



**THE HARRIS
CENTRE**
Memorial University

ADVANCING INNOVATION IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
Northern Peninsula Innovation Workshop Report

Heather Hall and Kyle White, Memorial University
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Advancing Innovation in NL Project Team



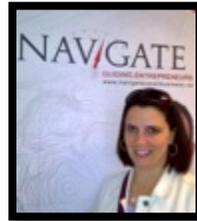
Rob Greenwood
Executive Director
Leslie Harris Centre of
Regional Policy and Development
Memorial University
robg@mun.ca



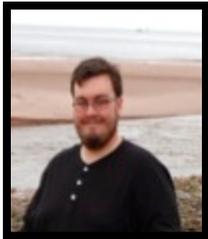
Heather Hall
Postdoctoral Fellow Department
of Geography
Memorial University
hhall@mun.ca



Kelly Vodden
Associate Professor (Research)
Environmental Policy Institute
Grenfell Campus
Memorial University
kvodden@grenfell.mun.ca



Jacqueline Walsh
Assistant Professor
Business - Grenfell Campus
Memorial University
jswalsh@grenfell.mun.ca



Kyle White
Undergraduate Research Assistant
Department of Geography Memorial
University
ksw355@mun.ca



Ken Carter
PhD Candidate, Department of
Geography, Memorial University
& Director of Research and
Analysis Office of Public Engagement
klcarter@gov.nl.ca

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Advancing Innovation in NL Project

The overall goal of the *Advancing Innovation in Newfoundland and Labrador (AINL)* project is to synthesize, share, and ground-truth knowledge related to innovation and ways it can be fostered with key participants involved in innovation (firms/entrepreneurs, local leaders, all levels of government, industry, industry associations, the university and the college). It will also distil lessons for policy and practice. More specifically, we are focussed on addressing the following questions:

- **What are the biggest impediments to realizing innovation-driven economic development in NL?**
- **What are the biggest opportunities?**
- **What strategies by firms, industry associations, all levels of government, regional development organizations, university/college etc. are needed to enhance innovation-driven economic development in NL?**

The AINL projects builds on several innovation-related research initiatives. This includes, research in Newfoundland and Labrador that was part of a national project looking at the social dynamics of economic performance in city-regions, led by David Wolfe and Meric Gertler at the University of Toronto. This project was focused on three themes: the social dynamics of innovation, talent attraction and retention, and civic governance and inclusion. Rob Greenwood led the Newfoundland and Labrador component, which included case studies on St. John's, Clarenville, Corner Brook, and Labrador West.

Another example is the *Networks for Business Innovation: Building Social Capital in Corner Brook, NL* initiative. This project is led by Jose Lam (Memorial University – Grenfell Campus) and includes a team of individuals from government, the university and business. The project is designed to assess the rural innovation system (adapted cluster work for rural and small regions) in the city of Corner Brook. Using interviews and surveys to investigate who people talk to and work with, this study is mapping out these connections and networks. Ultimately, this information will be used bring these players together to further develop social and economic innovation in the city and region.

One final example includes a cross-Canada initiative led by Kelly Vodden (Memorial University – Newfoundland and Labrador), Bill Reimer (Concordia University – Quebec), David Douglas (University of Guelph – Ontario), and Sean Markey (Simon Fraser University – British Columbia) focused on Canadian Regional Development. Five themes are being explored including: place-based development, collaborative, multi-level governance, rural-urban interactions, integrated development, and innovation and learning. In Newfoundland and Labrador these themes are being explored in Kittiwake/Gander-New-Wes-Valley and the Northern Peninsula.

The AINL project includes a series of **Innovation Workshops** in Kittiwake, Labrador Straits, Northern Peninsula, St. John's and Corner Brook. The format for these workshops includes:

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- Research presentations based on research undertaken in the region or on themes related to innovation in the regional economy
 - A panel from the region to provide examples of innovative firms and support systems that are fostering innovation
 - A roundtable discussion on innovation challenges and opportunities

Pending funding, we plan on hosting an **Innovation Summit** in St. John's to report back on the innovation workshops and engage national and international experts on regional innovation.

The *Advancing Innovation in NL* project will produce a knowledge synthesis on innovation, summarizing the latest research on innovation and providing insights for advancing innovation strategies in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as a series of workshop reports and a final report based on the innovation summit. A website will also be created to host innovation-related research studies in Newfoundland and Labrador. Ultimately, our goal is to generate ideas for future directions and respond to the overarching question of – What can industry and economic development associations, firms, all levels of government, Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic do to advance innovation in NL?

Introduction

This report is based on the presentations and discussions from the Northern Peninsula Innovation Workshop. The workshop included 11 participants from all three levels of government, economic development organizations, and business. The workshop started with a brief overview of the AINL project by Heather Hall. This was followed by two presentations on innovation, including: Firm-Level Innovation and Economic Growth in Newfoundland and Labrador presented by Jacqueline Walsh; and Innovation and Regional Development in the Northern Peninsula presented by Ken Carter. Next was a panel discussion on improving innovation in the region by Barb Genge (Tuckamore Lodge) and Carolyn Lavers (IBRD). The workshop concluded with a breakout discussion and report back on the major challenges, opportunities, and strategies for improving innovation in the Northern Peninsula.

Regional Profile of the Northern Peninsula

The Northern Peninsula is located in the western region of Newfoundland along the Strait of Belle Isle. The region falls within three economic zones (Zones 6, 7, and 8) using the former Regional Economic Board (REDB) boundary or it is split between the St. Anthony - Port au Choix and Corner Brook - Rocky Harbour Rural Secretariat (RS) Regions. It is the largest Peninsula in Newfoundland and has an economic history tied to forestry and the fishery. The largest community in the region is St. Anthony, which has a population of 2,442.¹

As seen in Table 1, in 2006 the regional population of the Northern Peninsula was 13,140. This represents a decline of 12.6 percent from the previous census period (2001). Like the population in NL, the population of the Northern Peninsula is aging. The personal income per capita in the region in 2009 was \$23,700, which is comparatively similar to the provincial average of \$24,700. The economic self-reliance ratio for the region was 66.8% indicating that the majority of regional income is generated from market sources. However, on the flipside 33.2% of income is derived from government sources such as pensions, income assistance, and employment insurance, compared to the provincial rate of 20.4%. In 2009, 7,660 people made up the regional workforce. This represents a decrease from the 1999 total of 8,680. The majority of people are employed by the service and sales sector (1,830 people) while the primary industries (1,640 people) and construction and related (1,215) are also major employers.²

¹ Statistics Canada. 2012. St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Labrador (Code 0786) and Newfoundland and Labrador (Code 10) (table). Census Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Retrieved from: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

² Community Accounts. 2012. St. Anthony - Port au Choix Rural Secretariat Region. Retrieved from: http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbWy0nI

Table 1: A Brief Regional Profile of the Northern Peninsula*³

Socioeconomic Indicator	Northern Peninsula Region	Newfoundland and Labrador
Population (2006)	13,140	505,470
Population Change % (2001-2006)	-12.6%	-1.5%
Median Age (2006)	43	42
Gross Personal Income per Capita (2009)	\$23,700	\$27,700

*Note: This information is based only on the St. Anthony - Port au Choix Rural Secretariat Region

Innovation Capacity & Policy Context

In terms of the capacity for innovation in the Northern Peninsula, there is some presence of Memorial University through the Harris Centre, Grenfell and the Marine Institute and the region is home to a College of the North Atlantic (CNA) campus in St. Anthony. With regards to levels of post-secondary education, 38.9 percent of the population (between the ages of 18 and 65) have no high school diploma or certificate (highest in the 9 RS Regions) while 6.8 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher (lowest in the 9 RS Regions).⁴ Individuals/organizations have submitted 15 applications (in zones 6 and 7) to provincial innovation programs between 2006 and 2012 and 6 were approved (\$171,318/\$16.5 million).⁵ In addition, 96 applications (worth \$16million) in the Northern Peninsula have been approved under the ACOA innovation programs between 2006 and 2012.⁶

Advancing Innovation in NL

Heather Hall, Postdoctoral Fellow

Harris Centre and Department of Geography – Memorial University

AINL Project Background

³ Community Accounts. 2012. St. Anthony - Port au Choix Rural Secretariat Region. Retrieved from: http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbWy0nI

⁴ Community Accounts. 2012. Multivariable Regional Comparison Feature. Retrieved from: <http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/>

⁵ Based on information provided to the AINL project team by IBRD.

⁶ ACOA. 2012. Project Information – Download all Projects. Retrieved from: <http://www.acoa-peca.gc.ca/eng/Accountability/ProjectInformation/Pages/Home.aspx>

Heather started with a brief explanation of the Advancing Innovation in NL (AINL) project and its anticipated deliverables (see earlier discussion in this report).

How We Define Innovation

Heather then turned to a discussion of how the AINL project is using the OECD⁷ definition for innovation, which includes four types: **product innovation**, **process innovation**, **organizational innovation**, and **marketing innovation**.

Heather then described how there is no ideal method for measuring innovation. She explained that patent activity is most commonly used followed by a range of indicators including: R&D expenditures, educational attainment, GDP, utilization of technology, occupational mix, industrial mix, proximity to an urban area, government provisions, applications for funding, training programs, productivity, venture capital, and access to broadband. These indicators present a number of issues for smaller more rural regions including the debate over what constitutes ‘new’ – new to the world or new to a region. In many rural regions and smaller cities on the periphery, innovations are new to the region versus new to the world. Another major challenge is the fact that many of the indicators are simply not available at smaller units of geography (i.e. local and regional).

Heather also noted that much of the research on innovation is focussed on large city-regions because they offer diversity and dense concentrations of people, firms, and institutions with global reaches. She also explained that examples of innovation in smaller places are often overlooked because they occur within traditional sectors like mining or forestry or a small family business rather than sectors that are perceived to be at the forefront of technological developments such as IT and biotech.

Regional Innovation Systems

Heather then explained that one of the most significant arguments emerging from the innovation literature over the last several decades is that innovation is not a linear process but rather a social process. She then described how the AINL project is using a regional innovation systems approach. This approach takes into account the collaboration and cooperation that is occurring between firms, universities, research labs, public and private governance organizations, financial institutions etc. Emphasis is placed on the linkages and interaction between these institutions. Key concepts include “Institutional thickness”; Place-based assets; Learning and knowledge flows; and ‘Local buzz, global pipelines’.

Firm-level Innovation and Economic Growth in NL

Jacqueline Walsh, Assistant Professor
Business, Grenfell – Memorial University

⁷ OECD 2005. *Oslo Manual: Guidelines for Collecting and Interpreting Innovation Data*. OECD Publishing.

Jacqui started by asking whether we understand innovation and how to innovate in NL. She noted that in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are often very creative and have a lot of good ideas, however, we're not innovative in the economic sense (i.e. new markets, expanded products, service offerings, improving efficiencies). Jacqui argued that innovation is a proactive process that encompasses change, risk, opportunity, and improvement. She emphasized how innovation is about being competitive and increasing revenue generation. Firms must also be constantly changing and innovative. More importantly, firms must adopt proactive decision making strategies rather than adapting/reacting to trends.

Jacqui also noted, firms need to recognize opportunities and change in order to capitalize on these opportunities. This requires learning and exploiting opportunities faster than competitors. More importantly learning and transforming is continuous process ***driven by opportunity not crisis***. Jacqui further emphasized how innovation is an ***investment***, not an immediate reaction or a profit/loss issue. She also explained how the status quo is often an easier solution for most firms rather than taking a risk on innovation.

Jacqui listed a number of variables that help make firms innovative, including: expenditures on R&D, monitoring competitors, market research, marketing strategies, interaction with customers, suppliers, universities and research centers, acquiring sophisticated equipment and new technologies, training programs for employees, hiring educated, qualified and diverse employees, using motivating techniques, and having sufficient funds dedicated to innovative activities. She also emphasized how innovation is not a linear process and often it requires comprehensive solutions.

Jacqui argued that innovation is powered by management. More importantly firms need to support learning, a culture of innovation, and proactive strategies. She emphasized the need for flexibility, empowerment, open communication, applauding mistakes and risk taking, and including time for innovation. Jacqui also noted that strategies need to be clearly communicated and build on core competencies. She further explained how management personnel need to allow for the free flow of ideas and collaboration, tolerate error, encourage experimentation, celebrate failure and successes, promote timely access to information, and provide feedback systems so employees learn from their mistakes. To illustrate this, Jacqui told a story about how her hairstylist works in a strong learning environment. Stylists are encouraged to attend conferences and receive additional training, however the owner can only afford to send a limited number at a time. When stylists return they share those experiences with other stylists in the salon. Stylists also move stations monthly to learn about colour, cut, and style techniques from each other.

In terms of issues firms face when the attempt to innovate, Jacqui noted that there are both internal and external factors. For example, lack of financing, lack of skilled labour, lack of management and commercialization expertise, resistance to change, lack of access to knowledge, lack of connectivity with the innovation system, and establishing collaborations. Jacqui noted how we heard in Kittiwake, that a study completed on the CME membership found that nearly 20 percent of those surveyed were unaware of what

alternative funding sources or programs (other than self-funding or bank loans) are available to them. She also argued that giving firms money is not the end, work must be done with firms to help them use that money wisely.

Jacqui then turned to a discussion of what we know about innovation in Canada. Citing a 2012 Conference Board of Canada report (*Who Dimmed the Lights?*), she argued that Canada's global competitiveness ranking continues to drop and that the country has weak innovation performance. She further explained that there are a number of reasons for this, including: businesses are not absorbing new technologies; there is a lack of investment in learning and training; access to funding; our competitive advantage is in natural resources, not in the capacity to produce innovative products, processes or services (In fact, Canada ranks 83 out of 144 countries in terms of the nature of our competitive advantage); we have poor business expenditure on R&D; and we have poor university-industry partnerships.

Jacqui noted that at the firm level we know very little about innovation in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2011-12 there were 17 patents filed and only 1 granted. In 2010-11, 16 were filed and 6 were granted while in 2009-10, 14 were filed and 7 were granted. In 2006, IBRD released an Innovation Strategy that argued Newfoundland and Labrador lags behind the rest of Canada because of low investment in R&D by the private sector, poor linkages between post secondary and industry, and a lack of management knowledge in commercialization. Jacqui argued that from her personal view from years of working in private industry is that there is no lack of ideas, just no understanding of how to manage them or how to commercialize them. This point was also emphasized in the Conference Board of Canada report in which they argued that Canada has "Great people, great ideas, poor commercialization".

Jacqui concluded with the following quotation by Henry C. Link - "While one person hesitates because he feels inferior, the other is busy making mistakes and becoming superior."

Discussion

It was noted by one participant that finding alternative sources of revenue in Canada is hard. For example, micro-financing from kick-starter is illegal in this country. It was also noted that there is no internal culture of sharing ideas in the region. Another participant argued that people in the region have a bad attitude when it comes to entrepreneurs. It was agreed that "entrepreneur" is a "dirty word" and making money is bad in NL, however participants did agree that these perceptions are starting to change. Participants also discussed the cookie cutter approach by government that excludes retail and services from innovation programming. However, this sector is absolutely vital in many rural areas. Participants also explained how there is very little take-up for government funding because people don't think that they're eligible, they don't think that they're innovative. Bottom line: people are not confident.

Innovation and Regional Development in the Northern Peninsula

Ken Carter, PhD Candidate

Department of Geography – Memorial University

Ken introduced the Northern Peninsula research, which was based on 22 interviews with local firms, elected officials, economic development organizations and other stakeholders. This research is focused on five dominant themes in regional development research, policy and practice - Rural-Urban Interactions; Integrated Development; Place-Based Development; Innovation and Learning; and Collaborative, Multi-Level Governance. More specifically, the innovation and learning research theme was focused on Knowledge Infrastructure; Knowledge Partnerships; Resources for Learning; Reflection and Knowledge Sharing; Openness to Creativity; Challenges for Innovation; and Examples of Innovative Initiatives.

Ken then described the regional profile, indicators of innovation capacity, and the policy context (see earlier discussion in this report for more detail). Ken also explained that the Northern Peninsula region has access to a number of innovation support institutions including federal programs like: Atlantic Innovation Fund, Innovative Communities Fund, Business Development Program, YEDI (Young Entrepreneur Development Initiative), Emerging Fisheries Development; Industrial Research Assistance Program (National Research Council); CBDCs; SR&ED tax credit; as well as provincial programs, including: IBRD programs, Fisheries Technology and New Opportunities Program (Provincial DFA), tourism - market readiness subsidy, and Tourism Atlantic.

In terms of examples of innovation in the region, interviewees provided a number of firms and social enterprises as well as specific projects or initiatives. Firms included: Holson, Cold Storage, Dark Tickle, SABRI, Canada Ice, Tuckamore Lodge, Norpen, Northern Light Seafoods, and Nordic, while projects and initiatives included: the Heritage Cluster, community forest, NP Business Network, partners meetings, CNA campus, immigration website, and the development of the whelk fishery. Ken explained how interviewees felt that very few new ideas come from the region or if they do being able to implement them is an issue because of lack of capital, support and research infrastructure.

Ken explained that the Northern Peninsula has access to a number of innovation support institutions, however the institutional landscape is not as thick as it used to be. This includes: the CME Business Network, ACOA, IBRD, DFA, DFO, the St. Anthony Chamber of Commerce, the former REDB and NLREDA, CNA, and MUN through Grenfell and the Marine Institute. The importance of field staff from ACOA and IBRD was also emphasized throughout the interviews. Ken noted how collaboration was generally perceived as good, however some felt that the right players are not at the table together. He also explained how the level of collaboration is different in different sectors. For example, in the fishery there is fierce competition for the resource while the forestry sector has stronger collaborations. In terms of learning and knowledge flows, Ken noted

that most respondents self-described as learning organizations, however there are limited training budgets except in government. Learning is also often informal based on experience. Some interviewees also referenced Gros Morne and how it brings exposure from external ideas and people.

Ken also cited a number of regional advantages or place-based assets in the Northern Peninsula. These include: resource assets (fish, culture, forests etc.), the people in the region, support agencies, and right size operations for niche markets. However, he also noted a number of challenges including: distance to market/supplies, lack of young people, competition from other jurisdictions, dying community, capital, lack of entrepreneurs, limited interest in expanding firms, broadband and cell coverage, training and skills development, building better points of intersection and networks, regulations, EI trap, and weak local governance. Ken concluded with a discussion of strategies for improving innovation. More specifically, he mentioned: a regional innovation strategy; better alignment of research and programs, youth retention and attraction; stronger connections and collaboration between knowledge partners and the region; stronger municipal government; new regional governance structures; prototyping and technological help; stronger business collaboration and networking; more regional presence; and better transportation networks.

Discussion

Participants discussed how access to new technology is still an issue with some communities lacking 3G and broadband. It was also noted that the BDC is a huge supporter in the region. There was some confusion over the strategies, specifically new regional governance structures and whether the research team meant regional government. Heather and Kelly noted that it takes into consideration municipalities, businesses and other organizations working together like the REDBs. Some participants felt that the dialogue in the region tends to be doom and gloom. However, others noted that the region has a habit of not talking about reality and we need to put the challenges on the table.

Enhancing Innovation in the Northern Peninsula - Panel

Barb Genge (Tuckamore Lodge)

Barb discussed the problems with broadband and cell coverage. She noted that clients at the lodge have to run to certain locations to answer phone calls. For businesses to improve and innovate, they need to have good communication technology. She discussed how Barbados is better connected than places in rural NL. She also argued that without new communication technology, even the simplest things are hard to do. Barb also explained how training is also needed with new technology. She also discussed the need for financial support, research, infrastructure, and a good team. Barb noted that the region doesn't have a clear idea of what it needs. She also advocated for good education that is current and reflects the needs and the economy of the region.

Carolyn Lavers (IBRD)

Carolyn started by agreeing with Jacqui that entrepreneurship drives innovation and that this is a significant weakness in the region. She noted that you can't have innovation if you don't have a good core of entrepreneurs. Carolyn explained how she is amazed at how much is invested in boats when the fishery is in trouble and that's fine because we may need it. But we don't reinvest money from the harvesting of natural resources into building or developing other industries or expanding existing industries. Carolyn also noted that a lot of young educated people do not have anything to come back to. She questioned why other countries like Greenland have a thriving sealskin product industry and this region doesn't produce it anymore. She argued that people don't invest and they don't have that entrepreneurial spirit. She finished by saying that people who are coming back to the region are still going away to Alberta for employment and that's a reality that we need to address.

Discussion

Participants noted that people in the region don't believe in themselves. They also stated that people in the region need to improve the standard of living because others won't do it for them. Participants also discussed the municipal rivalries and how that impedes collaboration. One participant noted that municipalities are not the only way to go. A region needs individuals and groups that have passion and don't beat them up when they

make some mistakes. They noted that municipalities are good for collecting garbage but don't have the capacity for economic development. Participants spoke about a trip to Iceland and how government, industry and municipalities were all at the table. They spoke of how if 10 people were at a table and 8 said we're going this way and 2 said we should go another way, they would come out of the room with all 10 agreeing. However, in NL the 2 who advocate another way will make sure it never happens. In Iceland, they weren't waiting for industries to come in and set up; they owned the businesses themselves.

Breakout Discussion

Workshop participants were asked to rank the top three challenges for innovation in the region based on the presentations or to identify missing challenges. Some of the challenges discussed include:

- * lack of capital/working capital (banks are difficult to work with)
- * risk aversion in government
- * government regulations and red-tape
- * youth attraction and retention
- * lack of diversification
- * lack of entrepreneurs
- * lack of training and skills development
- * no champion/s
- * too comfortable
- * negative attitude
- * distance to markets
- * access to venture/patient capital

Workshop participants were then asked to rank the top three opportunities for innovation in the region based on the presentations or to identify missing opportunities. Some of the opportunities discussed include:

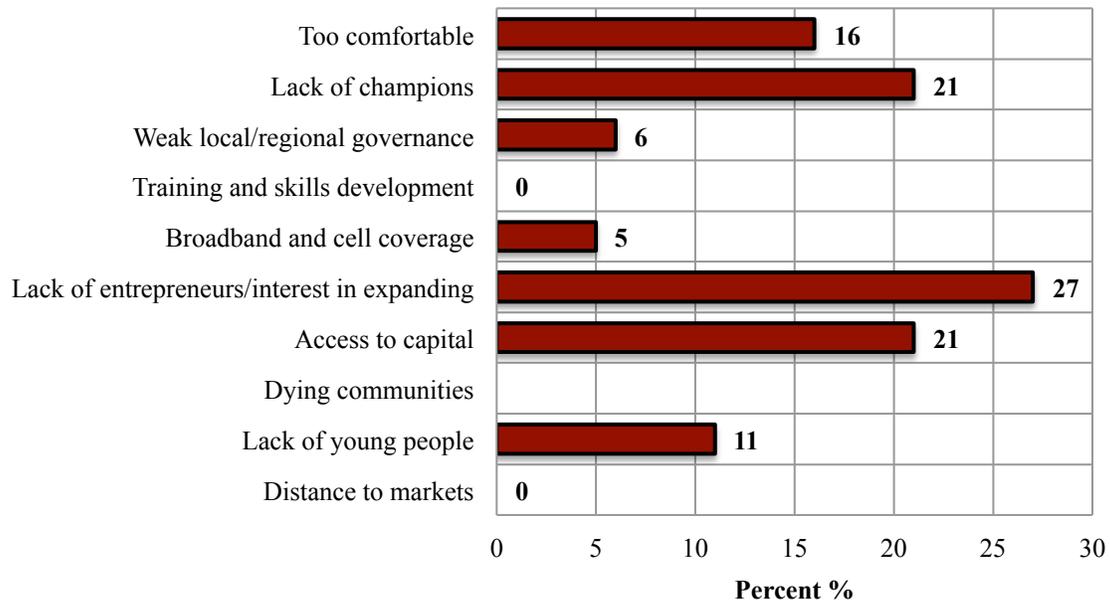
- * cold storage
- * commitment to place
- * low crime rate
- * quality of life
- * natural amenities
- * globally strategic position
- * rich in natural resources (berries, tourism, forestry, fishery)
- * niche products
- * transportation linkage to Labrador
- * Mega-project development
- * tourism potential
- * support agencies e.g. heritage centre

Workshop participants were asked to rank the top three strategies for strengthening innovation in the region based on the presentations or to identify missing strategies. Some of the strategies discussed include:

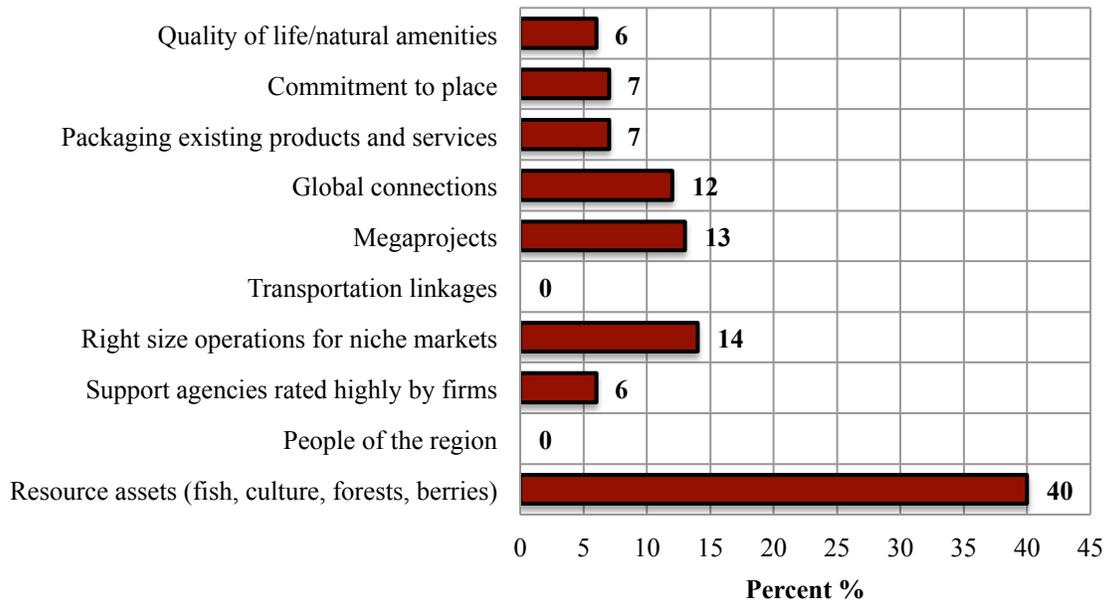
- * need more value added strategies for natural resources
- * promote youth entrepreneurship in schools
- * regional entrepreneurship centre for business advice, money and expertise
- * regional development fund
- * inventory of regional assets
- * creative marketing
- * stronger partnerships/collaboration/alliances
- * pilot innovation strategy
- * stronger partnerships with University and College

Report Back Questions

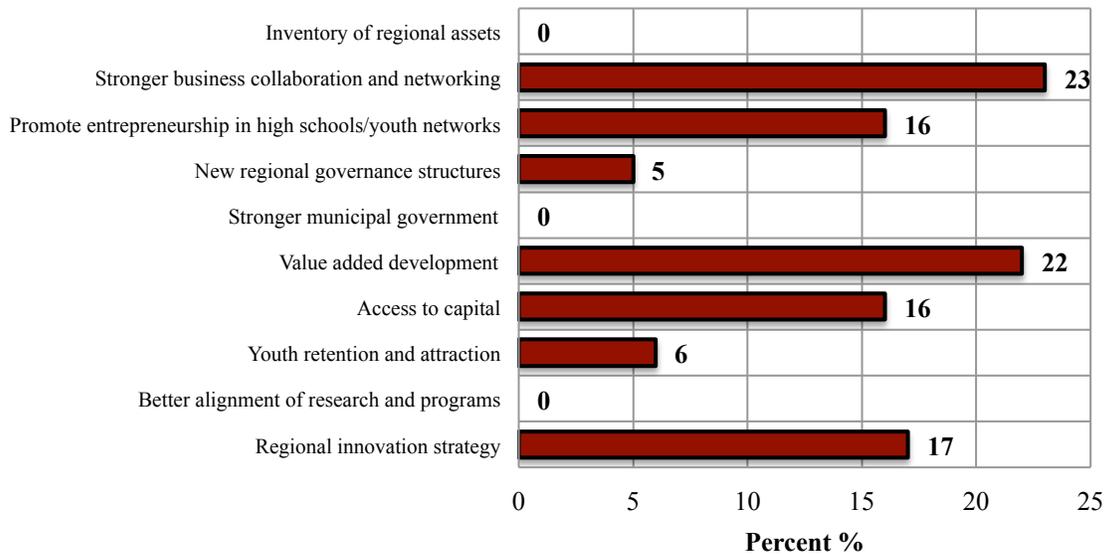
Workshop participants were asked to select the top two challenges for innovation in the region. A list of ten challenges was provided based on the presentations and breakout discussions. Their responses are shown below:



Workshop participants were asked to select the top two opportunities/ regional advantages for innovation in the region. A list of ten opportunities was provided based on the presentations and breakout discussions. Their responses are shown below:



Workshop participants were asked to select the top two strategies for enhancing innovation in the region. A list of ten strategies was provided based on the presentations and breakout discussions. Their responses are shown below:



Appendix 1 – Participant List

Name	Organization
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Mark Tierney	ACOA
Chatal Doyle	Government of NL
Carolyn Lavers	IBRD
Joan Simmonds	French Shore Historical Society
Lynn Dempster	IBRD
Kevin Simms	CBDC
Sam Elliot	SABRI
Richard May	CBDC
Barb Genge	Tuckamore Lodge
Gloria Toope	St. Barbe Development Association
Nina Mitchelmore	Rural Secretariat
AINL Team	
Heather Hall	Memorial University
Kyle White	Memorial University
Kelly Vodden	Grenfell – Memorial University
Jacqui Walsh	Grenfell – Memorial University
Ken Carter	Memorial University



THE LESLIE HARRIS CENTRE OF REGIONAL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

1st Floor Spencer Hall, St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7

Tel: 709 864 6170 Fax: 709 864 3734 www.mun.ca/harriscentre

THE HARRIS CENTRE Memorial University

