

Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation

Overview

The Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI) is a partnership organization that strives to bring people, ideas and resources together. OCRI's mission is to work with the business, education and government sectors to enhance Ottawa's global economy and quality of life. OCRI has more than 600 members ranging from large multinational corporations to local academic institutions and research laboratories.

OCRI strives to contribute to the region's economic prosperity and quality of life by developing and enriching Ottawa's talent; marketing Ottawa to attract talent, investment and business; enabling entrepreneurs to establish and grow their businesses; meeting Canadian and global demands through intellectual and technological innovation; facilitating collaborative, leading-edge research; fostering lifelong learning; and developing infrastructure and online service delivery.

Regional Priorities

OCRI has developed an ambitious regional strategy that is specifically targeted at developing companies with substantial export markets; developing the skill sets of workers in the region; increasing capital/resource attraction; maintaining the Ottawa region's quality of life; and growing the regional economy. In order to address many of these issues, OCRI has developed numerous projects and initiatives.

One of OCRI's top priorities is the Ottawa Global Marketing division. This division is focused on three key areas: 1) Responding to requests for information and strategic support on investment and trade from internal and external stakeholders; 2) Taking the lead in developing and promoting a consistent message that positions Ottawa and Ottawa-based businesses for success; and 3) Working in partnership with key decision-makers at home and around the world to create mutual investment and trade opportunities.

OCRI's Ottawa Global Marketing division has made significant headway in marketing Ottawa's business community and the

ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Type of Organization

Multi-sector: Led by partnership of business, government, civic, community and other leaders

Unit of Membership

Company/organization

Number of Members

2003: 605
1998: 400

Membership by Company Size

Small-sized Companies: 65%
Mid-sized Companies: 25%
Large-sized Companies: 10%

Dues Determined by

Number of employees

Annual Dues Paid by

Largest Member Companies: \$10,000
Smallest Member Companies: \$300

Annual Operating Budget

2003: \$5 million or more
1998: \$1 million to less than \$2 million

Staff Members (FTE)

2003: 94
1998: N/A

Board Members

2003: 22

Regional Priorities

Exports, Workforce Development, Business Attraction, Adult Education, Infrastructure, Entrepreneurship, Quality of Life, the Economy

city as a competitive place to conduct business. For example, OCRI has launched marketing campaigns in economically competitive U.S. regions such as Boston, Raleigh-Durham, San Jose/Silicon Valley and Washington D.C. as well as Europe and Latin America. In addition, OCRI's leadership staff and its partners often meet with international delegations in order to learn and exchange information. This has enabled OCRI to share with others business investment opportunities that exist in the Ottawa region.

Another successful program of OCRI's that has helped the Ottawa region build a first rate technology infrastructure has been its SmartCapital initiative. In 2000, Industry Canada selected SmartCapital to be the Province of Ontario's Smart Communities Demonstration Project. The OCRI SmartCapital initiative works with public and private sector institutions to develop online services that reach out to residents and businesses across Ottawa. Some examples of the initiative's projects include the City of Ottawa E-democracy project, SmartLibrary, The Entrepreneurship Centre online, and extending high-speed broadband services to Ottawa's rural areas. To date, the initiative has been able to raise over \$16 million for projects from the federal and provincial governments, local institutions and companies. Overall, the SmartCapital initiative has been critical in helping Ottawa develop a connected city.

The development of local talent is another focus area for OCRI. As a result, OCRI manages TalentWorks, a community-based program initiated by The Ottawa Partnership (TOP) that strives to develop and enhance the talent pool in the Ottawa region. Funded in part by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), the City of Ottawa and TOP, TalentWorks tries to build Ottawa's talent pool by providing strategic, integrated support to targeted sectors of the economy. Due to OCRI's success with managing the TalentWorks program, it took the lead on developing the talent plan for the City of Ottawa's 2020 Economic Strategy Plan.

Another priority for OCRI is growing the local business base and increasing the amount of capital and resources in the region. One way in which OCRI is striving to meet its objective is through the Entrepreneurship Centre, a nonprofit, public-private partnership managed by OCRI that helps entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses. The Entrepreneurship Centre provides entrepreneurs with access to several services including a business information portal that collects and disseminates start-up and business information in a variety of media. In addition, the Centre offers entrepreneurs seminars and workshops that cover topics such as business planning, marketing strategies, as well as income tax and legal issues. Perhaps one of the most successful aspects of OCRI's Entrepreneurship Centre is its ability to connect local entrepreneurs to venture capital through its Ottawa Capital Network. Every year OCRI's Ottawa Capital Network sponsors the Ottawa Venture Fair at which participants have the opportunity to present to a large audience of venture capitalists and attend panels at which they can hear from analysts, customers and successful entrepreneurs.

OCRI's work in education and research encompasses a variety of programs, projects and activities that contribute to building Ottawa's globally competitive knowledge

economy and superior quality of life. OCRI has diverse and far-reaching educational programs that support learning, facilitate community connections and pilot test applications in advanced learning technologies. Many of the educational initiatives provide direct service to Ottawa-area elementary and secondary schools (K-12), while other partnership-building programs benefit post secondary schools, colleges and universities. OCRI uses investments in research and development to advance the commercialization of technology in the community. OCRI's research activities are directed by a Research Management Board consisting of leaders in the local R&D community. One of OCRI's main strengths is its ability to build strategic alliances in the area of research for the benefit of its members and the Ottawa region. Collaborative initiatives include a Research Chairs Program and activities with the Centre on Governance at the University of Ottawa.

Finally, OCRI is working to increase increasing the infrastructure necessary to develop a technology corridor that could be a major source of innovation, research, entrepreneurship and investment in Ontario. OCRI has supported this effort in partnership with others to develop a strategic plan that will create information and communications technology (ICT) innovation centers in Ottawa, Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo areas. The goal is to create better linkages between major research centers, businesses and universities/colleges.

Structure and Operations

In 2001 OCRI and the Ottawa Economic Development Corporation (OED) merged, strengthening OCRI's economic development and international marketing capabilities. This also resulted in the consolidation of services and strategies that overlapped between OCRI and OED. After the consolidation, OCRI's staff increased to over 90 employees, making it one of the largest business-civic organizations in the Ottawa region. Over the past few years OCRI has increased its presence in the region by increasing its membership base from 400 in 1998 to over 600 members today. Moreover, OCRI's budget has more than doubled over the last five years, increasing from an annual budget between \$1 and \$2 million to more than \$5 million today.