

The issue of performance in HEI institution-community partnerships: A Canadian perspective

In this study we seek to examine the state of higher education institution (HEI)-community partnerships and accountability for their performance in Canada, thereby advancing understanding about this international phenomenon. A search of Canadian university and colleges was carried out to identify those with an explicit mandate relating to community engagement and an initial questionnaire was distributed to their offices to gain insights into the present state of HEI-community partnerships in Canada. The second portion of this study included distributing a secondary survey to individuals involved in HEI-community partnerships to determine which aspects and qualities of are of utmost importance in measuring partnership performance.



Niagara Adapts: An example of a formal HEI - community partnership between the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock University and seven municipalities in the Niagara Region, ON, Canada, who are working together to address climate change adaptation.

KEY TERMS

Community Partners

“Governmental, non-governmental, industry, community, or private individuals or organisations who are engaging in a joint venture with an HEI”



Formalized Agreements

“The formalization of a partnership by HEI and community partners typically involves the parties entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): an instrument commonly used to codify the terms of agreement”



ASPECTS & QUALITIES FOR MEASURING PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

ASPECTS

QUALITIES

Context/
Inputs

- Transparency
- Motivations for Partnership
- Human Resources

Process

- Shared decision-making
- Communication
- Trust
- Mutual Respect
- Adaptability

Outcomes

- Objective
- Subjective
- Learning

METHODOLOGY: Institutional Questionnaire

Systematic Search

Websites of 280 institutions

Key terms search: community engagement, community partnership, partnerships, community, community relations, industry, and community 'contact us'

Community relations webpage or mandate

95 HEIs were identified and contacted to participate in survey

KEY FINDINGS: STUDY 1

27 HEI community-focused offices responded to the questionnaire



25% of HEIs do not employ any monitoring or evaluation of community partnerships



67% of HEI community-focused offices have an operating budget of \$50,000 or more



67% reported having over 30 active partnerships at their institutions

METHODOLOGY: HEI & Community Partners Questionnaire

Institutional leads invited to distribute HEI-Community Partner Questionnaire to both HEI and community

Questionnaire was divided into 4 sections:

- demographics
 - inputs
 - process
 - outputs

participants were asked to identify inputs, processes, and outcomes that are most important for partnership performance

KEY FINDINGS: STUDY 2



motivation is the most important input



communication is the most important process



learning is the most important outcome