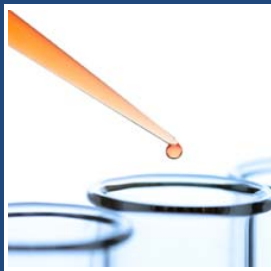


# Executive Summary

## An Action Plan for Innovation in Mississauga

Prepared for:  
RIC Centre

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HAL Ref: 8017



# Executive Summary

## Purpose of Study

This study was commissioned by the City of Mississauga and the RIC Centre, with support from the province, to assess the need and opportunities for an Innovation Centre in Mississauga. As part of the terms of reference, consideration has been given to the role that human capital can play in driving innovation in Mississauga and to the directions established by the city's strategic plans. To this end, an analysis was undertaken of the strengths and weaknesses of both Mississauga's innovation economy and the local innovation support system to identify gaps and opportunities that could be addressed with additional support.

## Overall Finding

In recent years, various calls for an innovation centre in Mississauga have been made, each with different ideas as to what such a centre should be about. Ideas have included establishing a centre as: a place where small high-tech businesses can access resources, programs and services to help them thrive; a meeting place for companies and individuals to meet, interact and engage on innovation issues; an incubator and accelerator that can support the development startups and small technology firms; and as an organization that can anchor an innovation hub in the city and align the region's educational resources with business needs.

What this study finds, however, is that the current innovation support system in Mississauga is already delivering on a number of elements captured by these ideas. The RIC Centre, for example, which has been enhancing its services this past year since receiving a multi-year funding commitment from the province, has established a core of support for small high-tech businesses and startups. The city also has some incubator capacity for start-ups that is being offered by some established firms in the region. What the city does lack, though, is a meeting place to promote connectivity and a coherent approach to better capitalize on the postsecondary assets for training, education and R&D purposes.

However, before Mississauga can act any further on its innovation agenda, it requires a much stronger civic leadership capacity that can be engaged to deliver on the kinds of initiatives that have been identified as being important for innovation by the community. Establishing such leadership is therefore a first step to strengthening innovation and spearheading initiatives such as a talent development project or a go-to meeting place that can create an innovation buzz and foster connections among the city's R&D oriented industry sectors.

For this reason, this study sets out an action plan that goes beyond an innovation centre *per se* to address factors for strengthening innovation in Mississauga as whole including ways to build a talent advantage for the city's innovation economy.

## Assessment of Mississauga’s Innovation Economy and Innovation Support System

In support of the analysis of the innovation economy and innovation support system, this study drew from a survey of Mississauga firms and interviews with key stakeholders. The results are highlighted in the following table.

### Strengths and weaknesses of innovation in Mississauga

Aspect	Main Strengths	Main Weaknesses / Gaps
<b>Mississauga Innovation Economy</b>		
Company base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong diversity of economic activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation activity not reaching potential</li> </ul>
Labour Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall quality of labour force is high</li> <li>• Major locational factor for firms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for specialized skills including specialized trades / senior management skills</li> </ul>
Innovation Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-regarded postsecondary education institutions committed to regional economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sheridan S&amp;T Park is not a catalyst for innovation in region</li> </ul>
Business Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost</li> <li>• Transportation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undeveloped innovation culture</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation Support System</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally focused innovation support organizations</li> <li>• Growing range of innovation support services and impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak Private sector leadership and engagement</li> <li>• Limited incubator capacity</li> <li>• Absence of meeting space</li> </ul>

### Towards making Mississauga a ‘global city for creativity and innovation’

Based on the forgoing assessment, a framework was created to structure the development of recommendations for strengthening Mississauga’s innovation system that is in keeping with the vision of making Mississauga a global city for creativity and innovation as set out in the city’s 2009 strategic plan. The framework, presented below, identifies four action areas: building leadership capacity; building a talent advantage by developing and linking skills for innovation; building a connected innovation community; and leveraging existing innovation infrastructure.

## A Framework for Action



## Recommendations

This report makes recommends for ten actions (see table below), each responding to one of the action areas identified in the above framework. Of the ten recommendations, the following four have been identified as priorities:

**Priority Action (1):** *Establish a Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance comprising leaders from the private sector, postsecondary institutions and the city that can provide strategic direction, support and commitment to overseeing initiatives designed to strengthen the innovation economy in Mississauga.*

A ‘Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance’ (MILA) is an essential first step to driving the innovation agenda. With experienced, respected and energized private-sector and postsecondary leadership, the Alliance will be able to reach out to the necessary partners and stakeholders, to initiate actions, make appropriate connections, resolve any emerging issues and ensure that progress is made towards innovation goals and objectives.

This group will have the flexibility to respond to needs and opportunities identified in this study and other strategies, including the city’s economic development strategy, as well as be able to address any emerging issues requiring its leadership.

- ▶ *Undertake a review of local governance to position MILA for success*

It is recommended that the Mayor, in consultation with the Economic Development Advisory Council, the Mississauga Board of Trade, the RIC Centre Advisory Board, and the Ministry of Research and Innovation, play a lead role in catalyzing the MILA and in clarifying respective roles and responsibilities with the goal of ensuring coordination and alignment with the new leadership body.

In reviewing governance implications for the MILA, consideration should be given to having overlapping membership with the RIC Centre Advisory Board so as to ensure alignment.

In addition, as part of its initiation, the MILA should be temporarily chaired by the Mayor who would be tasked with identifying appropriate members from the business and postsecondary sectors, including a full time Chair.

**Priority Action (2):** *Hire a minimum of three resource personnel who can animate and implement the initiatives identified by the Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance.*

It is recommended that at least three people be hired for the purpose of building community capacity in Mississauga to the point where the community can be engaged to support implementation of local initiatives.

The first and most important resource must be an energetic community-builder that can forge partnerships, and build the innovation community with the assistance of the MILA's leadership. This individual should be entrepreneurial, with an ability to act on opportunities and work across boundaries, be they functional, political or geographic, to achieve objectives as determined by the MILA. Key competencies required are as follows: networking / relationship building and maintenance; partnering; and community and environmental awareness.

The second resource is that of a project manager who can develop and manage initiatives identified by the working groups of the Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance. This individual would work closely with the community builder and the RIC Centre to achieve objectives. A third resource, an administrative assistant, will also be required to support the various projects and meetings of the Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance.

This new 'Mississauga Innovation Connections' group can be located within the RIC Centre and report directly to the Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance.

**Priority Action (5):** *Implement a Mississauga Talent Project comprising a series of pilot projects designed to connect and develop human capital in support of innovation.*

Attracting, creating, integrating, and enriching talent and connecting people to the right jobs in the right firms is a key driver of innovation. Building on the collective work of the Strategic Plan and the Economic Development Strategy for the City of Mississauga, and the Mayor's Jobs Summit and the Task Force on Post-Secondary Education Action Plan, it is recommended that the city launch the Mississauga Talent Project to develop, coordinate, and implement a series of pilot projects to support human capital development in Mississauga. This emphasis on developing skills and matching them to the human capital needs of local industry to drive innovation would clearly differentiate Mississauga's innovation support system from others in the region and help position Mississauga for the 'next economy'. Suggested pilots are as follows:

**Pilot 1:** a ‘Talent Team’ pilot program to connect individuals with relevant business and industry-specific skills to address business problems in start-up firms.

**Pilot 2:** a ‘Talent Development’ program between the University of Toronto Mississauga and Sheridan College to explore the development of local industry-focused experiential education programs.

**Pilot 3:** a ‘Talent Partnership’ program to connect business students from UTM and Sheridan College with local entrepreneurial start-up firms to support commercialization and business development.

**Pilot 4:** a ‘Talent Pathways’ program involving local industry, post-secondary institutions, and secondary schools to create interest in and develop careers pathways for jobs needed by local industry beginning in high school.

**Pilot 5:** a ‘Talent Connection’ program involving local industry and local networks of immigrant employment and settlement organizations to connect foreign-trained professionals with jobs that use their skills.

**Pilot 6:** a ‘Talent Enrichment’ program involving local employers and post-secondary educational institutions to identify opportunities and develop customized programs for skills upgrading for employed workers.

**Priority Action (10):** Launch a marketing campaign to showcase existing support services and foster awareness of Mississauga as a location for innovation.

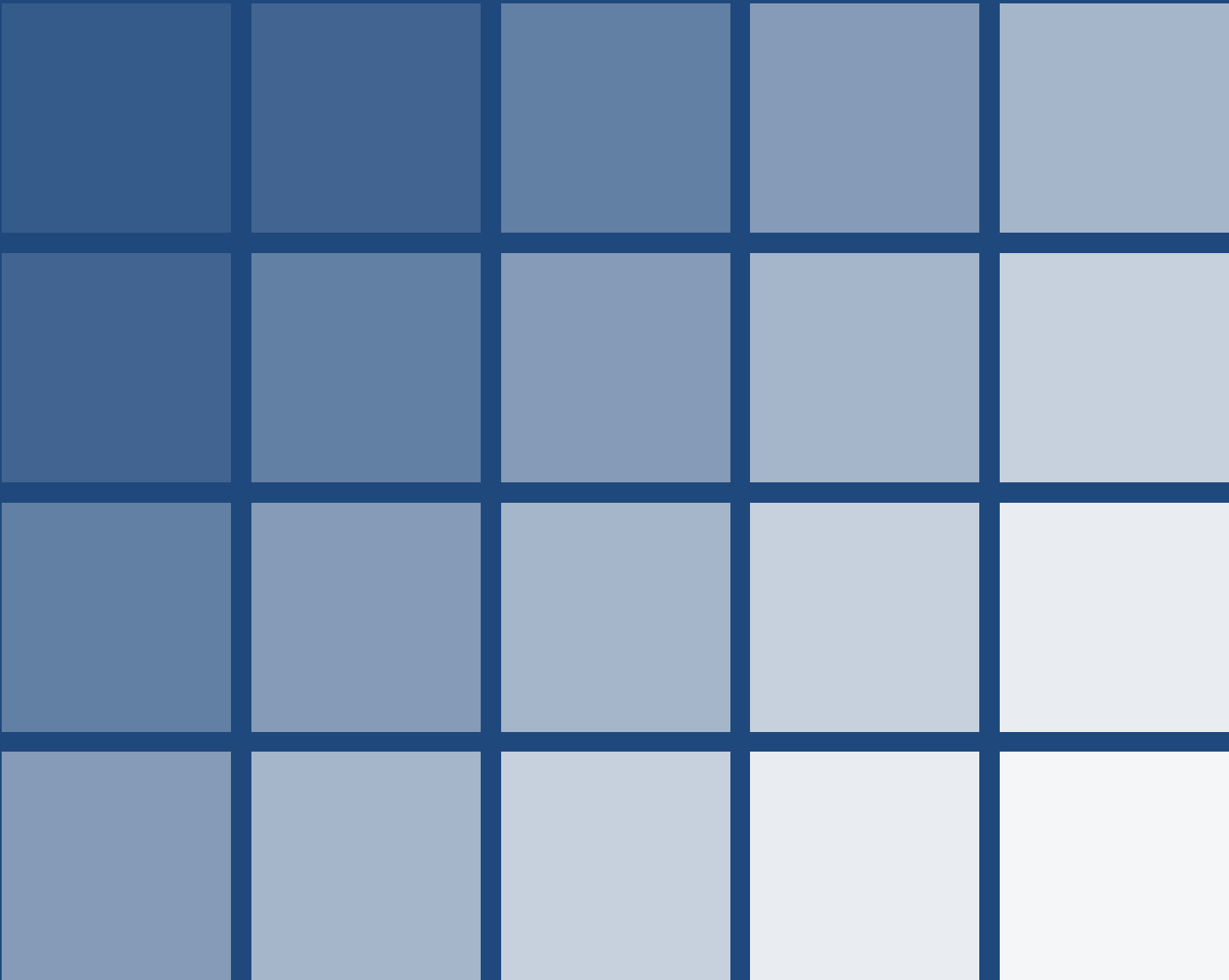
Given the relatively low level of recognition among firms of existing innovation support services, it is recommended that the city launch a marketing campaign that brings visibility to these services, the RIC Centre and to innovation in Mississauga as a whole.

### **What success will look like**

A critical shift in the business culture of Mississauga to one that embraces innovation will be the ultimate indicator of success. Indeed, it is this transformation in culture that will ensure that Mississauga can continually adapt to, and prosper from, the economic change that is inherent to a global economy. Fundamental, however, to the creation of a vibrant innovation culture is strong and sustained leadership from the MILA. To track progress towards building such an innovation culture, the MILA should be tasked from the outset to develop a set of relevant indicators that capture the different aspects of innovation culture and connectivity within the Mississauga community.

### Summary of Recommended Actions

ACTION	PRIORITY	IMPACT	TIMEFRAME	COST	LEAD	PARTNERS	FUNDERS
Action 1: Establish a Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance comprising leaders from the private sector, postsecondary institutions and the city that can provide strategic direction, support and commitment to overseeing initiatives designed to strengthen the innovation economy in Mississauga.	1	High	Short term	Low	Mayor	RIC Centre, EDAC, MBOT, MRI	MRI / City
Action 2: Hire a minimum of three resources that can animate and implement the initiatives identified by the Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance.	1	High	Short Term	High	EDO	RIC Centre	MRI / City
Action 5: Implement a Mississauga Talent Project comprising a series of pilot projects designed to connect and develop human capital in support of innovation.	1	High	Short Term	Medium	MILA	RIC Centre, PHWDG, MBOT	-
Action 10: Launch a marketing campaign to showcase existing support services and foster awareness of Mississauga as a location for innovation.	1	Medium	Short Term	Medium	RIC Centre	EDO	RIC Centre / EDO
Action 3: Establish a go-to hub where people involved in innovation can meet regularly.	2	Medium	Medium Term	High	MILA	RIC Centre, EDO	MRI / City
Action 4: Task the Mississauga Innovation Leadership Alliance with identifying two or three clusters around which to develop focused cluster strategies.	2	Medium	Medium Term	Medium	MILA	RIC Centre	-
Action 7: Identify incubation, lab and other specialized R&D space within established firms or underutilized industrial properties that can serve the needs of start-ups and SMEs.	2	Medium	Medium Term	Low	RIC Centre	MILA	RIC Centre / MRI
Action 8: Establish a Research Exchange with Sheridan College and UTM that identify opportunities for accessing specialized research equipment and collaborative research opportunities.	2	Medium	Medium Term	Low	RIC Centre	UTM / Sheridan College	RIC Centre / MRI
Action 9: Engage Sheridan College, IRAP and other relevant stakeholders to take advantage of the new funding programs for industry-postsecondary collaboration to leverage existing physical assets, resources and capabilities at the college so as to serve the unmet needs of existing manufacturing establishments in Mississauga.	2	Medium	Short Term	Low	RIC Centre	Sheridan College / IRAP / OCE	-
Action 6: Hire interns to assist with the community-building work of the Talent Project.	3	Low	Medium Term	Low	MILA	RIC Centre	-



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