturally-informed mental health support for newcomers
- 14 Suicide Prevention Council of Hamilton #1: Exploring models of men's suicide prevention initiatives
- 15 Filipinas of HamOnt: Investigating post-secondary attendance among the Filipino community
- 16 Flamborough Connects: Investigating user satisfaction and needs
- 17 Suicide Prevention Council of Hamilton #2: Evaluating mental health app effectiveness for suicide prevention

Community-Engaged Teaching & Learning

As opportunities for Experiential Learning continue to grow at McMaster, our commitment to supporting and sustaining principled Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning becomes even more vital, as more students and instructors require the knowledge and training to engage with local communities in respectful and reciprocal ways. Our [Minor in Community Engagement](#) prepares students with the skills needed to work in and with local communities by taking a scaffolded approach to community-engaged learning that moves from theory to praxis as students advance through their degree program. Our [Teaching and Learning Resources](#) for instructors and students ensure that community-engaged learning at McMaster is done in equitable ways.

The Educational Developer for Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning is a joint role between the OCE and the MacPherson Institute. Amanda is a key link in bridging campus resources for both new and experienced instructors undertaking community-engaged projects in the classroom.



Amanda Montague
Educational Developer,
Community-Engaged Teaching &
Learning

21 Students
Graduated with a
Minor in Community
Engagement in 2023



2023 Highlights

- Created the OER Pressbook, *Fundamentals of Community Engagement: A Sourcebook for Students* – a resource for instructors and students doing community-engaged learning (CEL).
- Relaunched the **Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning Staff Collective** – a community of practice for Staff who support CEL across campus.
- Supported the **ExCEL (Experiential and Community-Engaged Learning) Group** – an interdisciplinary community of practice for Faculty engaged in EL and CEL.
- Awarded a **Partnered in Teaching and Learning Garden Grant** – An Exploration of Honoraria and Gift-Giving Practices at Post-Secondary Institutions.

CityLAB Hamilton

CityLAB Hamilton collaborates with municipal staff to identify complex issues aligned with the City of Hamilton's strategic goals. It pairs them with faculty and courses from three local post-secondary institutions—McMaster University, Mohawk College, and Redeemer University. Through this partnership, CityLAB Hamilton fosters an enriching experiential learning environment for both students and city employees to devise solutions that advance the city's strategic priorities.

The CityLAB Hamilton Semester in Residence (SIR) CMTYENGA 4A06 and CMTYENG 4A09 offers a unique 15-unit learning experiential learning opportunity to students in downtown Hamilton. Students work in interdisciplinary teams to co-develop projects with City of Hamilton staff and community leaders, while deepening their understanding of community engagement through lectures, workshops, and field trips, that take students into a range of urban community spaces.

CityLAB has left an indelible mark on my student journey. Exploring Hamilton's vibrant landscapes, understanding municipal governance, and the profound inspiration to be an agent of change in my own community, have left a lasting impact. The lessons learned, friendships made, and newfound drive for positive change, will resonate in all my future endeavors.

Vicky Yiannakis
Life Sciences Student



Randy facilitates enriching experiences for students to engage with Hamilton communities through field trips and class activities. Serving as the bridge between SIR community leaders, he fosters collaboration and impactful learning opportunities.

Randy Kay
CityLAB SIR
Outreach Director



2023 Highlights

- **Over 177 students** enrolled in McMaster courses matched with City projects.
- Students expressed that the program enabled them to engage with **pressing issues in the local community**, and allowed them to **expand their academic and professional skillset while growing as individuals**.
- A cohort of **30 cross-faculty McMaster students** participated in the CityLAB Semester in Residence Program, collaborating with City staff from the Climate Change and Active Transportation office, ACORN Hamilton, Environment Hamilton, Hamilton Community Benefits Network, and SCORE. Students **presented to city councillors** at the LRT subcommittee.

Student Ambassadors

The Student Ambassadors group, comprising of undergraduate students from various faculties engaged in or having completed OCE programs, offers a platform for like-minded students to connect. It facilitates practical experience in community-engaged work, extends learning from programs like the Research Shop and the Interdisciplinary Minor in Community Engagement, and provides support to OCE staff. The Ambassadors collaboratively execute promotional campaigns, co-create projects addressing real-world challenges, offer feedback to enhance programs, and implement social programming to strengthen relationships among McMaster students interested in community engagement.

2023 Highlights

- Organized **3 student engagement events** to foster **networking opportunities** for McMaster students.
- Amplified the CE Minor and other CE opportunities at **student recruitment events** (i.e., Fall Preview, Minor Fairs, etc.)
- **Promoted the CE Minor** and other CE opportunities through social media and other public avenues.

Ananya oversees the Student Ambassadors group, fostering a strong CE network for students on campus. She also promotes and amplifies CE initiatives through various communication channels.



Ananya Yadav
Program Coordinator

"I'm grateful to have worked with my fellow ambassadors, who are so diverse in knowledge and backgrounds, unique in their ways of thinking, who have so much character, energy, openness, and share the same passion for connecting communities between Hamilton and McMaster. This experience has fostered my mindset of curiosity and inspired me to continue to create spaces where we can further engage community voices through ongoing conversations."

Jennifer Zhang
OCE Student Ambassador



A Year in Student Engagement

The Ambassadors program has opened doors to opportunities, connections and learning. I can't envision my university journey without it. It has allowed me to meet with the community, collaborate with remarkable people, build essential leadership skills, explore diverse academic opportunities, and have fun! Through this opportunity, I've discovered my passion for working with others, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary education. It has been guiding me toward a path I'm excited to follow.

Areeba Arshad
OCE Student Ambassador



Community-Campus Catalyst Grants

The Community-Campus Catalyst Grants program aims to reduce barriers to principled Community Engagement by supporting the cultivation and establishment of newly formed and early-stage community-campus partnerships that align with McMaster's Community Engagement Strategic Plan. Once a year the Office of Community Engagement funds collaborative projects with community partners working towards mutual benefit and pursuing outcomes aligned with McMaster's community engagement goals and objectives. Students, staff, and Faculty are all eligible to apply.

Carrie cultivates diverse relationships with a varied range of community organizations, emphasizing social justice, equity, and anti-coloniality. She leads OCE's partnership with the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre, and is a member of the local Urban Indigenous leadership and advocacy group Circle of Beads.



Carrie McMullin
Knowledge Broker Manager



"The Community Catalyst Grant provided us with funds to make a positive difference in the community that McMaster is a part of in a way that we hope contributed to the greater good of those Indigenous folks experiencing houselessness in Hamilton. In partnership with Stacy Kaune at HRIC, we were able to provide a welcoming space for people to access the care packages to help contribute to their health and well-being. We at MIRI believe that it is essential to use praxis especially when working to build lasting community partnerships rather than 'one off' projects."

IndigiNerds Give Back
McMaster Institute for Indigenous
Research

2023 Highlights

- 5 projects funded
- Relationships cultivated with: the **Strathcona Community Pantry, the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, Canadian Mental Health Association of Hamilton, Centre 3 Hamilton, Factory Media Centre, Hamilton-Burlington YWCA**
- Types of projects done: **volunteer appreciation, community service, knowledge mobilization, resource creation**

New Pilot Program: Yaffle

In 2023, McMaster University began development on the [Yaffle program](#), a virtual knowledge mobilization platform initially developed by Memorial University. Aimed at enhancing campus-community connections, Yaffle acts as a tool for collaborative engagement and collective problem-solving.

Development and Launch

In 2023, McMaster's Yaffle BETA was developed with **Memorial University** and **McMaster UTS**, tailored to meet the unique context of **McMaster and Hamilton**. The platform launched in January 2024.

Engagement

In 2023, the Yaffle project team facilitated discussions with **nine campus partners** and **four community partners**, exploring the platform's adaptability to local needs.

Strategic Alignment

Yaffle at McMaster uses **six strategic theme areas** to help categorize information. These six themes directly mirror the **priorities from the City of Hamilton's Our Future Hamilton project**, ensuring the platform's **alignment with community needs**.



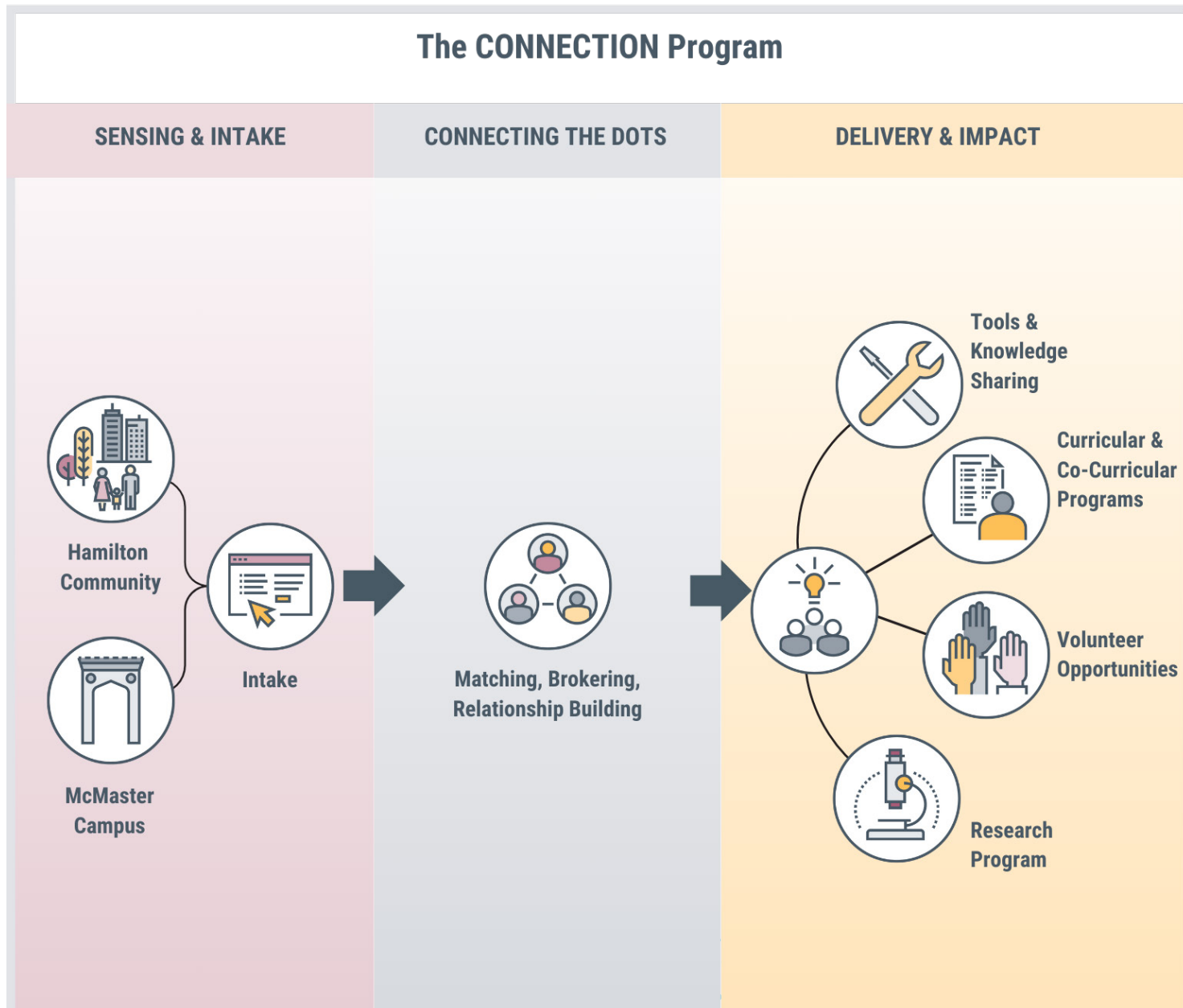
Impact Insights

- Yaffle users can **create profiles, upload projects, and explore opportunities**, enhancing knowledge exchange and building networks across diverse sectors.
- Yaffle is designed to **facilitate organic interactions between users, enhance the roles of campus experiential leads and knowledge brokers, and cultivate multi-layered partnerships** between community partners, McMaster's students, staff, and faculty.
- The platform **integrates academic resources with community-driven initiatives** to ensure that educational and research pursuits reflect real-world benefits.



Rachel Roy
Yaffle Lead

"Yaffle is more than an information platform; it's a dynamic ecosystem that fosters innovation and collaboration, enhancing McMaster University's role as a catalyst for positive change in Hamilton and beyond."



The CONNECTION Program

The CONNECTION is a program designed to facilitate mutually beneficial partnerships between campus and local community organizations. The program enables us to support students, staff, faculty, and community through making connections to different tools, programs, and people.

This program has evolved from being a COVID-19 response to meet the current needs of our community and campus members.

Students, staff, faculty, and community members can submit requests through our new intake form.



Local, Regional, and National Community Engagement

The Office of Community Engagement **liaises between regional, national, and international community-engaged education, research and knowledge mobilization networks** to promote initiatives at McMaster, community partnerships and best practices in a reciprocal way.

2023 Highlights

- Attended and presented at the **C2U Expo**, Canada's leading conference on community-based research.
- Member of the **Research Impact Canada Engagement Committee** and supported connections for the **MobilizeU knowledge mobilization course**.
- Celebrated outstanding community members at the **YWCA Women of Distinction Awards and the Reverend John C. Holland Awards**.
- **CBRCanada institutional member** and active **Community of Practice** participant.
- Member of **CCECanada Management Committee** and **CE Professionals Peer Network**.



Sashaina Singh
Senior Manager



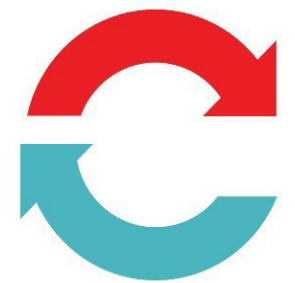
Sashaina leads, advocates, and advises on community engagement principles and best practices. She provides strategic direction for the OCE while leading relationship development and supporting the staff team to achieve a comprehensive and ambitious mandate.



Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario
June 5-8, 2023



Community-Based Research Canada
Recherche partenariale du Canada



Community Solidarities for Change

Since 2018, we have been working to support the [Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre](#) (HARRC). Through partnership, the Office of Community Engagement has worked with HARRC to have a home at **1 James St. North** in Hamilton since the Fall of 2021. Since 2022, HARRC has collaborated with the **Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion**, the **Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship** at McMaster University and the **Office of Community Engagement** to help develop [WeSupportHamilton](#), Hamilton's first, online, community-based, hate reporting platform (launched in May of 2023).



HARRC Spotlight

HARRC has been influential and impactful in responding to community needs with respect to systemic racism, successfully advocating with community allies for **changes to the selection process for the community representative to the Hamilton Police Services Board** and leading the first community-based selection process.

Under the Executive Direction of Lyndon George, HARRC has also successfully advocated in partnership with community agencies, organizations, and members of the community for **changes to the structure of the Hamilton Board of Health, to address health inequities** by embedding a requirement to have citizen appointees including health experts and people from equity-deserving communities.

Connect With Us

Whether you are McMaster faculty, staff, student, or a member of the Hamilton community, the Office of Community Engagement is here to help you as you develop relationships, ideas, and strategies towards new or developing community-campus partnerships.

Ways to Connect



community.mcmaster.ca



community@mcmaster.ca



[@McMasterOCE](https://twitter.com/McMasterOCE)



[@mcmasteroce](https://www.instagram.com/mcmasteroce)



[@McMasterCE](https://www.facebook.com/McMasterCE)



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Explore our [Resources](#) to support your needs