



Mobilizing Knowledge for Better Public Policy: Lessons from the Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development, Memorial University

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N.B. Social Policy Network Forum, Moncton, Oct. 28, 2010



Lessons from a Provincial Government Policy Wonk (1)

- **Policy Shops are the easiest to cut – not direct delivery to client**
- **Policy cuts have long-term impacts**
- **Restoring policy to feed “rule by auditor” and do briefing notes isn’t restoring policy**
- **Significant knowledge resides outside government: why not tap into it?**



Lessons from a Provincial Government Policy Wonk (2)

- **Better policy when developed collaboratively**
 - across departments
 - with external partners: industry; community; other governments; university
- **...and better chance of continuity**
- **Collaboration has to be resourced**
- **Requires brokers / safe spaces**



Memorial University

- **Only university in NL**
- **“Special Obligation” to People of NL**
- **History of Regional Engagement**
- **Harris Centre established October 2004**

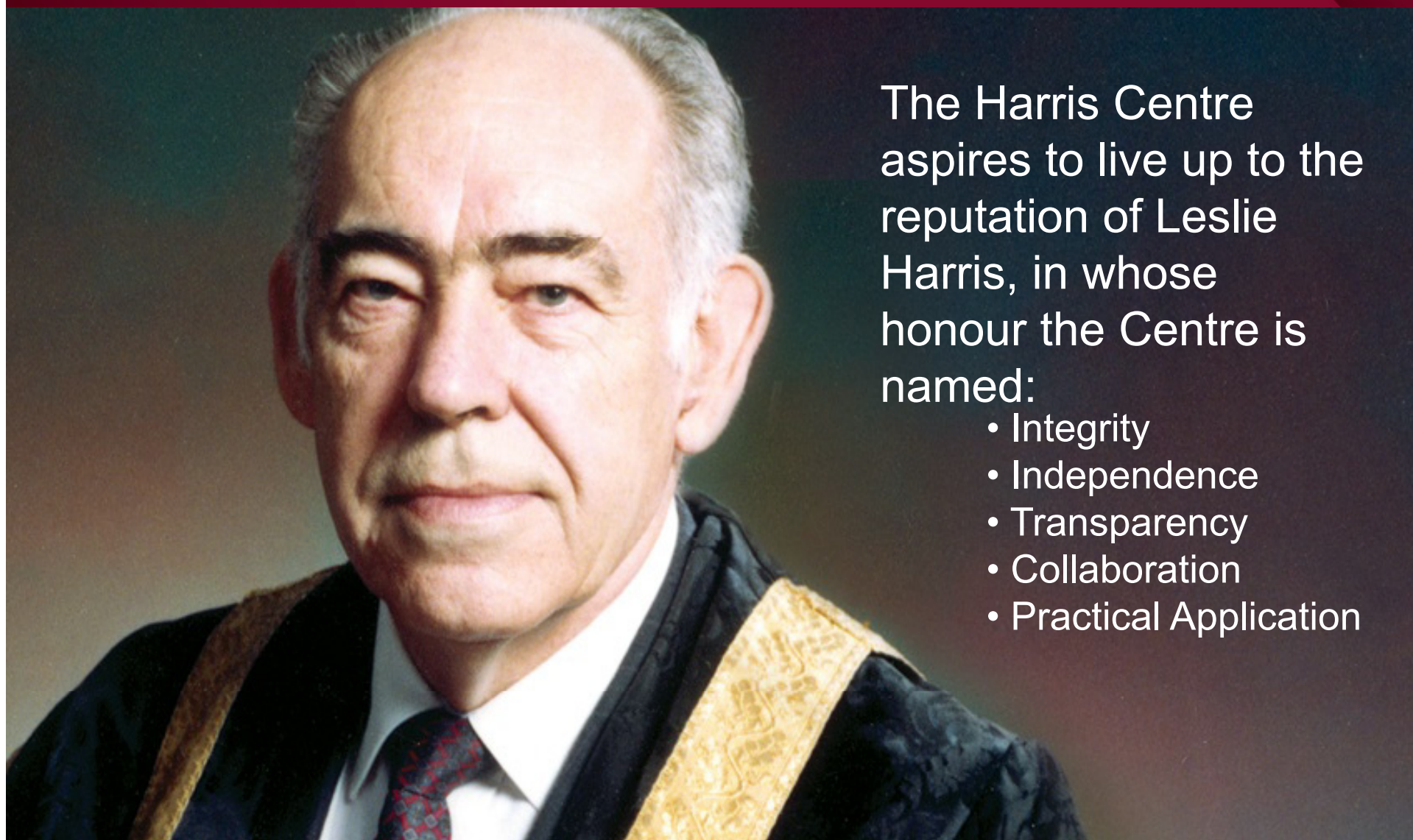


Harris Centre Mandate

- **Coordinate and Facilitate the University's Activities Relating to Regional Policy and Development**
- **Advise on Building the University's Capacity**
- **Identify Priority Themes and Projects relating to:**
 - Teaching
 - Research
 - Outreach
- **Emerging Role: Honest Broker**



Harris Centre Values



The Harris Centre aspires to live up to the reputation of Leslie Harris, in whose honour the Centre is named:

- Integrity
- Independence
- Transparency
- Collaboration
- Practical Application



2010-2011 Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Research

Stimulate more research in regional policy and development

Goal 2: Education

Stimulate education in regional policy and development at Memorial University

Goal 3: Outreach

Generate greater interaction of Memorial University faculty, students and staff with stakeholder needs and opportunities

Goal 4: Capacity

Establish Memorial University as a recognized centre of excellence in regional policy and development

Goal 5: Operations

Establish Harris Centre operations for long-term success

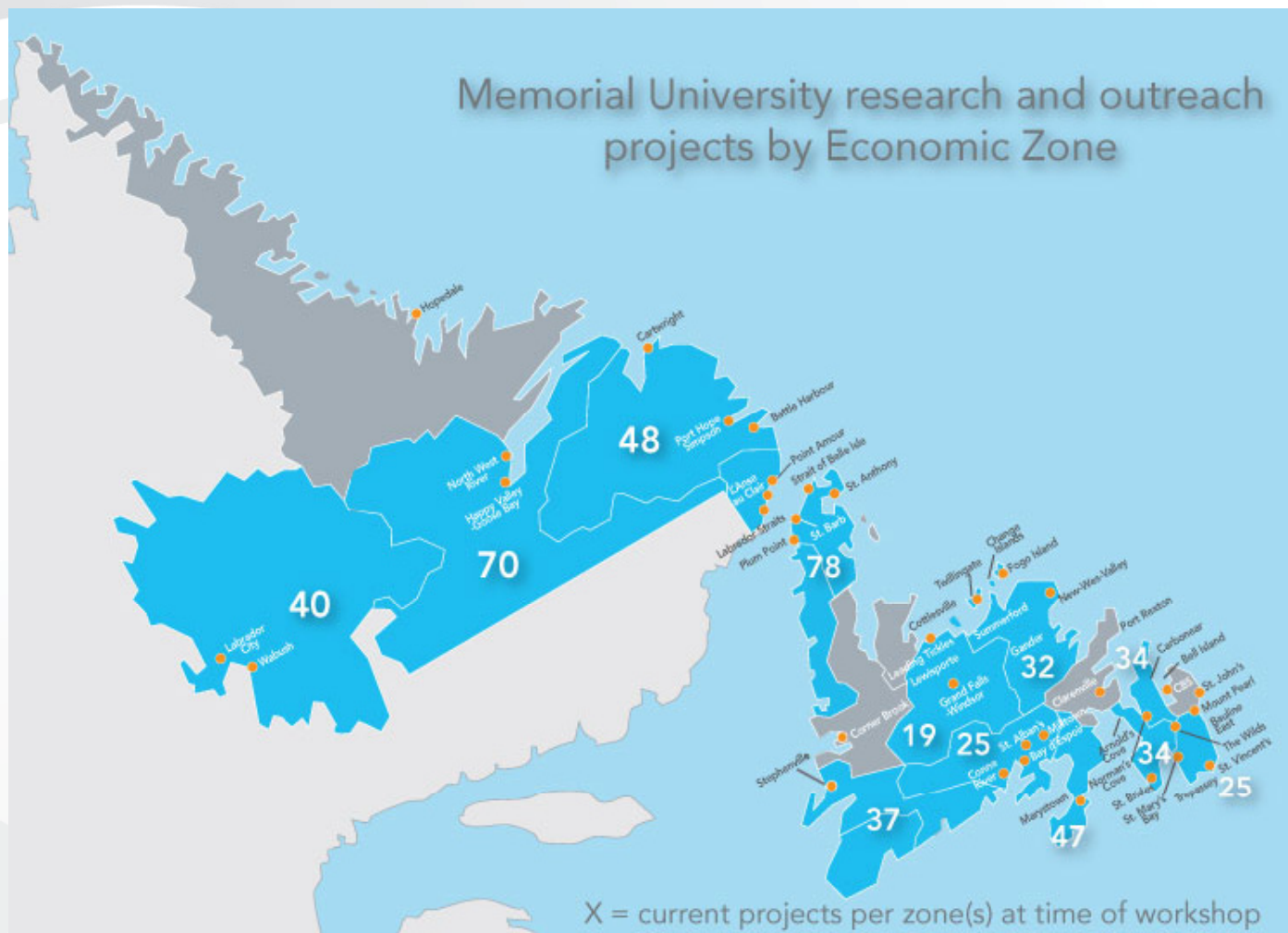


Harris Centre: Key Programs and Services

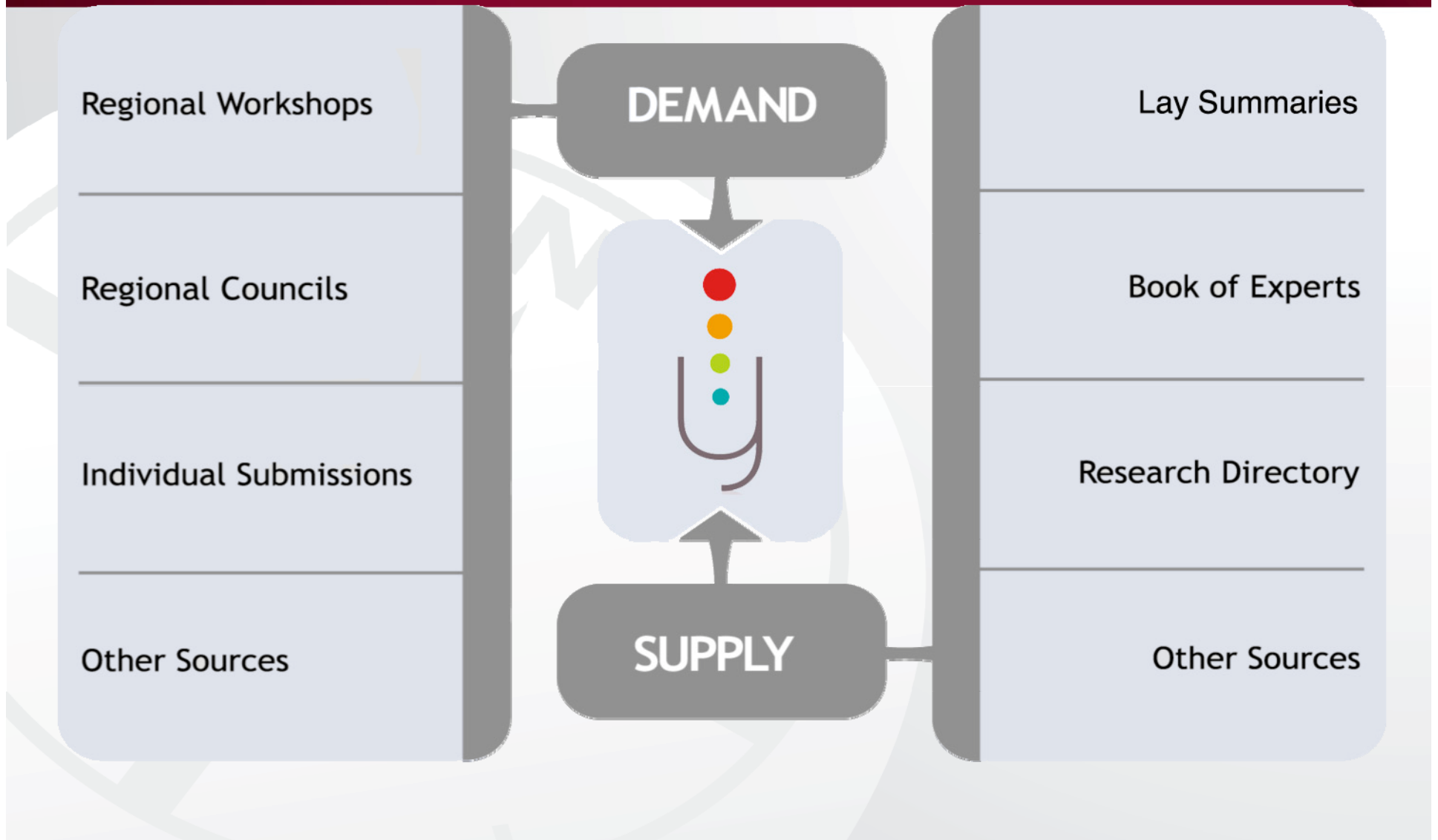


- **Public Forums**
- **Conferences**
- **Invitation-only Sessions**
- **Targeted Research Funding**
- **Graduate Student Knowledge Exchange**
- **Packaging Research to Meet Needs**
- **Regional Workshops**
- **Yaffle.ca**

Regional Workshops



A 'marketplace' for information





**Partnering with the Private Sector for
Independent Policy Research**
The Federal Presence in Newfoundland and Labrador



Memorial's Faculty of Business Administration Approached

Crosbie group of Companies approaches
Dean of Business for possible
researcher

November 2004



Partnering with the Private Sector for Independent Policy Research

The Federal Presence in Newfoundland and Labrador



**Memorial's Faculty of
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Approached**

Crosbie group of Companies
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November 2004



Meeting with Harris Centre

Dean of Business
arranges meeting
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November 2004



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The Federal Presence in Newfoundland and Labrador



Memorial's Faculty of

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Researchers identified

The Harris Centre confirms Dr. James Feehan and researcher Alison Coffin to conduct research on the federal presence in Newfoundland and Labrador

Harris Centre and the Crosbie Group partner to fund the research

May 2005



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The Federal Presence in Newfoundland and Labrador



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Meeting with

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November 2005

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- Provincial Minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs issues a Ministerial Statement in House.
- City of St. John's all Candidates debate (federal election January 2006) addresses questions from Dr. Feehan
- Premier's letter to federal leaders cites "independent confirmation" of Harris Centre study

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Further Research

• Dr. Feehan and Ms. Coffin are awarded funding for Phase II report from the Harris Centre Applied Research Fund

February 2006

• Federal Presence Phase II Report

Summer 2006

Dr. Feehan and Ms. Coffin research on the federal presence in Newfoundland and Labrador

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Key Challenges

- **Building the brand: inside and outside the university**
- **Faculty rewards for promotion and tenure**
- **Focus; “not lose sight of the mundane whilst chasing the exciting” (Newcastle U., June 2009)**
- **Maintaining independence while brokering projects requiring funding**
- **Patience, taking the High Road when dealing with university politics / posturing**
- **Don’t over estimate capacity of community / NGOs / business / government, to engage**
- **Responding to demand; managing flow**



The Harris Centre as Broker (1)

- **Knowledge Brokering Mirrors Marketing Function - Need to Identify 3 Components:**
 - Demand: research, teaching, outreach "pull"
 - Supply: Memorial capacity to deliver; "push"
 - Champions: make it happen
- **Clarify roles: Lead / Partner / Support**
- **Clarify commitments and implementation**
 - Contract Management / Project Management
 - Monitoring and Evaluation
- **Communicate!**
- **Integrity & Independence of the University Key**

The Harris Centre as Broker (2)

- **Honest Broker role**
 - Not a policy advocate
 - Not a think tank
 - Independent moderator / facilitator
- **Knowledge Mobilization**
 - Research management, promotion, communications
 - Continuum: Inside out / Outside in / Co-production



Knowledge Mobilization:

Harris Centre Perspective



1. Contribute to informed public debate; build democratic efficacy; create and apply knowledge
2. Engage stakeholders to define issues / needs / opportunities
3. Involve partners in knowledge generation
4. Ground-truth findings
5. Identify champions



Knowledge Mobilization:

Harris Centre Perspective



- 6. Build awareness (Memorial, research, faculty, students)**
- 7. Intermediary: linking policy makers & practitioners with faculty, students and staff**
- 8. Building long-term relationships: creating & fostering networks (its about people!)**
- 9. Strategic Communications**
- 10. Evidence-informed decision making**



Long-term outcomes?

- **Better public policy and governance**
- **Greater democratic efficacy**
- **Informed Public Debate**
- **Scholarship of Engagement**
- **Learning Region(s)**
- **Culture of Innovation**
- **...and it's fun to do!**



**Comments? Questions?
Opportunities for new
partnerships?**