

Queen's in the Community Working Group

Strategic Goal #5

Embedding Queen's in the community: building deliberate, strategic, respectful and mutually beneficial engagement with communities outside the University, including Kingston, the region, other organizations and institutions, and national and global networks that share our goals.

Preamble

The [vision](#) of Queen's new strategy is that *The Queen's community—our people—will solve the world's most significant and urgent challenges with their intellectual curiosity, passion to achieve, and commitment to collaborate.* As Principal Deane has [said](#):

"We have an obligation intentionally to bring the scholarly and human resources of the university to bear on issues of cultural, social, and environmental sustainability as they manifest themselves locally" (2020).

With their abundance of assets, including material resources and creative, talented, and curious scholars and artists, universities are well-placed to address the important challenges of our time. While recognizing that Queen's has significant resources, and a responsibility to share them, especially with those who are marginalized in our community, the Working Group supports an approach that also moves beyond "outreach," which tends to maintain hierarchies of power, to true partnership with different communities and networks. University partnerships with communities—collaborative engagements where knowledge and benefits flow in both directions—are essential to address epistemic injustice, in which some forms of knowledge are privileged over others. In a collaborative, interactive and co-creative partnership model of university-community engagement, Queen's will learn from its partners and ideally be transformed in the process. Then, Queen's will be better equipped to solve urgent challenges, and will enhance graduates' capacities to bring about positive social impact. Partnership work with communities is essential to decolonize and indigenize the university, and to manifest the Queen's [value](#) of building "a diverse, equitable, inclusive and anti-racist community."

Goal

In all our activities—research, teaching and learning, creative activity, and service—we seek to increase the porosity of boundaries between Queen's University and the local communities that constitute Kingston. In the longer term, respectful and reciprocal community partnership will be at the heart of what we do at Queen's.



Principles of community engagement and partnership

Embedding Queen's in the community, in all our activities, must be an *ongoing process* of mutual benefit and commitment to the common good. It requires:

- **mutual respect**
- **collaboration**
- **reciprocity**
- **sustained relationship-building**
- **attention to equity**

To be effective, such a process requires commitment, resources, and leadership from Queen's.

Background

Queen's students, faculty, and staff are already engaged in numerous local, provincial, national and international activities, including research, learning, creative work and service, but for the most part, these are not integrated into the operations or mission of the University. While some Canadian universities have developed a strong track record of significant community engagement or campus-community partnerships, Queen's has maintained and fostered its aura of an "ivory tower" institution, "still too much 'owned' by the white, colonial constituency it was founded to serve" ([Patrick Deane, 2020](#)). Some members of marginalized Kingston communities perceive there is a fence around campus, blocking them from accessing the university. Developing meaningful partnerships with community members will require members of the Queen's community to engage with open minds, curiosity and a sense of humility.

Although the Working Group recognizes that "community" can be understood expansively, we focused on the Kingston "community" recognizing that there are many communities within the greater Kingston area. Speaking of Kingston *communities* reminds us that Kingston is not homogenous. Given our great privilege as a publicly funded institution, the Working Group is particularly interested in building relationships with the most marginalized in Kingston communities, to reach those who are least likely to participate in engagement activities with the University. We also recognize that Queen's faculty members and graduate students carry out scholarly and creative activities in many communities and networks outside of Kingston; the Working Group supports the application of the same principles of respectful community engagement in all settings: local, regional, provincial, national and international.

Actions:

1. Begin a process of centering meaningful and respectful community engagement and partnership at the heart of Queen's activities in research, teaching and learning, artistic creation, and service. As Principal Deane has [said](#), "*In doing so, furthermore, we must exercise respect and deference to the community, positioning ourselves not as bringers of salvation, but as willing partners in pursuit of a shared goal.*"
2. Develop a systematic, institutionalized process to understand the perspectives of various Kingston communities about Queen's, ensuring meaningful participation by marginalized communities, including Indigenous, racialized, low-income, and newcomer communities,



especially youth, seniors, and parents in these communities, and the community organizations that serve them. This could begin with a version of *The Conversation* that involves going out into various Kingston communities to engage in meaningful dialogue.

3. Develop an inventory of existing activities that involve campus-community engagement, assess coherence with the principles of meaningful engagement, identify gaps and improve. For example, there are already many forms of experiential learning, service learning, internships, practica, and placements that take place in various faculties, some of which are mandated by law. The Working Group recommends that these existing programs be evaluated for their congruence with the principles of meaningful and respectful university-community engagement.
4. Begin the development of a campus-wide infrastructure to support and promote community engagement in all activities at Queen's. This will require financial and human resources at the level of the University, and should have a longer term goal of establishing a well-resourced Community Engagement Office at Queen's, including dedicated space for community-university engagement activities.
5. Connect with other universities involved in the development of the [Canadian Carnegie Community Engagement Classification](#) and assess the suitability of the classification for facilitating Queen's-Kingston engagement.
6. Develop robust mechanisms for Kingston community members to influence decisions and actions at Queen's.
7. Support the development of funding mechanisms (e.g., research grants, fundraising, alumni-giving) for community-campus engagement and partnerships.
8. Develop professional support programs and recognition for faculty, staff, and community members who engage in meaningful and respectful university-community partnerships. For faculty members, the development and fostering of community partnerships must be valued in the same way as other indicators of academic output, such as grants and publications.

Proposed Specific Initial Projects:

1. Establish a fund that members of the Queen's community could access to facilitate community engagement (e.g., to reduce costs for use of sport facilities and room rentals; to provide start-up funds for community-based research; to develop community-driven initiatives) and that community members could access to support their partnership activities with Queen's.
2. Recognizing that internet and computer access is a basic human need, essential for access to the legal system, health care, education, employment, and more, establish a working group to develop policies to facilitate internet and computer access for those who do not have internet access at home or in a suitable private location.
3. Develop a "Community Scholars Program" in the Queen's Library system, such as the one at [SFU](#).



4. Develop a “Community Research Associate” designation to recognize the work of community members who engage in research activities with Queen’s faculty and students.
5. Develop a funded “activist-in-residence” program, similar to the “artist-in-residence” model, to help achieve our goal of building a diverse, equitable, inclusive and anti-racist community.
6. In conjunction with local community activists, relevant organizations, and the City of Kingston, consider mounting a version of a [Democracy Festival](#), to engage Kingston citizens in constructive dialogue about the collective problems we face and how to develop solutions.
7. Build on existing resources, programs, and initiatives that facilitate community engagement (e.g., art, athletics & recreation, summer camps, law clinics, health care) to deepen and broaden engagement, especially among marginalized groups.
8. Make Queen’s campus courses (not only on-line courses) accessible to Kingston-area community members, including those from low-income groups. Develop interdisciplinary courses and non-academic certificates that invite collaboration with and participation by community members.

Conclusion

To be effective, the principles of meaningful community-university engagement and partnership must be diffused across all the Strategic Goals. There are synergies, overlaps, tensions, and challenges between our recommendations and those of the other Working Groups. While recognizing that community partnerships may not be appropriate for some types of research, the “Queen’s in the Community” Working Group strongly encourages the integration of the principles of community-university partnership into the recommendations of the other Working Groups.

Reference:

The [Canadian Pilot Cohort](#) of the [Carnegie Foundation’s Classification for Community Engagement](#)

Examples of other Community-University Engagement Offices:

[Simon Fraser University Community-Engaged Research Initiative](#)

[Trent Community Research Centre](#)

[McMaster Community Engagement](#)

[Carleton University Community Engagement](#)

[York University Community Engagement](#)

[University of Alberta Community University Partnership](#)