8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Moderation Team

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SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth**,** full and productive employment, and decent work for all

Event Description

On **June 21, 2021**, Queen's University hosted its first [17 Rooms](#) event, which brought together Queen's faculty, students, and staff to identify next steps for advancing the [UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)](#) at the university.

Participants were divided into 17 virtual rooms, one per SDG, and asked to identify actions **that Queen's University could take in the following 12 to 18 months to advance their specific goal.**

Rooms participants were also asked to identify:

- The most important issues related to their SDG that Queen's should address,
- Connections and common themes amongst these issues,
- How their SDG connects with reconciliation/conciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization,
- How their SDG connects with other SDGs.

Each room had two hours to brainstorm ideas before presenting their recommended actions to all participants. Following the event, each room's moderation team authored a summary report.

Room Participants

Kevin Banks (Moderator)	Rosemary Lysaght
Jim Banting	Sumon Majumdar
Mary Beth Gauthier (Facilitator)	Melissa McLeod
Richard Chaykowski	Anton Ovchinnikov
Samuel Dahan (Moderator)	Heidi Penning
Solyana Gedlu (Facilitator)	Lynette Purda
John Harriss	Birhan Suadik (Facilitator)
Ted Hsu	Rody Yehia
Nicholas Jewitt	

Discussion

SDG 8 seeks to combine increased economic productivity with dignified and fair working conditions, equal access to economic opportunity, and environmental sustainability. The targets of this SDG focus on growth, innovation, technological upgrading, formalization of small and medium-sized enterprises, access to financial services, resource efficiency, ending environmental degradation, protection of labour rights, and economic inclusion of persons in disadvantaged groups.

Room 8 participants discussed what Queen's University can do to make progress toward these targets as an educator, employer, leading research institution, influential community actor, and purchaser of goods and services.

The room focused on measures to advance productivity and decent working conditions, including the affordability of housing, a key factor in whether work offers decent or at least living remuneration.

Time did not permit the group to explore in depth the SDGs connections to decolonization, reconciliation and conciliation, and Indigenization. Connections identified include fostering inclusiveness in economic opportunities for Indigenous entrepreneurs, i.e. through inclusive procurement practices, and respectfully focusing research and partnerships to improve the economy on reserve.

Examples of research at Queen's related to SDG 8 include:

- Job displacement and upgrading through technological advancements such as robotics and AI.

- Effectiveness of labour and employment laws in securing decent working conditions including access to legal information.

- Access to financial services and gender biases in financial inclusion,

- Worker retraining,

- Greening development,

- Supported employment and entrepreneurship for persons with disabilities,

- Macro-economic conditions fostering the growth of inequality in wealth, incomes and incomes security, and

- Effective strategies for the elimination of child labour in developing countries.

Proposed Actions

Room 8 brought together 17 individuals from across Queen's University to discuss approaches to addressing SDG 8. The group identified a list of possibilities within two areas for action.

Action One: Become a model employer, advancing decent work and productivity.

To advance SDG 8, Queen's should demonstrate best practices, engage in inclusive procurement practices, and demonstrate leadership on housing affordability – an issue increasingly affecting wellbeing and economic opportunity in the region.

This can help retain/attract a diverse workforce and encourage other employers in the region to follow our lead. Our actions as an employer and purchaser of goods and services influence our overall economic impact in the Eastern Ontario region.

Become a living wage employer.

Queen's should take steps through HR to determine which employees are paid less than a living wage, how a living wage could be implemented, and what is required to become a "certified living wage employer".

Provide more ESL training and presentation skills to faculty and staff.

Queen's should determine what ESL tools exist now for staff and how these can be expanded and promoted.

Provide financial literacy training to students, faculty, and staff.

Queen's should conduct a needs analysis. What financial literacy goals do we need to achieve? What currently exists? Where are the gaps? How can it be inclusive and accessible?

Ensure that procurement is accessible to and inclusive of small and medium-sized enterprises and under-represented groups.

Queen's University has great purchasing power and some of its procurement policies favour large businesses. Queen's needs to audit its practices and supplier lists to ensure they are not excluding small- to medium-sized businesses and under-represented entrepreneurs and to make sure procurement is accessible and inclusive. The conversation can begin with Human Rights and Equity Office, Office of Partnerships and Innovation, and other experts to assess current practices and make recommendations.

Demonstrate leadership by addressing housing affordability in Kingston.

The cost of local housing is an issue increasingly affecting well-being and economic opportunity in the region. Progress would help Queen's attract and retain a diverse workforce. Queen's is a member of the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Committee; the next step is to advance discussions with the city about housing affordability.

Action Two: Develop and enhance research partnerships within Queen's and with industry that are focused on advancing SDG targets.

Work on an organizational AI tool.

This tool should determine who at Queen's could be working together, matching suitable collaborators within the institution.

Look at IVADO (Institute de Valorisation de Donnees) as a model, as it is a Quebec organization that seeks out partnerships with public/private sectors.

Develop a program to match researchers with industry partners in developing countries.

Queen's Partnership and Innovation may reach out to potential partners.

Investigate ways to use connections between industry and researchers to boost employment.

Specifically for our students and recent graduates. We propose developing research training opportunities for students.