



# **Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutions**

## **Country Brief: Canada**

**August 2016**



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## About the British Council

The British Council was founded to create a friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and the wider world. The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We call this work cultural relations.

We work in over 100 countries, connecting millions of people with the United Kingdom through programmes and services in the English language, the Arts, Education and Society. We believe these are the most effective means of engaging with others, and we have been doing this work since 1934.

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

## About Plymouth University

Plymouth University is one of the leading modern universities in the UK, ranked in the top seven institutions under the age of fifty by Times Higher Education. The University was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2012, and was the first in the world to be awarded the Social Enterprise Mark in recognition of working as a genuine social enterprise, caring for communities, and protecting the planet. The study has been led by SERIO, an applied research unit based at Plymouth University, in collaboration with colleagues from the Institution's Futures Entrepreneurship Centre.

## Using this report

### Overview

This research seeks to identify the benefits and challenges of partnership between higher education institutions (HEIs) and social enterprises (SEs) with a particular focus on those operating within an international context. Specifically it explores:

- Existing partnerships between HEIs and social enterprise across twelve countries, spanning four continents;
- The benefits of existing cooperation between social enterprise and HEIs;
- The impact of such cooperation on a range of stakeholder groups, such as students, social entrepreneurs, and funders; and,
- The role of HEIs in supporting an increased awareness of social entrepreneurship as a career option, and in assisting start-ups and early growth.

In May 2016, the British Council published the core research report<sup>1</sup> emanating from this study - '*Social Enterprise in a Global Context: The Role of Higher Education Institutions*' – which placed a deliberate focus on the macro international landscape for engagement between HEIs and social enterprise. In contrast, this report on Canada provides a specific country focus, enabling a more granular view of social enterprise activity among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A similar report has been produced for each of the eleven other countries that participated in this study.

It is expected that the findings of this research will:

- Facilitate dialogue, networking and knowledge exchange, opening up avenues for greater international cooperation between HEIs, and a stronger global narrative on social value and the contribution of this activity to achieving social development goals.
- Assess and promote the role of HEIs in social enterprises and the benefits of existing co-operation, based upon an analysis of opportunities and challenges related to collaboration.
- Provide a body of evidence which supports and informs further research and collaboration opportunities.

All research outputs from this study, including this report, will be made available on the British Council Social Enterprise webpage: [www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/reports](http://www.britishcouncil.org/society/social-enterprise/reports)

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to hereon after as 'the global research report'.

## Introduction

### Outlining the research

This research is set against a context of global growth in higher education, and seeks to understand and enhance the role of international cooperation between higher education institutions (HEIs) and social enterprises (SEs). The study, led by Plymouth University for the British Council, is one of the first to attempt to identify the range of HEI activity in the social enterprise sector. Specifically, the study maps and explores existing partnerships between HEIs and SE; the benefits of existing cooperation; and the impact of such cooperation on a range of stakeholder groups, such as students, social entrepreneurs, and communities.

One of the challenges of conducting social enterprise research on a global level is that the term is governed by different legal frameworks, terminology, and cultural approaches. For this study, the researchers adopted the [www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk) definition, which considers a social enterprise to be:

*“A business that trades to tackle social problems, improve communities, people’s life chances, or the environment. They make their money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community”*

### Study approach

The global research was undertaken with over two hundred HEIs drawn from Canada, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Slovenia, South Africa, Thailand, United Kingdom and the USA. These twelve countries were selected to provide a wide range of different geographical locations, higher education structures, and levels of economic development and rates of growth. The study comprised three core methodological stages:

Approach	Overview
<b>Desk-based review of social enterprise activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This included academic and grey literature, as well as media sources such as HEI and news websites, blogs, and third party partner organisation websites.</li> <li>▪ The review was supported by consultations with British Council representatives from each country and explored country-specific issues such as variations in the definition of social enterprise, legal structures for the sector, and challenges to growth.</li> </ul>
<b>HEI survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An online survey was sent to all known HEIs in each country to map social enterprise activity, and to explore the benefits and challenges of partnership working.</li> <li>▪ The survey was disseminated to 993 HEIs, yielding a return of 205 (a 21% response rate).</li> </ul>
<b>Consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In-depth semi-structured interviews with up to three HEIs from each country, to capture their social enterprise activity and partnerships in more detail.</li> <li>▪ This data was combined with analysis from the preceding two stages to formulate a series of case studies of practice.</li> </ul>

With specific regard to Canada, ninety HEIs were invited to complete a survey, yielding a return of twenty – a response of 22%. Where possible, the survey was targeted toward named contacts with knowledge of, or responsibility for social enterprise at their institution. Whilst this approach was felt to provide the most rounded view of cross-institutional engagement and practice, it should be noted that any views expressed may not necessarily reflect the official stance of their HEI.

The survey findings have been exemplified and elaborated upon through the inclusion of case studies of practice from three Canadian HEIs, and consultation with representatives from the British Council team in Canada.

### **The British Council's social enterprise programme**

Social enterprises address social and environmental problems through innovative solutions that improve people's lives in our communities and societies. The British Council's global social enterprise programme draws on the UK experience in social enterprise to promote its growth around the world. We build capacity in the sector, forge international networks, and support policy leaders to create ecosystems in which social enterprise and social investment can thrive. Our work supports positive social change, inclusive growth and sustainable development while building trust and creating opportunities between the UK and other countries.

In Canada, the British Council runs 'Students for Social Impact'; an international exchange programme for students with an idea for a social venture that will address a local problem or global challenge. University students from Canada and the UK contribute to life-changing social enterprises, gain valuable overseas experience, and connect with other young leaders of the future.

[www.britishcouncil.ca/programmes/education/students-social-impact](http://www.britishcouncil.ca/programmes/education/students-social-impact)

## The landscape for social enterprise

### Country overview

The higher education system in Canada is long-established and widely considered to be of high quality, attracting an increasing number of international as well as domestic students. There are approximately ninety professional, technical and vocational colleges and universities present across the country, the largest proportion of which are public; and in the 2013/14 academic year, the number of students enrolled in Canadian HEIs reached more than two million<sup>2</sup> - a 1.2% increase on the previous year and representing around 5.8% of the total population.<sup>3</sup> This is higher than the average number of student enrolments as a proportion of the total population across the 12 study countries described in this research, with the mean average across the 12 countries standing at 3.6%.

Higher education in Canada is managed by individual provincial governments, as opposed to a federal Ministry for Education. This provincial autonomy also brings with it variation in respect to both the approach to, and definition of social enterprise. For example, in predominantly French-speaking regions the terms 'social economy' or 'solidarity economy' typically have more resonance than 'social enterprise' or 'social innovation', which are more widely used in English-speaking regions.

### Approaches to social enterprise

Social enterprises in Canada tend to operate within a spectrum of legal and operational structures. They are commonly run by non-profit organisations seeking to diversify their income away from grant-funded activity, often centred on initiatives to support routes to employment for disadvantaged or marginalised groups.

Feedback from the consultations conducted in support of this study suggest that the Canadian social enterprise sector is growing in both strength and stature, with cross-sector engagement and multi-organisational partnerships becoming commonplace. Whilst social enterprise in Canada is not yet considered mainstream in terms of its visibility, it is being increasingly viewed as a useful construct to address local issues and deliver public services across the provinces.

### Support for social enterprise

Evidence suggests that the increasing level of support from federal and provincial governments for social enterprise is also helping to accelerate the development of the sector. For example, in 2015, five Federal Government Ministerial mandate letters were submitted supporting areas of social enterprise, social finance and social purchasing. Furthermore, the government is working to become a prominent figure committed to advancing and expanding the sector; indeed, one of the questions being asked as part of the Federal Government of Canada's Innovation Agenda is 'what can be done to cement Canada's place as a leader in social entrepreneurship?'

In 2014 the Federal Government of Canada established the Canadian Business Network - a social enterprise portal offering a wealth of resources to support potential, new and existing social entrepreneurs to achieve maximum impact. Further support is derived from the Social Enterprise Council of Canada. This comprises an alliance of social enterprise leaders who share their knowledge and experience in order to build a more enabling environment for social enterprise across the country.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada (2016) Canadian postsecondary enrolments and graduates 2013/2014. Available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/151130/t001d-eng.htm>

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016). Regional and Country Profiles. Available at: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/regions.aspx>

Provincial structures for social enterprise are also evident. This is exemplified by Ontario Government's Social Enterprise Branch, which launched a new five-year strategy for social enterprise in 2016 with an aim to support social entrepreneurs as they grow their ventures. Similarly, in 2015 the Quebec Government launched a Social Economy Action Plan to support and enhance social enterprises in the region. Further, cross-cutting all the provinces, is the Canadian Community Economic Development Network - a membership organisation supporting local communities to create economic opportunities that will improve social conditions within their region.

With regard to financial support, a small number of foundations and government agencies are active across Canada with a specific remit to fund social enterprise development on a large scale. In February 2015, for example, the Government of Ontario announced the creation of The Social Enterprise Demonstration Fund, comprising an investment of \$4 million distributed to 11 organisations that support early stage social enterprises. A number of examples of independent financial support are also evident in Canada. Reflecting the focus of this study on the relationship between social enterprise and higher education, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation launched RECODE in 2014 which provides social innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities for higher education students to become drivers of progress and change. Similarly, the Trico Foundation is another support organisation committed to developing student-led social enterprises; promoting successful ventures and inspiring a future generation of social entrepreneurs.

### **The role of HEIs**

HEIs are becoming a key source of support for new and emerging social enterprises in Canada. The findings from this research, for example, indicate that three in five Canadian HEIs housed an incubation space where new social enterprises can develop (*see 'Overview of social enterprise activity'*).

This approach may be illustrated by RADIUS (RADical Ideas, Useful to Society) - a social innovation lab and venture incubator based in the Beedie School of Business at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia. RADIUS provides a range of incubation and support services to the sector; partnering with community organisations to create innovative ways to enrich the local economy and providing acceleration support programmes for emerging social ventures. Another example of HEI support through incubation space is 'Greenhouse', created by the University of Waterloo, Ontario, representing the first live-in, campus-linked social incubator and accelerator in Canada. Designed specifically for students to develop their own social enterprises, this incubation facility provides a range of support services such as weekly programming, mentorship from social entrepreneur experts and other professionals, peer-to-peer support, and access to start-up funding.

Other forms of support commonly offered by HEIs were found to include the promotion of social enterprise through the facilitation of research and dialogue. For example, the Sprott Centre for Social Enterprises, established by Carleton University, Ottawa, in 2008, aims to advance the sector by encouraging graduates to consider social enterprise as a career path and to facilitate partnerships with other researchers and practitioners working in the social enterprise community. Similarly, Ryerson University, Toronto offers a range of initiatives to build awareness about the sector, delivered both on and off campus, including workshops and events. Ryerson also run the Social Enterprise Demonstration Fund (SEDF) – a three year acceleration and funding programme to support young social entrepreneurs in developing a high-growth social enterprise.

## Overview of social enterprise activity

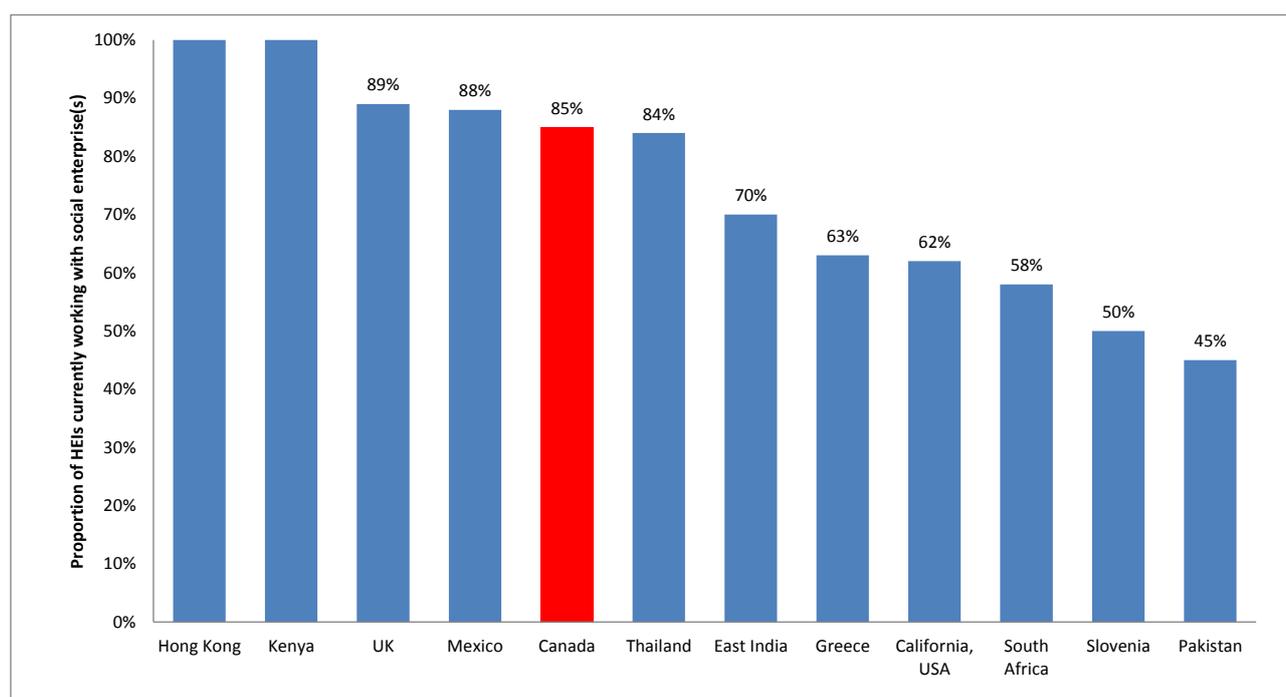
### Introduction

This section firstly summarises the scale and characteristics of HEI and SE partnerships in Canada, followed by a review of priority areas, and discussion on the benefits and approaches to supporting social enterprise. Where appropriate, the analysis draws on findings from the eleven other countries of focus in order to provide a comparator position to Canada (see 'Using this report').

### The scale of social enterprise activity

Social enterprise activity amongst Canadian HEIs was found to be commonplace. As illustrated in Chart 1, of the twenty responding Canadian HEIs, seventeen (85%) were found to have active partnerships at the time of the survey - the fifth highest proportional concentration of HEI/SE activity across all study countries. Notably, the remaining three HEIs (15%) whilst not currently working with social enterprise(s) stated an intention do so in the future. The level of current engagement, or stated future intent to engage with SE, perhaps reflects the aforementioned breadth of support available across both provincial and federal agendas.

**Chart 1: Proportion of institutions from each country currently working with social enterprises**

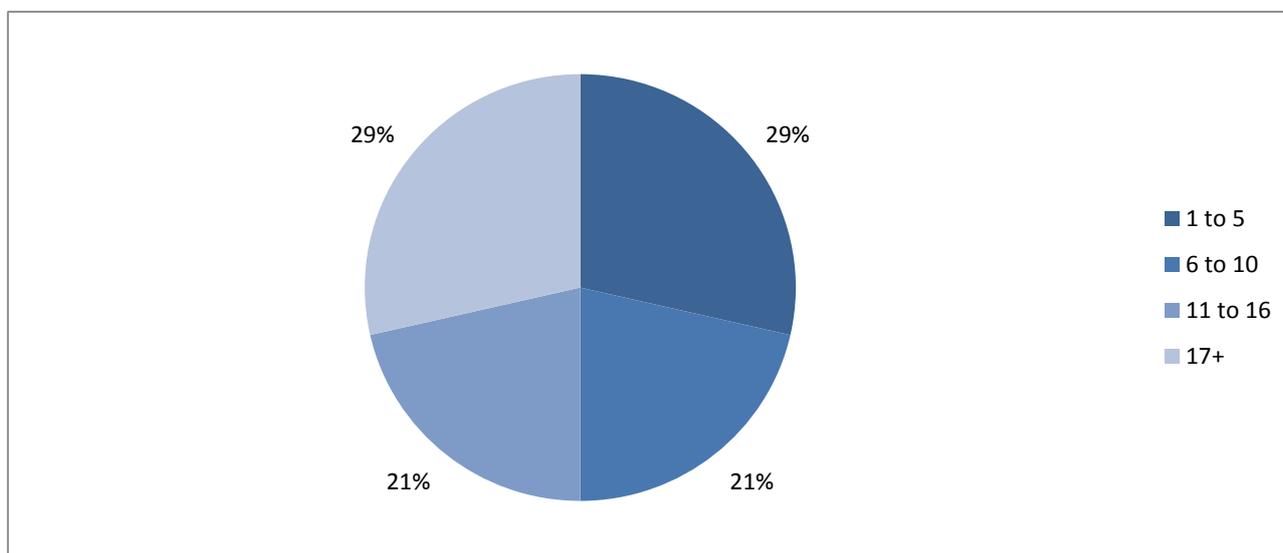


Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016  
Base: 205

Analysis revealed no obvious trend with regard to the number of active partnerships across responding HEIs. As indicated in Chart 2, 29% (4) of HEIs that were working with a social enterprise at the point of the survey engaged with between one and five, whilst the same proportion had seventeen or more active partnerships. In contrast, 21% (3) engaged with between six and ten, whilst a further 21% engaged with between 11 and 16.

As with the findings from the global research report, and as outlined in Chart 2, the number of active social enterprise partnerships in Canada was found to be diverse, and do not represent one homogenous group. However taking into account the size of a social enterprise could go some way toward accounting for these differences. For example, in the global research report, one university was found to have between one and five active partnerships; but one of these was with an umbrella organisation which is home to several large scale social enterprises.

**Chart 2: Number of active social enterprise partnerships per Canadian institution**



Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Base: 14

### International activity

In terms of the geographical scope of engagement, of the seventeen Canadian HEIs with an active partnership(s) at the time of the survey all but one (94% / 16) stated that this included a partnership within their own country. Further, approximately three in five (59% / 10) stated that their partnerships also involved international activity, such as being part of an international network; collaborating with social enterprises operating in other countries; or project activities such as presentations taking place on an international scale.

*“We attended and presented at three Social Enterprise World Forums, across Edinburgh, San Francisco and Calgary”*

*“Two of our accelerated social enterprises have their primary business in international markets, specifically developing countries where they are partnered with local social enterprises”*

*“We are part of a network of centres across Canada, the US and India that create exchange opportunities for students to have experiential learning opportunities in each country”*

Regarding the scale of this international activity, 70% (7) of HEIs that had international SE partnerships stated that this amounted to between one and five projects. This compares with 20% (2) that worked with between six and ten projects, and 10% (1) that worked with seventeen or more.

As a proportion of total work with social enterprise, the largest majority of HEIs from this group (80% / 8) stated that international partnerships accounted for between one and ten per cent of their social enterprise engagement and activity. Of the remaining two HEIs, one (10%) stated that international activity accounted for between twenty-one to thirty per cent, whilst the other was unable to attribute a proportion.

For those HEIs that had previously been, or are currently engaged in an international partnership, key motivations included the opportunity to: address identified international needs; build networks; gain additional exposure; and expand knowledge share opportunities.

*“We engage in international partnerships to get broader exposure and experience and to share what we have learned from our experience”*

*“We see our university as a global citizen and thus our work is not exclusive to our local community. We would like to create students that are opportunity creators and not job seekers, and the more diverse their experiences, the more likely we will achieve that goal”*

Notwithstanding the prevalence of international activity in Canada, a number of challenges were faced by institutions in brokering and supporting these partnerships. All but one institution (9) highlighted areas in which they had experienced barriers to working internationally.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, funding was the most frequently cited barrier to international working (highlighted by six HEIs), both in terms of its limited availability, but also the protocols by which funding for international work is governed. As articulated in the global research report, funding was also found to be the most commonly cited challenge to international partnership working across all twelve study countries. Other less commonly cited complications (reported by just one or two HEIs each) included difficulties with communication, cultural differences, and the time required for international travel.

*“With regard to funding for international projects, funding agencies do not always recognise the ways in which Canadian institutions work. It’s important to be careful when dealing with international protocols”*

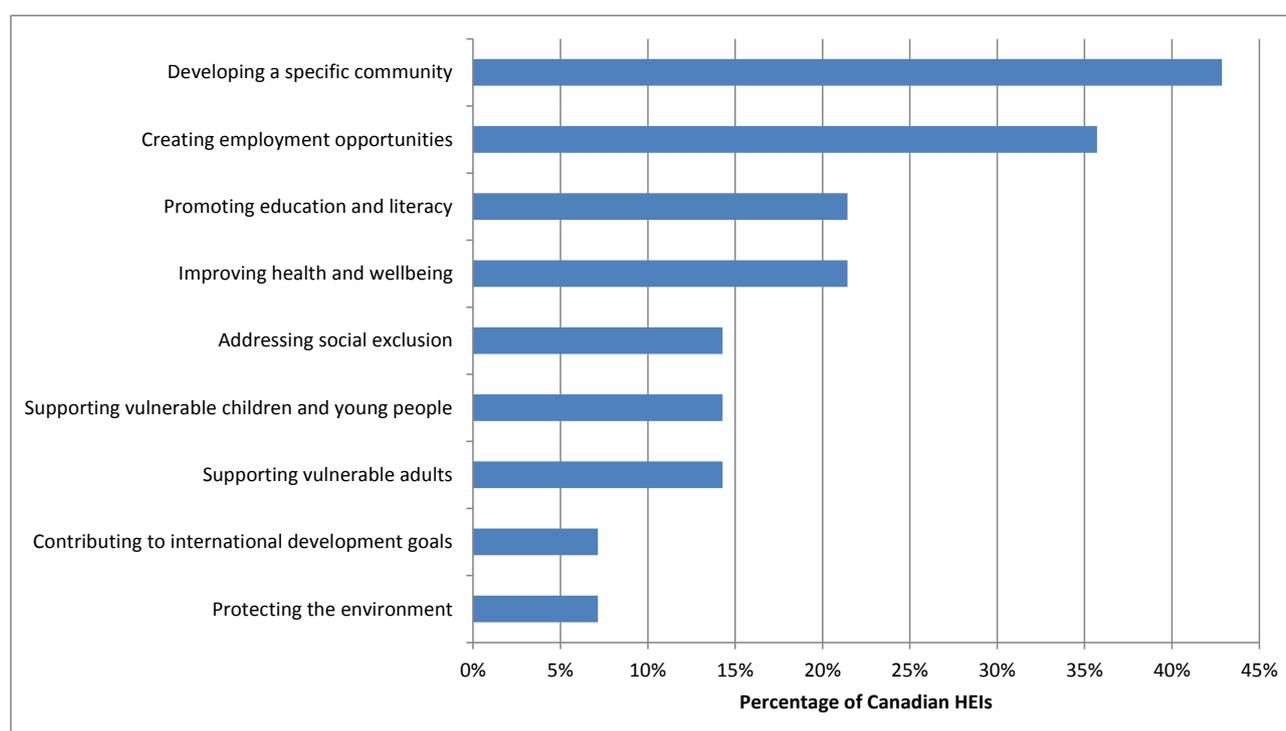
*“Challenges to international working include difficulties with currency, communication, the cost of support and/or delivery, and also building clear tie-ins back to our local institutional context”*

*“International working can be restricted if the communities in which you are working are not integrated. Grassroots involvement is a critical ingredient which is often missing from the heroic ‘solutionary’ brand of social entrepreneurship”*

## Priority areas

Echoing the findings from the global research report, the most commonly cited social purposes that Canadian HEIs would be most likely to support<sup>4</sup> were the development of specific communities (43% / 6); and the creation of employment opportunities (36% / 5). As shown in Chart 3, promoting education and literacy, and improving health and wellbeing were also deemed to be important social purposes, both cited by 21% (3) of HEIs.

<sup>4</sup> HEIs nominating each variable as their first or second choice of purpose they would be most likely to support.

**Chart 3: Types of social enterprise Canadian HEIs would be most likely to support**

Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Base: 14

### Motivations for engagement

Canadian institutions outlined a range of motivating factors that underpinned their engagement with social enterprises. Of those providing a response, 57% (8) reported that they would be particularly motivated<sup>5</sup> to engage with social enterprise to improve their student experience. This was followed by the inclusion of social enterprise in the HEI's mission or strategy, and a motivation to develop research opportunities, each reported by 36% (5) of Canadian HEIs. In addition, a further 21% (3) specified that they would be encouraged to engage in partnership working to address local or regional needs. Notably, these motivations echo those found globally; with the exception of developing research opportunities which was more likely to be reported by Canadian HEIs. This can be exemplified by the Canadian Social Enterprise Sector Survey Project, which has been led by two prominent Canadian HEIs since 2010, and involves profiling the work of social enterprises in and across the provinces of Canada on an annual basis.

*"Students receive hands-on experiential learning opportunities, and opportunities to make a difference"*

*"We now have a reputation as a socially responsible institution"*

*"As a result of partnership working, our HEI is becoming recognised as a research resource in this field"*

*"Our university partners with a social enterprise in the local downtown area to support people who are otherwise unemployable, and to help them get skills that will make them employable"*

<sup>5</sup> HEIs nominating each variable as their first or second most motivating factor.

## Working with and supporting social enterprise

Canadian HEIs that were found to be currently working with a social enterprise(s) were asked to indicate the ways in which this took place, and to exemplify the associated type of support they provide.

As shown in Table 1, (and in common with the findings from the global research report), by far the most commonly cited approach was through a project, partnership, or joint activity – identified by all seventeen responding Canadian institutions. This was exemplified by the provision of: expertise (17 HEIs); collaboration or research opportunities (16); training (15); and placement students, funding or business support services (12).

The second most commonly cited support approach was through student-led social enterprises – cited by two thirds (65% / 11) of Canadian HEIs. The provision of incubation space, where social enterprises can develop, was also prevalent amongst Canadian HEIs, cited as a support approach by 59% (10). Notably, in comparison to global findings, HEIs in Canada were less likely to report institutional commitment to working with social enterprise within the HEI's mission or strategy, or membership of a social enterprise network.

**Table 1: Approaches to working with social enterprises**

Approach	Percentage	
	Canada	Global
A project, partnership or other joint activity with one or more social enterprise(s)	100%	96%
Student-led social enterprises	65%	78%
Incubation space / facility where new social enterprise(s) can develop	59%	68%
Institutional membership of a social enterprise network	56%	70%
Institutional commitment to working with/ supporting social enterprises in mission/ strategy	56%	81%
HEI/ Staff-led social enterprises	56%	67%

Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

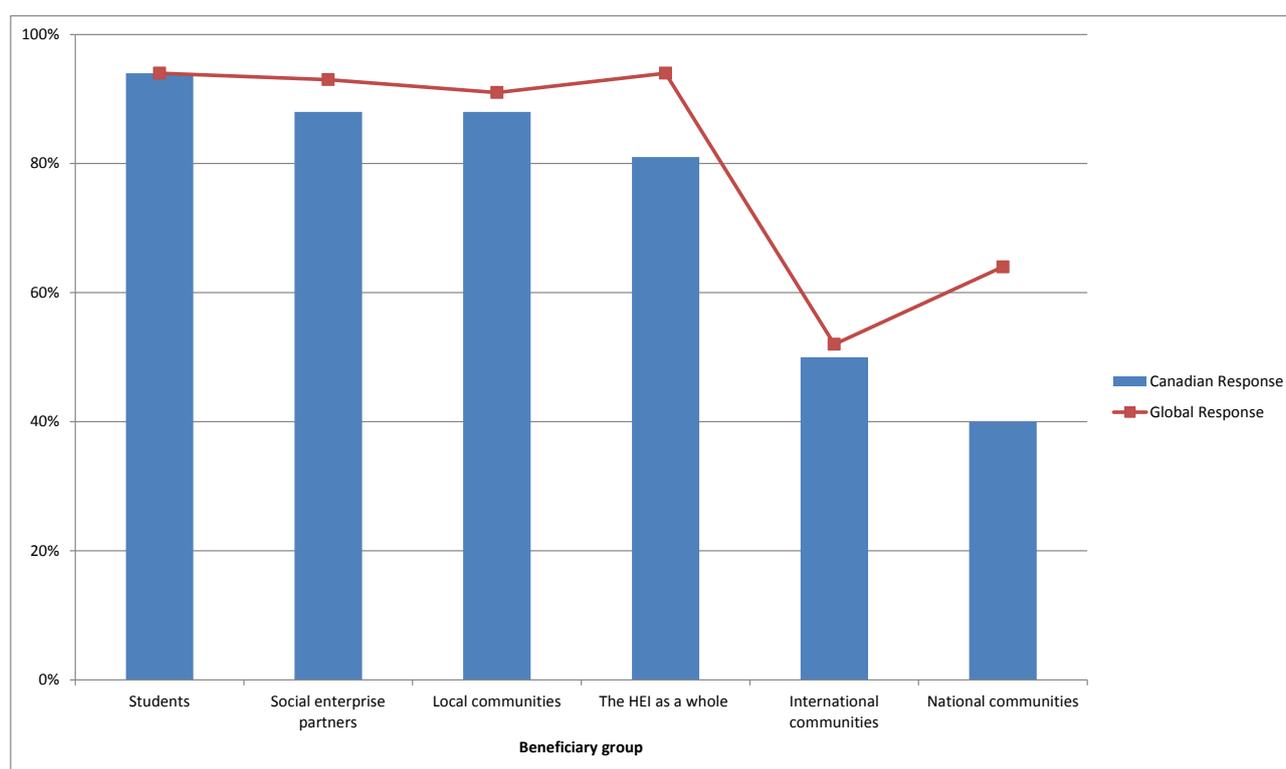
Base: 17 except 'Institutional commitment to working with/ supporting social enterprises in mission/ strategy', 'Institutional membership of a social enterprise network', and 'HEI/ Staff-led social enterprises' where B=16

## Benefits of partnership working

Canadian HEIs identified that their work with social enterprise(s) had created benefits for a range of groups. This is presented in Chart 4, and benchmarked against findings from the global research report, indicated by the red trend line.

Perceived levels of benefit amongst Canadian HEIs generally mirrored the collective view across all twelve countries. As shown, of those providing a valid response, the primary beneficiaries of partnership working were identified by Canadian HEIs to be students (94% / 15), social enterprise partners, and local communities (both cited by 88% / 14). This is broadly in line with global findings of 94%, 93%, and 91% respectively. In contrast, however, there was less recognition regarding the benefit to national communities - identified by 64% globally, and 40% across Canadian HEIs.

The perceived value of social enterprise partnerships to students is perhaps unsurprising given the focus that Canadian institutions place on student involvement. Indeed, and as mentioned earlier in this section, one of the most commonly cited motivations for engaging in these partnerships was to improve the student experience. Benefits also seem to be felt on a smaller, more local scale as opposed to nationally or internationally, which potentially could be explained by the predominantly provincial landscape within which HEIs and social enterprises operate in Canada.

**Chart 4: Canadian views regarding the key beneficiaries of HEI/SE partnership**

Source: Social Enterprise in a Global Context Survey, 2016

Canada Base: 16, except 'National communities' where B=15

Global Base: 157, except 'Social enterprise partners' where B=156; 'Students' and 'Local communities' where B=155; and 'National communities' and 'International communities' where B=148

### Embedding social enterprise in higher education

Reflecting findings from the eleven other participating countries, Canadian HEIs that had active partnerships at the point of the survey commonly used social enterprise to support the delivery of extracurricular activities (71% / 12), whilst just over half (53% / 9) indicated that they offered accredited social enterprise courses. For example, one university offers a 'Social Enterprising' course, in which academic studies are conducted alongside practical experience. Students enrolled on this course work with real social enterprises, supporting them on tasks and projects that forms part of their 'social entrepreneurship' education.<sup>6</sup>

Notably, given the high proportion of institutions in Canada currently working with a social enterprise (85%), just over a third (35% / 6) indicated that they involve social enterprises in the delivery of their curriculum, whilst 12% (2) incorporated social enterprise across all courses.

<sup>6</sup> See 'Case study 2' for more information.

## Good practice in developing partnerships

### Introduction

As previously articulated, the research sought, in part, to facilitate dialogue and knowledge exchange, and to inform further collaboration opportunities (see *'Using this report'*). In support of these objectives, the survey asked HEIs to share examples of good practice stemming from their experience of developing partnerships with social enterprises.

HEIs in Canada provided a range of good practice approaches that could be shared more widely, which were broadly categorised as follows: involving communities; student involvement; developing cooperative networks; communication and knowledge exchange; and focus on impact and sustainability. These are discussed in turn, and exemplified by quotes from responding institutions.

### Involving communities

The involvement of local communities in social enterprise partnerships was highlighted as a key element of successful delivery. In line with the findings from the global research report, HEIs in Canada stressed the importance of institutions working with communities in order to maximise the social value of the intervention through, for example, support for delivery, and in designing and shaping the approach. Engagement from an early stage, and investing the time to get to know the local community and the cultural context within which the social enterprise is situated were also considered key to good practice.

*“Have patience when working in local communities and a huge investment in finding out how we can add value, rather than just showing up with your own Master Plan”*

*“Social entrepreneurs need to get out of the building and talk to the people that will be benefiting from, and using, their products or services. We provide them with lots of training and coaching, but their ability to develop their network and speak to users is usually where things open up or break down”*

*“Having a strong cultural awareness when working with indigenous peoples and organisations is important to success”*

### Student involvement

HEIs in Canada were clear about the importance of student involvement in developing effective partnerships and supporting social enterprises. Evidence from the survey indicates that 71% (12) of Canadian HEIs with an active partnership supported social enterprise through the provision of placement students, whilst 65% (11) included student-led social enterprise in their approach to partnership working.

Ryerson University, for example, is Canada's first 'Ashoka U Changemaker Institution' – an initiative to catalyse social innovation in higher education through a global network of entrepreneurial students, faculty and community leaders.<sup>7</sup> In support of this, Ryerson has developed a unique six-stage process that provides students with the experience and knowledge they need to become successful social entrepreneurs and 'changemakers.' This includes a programme of awareness-raising initiatives, on and off campus, supported by workshops, events and competitions to increase engagement.

<sup>7</sup> See [www.ashokau.org](http://www.ashokau.org)

HEI-based incubation facilities provide an opportunity for students to engage with new social enterprises or to develop their own initiative. These are typically characterised by the provision of an office to support early growth, and access to coaching, mentoring, and opportunities for networking. In Canada, 59% (10) of HEIs with an active partnership indicated that they provide incubation space for social enterprises, compared to 68% globally.

### **Developing cooperative networks**

Again, in common with findings from the global research report, HEIs in Canada highlighted the importance of cooperative networks to support social enterprise. The survey revealed that over half (56% / 9) of all responding institutions with an active partnership were part of a formal social enterprise network.

This is exemplified by provincial funding for the Change Lab Action Research Institute (CLARI). Housed at Saint Mary's University, CLARI represents a partnership with six other universities and colleges, providing a network of experts and professionals to support social and economic development and improvement projects.

*"We are launching the CLARI (Change Lab Action Research) Network in September 2016 which focuses on social enterprises. Our interaction with the sector will increase greatly as a result"*

*"Our recommendation is that HEIs focus on developing their own network so that they can tap into it when needed for the ventures they're working with. Lots of organisations provide training and coaching, but networks are where the real value is"*

### **Communication and knowledge exchange**

Communication between social enterprise partners, and the exchange of knowledge (both internally within HEIs and externally with the social enterprise community) were also highlighted as examples of good practice approaches. An increased level of cross-institutional communication, for example, has the potential to enhance levels of HEI buy-in, highlight opportunities for collaboration, and serve as a platform to draw upon the knowledge and skills of a wider pool of academic expertise.

*"Listen and learn. Take the time to clearly understand a social enterprise's ecosystem and the problems they are facing before attempting to determine how you can help"*

*"When most students want to start a venture internationally, we direct them to local issues first where possible. Where it's not possible, we work through our International Development team to make sure they are building solutions that are culturally appropriate"*

### **Focus on impact and sustainability**

As highlighted in the global research report, measuring the impact of social enterprise is important in communicating its social value, but also in articulating the value of HEI involvement for students, staff, local businesses, and the community. This theme was echoed by a number of Canadian HEIs who highlighted the value of clear action plans, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks to underpin their social enterprise partnerships. Further, the importance of ensuring capacity for the

long-term was also stressed, based on the view that short-term solutions to community issues rarely work.

## Summary

The social enterprise sector in Canada is growing both in strength and stature, with cross-sector engagement and multi-organisational partnerships becoming commonplace. Further, evidence from this research suggests that the increasing level of support from federal and provincial governments for social enterprise in Canada is helping to accelerate the development of the sector. In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that HEIs' involvement with social enterprise in Canada was commonplace, with 85% of respondents indicating an active partnership at the time of the survey. This is benchmarked against a 75% level of engagement from across all twelve countries of study.

Reflecting the geographical scope of engagement in Canada, all but one HEI (94%) with an active partnership indicated that this included a partnership within their own country, whilst approximately three in five (59%) stated that their partnership also involved international activity. Underpinning this engagement was a motivation to improve the student experience, the inclusion of social enterprise in the HEI's mission or strategy, and a motivation to address local or regional needs.

In line with this desire to address local or regional need, and in common with the findings from the global research report, the most commonly cited social purposes that Canadian HEIs would be most likely to support were the development of specific communities, and the creation of employment opportunities. This focus on local or provincial issues could reflect both the diversity between territories (and therefore the range of cultural, environmental, and societal needs), and the presence of provincial structures for social enterprise.

The research indicated a breadth of different ways in which Canadian HEIs approach their work with social enterprise(s). By far the most commonly cited (100%) was through a project, partnership, or joint activity, such as the provision of expertise, collaboration, or research opportunities. This was followed by student-led social enterprise, identified by approximately two-thirds (65%) of HEIs. Notably, students were also identified by Canadian HEIs to be the primary beneficiaries of partnership working, as cited by 94% of responding institutions.

Looking forward, despite the prevalence of HEI/SE activity in Canada and the growth of the sector, the findings indicate that there is more work to be done to further embed social enterprise into the curriculum. For example, 86% of global HEIs with an active partnership involve social enterprise(s) in the delivery of extracurricular activities, such as being a mentor or judge in a business competition; whilst 67% involved social enterprise(s) in the delivery of curriculum teaching. In contrast, this compares to 71% and 35% of Canadian HEIs respectively indicating scope for additional partnership.

## Case studies of practice

### Case study 1: University of Waterloo

**Institution overview:** Founded in 1957, the University of Waterloo (UWaterloo) is a public research university with a main campus located in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. UWaterloo has a student population of c.35,000, and has Faculties in Applied Health Sciences, Arts, Engineering, Environment, Maths and Science. The university also operates the largest post-secondary co-operative education programme in the world, with more than 120 undergraduate courses incorporating up to two years' work experience alongside academic studies. The university's mission is to advance learning and knowledge through teaching, research and scholarship, nationally and internationally, in an environment of free expression and inquiry.

**Approach to social enterprise:** UWaterloo embeds social enterprise concepts across its campus, providing students with various opportunities (curricular and extracurricular) to learn about social entrepreneurship and to transform their ideas into viable enterprises.

**Research mobilisation:** The Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience (WISIR), housed within the School of Environment, Enterprise and Development, generates inter-disciplinary knowledge about social innovations and the dynamics of learning, adaptation and innovation in the area of sustainable development. They engage in multi-disciplinary, collaborative research projects and mobilise this knowledge through a range of curriculum opportunities and training courses within and outside the university setting; such as the Graduate Diploma in Social Innovation and the Social Innovation Lab.

Still in its pilot phase at the time of writing, the Social Innovation Lab is a cross-disciplinary campus-based setting which will work on multiple complex challenges simultaneously. The lab will integrate with undergraduate and graduate work from across the campus, and house a number of social innovation and social entrepreneurship classes, whilst also providing co-operative work opportunities for students to organise lab tasks.

**Incubation:** Based on campus, GreenHouse is Canada's only live-in social impact incubator for students focused on social innovation and entrepreneurship. Students receive mentoring support; start-up funding and weekly programming to help them develop their enterprise. Administrators track the annual impact of Greenhouse using various outcome indicators such as the number of new start-up clients, jobs created, and incremental sales obtained. GreenHouse also runs a four-month summer fellowship programme, providing social entrepreneurs with free space and accommodation to enable them to work on their early stage start-up ventures full-time. Fellows receive entrepreneurship training, mentoring and pathway access to potential first customers.

St Paul's University College's<sup>8</sup> GreenHouse initiative collaborates with other national and international HEIs to promote the concept of social enterprise. They partnered with Ryerson University (Canada) and the University of Southampton (UK) on both the Ryerson Social Innovation xCHANGE and the Waterloo Region Design Jam. This partnership was the first of its kind to connect the student-led social innovation hubs at three HEIs with the objective of increasing the number of opportunities available to students to engage in cross-institution initiatives that advance social innovation.

**Contact Information:** [www.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.uwaterloo.ca)

<sup>8</sup> St Paul's University College is affiliated with the University of Waterloo and located on its main campus.

## Case study 2: Mount Royal University

**Institution overview:** Mount Royal University (MRU) is a public university located in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Founded in 1910 as a music conservatory, primary and secondary school, Mount Royal became a post-secondary college in 1931 and a university in 2009. MRU has subject specialisms in Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation, Child Wellbeing Studies, Outdoor Recreation and Leadership, and Midwifery. The institutional mission states that MRU values undergraduate excellence through personalised, experiential, community-engaged and outcome-based learning in an environment of inclusion, diversity and respect. MRU has a current enrolment of between 10,000 and 15,000 students.

**Approach to social enterprise:** MRU work to increase and enhance awareness of the social enterprise sector through encouraging students to design and deliver their own enterprises, educating them about the potential of social entrepreneurship as a career path. The institution also supports local initiatives that ensure indigenous inclusion and that build on the principles of reconciliation.

**Students and social enterprise:** Involving students in social enterprise is at the core of MRU's approach. They note how social enterprise challenges the bifurcation of non-profit and for-profit sectors; aligning with students' desire to not have to choose between an enterprising career (doing well) and one focused on social benefit (doing good).

RECODE, an initiative of the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, aims to instil a culture of social entrepreneurship within HEIs, providing social innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities for college and university students. MRU was selected by the McConnell Foundation as a RECODE campus, which includes additional support for the incubation and growth of new social enterprises and social innovations.

Students enrolled on the 'Social Enterprising' course have the opportunity to work with real social enterprises as part of the curriculum. For example, current students are working with the Attainable Homes Calgary Corporation (AHCC) - a social enterprise and wholly owned subsidiary of the City of Calgary that delivers well-appointed entry-level homes for Calgarians who have been caught in the city's growing housing affordability gap.

MRU also support student-led ventures, providing start-up funding to enable these initiatives to come to fruition. Green Cup is one such student-led social enterprise, aimed at reducing the amount of coffee cup waste in Canada. This is achieved through selling advertisements on compostable cups and through the distribution of these cups in the advertiser's target market.

**Defining the sector:** MRU note challenges in their work related to how social enterprise is defined. They identify that there might be a preoccupation in academia for narrow definitions and specific models for social enterprises to subscribe to. In contrast, however, in MRU's experience many social enterprises prefer to be defined differently, such as 'an enterprising non-profit' or 'a social purpose business'. They suggest that strict definitions of social enterprise are unnecessary and focus should always be on the social impact of a venture.

**Contact Information:** [www.mtroyal.ca](http://www.mtroyal.ca)

### Case study 3: Simon Fraser University

**Institution overview:** Simon Fraser University (SFU) is a public research university located in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. Founded in 1965, the Institution now has more than 25,000 student enrollments.

**Approach to social enterprise:** Driven by their social innovation unit 'RADIUS' (RADical Ideas, Useful to Society) and established leaders like the SFU Centre for Sustainable Community Development, SFU is a key partner in multiple local, national and international social enterprise initiatives. They use social enterprise to address community needs and are proactively seeking new ways to engage with, enhance, and promote the sector.

**Community partnerships and incubation:** Based in the Beedie School of Business, RADIUS is SFU's social innovation lab and venture incubator, providing a range of incubation and support services to the sector, including:

- The Local Economic Development (LED) Lab which was founded through a partnership between RADIUS and Ecotrust Canada. LED lab partners with community organisations to design, test and launch innovative enterprises to create a more dynamic and inclusive local economy in Vancouver's inner city, supporting new income generation and livelihood opportunities for residents.
- RADIUS Ventures, which delivers incubation and acceleration programming for top emerging social ventures. RADIUS Ventures helps entrepreneurs to test and refine their business model through an eight week 'Trampoline' program and provides an intensive 6-month catalogue of support for growth stage ventures in the 'Slingshot accelerator'. Additionally, RADIUS has recently launched a First People's Enterprise Accelerator program which aims to help entrepreneurs who are serving aboriginal communities to develop their ventures so they're ready to launch and get funding.
- The RADIUS Fellowship, which annually supports twenty of British Columbia's most promising emerging social economy leaders, including many developing their own ventures or working within other social enterprises.

**Curriculum innovation:** Social enterprise has been woven into the core offerings in entrepreneurship and innovation at SFU, including introductory and specialty courses. These include:

- SFU Change Lab, a term length studio program where interdisciplinary teams of students learn how to analyse social problems and design social enterprise responses. Heading into its sixth year, the Program has partnered with community health leaders, the Vancouver Economic Commission, SFU facilities, and the City of Vancouver over the years to help address real problems facing the region.
- SFU's Centre for Sustainable Community Development has been a leader in studying and teaching about how social enterprise can play a role in building more sustainable local and global communities for many years, and offers a widely renowned professional certificate in Community Economic Development

**International engagement:** Arising through a partnership between RADIUS and Impacto Quito (a social enterprise focused co-working, events and training organisation) and launched in early 2016, Salto Social or 'Social Leap' is the first incubator for social enterprises in Ecuador.

**Events and community:** RADIUS is well known for its unique events, engaging a broader community in learning about the role of social enterprise in building a more just, sustainable and resilient economy. Fun events such as the Social Venture Failure Wake feature the emotional stories of recently failed social ventures, celebrating the brave entrepreneurs behind them, providing a cathartic opportunity to move on and learn from their experiences. Others, such as the Social Innovation Train Tour from Vancouver to Seattle and Portland, help connect these international communities of entrepreneurs, innovators and investors.

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