

January 31, 2018

Help make our region the smartest, healthiest, greenest, and most caring!

Community Innovation Day

January 9, 2018

Cranberry Resort, Collingwood

Southern Georgian Bay

90 leaders of community organizations, business, and government, as well as interested and concerned residents, participated in learning more about important challenges and opportunities in our region on January 9 at the Cranberry Resort. After a fast-paced facilitated afternoon they decided, as a community, what priorities should be included in a collaborative action plan to improve social and economic prosperity in our region.

Initiative teams are being created and will meet over the next few weeks to develop a road map, which will become a collaborative action plan for our region. The Institute will lead the development of funding proposals and will be sharing those with patrons, philanthropists, businesses and funding organizations, to garner support for increasing collaboration, leveraging up what is already going well, developing new solutions to our challenges, and improving the overall quality of life in our region.

The Institute would like to acknowledge the following partners: One Smart World, Cranberry Resort, Community Connection, Rotary Club of Collingwood, and Ecologos/Water Docs.

Here is a summary of the seven themes and the outcomes:

Arts & Culture: Chautauqua of the North

Arts and Culture are the fabric and soul of societies and communities. Not only do they enhance the quality of our lives, they can also: strengthen cultural values and preserve heritage/history, build community and sense of place, and enhance engagement, participation, and economic vitality.

Arts and Culture is already a major sector in our region. It helps to attract people from all walks of life to live and work here. There are many great arts, culture, dining, and entertainment success stories here such as Blue Mountain Village, the Apple Pie Trail, Feast in the Forest, Dining & the Arts, Theatre Collingwood, Blue Mountain Foundation for the Arts, Mad and Noisy Gallery, Meaford Hall & Cultural Centre, Clarksburg/Thornbury art galleries, 65 Simcoe Street, the Marsh Street Centre, and the Georgian Bay Music Foundation. Now is the time to map out stakeholders, identify opportunities for collaboration, and develop an overall strategy to benefit initiatives in our region.

Crux: How do we promote and enhance arts opportunities, participation, collaboration, and coordination?

Priorities:

- a) Develop a common brand through a regional arts and culture working group
- b) Develop a regional digital marketing strategy and website
- c) Create collaborative headliner event

Wild Card: Develop a regional centre for the arts

Business, Entrepreneurship & Innovation in South Georgian Bay

Entrepreneurship has been a key driver of business, employment, and economic growth. The number of entrepreneurs in our region has had a hockey stick uptick in the last 5 years and the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses (CFIB) has tracked the ascension from 7th to 3rd to 1st place in Canada as the most entrepreneurial area.

Business leaders from across the country are increasingly looking at Southern Georgian Bay as a place to marry their desire for a balanced, outdoor, active lifestyle, with their professional ambitions. But there are some major challenges that are becoming evident and could prevent the region from becoming a new 'magnetic' area for the 21st century knowledge economy.

Participate in this conversation about the idea of a "Living Lab" for innovation to support scaling new businesses, tackling integrated issues, and creating collaborative "centres of excellence".

Crux: How do we connect the region around a central business development strategy?

Priorities:

- a) Create a community collaboration leadership committee (multi-sector)
- b) Develop a regional strategic plan
- c) Develop a regional branding campaign

Wild Card: expand post-secondary education in the region

Poverty Reduction Strategies – Simcoe County Circles

At the heart of Circles, a new poverty reduction initiative being launched, is the belief that no one should live in poverty. Families and communities can take charge of their destinies. And if given the right relationships and tools and support, economic stability can be achieved. Through an approach that combines strategies and services along with the individualized support of dedicated staff, volunteers and the resources of organizations and communities, we can create an environment that educates, empowers, and equips our community members to move up and out of poverty successfully.

The Circles initiative is a supportive network of diverse individuals creating long-term actions towards poverty reduction. They cross the financial spectrum and focus on building

relationships of mutual trust and respect. This initiative increases the quality and quantity of social capital for all its members, specifically those in poverty looking to reach financial self-sufficiency.

The authentic relationships of reciprocity empower those members who are in poverty to seek out new solutions and helps them build a stable sustainable future they know they belong in. We meet almost weekly, “leave our hats at the door”, share a meal like a family. We talk, ask questions and really listen. And most importantly we build authentic trusting relationships – we aren’t selling and everyone buys-in.

Circles Canada reports that the longest standing Canadian Circle in Sarnia graduates between 15-20% of its participants a year, resulting in annual government cost savings around \$750,000.00. Add in the economic growth potential of the new, financially self-sufficient consumers and we have a true win-win-win!

Simcoe County Circles, although in the early stages, has already had a measurable impact on the lives of the Midland/Penetanguishene/Tiny/Tay residents and we look forward to initiating a Circle in every corner of Simcoe County.

Crux: How do we help move residents in Southern Georgian Bay out of poverty?

Priorities:

- a) Present more Bridges out of Poverty workshops
- b) Develop the Getting Ahead program in Simcoe County
- c) Create a centralized, accessible poverty reduction program database

Wild Card: Launch two Getting Ahead sessions per year in our region

Environment: Bringing the Water Docs Film Festival to our Region

YOU care about the environment and are passionate about the dangers facing water, locally and globally. Now you can share your love of film and passion for water by hosting a mini Water Docs Where-You-Live Film Festival right in your own community.

Launched in celebration of Canada’s 150th Anniversary, the Water Docs Where-You-Live Community Screenings program is a community-based cultural and environmental initiative. Water-themed films are co-presented in towns and urban neighbourhoods throughout Ontario to showcase great documentaries and to engage participants in discussions, which celebrate and reflect on the connection between Ontario’s waterways and its people. Water Docs Where-You-Live is an initiative of Ecologos, a not-for-profit, charitable organization dedicated to protecting water. By using documentary storytelling and experiential learning, we aim to revive a sense of reverence for water, address threats that concern water, and stir action to protect water in communities across Ontario.

Partner with Ecologos and choose from a number of films screened at the annual Water Docs Film Festival in Toronto to promote a more sustainable world for generations to come.

Water YOU Doing?

Crux: How can we encourage and develop a spirit of reverence for water?

Priorities:

- a) Develop a Water Festival – first step: Water Docs Where-You-Live in our region
- b) Partner with existing organizations
- c) Develop and implement school programs

Wild Card: Create a communications strategy around World Water Day – March 22

Developing a Health & Wellness Innovation Network

Southern Georgian Bay's natural beauty, recreational pursuits and related active lifestyle, and opportunities for employment particularly for service industries and entrepreneurs, have and will, at least for the next decade, fuel significant economic and population growth. During this decade, the delivery of health care in Southern Georgian Bay will undergo significant change.

Southern Georgian Bay communities will assume more active partnerships with the hospital and healthcare professionals to help promote Wellness – intervening to keep all generations healthier, out of both the hospital and the institutional healthcare system. Active lifestyles will help, but the increasingly pervasive availability of digital information will provide the knowledge for all to better manage personal health. Although many initiatives exist to further this idea, what is missing is a network of Southern Georgian Bay innovators working collectively to ensure that the shared goal of improving health of its people is met.

Crux: How do we encourage community to come together to address physical and mental health issues in a holistic, integrated way, while recognizing the complexity of health?

Priorities:

- a) Create a common understanding of what holistic health is
- b) Create a constellation map of services, systems, and collaborative partners
- c) Use a central hub (existing? digital?) for access to health awareness.

Wild Card: Build a regional health strategy

Community Hubs: Partnerships and Connections

Community hubs most commonly operate out of buildings, from which multi-purpose, community-led services are delivered. These hubs often host other partners and access to public services and these co-location approaches are an efficient and effective use of resources. The range of services reflect local need, and may be delivered by local people, other organizations, or public agencies.

The Rotary Club of Collingwood is developing a Community Hub in the century-old “Saunders Building” at the corner of Campbell and High Street. The Hub’s purpose is to be a connection place where community collaboration will flourish by offering space for services and activities that connect people and provide opportunities to establish relationships through common interests. The Hub will offer community rooms and outdoor green space where gathering can be held for things like workshops, club meetings, hobby groups, food and garden projects, and socials such as group picnics.

The Hub will be designed as a welcoming community space for all people (regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, socioeconomic status or other socially determined circumstance). The Hub will serve as an access point for community, social, health and government information, as well as a place to get connected to volunteer opportunities – Get help, Give help. The Hub will be a catalyst to connect organizations, creating opportunities to work together on broader community issues. Be a part of developing this initiative!

Crux: How can we support this Community Hub so that it becomes a model for hubs across the region?

Priorities:

- a) Create regional working group based on vision and strategy to address needs
- b) Organize a hub crawl of existing hubs in the region
- c) Utilize technology that connects facilitators of hubs across the region – to facilitate real time access to information, services, resources

Wild Card: Create a social enterprise or community benefit company to benefit and fund some costs of developing regional hubs

Increasing the Impact of Volunteerism

Strong volunteerism will engage and connect residents to each other, cultivating relationships and increasing our community’s capacity to care for one another. Strong volunteerism will strengthen our community’s ability to effect community change and improve community well-being beyond the influence of any one individual or organization. Being a volunteer improves quality of life for both the volunteer and those residents they support.

Community Connection, an emerging community volunteer centre, believes the following social action ideas will transform volunteerism in Southern Georgian Bay:

- a Consolidating information about community volunteer opportunities will make it easier for people to connect with organizations offering opportunities of interest, and support organizations and groups that need volunteers through highly visible common access points.
- b Developing a robust volunteer training and education program that aligns learning activities to community needs will equip volunteers with new skills that can be deployed

for a positive impact on the community. Volunteers will gain knowledge and experience to enhance employment opportunities, improve interpersonal skills, job skills and create new social networks.

- c) Unifying volunteer screening, and credentialing individuals with a community Volunteer Passport will enable people to volunteer with multiple organizations without duplicate screening. A Volunteer Passport will make it simpler for people to try new volunteer experiences and will deepen their engagement within the community.

Crux: How do we engage the community with an innovative model of volunteerism which attracts and sustains volunteers for our region?

Priorities:

- a) Share awareness and understanding of the model
- b) Develop collaborative training based on the needs of the community
- c) Launch the volunteer passport component of the model

Wild Card: Kick-start this emerging volunteer centre pilot and secure funds to hire staff