

ABCs of Partnerships in Atlantic Canada: A Focus on Higher Education Institutions

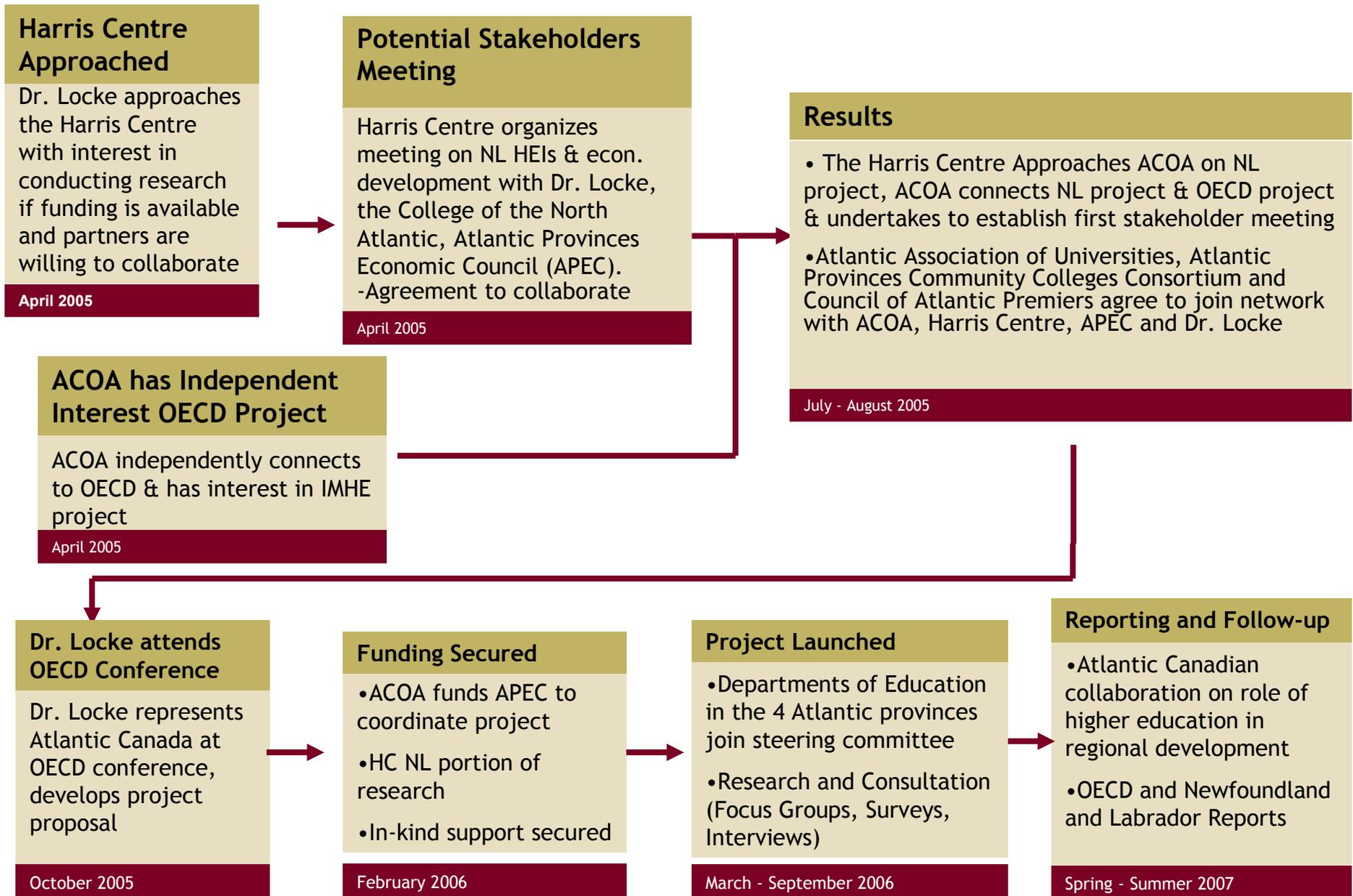
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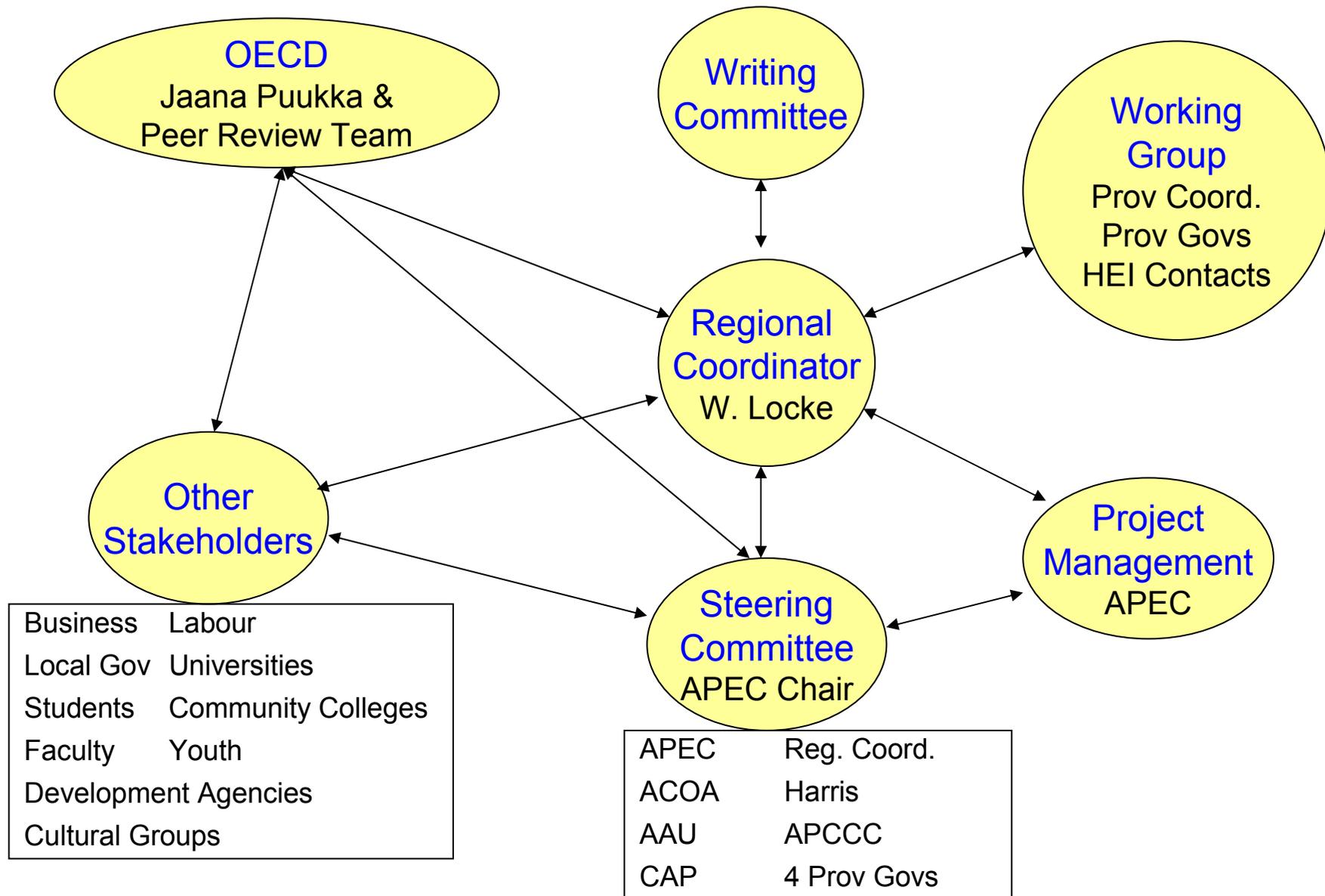
Outline

- Genesis & Evolution of Research Network
- Research Network for OECD Project
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- Assessing the Research Opportunity
 - Feasibility
 - Generating buy-in
 - Constraints
 - Making it happen
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Genesis & Evolution of Research Network



Research Network for OECD Project



Importance of Partnerships in Atlantic Canada

- Conceptual framework rather than formal, legislative region
- 4 independent provincial governments and 1 federal government
 - (prov. jurisdiction over education, but fed. has role in HEI R&D, innovation, & commercialization)
- Small population
- personal relationships important
- trust crucial
- need buy-in from key players
 - sources of info, facilitates participation & mobilization of others, & institutions already overburdened with info requests

Assessing the Research Opportunity

- Feasibility:
 - Schedule - started late, is it possible to meet OECD schedule
 - Resources – what finances and in-kind support needed & how can we get it
 - Benefits – do we want to do this, what is in it for us & other regional stakeholders
 - Team – who would do this, what is structure of network, & what are the roles of participants
 - Information – how do we get the required information and can we get cooperation from other stakeholders

Assessing the Research Opportunity

- Generating Buy-in:
 - no single entity with authority to ensure that project is completed
 - can't compel cooperation so may not get any information
 - findings may not be taken seriously without buy-in
 - Approach
 - Make steering committee inclusive
 - Identify benefits for stakeholders of participating
 - Determine appropriate way to communicate with stakeholders – personal contacts, organizational contacts, lobbying efforts, effective & clear communication strategy
 - Specify clear & simple roles for stakeholders & members of network
 - Get the right people to be part of team, enhances research capacity & lends legitimacy
 - Champion to shoulder most responsibility
 - Have clear execution strategy

Assessing the Research Opportunity

- Execution:
 - Let people know what you are doing regularly
 - Clearly explain what is involved
 - Use the steering committee for ideas and contacts
 - Vet survey instruments with representative from HEIs for clarity & reaction
 - Allow sufficient time for completion, follow-up and follow-up again
 - Separate project management from research and writing
 - Be flexible & deal with unforeseen factors quickly

Assessing the Research Opportunity

- Constraints:
 - Geography – large areas
 - Numerous and diverse HEIs (17 universities & 4 community colleges)
 - Linguistic Duality – French & English required translation of instruments & responses
 - Late Starting – OECD project started one year prior to our joining
 - Federal election – funding application caught in change of government
 - HEIs overburdened – another survey!
 - Lack of authority – no one could guarantee participation
 - Time – everyone is overcommitted

Assessing the Research Opportunity

- Making it happen:
 - OECD reputation helps buy-in
 - recognized research credentials of team (regional and provincial coordinators)
 - honest broker institutions (Harris Centre & APEC) lends legitimacy to process
 - AAU and APCCC buy-in brings institutions along
 - AAU economic impact study & APCCC value for money studies provided information to study
 - ACOA provides resources and participation indicate importance of project to others, thereby acting as a catalyst for buy-in
 - Provincial government participation provides access to information, legitimize the project and encourages buy-in by others

IMHE Project – Atlantic Variations

- Importance of a regional and provincial synthesis document
- Potential for a regional conference
- Follow up could include developing elements of a regional strategy for HEI in regional development
- Regular steering committee meetings every 2 months at first face-to-face and then via conference call
- Four focus groups were held with one in each province, each having a different theme:
 - Rural engagement in PEI
 - Commercialization in NL
 - Acadian and francophone community involvement in NB
 - Future of HEIs in NS

Conclusion

- Atlantic Canada is a complex area, which added to difficulties associated with partnership building for this project
- Rich information set generated that should provide lessons for Atlantic Canada and other OECD countries

Thank You for
the opportunity to discuss our experiences