

2017 Strategic Technology & Innovation Management Programme

Measuring the Impact of Innovation Hubs

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Industrial / managerial need addressed

Innovation Hubs are places where industry, community, government, researchers, end users and other stakeholders can interact and generate new solutions together. As communal, collaborative, adaptive spaces they enable innovative re-combinations of products and services to be developed, tested and delivered to market. They have the following characteristics that distinguish them from related concepts such as incubators, accelerators, makespaces, fablabs, ecosystems and clusters.

- (1) Embraces fluidity and diversity by moulding a community of like-minded innovators and entrepreneurs. They connect diverse people and knowledge, and have a greater creativity potential through the ongoing flow of diverse participants.
- (2) Focuses on impact by emphasising the sense of a common mission. Innovation hubs remind us that by refocusing from short-term results to vision and impact, an organisation stands a better chance of engaging its employees and other stakeholders in more radical forms of innovation.
- (3) Encourages serendipity. The facilitation of encounters of extreme heterogeneity acts as a driving force behind the innovation activity within hubs.
- (4) Creates a sense of community. The group has a sense of community of like-minded people, sharing common beliefs, jargon and lifestyles.
- (5) Intensive collaborative innovation. Stimulates collaborative activities in a variety of ways (co-location and co-working but also crowdsourcing, co-creation, design thinking, and various open innovation practices). The uniqueness of an innovation hub lies in the high intensity frequency and openness of the collaborative activities pursued.
- (6) Dynamises the innovation process. Hunting for ideas through innovation jams, hackathons, pitches, innovation challenges, idea competitions and brainstorming. Strong event-centred approach “hub organization”.
- (7) Enables, rather than forces, innovation. Members are self-determined and self-motivated to participate, and empowered to take their own initiative.

In providing this space for diverse actors to participate they offer an alternative means of organising innovation. However, their effectiveness and the impact of their activities is uncertain.

Expected deliverables

A set of guidelines that describe the characteristics and dimensions of innovation hubs, and outline the metrics for measuring their impact.

Engagement opportunities

The lead researcher is interested in talking to anyone within the consortium who has experience either in managing in or engaging with innovation hubs.

Approach

As part of STIM, the project leader is collaborating with the Canadian AGE-WELL network (“Aging Gracefully across Environments using Technology to Support Wellness, Engagement and Long Life”, <http://agewell-nce.ca/>). Collaboration with this network was begun in June 2017 and will involve investigation into the healthcare innovation hubs that AGE-WELL is implementing during 2017.

Key questions that the project will be asking include:

- What are the characteristics and dimensions of an innovation hub?
- What different configurations do innovation hubs take?
- How can the impact of different types of innovation hubs be measured?

The process for answers these questions will include the following:

- Literature review around innovation hubs to define the dimensions through which they can be identified.
- Use of secondary data to examine existing innovation hubs and their practices.
- Development of framework and metrics for measuring the impact of innovation hubs.