

## **Canada - Andes - Latin America cooperation partnerships for mutual development**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this activity is to explore potential innovative approaches and services to support mutually reinforcing partnerships for Canada, Latin America, and the Andean Region, building on relationships and networks existing in sectors, disciplines and professions, and on information and communication technologies available in the region.

The Advocate Institute of Human Resources is a non-governmental organization devoted to improving social relations and human living conditions in Canada and internationally, and helping people to adapt to the changing social and economic world. The Institute's services include provision of professional development and organizational development opportunities; promotion of partnerships and joint initiatives among organizations in different sectors; and development of new knowledge through research and experimentation.

CEBEM is a non-governmental organization created in 1989, devoted to interdisciplinary research and graduate training in social sciences from a multidisciplinary, comparative, and international perspective, and to disseminate knowledge through publications, seminars and workshops. Its areas of activity include research, training, management of knowledge networks, and distance education. CEBEM conducts its activities in collaboration with a variety of institutions across Latin America. Despite its small size, its accomplishments are substantial, due to its capacity to innovate and its proven ability to establish and maintain alliances with diverse academic and research institutions throughout the Andean region and beyond.

### **Background**

Globalization, the emerging knowledge economy, economic integration processes, and free trade agreements have created a new context for partnerships between research and training institutions in Canada, Latin America and the Andean Region in particular. The usefulness of having knowledge and experience on local matters depends now to a large extent on the capacity to put them in the wider context of regional and international collaboration and exchange. Otherwise, knowledge and local experience may become parochial and, eventually, irrelevant for taking advantage of global opportunities. Innovative partnership modalities have to be tried out in order to be able to respond to globalization challenges and use local knowledge more effectively.

The community of Canadian scholars interested in Latin America and the Andean region, the number of Canadian citizens and residents with origins in the region, the accumulated experience generated by the participation of Canadian and Latin American governmental and

non-governmental organizations in various development cooperation activities, the interests of Canadian private entrepreneurs and investors in the region (in some cases in sectors of major importance to national economies, such as mining), and the desire of Latin American entrepreneurs to extend their markets, represent a social and intellectual capital that may serve as a base for mutually beneficial partnerships.

There are many reasons to encourage mutual learning and collaboration between residents of Canada and Latin America and the Andes in particular:

1. Migration, business and leisure travel experience will be enhanced by higher cultural and linguistic literacy; two-way cultural adaptation will be accelerated.
2. Recognition of prior learning, not only educational credentials, but also professional upgrading and experience will be enhanced if professional associations are cognizant of the nature and quality of experience (e.g. if a teacher from the Andean region migrates to Canada or a Canadian professional seeks experience or professional development in the Andes, it is important that professional associations have a good understanding of these and are prepared to recognize the learning.)
3. Some professions such as interpreters, translators and language instructors, teachers, etc have an obvious need to improve their knowledge and understanding of linguistic and cultural realities.
4. Many professions such as social workers have specific professional objectives to improve international and intercultural solidarity and mutual learning.
5. In recent decades, a new form of global recruitment of human resources has accompanied the emergence of trans-national corporations. In the newer professions and occupations, the ability to use specific instrumentation, software or other technology, may in some cases be as important as education credentials. A closer understanding of professional experience in other cultures is a growing need.
6. With outsourcing becoming a common mechanism for filling labour-intensive roles, cultural/linguistic ability and cross-cultural experience will be vital dimensions. Because of population aging in Canada, Canadian firms and institutions are likely to be doing much more outsourcing and use of guest labour in the future.

One challenge to innovative partnerships is how to build and sustain bridges between North and South, by sectors of activity (commerce, industry, services, government) and by professional groups (researchers, university professors, educators, commercial and industrial brokers and technicians, lawyers, entrepreneurs). Rapid changes in the knowledge base of social service provision, industrial and service production, and trade practices have rendered indispensable more frequent the updating of professionals, entrepreneurs, and program operators on issues that cut across North and South interests. Another challenge is to equip prospective partners with a portfolio of instruments that the revolution in ICTs has made available (distance education courses, virtual groups for discussion and evaluation, video conferencing, portals, websites, newsletters) in order to improve, in the new global environment, the dissemination, circulation, and use of relevant knowledge and experience.

In May 2005 the Advocate Institute facilitated with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) an exploration by CEBEM in Washington DC and Canada in order to (i) contact key institutions and persons in development agencies, (ii) share information about CEBEM's accomplishments and key activities in the Andean region, and (iii) identify opportunities of innovative partnerships with universities, donor agencies, development banks, research centres, and diplomatic representations of Bolivia.

On the basis of results from the exploration, the Advocate Institute and CEBEM will implement a pilot project that will identify and design a number of products and services intended to help Canadian, Latin American, and Andean institutions and individuals wishing to explore cooperation opportunities and investigate resources available in diverse institutions, particularly in the development banks and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); the project will also develop one or more specific proposals for innovative Canada-Latin America cooperation partnerships with a focus in the Andes. Emphasis will be placed on ways of supporting partnerships with an innovative approach, including:

- An approach that cuts across North-South professional, academic and economic interests
- A combination of training, communication, and exchange instruments
- Promotion of partnerships among academics, universities, researchers, entrepreneurs, professional associations, community leaders, and policy-makers in a bilateral or multilateral modality
- Mutual interests for working, exploring, searching, and making business together
- Identified funding possibilities of diverse stakeholders (academics, researchers, graduate and post-graduate training programs, NGOs, professional associations, business and entrepreneurial organizations, and local and national government bodies both in Canada and Latin America and the Andean region), their institutional interests, and their training needs for professional updating
- Potential use of research results to meet those interests and needs
- Consideration of development opportunities in select economic activities that may operate as incentives for implementing partnerships

The assumption is that information in itself about training or market opportunities, to mention a couple of factors, is not enough. People needs to be trained, updated and promoted about what exists, what is its potential, how to take advantage of it, and what sort of benefits may be obtained.

In order to conduct a meaningful experiment and maintain a degree of focus, the project will focus on local territorial development and policies (LTDP), a wide-ranging area of high relevance throughout the region and one which has significant convening power among academics, non-governmental organizations, private sector, and decision-makers. In addition, there already exists a research and education network on territorial policies and studies, the Ibero American Network of Graduate Programs on Territorial Studies and Policies (RIPPET) which currently has 132 member institutions, including universities, research centers, and graduate and post-graduate programs, in Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador. It is argued that, if the experiment is successful, it can serve as a model to foster and support innovative approaches to partnerships in other areas.

Local territorial development and policies (LTDP) refers to the combination of participatory planning, community development, and institutional growth as a means to promote sustainable social, economic, and cultural development at the local level. While a primary focus on territorial development and policies will facilitate better targeting of products to be obtained through this initiative, identify interactions among them, and allow more cohesive

proposals of future activities, other potential areas that might emerge along this exploration and require separate attention may be also be identified and considered.

Processes such as decentralization policies, environmental management, economic planning, investment strategizing (including foreign investment), participation in free trade opportunities, and human resources generation are increasingly subject to local and, particularly, global than to national factors. Therefore, improvement of capacities for the management of the complex interactions among these processes affecting local development, requires a broader view, beyond local boundaries, nourished by knowledge and experience available elsewhere at the global level.

LTDP can be unpacked into a number of substantive areas or topics of interest to different sectors and professional groups. For the purposes of this study, four or five topics have been selected, on the basis of the existence of a critical mass of knowledge, academic research and training programs, NGO activities, key development investments and projects in the region, and potential interests of stakeholders. At the time of writing, the following topics have been identified as entry points for the various activities envisioned in this exploration. They are:

1. Urban environmental problems
2. Community management of natural resources
3. Social participation in public policy making and social service delivery
4. Local production and trade opportunities - eventual focus on SMEs
5. Improvement of local public administration

## **Objectives**

The general objective of this six-month pilot project is to identify and design the specifications for the basic components of an innovative Andean-Latin América-Canadian partnerships program aimed at professionals, development practitioners, academics, researchers, and entrepreneurs, using local territorial development and policies as the primary area of focus.

The specific objectives will be:

- To identify the major stakeholders who would benefit from partnerships, using as entry points four or five specific topics related to the primary area of focus
- To identify potential supply and demand for short distance-education training courses targeting Latin American professionals requiring skills and knowledge upgrading
- To identify the technical specifications for a portal or gateway to publicize and support core activities with relevant information, training and communication tools and services
- To design a Canada-Latin America-Andes exchange program for professionals, development practitioners, academics, researchers, and entrepreneurs
- To design a strategy for on-line cost recovery modalities for delivery of distance education courses and information services

## **Methodological approach**

An innovative approach to partnerships requires the support of a cluster of services based on a portfolio of communication, information, and learning tools. Therefore, although products and services will stand on their own, they will be developed in parallel so as to be mutually supportive and complementary.

### **1. Stakeholder Identification**

A preliminary number of Canadian stakeholders with interests in Latin America, particularly in the Andean region, includes institutions like IDRC, CIDA, The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS) and some other key academic, business, and professional networks and organizations. Other stakeholders will be identified on successive explorations by using information available in data basis, programs and projects of these institutions. On the Latin American side, information provided by RIPPET will be the initial entry point for identification of stakeholders. Eventually, data from regional organizations and networks will be used. Information available in the Inter American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank Institute (WBI) data basis will be also consulted. Results from inquiries and interviews with experts to be conducted in order to develop components indicated in this proposal will represent additional opportunities for identification of other key stakeholders. Thus, identification of stakeholders will be the result of successive explorations.

### **2. Distance Training Courses: Assessment of Supply and Demand**

Long-term courses at the M.A. level exist in abundance in the region. The gaps are in high quality short-term courses to update qualifications. The project will seek to identify potential supply and demand for focused courses of two-four weeks' duration to update knowledge and skills of professionals and entrepreneurs in the substantive areas of focus. It will also consider optimal content and format for such courses. The process related to identifying and matching content (e-courses) related to a particular field will increase the likelihood of defining a sound strategy of use to implement in other subject areas. Having identified concrete gaps (as well as the process to identify these gaps), a proposal to create, disseminate (and charge for) this content could follow-up as a concrete deliverable. Examples of courses to be considered include:

- Training in the selection and use of tools for local program design, follow-up and evaluation, and on community planning - eventually other educational products may be included - to be delivered by Canadian professors and Southern partners
- Substantive theoretical and practical updates on current issues, based on recent research and experience
- Introduction to topics of interest for professional or business development purposes, and related to local economic development in sectors such as trade, industry, or services
- Presentations on policy areas related to local development and international trade participation, 'glocalization', and the use of ICTs

At this stage, preference will be given to courses with the potential to build upon results of development projects having received Canadian support. Canadian, Latin American and

Andean NGOs, research centres and professional and entrepreneurial associations, and international aid agencies, will also be engaged with respect to their interest and ability to offer courses. Potential for the marketing of Canadian expertise and educational products in the Andean region and beyond it in Latin America, and vice-versa, for the marketing of Latin American expertise and knowledge in Canada will be given special attention.

Opportunities for North-South institutional collaboration in the design and delivery of the training courses will be explored through existing networks like RIPPET, other networks led by CEBEM (RIADEL, etc), and networks led by FOCAL, CALACS, the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD), ECLAC, and others.

### **3. Canada-Andes-Latin America Portal: Format and Components**

Currently, there is no "one stop" internet-based source of information to announce upcoming activities to be conducted by Canadians in the region, or about Latin American events in Canada - project pipelines, conferences, or training opportunities - that could be of interest to Canadian and Latin American scholars, graduate students, professionals, and business persons. The central purpose of the system will be to alert and inform about current or future activities to be conducted by Canadians in the region, and their potential for diverse partnership options.

The design of a prototype system will include a portal, which will be housed at CEBEM. Given that design of such a broad website may become a very complex task that would consume energy and resources when resources are not longer available, identifying key stakeholders that would keep the site up and running and designing the technical specifications will be key to this objective.

The specifications will be defined on the basis of consultations with a select number of academics, private sector organizations, and professional associations that might be interested in using and funding specialized websites in areas such as public services, health, education, SMEs, international trade, technology transference, etc. Specialized newsletters, web sites, and a plan for creation of an experimental Observatory devoted to promotion of innovative cooperation partnerships between Canada and the Andean Region, will be considered among the possible components of the system. Particular attention will be given to avoid duplications with current newsletters on Latin America issues produced in Canada, USA or Europe. Proposals for websites will be made on the base of analysis of existing websites that include the region.

### **4. Canada-Andes-Latin America Exchange Program**

The project will explore the viability of self-financed and self-sustaining exchanges supported by a community-based infrastructure. The exchange program will be for professionals, business persons (particularly from, but not reduced to, small and medium size enterprises), academics, and policy makers interested in their professional updating, conduct market explorations, or explore hard and soft technology transfer.

Such exchanges would require support in terms of information and capacity-building services, which would be made available through other components of the overall program. In certain cases, exchanges could be combined with courses to be delivered by Canadian and Latin American experts as preparation for more fruitful internships and explorations. The Canada-Andes-Latin America Portal would provide additional support. The program will also take advantage of existing provisions in Canada that promote the updating of professionals. Special attention will be given to opportunities and resources that could contribute to make this sort of program more sustainable.

## **5. A Strategy for On-line Cost Recovery**

While only one component of a sound business plan that seeks to ensure sustainability, cost recovery is a perennial problem for civil society organizations; it is therefore important to identify other experiments in this area, and to identify possible mechanisms enabling suppliers of services to charge their users.

Modalities for on-line cost recovery corresponding to delivery of courses, selling of publications, documents, and accessing to databases, will be examined. Cost recovery may be a very important factor of long-term financial sustainability to distance education programs and networking activities. Currently, cost recovery is very limited despite the possibility for paying by potential users. The strategy will propose steps to be taken at the short, medium and long term, and mechanisms and means to be implemented at each step.

## **Expected outputs**

### **1. Stakeholders identified**

Identification of stakeholders with interest in participating in innovative modalities of partnerships involving use of exchanges, courses for professional updating, and information and communication facilities.

### **2. Potential supply and demand identified**

Identification of potential supply and demand for courses of two-four weeks? duration to update knowledge and skills of professionals and entrepreneurs in the substantive areas of focus with origin in Canada as well as the Andean region and Latin America.

### **3. Technical specifications for a Portal**

Technical specifications, options, modalities, and components of a system to alert and inform about current or future activities to be conducted by Canadian and institutions and persons from the region, and their potential for diverse North-South partnership options.

### **4. Design for an Exchange Program**

Assessment of the viability of self-financed and self-sustaining exchanges supported by a community-based infrastructure, for professionals, businesspersons, academics, and policy makers interested in their professional updating, conduct market explorations, or explore hard and soft technology transfer. Complementary support in terms of information and capacity-building services, which would be made available through other products or components of the overall program, will be given special attention.

### **5. Strategy for on-line cost recovery**

Identification and assessment of modalities for on-line cost recovery corresponding to delivery of courses, selling of publications, documents, and accessing to data basis. The strategy will propose steps to be taken at the short, medium and long term, and mechanisms and means to be implemented at each step.

### **6. One or more proposals**

One or more proposals developed on the basis of consultations with current and potential partners, and on findings of the pilot project and on the experience in designing the products and services described above. These proposals will be submitted to potential funding agencies, with a view to institutionalizing mechanisms that support innovative Latin American-Andean-Canadian (North-South) partnerships, and prototypes and/or design specifications for the following products and services:

- Latin American-Andean-Canadian portal
- Latin America-Andean-Canadian exchange program
- Short-term training courses for interactive on-line delivery
- On-line cost recovery for training and document delivery

## **Canada - Andes - Latin America cooperation partnerships for mutual development**

<http://www.advocate-institute.com/partnerships/index.htm>

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