

Ontario Creates submission in response to the Government of Ontario's Consultation on Intellectual property in the postsecondary education sector

The Government of Ontario held a Consultation on Intellectual Property in the Post-Secondary Education Sector from May 17 to July 15, 2019. The information is being used by an Expert Panel struck by government to deliver recommendations expected in December 2019. In June 2019, Ontario Creates provided the following responses to survey questions issued as part of the consultations. Responses had a word count limit of 250.

1. How can publicly assisted postsecondary education institutions and technology transfer offices better facilitate the creation and the commercialization of ideas and technologies? *

Ontario Creates is mandated to support the film and television, book and magazine publishing, music and interactive digital media industries in Ontario. Creative industry businesses continually generate IP - primarily content products and services, but also technological innovations. In our work, we've seen that compelling ideas require solid business acumen in order to realize their potential.

PSEs and TTOs can help by:

- **Prioritizing business skill development:** Ensuring students across a range of fields of study are equipped with the business skills required to develop their ideas into commercially viable products and services. These basic business skills may include: market validation, sales forecasting, financial planning, pitching and presentation skills.
- **Facilitating mentorship opportunities:** Identifying willing mentors and ensuring students can access ongoing mentorship.
- **Providing supportive infrastructure:** Offering access to expertise, shared work spaces and resources. This may include providing office space, bringing in speakers, hosting "executives in residence" or providing access to legal and tax expertise.
- **Aligning with industry:** Working closely with industry (including individual companies, trade associations and non-profit organizations), to ensure alignment of programs and curricula with evolving industry needs and collaborating via co-op placements. There are also opportunities to collaborate on in-depth academic projects exploring the opportunities and challenges of various industries.
- **Thinking local:** Acknowledging the specific local environment and its advantages or challenges. For instance, PSEs located outside of hubs such as Toronto, Ottawa and Kitchener-Waterloo may need to offer their students greater or more specialized support.

- 2. How can the Government of Ontario better facilitate the wider network of innovation intermediaries such as incubators, accelerators, regional innovation centers, and the OCE to promote commercialization opportunities in Ontario? ***
 - **Continue to support innovation intermediaries:** Recognize and value the work performed by these hubs, which offer significant support to businesses-- early stage, mid-stage and experienced alike. Incubators and accelerators as physical locations centralize activity and offer access to valuable expertise and networking. Many develop specializations in particular industries, which offers users added value.
 - **Continue to provide business supports:** Creative companies need to be well-financed in order to be able to maintain and exploit their IP. Continued incentives for companies in the form of tax credits, grants and other support are needed in order to catalyze economic growth for both companies and the province.
 - **Encourage collaboration with key partners:** In our industries, non-profit trade organizations play a key role in catalyzing professional development and should be seen as strong partners for government in effectively linking post-secondary institutions and innovation intermediaries to industry.
 - **Leverage new partnerships:** Provide support or incentives to attract other institutional investors (e.g. banks) to incubators to facilitate their ability to offer matchmaking and corporate partnerships.
 - **Remain flexible and build risk tolerance:** Developing strong ideas takes time. Consider building in longer timescales for demonstrating achievement of outcomes. Program criteria should be broad enough to allow for new ideas and commercialization techniques to be employed. Risk tolerance is needed, as not all ideas will be successful. Consider a variety of support models, such as recoupment models, grants and hybrid financing mechanisms.
 - **Foster diversity:** Promote active inclusion to ensure a diversity of people and perspectives are contributing to the innovation sector.

- 3. How can universities, colleges, and innovation intermediaries such as accelerators, incubators and Regional Innovation Centres ensure they have the technical expertise to develop commercialization capacity to increase innovation outcomes, such as the generation and commercialization of research and intellectual property? ***

In our space, incubators such as Communitech, MaRS, Ryerson Digital Media Zone (DMZ), George Brown Digital Media and Gaming Incubator, Niagara Innovation Centre (Generator at One), Invest Ottawa and others are some of the entities working to create strong creative companies and helping bring products to markets and audiences the world over. Some have developed areas of expertise around specific industry sectors and this focus has been beneficial in building networks of mentors, advisors and experts familiar with getting creative companies market-ready.

Community/nonprofit incubators (examples in the gaming and screen space are Bento Miso/Gamma Space, CFC's ideaBOOST), and industry associations should be seen as partners.

PSEs and innovation intermediaries need to invest in their own staff and attract and retain qualified personnel. They require the resources and budgets to be able to retain advisory services on an as needed basis, specific to the projects and companies being developed and commercialized. Access to timely market research and intelligence is needed, and they need to draw from local, national and international best practices. (The Ontario Creates Online Research Library provides links to hundreds of free-to-access studies about the creative industries).

Intermediaries should develop strong partnerships with industry leaders and industry associations to maintain a leading edge knowledge base and they should foster and develop partnerships with networks of experts and advisory teams to go to for advice on specific issues.

Broad-based education on venture capital cycles and access to presentations and training on new and emerging financing models would be valuable.