

ISRN City Regions Study: Government Interview Guide

Theme III: Inclusive Communities and Civic Engagement

For Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments

(IRAP, NRC, Industry Canada, HRSDC, Regional Development Agencies, Provincial Departments or Agencies, Local Economic Development Departments or Offices, Community Business Development Organizations)

The innovation systems and cluster literature has argued recently that government, especially at the regional and local levels, retains an essential role in the learning economy, but one that departs from traditional forms. A key societal challenge, according to this perspective, is to create the conditions in which firms, associations, and public agencies engage in a collective process of interactive learning and adaptation to stimulate innovation and creativity. This conception of governance delegates certain tasks from formal government agencies to business associations or community organizations that possess relevant assets (such as knowledge of, and credibility with, their members) needed to ensure the effectiveness of their policies. Sharing power and responsibility with lower levels of government and community organizations creates the opportunity for dialogue or discussion, which is central to the process by which parties come to reinterpret their roles and relationship to other actors within the local.

The following questions investigate the specific conditions that facilitate or inhibit the emergence of effective collaborative leadership and the broadly based civic engagement that integrates community stakeholders and their government partners within a social process of interactive learning.

Interviewer's Note: this semi-structured questionnaire is intended to be a qualitative research tool – it will gather information that is useful for the qualitative aspect of the city region studies.

The respondents should include senior managers, policy analysts in federal, provincial and local government departments or agencies involved with issues of regional and local economic, social or cultural development).

The organization fact sheet should be filled out as much as possible before the interview.

The respondent may have a copy of an Information Sheet that was faxed or e-mailed before the interview.

Please ensure that the respondent understands the purpose of the interview and formally consents to participate.

GOVERNMENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

PART A: GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the primary objectives and main activities of your agency or department?

2. What role or contribution does it make to local [economic, social, or cultural] development efforts?

3. What is your position and set of responsibilities?

PART B: LOCAL GOVERNANCE DYNAMICS

4. What are the key networks or local associations that your department or agency regularly interacts with in the development of the city region as a whole – with respect to:
 - a. with respect to economic development?

 - b. social development?

 - c. cultural development?

5. How does your department or agency work with local civic associations or networks to realize your objectives with respect to economic (including innovation), social or cultural development in this city region?
 - a. To what extent have they made the achievement of your department's objectives or mandate easier or more difficult?

 - b. Ideally, what policy process would engage civic associations most effectively in the work of your agency?

- c. Which civic associations are potential partners for your agency in program or service delivery?

6. Who are the key business, community, or government leaders – people who stand out as community leaders – in each of these networks or associations? [Prompt: people who stand out as community leaders in relevant business federations; educational institutions., post-secondary, public and private research organizations, different levels of government, organized labour, immigration-relevant actors, non-business community groups, representatives of ethnic minorities].
 - a. Which leaders are particularly effective at linking different networks or associations across economic (including innovation), social or cultural development issues?

7. How would you describe the relationships among these networks or associations and government actors at the local level?
 - a. How often and effectively do they work together in pursuit of key economic (including innovation), social and cultural development goals?
 - b. Do interactions tend to be collaborative or conflictual? [Prompt: Are people typically 'on the same page' or do different groups tend to compete to dominate agendas or resources?]
 - c. Are there key actors in the city region who should be at the table but are not? [Prompt: degree of involvement of key industry actors, unions, social equity groups, etc.]

8. What contribution has your own department or agency made to these local development networks?

9. What have been the most important outcomes or impacts of these networks or associations regarding local economic (including innovation), social or cultural development? [probe for specific outcomes with respect to strategic planning initiatives such as infrastructure development, R & D pooling, sharing info on product or process design, or markets, acquiring needed skills, addressing issues of safety and social equity in the community, other aspects of 'quality of life'].

10. Are you aware of any previous or existing, innovation-based strategic planning processes at the city region level? [Inquire if they have used a SWOT type analysis or other method to develop an underlying analysis of the city's current or prospective development trajectory].

- a. What concrete outcomes resulted from these strategic planning initiatives? (provide examples)
- b. Which agencies or associations played the most important role in these planning processes?
- c. Overall, what role do you think that formal government agencies or government sponsored activities should play in these activities? [i.e. Community Futures, Regional Development Agencies, provincial departments or agencies?]

11. To what extent have social equity or social inclusion been included as part of innovation-based strategic planning or economic development activities?

12. What are the major barriers or challenges that local networks or associations face in promoting economic (including innovation), social and cultural development initiatives in your city-region?

PART C: ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

13. How effectively do the three levels of government work together in your city region?

14. What do you think is the appropriate division of roles and responsibilities between formal government departments or agencies, such as your own, and more informal civic associations or networks in economic?

15. What would be the most important change/improvement in intergovernmental cooperation and/or work with local civic associations that would contribute to your economic development and innovation goals or objectives?

PART D: SOCIAL INCLUSION

16. What mechanisms exist to help newcomers (both from other parts of Canada and outside Canada) integrate into this city region?

a. What challenges affect the ability of newcomers to integrate into the local community?

b. What initiatives are being taken to help newcomers deal with these challenges?

17. Which local networks or civic associations representing 'diverse interests' are most involved with local economic (including innovation), social and/or cultural development issues?

18. How do local civic associations and networks respond to new and sometimes divergent perspectives on local economic (including innovation), social and cultural development issues?

19. How do the leaders of local networks or civic associations in the city region respond to the needs of the region's residents of diverse socioeconomic, gender, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds?

PART E: CONCLUSIONS

20. What are the major barriers or challenges that local civic associations or networks face with respect to promoting an economic (including innovation), social or cultural development agenda in the city region?

21. Is there anything you would like to add?

22. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?