A. Project Overview

What’s the idea?
The McMaster Social Innovation Lab (MSIL) is a student-run space for interdisciplinary problem solving that breaks down barriers between theory and practice. It gives students a space to develop their ideas and teaches them the ‘MSIL process’ – a way of thinking they can then apply again and again.

Why are we doing it?
To connect: theory and practice; students, faculty and the community; problems and solutions; and ideas and reality. To help McMaster students build skills and connections they can use to transform themselves, the institution and the community.

The point of MSIL is to help students with cool ideas be more likely to succeed. We help through our facilities and our process.

What’s the space?
A cross between a hobbyist workshop and a think-tank ‘breakout room’. Whiteboards on the walls, large workbenches with modeling clay, interesting and inspiring images up all around. Good Wi-Fi and lots of plugs. Lots of post-it notes. Most importantly, interesting and diverse groups of people!

MSIL’s facilities are designed to improve idea development and collaborative thinking. We take an essentialist approach (i.e. avoid fancy tech) to show members how to get a project going with basic materials. Because of the open, rearrangeable, and cozy nature of the space, people working on different projects are bound to hear what the other is doing. Our members are curious and this unavoidable eavesdropping leads to conversations, discussions and further brainstorming. This collaboration is how our facility leverages the social capital of curious and driven members.

What’s the process?
MSIL’s process is adapted from various change labs across the world. There are six general steps:

1. Research a topic to appreciate the nuances of multiple perspectives.
2. Build an easily modifiable model of the problem.
3. Connect and gather the people involved in the problem.
4. Critique and explore the model with these people to get a realistic and shared idea of what is going on.
5. Look for clues to a solution in the model.
6. Prototype and test these solutions (preferably with the help of others), adapting the model with what you learn.

This process alone does not make success significantly more likely, but it works because these general steps are adapted to each project. Instead of over-prescribing, our process helps members to brainstorm effectively and suggests small and useful steps that make project management easier overtime.
How does the whole thing work?

1. Students enter the space with a (preferably) socially-focused question; E.g. “How can we improve nutrition of children in the Beasley neighborhood?”
   “How can I reduce McMaster’s ecological footprint?”
   “How can the extra food from catering events be used more constructively?”
   “How can theatre inspire people to change their thoughts and behavior?”

2. They begin the MSIL process (a systematic way of approaching problems), engaging with stakeholders and experts to co-design and test possible solutions.

3. They leave with a multi-level plan of action that could be implemented tomorrow if all the right pieces were in place.

Members experience ease in outlining their idea. Then we listen to them. That makes a project more likely to succeed. The subsequent referrals, brainstorming and fun are done for good measure.

How will Members use MSIL in the pilot year?

Informal users: Students and community members with independent projects

- Hours of Operation
  - MSIL will be open from 8:00AM-6:00PM from Monday to Friday, and for 5 hours every Saturday and Sunday (exact hours TBD)
  - During these hours, any MSIL member has access to the facilities and services

- Events
  - From November 22nd-24th, MSIL will host a weekend long problem-solving “jam.” For more information, see the Global Sustainability Jam pilot project description on page 3.

Formal users: Students with course projects

- Courses with large project-based components will be able to book time in the space and with facilitators.
- This booking will overlap with hours of operation for general members but will not prevent general members from using the space.

Long-term user goals: At the moment membership is targeted towards undergraduate students.

- Any other people interested in becoming members will be subject to the discretion of the co-directors.
- If we are successful in our pilot year, we would like to extend membership to graduate students, McMaster Staff, Faculty and Administration, as well as members of the Hamilton community (such as high school students.)
- We would like to support researchers who have an interdisciplinary interest in generating ideas and examining assumptions.

Who is in charge?

- MSIL is composed of members, volunteers, an executive, co-directors, and a board of advisors.
- All volunteers, including the executive, are students and are identified by lanyards.
- The general volunteer helps facilitate project development with MSIL’s members by guiding groups through the process.
- The executive each have particular responsibilities in addition to those of a general volunteer that are required to run MSIL
- The co-directors manage the executive and make key decisions for MSIL
- The board of advisors coaches the directors and provides sustainability to the organization.
Who benefits?

| Students                          | • Build transferable skills, meaningfully connect to others and learn to attack problems in a systematic, structured way;  
|                                  | • Generate novel, tested solutions that add value to what people care about  
|                                  | • Practice developing their ideas. |
| Faculty                          | • Are supported in organizing and structuring community/project-based learning. |
| University                       | • Makes McMaster the first university to launch a socially-focused problem solving space, developed and run by undergraduate students;  
|                                  | • Standardizes some aspects of experiential learning and community engagement to share best practices. |
| Community                        | • Promotes a sustainable interaction between the community and university by recycling initiatives and eschewing oversimplifications;  
|                                  | • Values Community members’ lived experience and knowledge by asking for it and keeping record of the information so that the community is not redundantly asked for input. |

How will it happen?

**Summer 2013**

- **LOGISTICS:** Finalize procedures for operating the facility and running the organization. Develop several key legal documents (such as space agree, terms of use and intellectual property protection policy) and a pilot budget. Detail the procedure for volunteer management, and general promotion.
  - Supported by the Student Success Centre, the McMaster Student’s Union (MSU) and the McMaster Industry Liaison Office (MILO).
- **METHODS:** continue developing and nuancing the MSIL process and facility design.
  - Learn from the OASIS Social Innovation Lab (India) and the Waterloo University Change Lab research team (Ontario)
- **SPACE:** modify the pilot space with the appropriate fixtures, equipment, and supplies.
- **EVENTS:** Begin planning the Community Pilot Project: A Global Sustainability Jam
- **PARTNERSHIPS:** Work with the McMaster Engineers Without Borders and McMaster Entrepreneurship Club to deliver a complimentary menu of project assistance to undergraduate students.
- **CONTACT:** Students who are interested in having their ideas run through the lab and anyone who is interested in our work or has something to add!

**Fall 2013**

- **September**
  - Recruit and train executive and general volunteers;
  - Approach potential board members;
  - Begin developing plan for collaboration with the Arts & Science 4CK3 Inquiry into Climate Change (as part of Brianna’s thesis).
- **October 2013**
  - Promote MSIL to undergraduate students;
  - Finalize the board of advisors;
  - Help early adopting students develop their projects;
  - Reshape MSIL to meet the unknown realities of student project management.
THE McMaster SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Co-Leads: Brianna Smrke and Michael Hewlett

- November 2013
  - Be the first Canadian host of the Global Sustainability Jam, an international 48-hour problem solving conference where multiple host cities pitch and rapidly develop solutions for issues of sustainability;
  - Begin review MSIL’s effectiveness and assess its needs for the Winter Term;
  - Determine if MSIL will continue for the Winter Term and in what capacity.
- December 2013
  - This month is set aside as a contingency for whatever happens this fall.

Winter 2013/14 (ideally)
- January
  - Interview and hire new directors and executive for the following year;
  - Begin plans for summer space relocation;
  - Promote MSIL to undergraduate students with concrete success stories;
  - Identify avenues of fundraising;
  - Continue supporting existing and incoming projects;
  - Run the course pilot project: Artsci 4CK3 Inquiry into Climate Change.
- February
  - Determine future executive and directors;
  - Apply for funds;
  - Finalize summer relocation plans;
  - Continue supporting existing and incoming projects;
  - Closed for Reading Week.
- March
  - Review Winter pilot projects and fall project progress;
  - Prepare a comprehensive report outlining the project’s results;
  - Determine future steps;
  - Transition the new executive and directors;
  - Continue supporting existing projects.
- April
  - This month is set aside as a contingency for whatever happens from the pilot project.

What support do we already have?

Student Groups
- Computer Science Society – website hosting and design;
- McMaster Engineers Without Borders – potential partnership and mutual support for student project development and management;
- MSIL Student Team – an interdisciplinary team of students working on anything needed for the development of this space;
- McMaster Entrepreneurship Club – they have students interested in doing projects and we have a space designed to help;
- MSU – advocating on our behalf, helping to finalize transparent and responsible organizational policies and budgeting. Will be helping with promotion and surveying in the fall.

McMaster Organizations
- Student Success Centre – providing feedback on strategic planning, budgeting, succession planning and volunteer Management. Would like to provide student facilitators in the fall;
- McMaster Industry Liaison Office – helping to draft fair and legitimate legal documents for the proper and responsible running of MSIL. Providing summer space to for project development. Joining MSIL with campus meetings to clarify any legal questions that arise.
McMaster Faculty, Staff and Administration

- **Dr. John Maclachlan** – offered ArtSci 4CK3 Climate Change & Global Warming Inquiry as a course for the pilot project, will provide insight into faculty concerns;
- **Dr. Jay Brodeur** – would use this space in his experiential education courses if it existed, offered to consult regarding faculty concerns;
- **Dr. Nancy Doubleday** – providing continued discussion on the theory of undergraduate engagement and alternate educational models;
- **Dr. Jean Wilson** – will support MSIL through connections, offered her support and network at McMaster to help us meet the right people;
- **Dr. Fiona McNeill, AVP Research** – helping connect MSIL to campus partners, can provide a discretionary budget including a 3-D printer, and will help support future proposals;
- **Jeff Wingard, Coordinator, McMaster Community Poverty Initiative** – Will help MSIL connect with community groups and develop a database of Hamilton Community Initiatives.

Forward With Integrity

- **Dr. Laura Harrington, Project Director, Forward with Integrity** – providing ongoing critique, support and networking between MSIL and other FWI initiatives;
- **Ms. Jeannie An** – An’s FWI project group aims to create an online compendium of experiential learning opportunities and sees our project as the offline component to theirs;
- **Phil Omorogbe, Lead Developer, FWI Engage!** – Collaborating to create a database of Hamilton community issues. MSIL will support the student projects generated by Engage!;
- **President Deane** – prepared to support MSIL once we articulate how he can help.

Hamilton Contacts

- **Tyler Wright, Business Development Coordinator, Innovation Factory** – sees our project as a ‘testing ground’ for his work in uniting McMaster and Hamilton interests;
- **Colina Maxwell, Director, Centre3** – will provide pro-bono consultation on our media and logo design.

B. Work Summary – May and June 2013

Who have we talked with in the last two months?

Student Groups

- **McMaster Students Union**
  - David Campbell, President;
  - Jeff Doucet, VP Finance, MSU;
  - Spencer Graham, VP Education, MSU.
- **McMaster Engineers Without Borders**
  - Kathryn Chan, Co-President;
  - Alexandra Sproule, Co-President.
- **McMaster Social Innovation Lab Volunteers**
  - Steve Clare, student, Arts & Science III;
  - Jeff Wyngaarden, Former VP Finance, MSU;
  - AbdulRahman Khodr, President, McMaster Game Developer’s Association;
  - Justin Chu, President, McMaster Computer Science Society.
McMaster Organizations

- McMaster Industry Liaison Office
  - Dr. Elsie Quaite-Randall, Executive Director;
  - Brent Davis, Manager of Research Contracts and Legal Affairs;
  - Amber Metham, Research Contracts Advisor;
  - Gay Yuyitung, Business Development Manager;
  - Sarah O’Byrne, Business Development Officer, Copyright;
  - Glen Crossley, Business Development Advisor.

- Student Success Centre
  - Adam Kuhn, Manager of Community Service Learning and Civic Engagement;
  - Jeremy Sandor, Leadership Development Program Coordinator.

McMaster Faculty, Staff and Administration

- Robert Fleisig, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Engineering;
- Dr. Fiona McNeil, Associate Vice President Research, Vice President (Research and Internal Affairs);
- Anne Pottier, Associate University Librarian, Mills Memorial Library: Library Services and Facilities;
- Tarek Sadek, Enterprise Development Manager, Xerox Centre for Engineering Entrepreneurship & Innovation;
- Dr. David Shore, Co-developer, Engage!
- Dr. Joe Kim, Co-developer, Engage!

Outside of McMaster

- Melanie Winterle, Executive Director, Volunteer Hamilton;
- Mark Tovey, Social Innovation Generation, Waterloo Institute for Complexity and Innovation;
- Sam Laban, Director of Educational Programs, Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience (WSIR).

What have we done so far?

Retaining the format used in Part A for summer goals, we have added comments below each area of work detailing our progress or lack thereof.

- LOGISTICS: Finalize procedures for operating the facility and running the organization. Develop several key legal documents (such as space agree, terms of use and intellectual property protection policy) and a pilot budget. Detail the procedure for volunteer management, and general promotion.
  - Update:
    - Created an organization structure and outlined the responsibilities of each position in the organization;
    - Outlined the daily operational procedures of MSIL (hours of operation, how to register members, how to open and close the space);
    - Detailed the procedures for recruiting, managing and removing individuals from each position in the organization;
    - Outlined circumstances that would lead to reward or reprimand;
    - Decided what legal documents we need and read through example templates for each document, preparing necessary information to be sent to MILO so they can help prepare these documents;
    - Troubleshot for differently abled members, emergency situations and legal disputes.
• METHODS: continue developing and nuancing the MSIL process and facility design.
  o Update:
    • Drafted the steps of the process and consulted with OASiS India and members of the Waterloo Social Innovation Lab team;
    • Brianna will intensively refine the process during a month-long internship at OASiS.

• SPACE: locate, secure and modify the pilot space with the appropriate fixtures, equipment, and supplies.
  o Update:
    • Secured space on campus for our fall pilots;
    • Have a list of desired renovations for the space;
    • Sent MILO details to draft the Space License.

• EVENTS: Begin planning the Community Pilot Project: A Global Sustainability Jam
  o Will begin work in July/August.

• PARTNERSHIPS: Work with the McMaster Engineers Without Borders and McMaster Entrepreneurship Club to deliver a complimentary menu of project assistance to undergraduate students.
  o Update:
    • Created an organization structure and outlined the responsibilities of each position in the organization.

• CONTACT: Student who are interested in having their ideas run through the lab and anyone who is interested in our work or has something to add!
  o Will begin recruitment for July/August.

ADDITIONAL WORK:

Project Management
• Submitted a funding summary and results from our initial FWI grant;
• Made a budget for our second FWI grant;
• Created a system that enables MSIL to effectively archive and access its development history.

Project Team Recruitment
• Added Jeff Wyngaarden, a graduate student (and former MSU VP Finance) to our executive team.

THE END.

Thank you for your support! We are excited to share more with you as MSIL develops.

Michael Hewlett & Brianna Smrke
Project Co-Leads