Social Innovation Challenge

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Course Description

Overview
The course finale is a two-day workshop designed to test students’ skills and knowledge formed during the course: The Barn Raiser. It is a series of collaborative exercises and presentations designed to bring course materials, tools, approaches and resources to bear on real community economic development projects that you are working on in your community. This challenge will amplify your current work in your local living economy sphere of influence through rapid prototyping, project design and community mobilization as an alternative to traditional planning processes.

CED versus Traditional Economic Development
Traditional economic development is usually an institutionalized municipal or regional government policy-driven approach. This approach can be supported by federal, provincial, regional and local economic agencies, such as business improvement associations or chambers of commerce. Traditional economic development usually relies on concepts of capitalist competition, with governments encouraging economic growth through business attraction, monetary and fiscal policy, tax incentives and trade policies.

Community Economic Development differs from these traditional approaches. This approach to economic development is about finding win-win solutions and doesn’t assume all market transactions are win-lose. It places importance on sharing, collectivism and community while encouraging different business models like cooperatives, co-working spaces, and progressive company structures. Information sharing, decentralization, dissemination of specialization and new technologies create opportunities for inclusion and participation. CED is also about leveraging social networks over physical footprints and intellectual and social capital over physical assets.

CED can take the form of champions and entrepreneurs addressing a gap or opportunity in a community’s social, human, physical, economic or cultural capitals. In order for these efforts to succeed, vision, resources and sustained support are required in addressing a real community need.

The Social Innovation Challenge aka “The Barn Raiser”
The Barn Raiser is a workshop designed to short-circuit what are typically long economic planning processes. It is an intensive planning process that quickly builds actions out of ideas. This is a strong starting place for community economic development action that will get local living economies off the ground in short order.

The workshop will begin by developing an existing or planned CED project in each student’s community. Through a process of presenting and voting, up to three projects will be chosen for further development by the entire group in the Challenge. The goal of the Challenge is to evolve these few CED projects to an advanced level of application using an intensive development process of brainstorming, feedback and rapid iteration. The process will benefit the entire group, and, done well, the entire community economic development sector by increasing the potential for success and the profile of the projects chosen by the group to best exemplify the goals of community economic development.

$25,000 is available to be distributed to the three projects in amounts determined by a panel of judges.
**Workshop Step 1: Prepare your CED project & your pitch**
All students are required to prepare a two-page description of a CED project they are working on and which has community support. The descriptions must include a description of the need for the project, the project approach, funding and support available and, importantly, the theory of change the project is applying.

Projects should be designed to:
- Increase the number of locally-owned ventures;
- Increase self-reliance in the economy, measured by an increase in the diversity of locally-owned businesses, trade between locally-owned businesses, and localized supply chains;
- Prioritize triple-bottom line or blended-value organizations and/or initiatives; and will also
- Raise the profile and influence of local living economy leaders;
- **Have existing traction** (this challenge will have the greatest impact by focusing on those initiatives that are already rolling and will generate increased momentum, speed and resources with a push); and
- Practise using the ideas, materials and approaches introduced throughout the program.

Students choosing to participate in the Barn Raiser (the process by which a few projects will be chosen for focused development) with their project will so indicate at the top of their write-ups. Not everyone is required to participate, but all are encouraged. You will have 90 seconds to pitch your project to the group. You will come to the workshop with your pitch and presentation materials prepared beforehand.

**Workshop Step 2: Project Development**
The first exercises of the two-day challenge are designed to develop every student’s project. Small group work will explore project challenges and potential solutions.

**Workshop Step 3: Pitch Prep**
Those pitching their projects in the Barn Raiser will have 20 minutes to refine their pitches.

**Workshop Step 4: The Challenge**

**Part 1: Pitches**
Students participating in the Challenge will have no more than 90 seconds each to pitch their project to the group. Dynamic, compelling pitches are encouraged. Slide shows and printed materials are allowed.

**Part 2: Voting**
Students will vote using the criteria described in *Workshop Step 1*. The three highest rated projects will be further developed.

**Part 3: Team Work**
The cohort will be arranged into four teams. The teams will flesh out project design details. At the end of the course on the second day, each team will present the results of the efforts and make a seven-minute pitch with an ask for money.

**Part 4: Final pitches and judging**
The seven-minute pitches will be given before a panel of CED judges. The judges will determine the distribution of the funding between the projects.

Elements to include in the final pitch:
- What is the theory of change?
- Community organizing/mobilization strategy.
- How will it challenge existing power structures?
• Value proposition and other aspects of the business model canvas.
• What is the financial model for the initiative?
• Story of Hope.
• How does this initiative create a new narrative of the economy that doesn’t fit into existing paradigms?
• How does it help create a local living economy?
• What is the ask? You should be prepared to ask for an amount of money. Be clear on how much money you need and what you will accomplish with that money. Some initiatives may accomplish quite a bit with $3,000 and other initiatives may need $15,000 to make an impact.

**Workshop Step 5: All Projects Revisited**
The final exercise will relate the experience of developing the four Challenge finalist projects to each student’s project, giving each student additional tools and approaches to apply back in their communities.

**Workshop Step 6: Closing**
A final group discussion will check in on the process and the course.

**Preparation Reading**
You will benefit the most and bring the most to this session if you are already familiar with some of the tenets behind the process. The process is a mixture of hackathon, change lab, open space and unconference. These terms can mean different things to different people. Here are some fun and quick preparation readings and media that will allow you to meaningfully participate and get the most out of this workshop.


SFU Change Lab (sfu.ca/fenv/partnerships/changelab.html)

*Open Space:* Open Space World (openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?AboutOpenSpace)

Opening Space for Emerging Order, Harrison Owen (openspaceworld.com/brief_history.htm)

*Unconference:* Transparency Camp (transparencycamp.org/about/tips)

*Hackathon:* From Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hackathon)