**November 1, 2017**

**Innovation150 Symposium: Lessons Learned on Pan-organizational Outreach Collaborations**

**Organized by**:Innovation150, a partnership supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage, between Perimeter Institute, Actua, the Institute for Quantum Computing at the University of Waterloo, the Canadian Association of Science Centres, and Ingenium.

**Speakers**: Andrew Campbell, Senior Executive Director, Canada 150 Federal Secretariat; Sandra Corbeil, Director, Strategic Partnerships and Networks, Ingenium; Tobi Day-Hamilton, Director, Communications and Strategic Initiatives, Institute for Quantum Computing at the University of Waterloo; Stephanie Deschenes, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Science Centres; Greg Dick, Director of Educational Outreach, Perimeter Institute; Jennifer Flanagan, President and CEO, Actua; RJ Taylor, Manager of Special Projects, Perimeter Institute

**Takeaways and recommendations**

About Innovation150:

Innovation150 was a yearlong program that offered meaningful and enriching experiences across the country that fostered a culture of innovation and inspired the next generation of innovators. Delivered through a partnership between five leading science organizations, the collaborative Canada 150 project included:

* Power of Ideas — an interactive science exhibition from Perimeter Institute that travelled to schools and science centres across the country, reaching 100,000 youth and families in 180+ communities
* Actua Maker Mobile — a moving makerspace packed with exciting, cutting-edge technology that encourages youth to experiment and build with hands-on learning, reaching 12,000 youth through 300+ workshops from coast to coast to coast;
* QUANTUM: The Exhibition — from the Institute for Quantum Computing at the University of Waterloo, this feature exhibition was the first-ever travelling show on quantum information science and technology and reached more than 150,000 at seven venues throughout 2017;
* Innovation Festivals — hosted in part by science centres, five region-wide celebrations of innovation inspired curiosity through a wide range of activities from Innovation150 organizations and dozens of community-based partners throughout the country;
* Innovation150 Digital Hub — a go-to showcase about Canadian thinkers and new concepts, this online nexus for Innovation150 had a crowd-sourced innovation storybook from Ingenium, a range of exciting contests, and more, garnering over 1 million pageviews and 2.5 million clicks, likes, and shares on social media;
* Public Awareness Campaign — this far-reaching campaign celebrating Canadian innovators reached over 20 million Canadians with promotions, media engagement, online content, and national Public Service Announcements.

Partnering with the federal government:

* Government played an important role in funding, promotion and coordination.
* The Innovation150 vision, combined with funding from the federal government, provided a raison d'être for partners to come together under a common purpose.
* Government was flexible in allowing adaptive partnership funding models (i.e. between public, private and not-for-profit sectors).
* Government’s hands-off approach allowed Canadians and Canadian organizations to share unfiltered views on 150+ years of innovation.

Structuring the partnership:

* Develop common goals and a common vision, as well as relationships that extend beyond the outcomes.
* By joining forces, partners were able to reduce duplication and share resources and expertise.
* A lot of energy and engagement is needed at the front end to create a structure that was nimble, adaptable and responsive to each group’s needs. This is critical to building trust.
* This wasn’t five organizations with five different cultures; when including stakeholders, it is about 80 different organizational cultures. Personal interaction with partners on the ground is critical.
* A secretariat was formed.
* A memorandum of understanding identified potential challenges and opportunities for alignment and engagement; recognizing that each group has their own culture, mandate and deliverables.
* “Legacy over logos”: you need complete vertical buy-in from each organization, from executive level to people on the ground.
* A marketing communications sub-committee was struck to develop common branding.
* Partnerships work best when participants “check their egos at the door”
* Hold regular meetings and “check ins”.
* Each partner must be prepared to invest money, time, and resources to have a bigger impact.
* Each group needs a champion who can promote the importance of the partnership within their own organization.

Engaging communities

* Having Innovation150 led by its partners, and not the government, resulted in more community groups and their networks being involved. This broadened the reach and impact of Innovation150 and resulted in new linkages among community groups and other organizations.
* Having “boots on the ground” in each community made it possible to showcase how individuals can use innovation to solve problems in their homes, schools and communities; and why a science literate population is important.
* Overestimated the amount of promotional spend that would be required in communitiesbecause many partners at the community level brought (i) pre-existing media relationships that meant cost efficiencies, and (ii) existing people and organizational networks to spread the word quickly.

Lessons learned

* Bring organizations together in a formal partnership can yield much greater reach and impact, but this model is not necessarily cheaper — there are higher administration costs and organizational effort that need to be factored in from the start when considering a model like this. However, the final result will end up being much more than the sum of its parts.
* Securing funding from sponsors is resource- and energy-intensive, but the front end work is critical for long-term success.
* Be patient with your partner’s stakeholders; they may have concerns and reservations about the partnership that need to be understood and addressed through an open communications process.
* “Be open to knowing what you don’t know” and don’t be afraid to tap into the expertise of your partners.
* Employing extra diligence and seeking expert advice when developing project budgets is crucial.

Scaling up impact

* Successful projects often leveraged work that was already being done by other groups and networks, avoiding the need to start from scratch.
* Content was developed that could be adapted for use by the members of each partner’s network (e.g. the 50 science centres that are members of the Canadian Association of Science Centres).
* A focus on accessibility and inclusivity ensured projects reached the most Canadians, particularly those in rural, remote and indigenous communities (i.e. a mobile makers space, travelling science exhibition, innovation festivals, smaller pop-up exhibits).
* Several universities are creating their own maker mobiles modelled on the one created for Innovation150.
* Innovation festivals attracted more visitors than usual to local science organizations and facilities that local communities didn’t before know were in their backyards (e.g. Canadian Light Source).
* Partners and volunteers in each community leveraged their own networks and resources to reach more people.
* Developed professional public service announcements that broadcast stations ran for free; engaged sponsors (e.g. Shaw) that could provide more PSA airtime, reaching 20+ million Canadians.
* Used social media and contests to increase public engagement. This required constantly tweaking and testing digital content to understand what works and what doesn’t.

Building a lasting legacy

* Think big, start small and scale up; be persistent, be open and invite others to join.
* Connected the public to innovation already happening in their community, and showed them how to build that capacity at the local level.
* Ingenium developed a crowdsourced interactive digital storybook of Canadian achievements that people can continue to contribute to, comment on and share beyond 2017 (more than 760 stories to date).
* Created a digital hub – innovation150.ca – that organizations can use to share events and resources, including resources for teachers and parents
* Developed teacher resources that will allow educators to provide learning opportunities for their students around the knowledge and skills of innovation for years to come.
* Participants plan to incorporate much of what they learned into their regular programming.
* This experience has helped to build trust and long-term relationships between the partners, which are now looking at other ways to leverage their collective networks.