

THE FUTURE IS CASCADIA

Building Regional
Competitiveness Cross
Border Workshop



SUMMARY REPORT
AUGUST 2018



BACKGROUND

The idea of Cascadia has always been unique — and hard to define. This transnational region straddles two countries, multiple sub-national units, a bio-region, and is one of the most robust and diverse economic clusters on earth. As technological, economic, and political uncertainty grows, it is clear that Washington State, British Columbia and Oregon have a unique opportunity to build their shared competitiveness, enabling each to better weather challenges independently, while collectively seizing local and global opportunities. New threads of connectivity are continuously being established amidst these shifts, but the need and desire for a structured and long-term approach to building regional integration has remained.

Building regional competitiveness is going to require continually strengthening relationships and ecosystem investments by all sectors and at all scales. There are a number of existing frameworks for the Cascadia Innovation Corridor, including MOUs, bilateral agreements, research partnerships, and emerging support networks. As the fall 2018 Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference approaches, the need for visioning and planning on how to bring together Cascadian leaders and institutions to invest in our collective prosperity increases.

Events of 2018 have brought Cascadia to the top of many minds. The announcement of the BC-led Canadian Digital Supercluster, in particular, is a huge achievement for the region. The diversity and quantity of stakeholders from Cascadia that are already involved in this initiative will have an incredible, catalysing effect for the entire region. The \$1.4 billion CAD investment over ten years is projected to realise 15 billion CAD

in GDP growth for British Columbia — with innumerable opportunities to include the greater Cascadian community. Numerous other efforts across Cascadia are also being developed, including deepening post-secondary partnerships, the launching of a Cascadia-wide venture acceleration network (CVAN), and intergovernmental collaboration on high-speed rail. The breadth of activity needs a guiding vision to ensure alignment and success. Also required are agreed upon commitments from all stakeholders that will clarify shared opportunities and identify roadblocks to keep Cascadia moving forward. From these, Cascadia will see increased connectivity, innovation, and prosperity for all involved. The May 14th workshop focused directly on this.

THE PARTNERS

This event was convened by a multi-sectoral group of key stakeholders, under the leadership and facilitation of Simon Fraser University's (SFU) Public Square and the Vancouver Hub of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community. The convening partners included longtime leaders in the Cascadia Innovation Corridor, including the Business Council of BC (BCBC), the BC Tech Association, Innovate BC (formerly the BC Innovation Council), the University of British Columbia (UBC), and the Cascadia Venture Acceleration Network (CVAN). The event was further supported with advice from the BC Government, the Vancouver Economic Commission (VEC), and many others. Finally, the event was made possible due to the generous sponsorship received from EY, with Partner Doug Campbell present to provide overarching observations from the conversation.

THE EVENT

The partners, with presentations and comments by key ecosystem actors, joined together at the Vancouver Convention Centre in the lead-up to the 2018 #BCTECH Summit, to host a half-day workshop on the future of the Cascadia region. Based on prior input from existing stakeholders at all levels, the workshop was structured around three goals:

1. Create new and strengthen existing Cascadian relationships and partnerships;
2. Refine a Cascadia-wide vision for success and strategic framework for priorities;
3. Capture the range of Cascadia-related initiatives and develop near-term, tangible actions and outcomes that can be pursued in the lead-up to the Fall 2018 Cascadia Innovation Conference.

The event was structured in two parts: introductions and context provided by speakers, and break-out sessions at tables on ideas and action.



SPEAKERS

In opening remarks from Alan Winter, the Innovation Commissioner for BC, and from Joy Johnson, SFU’s Vice President of Research, there were themes of increasing connectivity through new infrastructure projects like the new direct flights from Seattle’s Lake Union to Vancouver’s Coal Harbour via the ‘Nerd Bird,’ as well as ongoing research into high-speed rail which would connect the Cascadia regions. Both highlighted the immense opportunity posed by the Supercluster for Cascadia.

Greg D’Avignon, President of the Business Council of BC, presented a history of the Cascadia initiative to-date including Microsoft’s pioneering investment in Vancouver which was the start of greater tech connectivity for the region, sparking an increase in movement of talent and capital across the border. D’Avignon noted some key similarities our societies share, including the Indigenous roots of BC and Washington, the contemporary focus on sustainability, and a focused pivot toward Asian markets. To succeed, D’Avignon argued that BC and Washington will need to become global innovation ecosystem leaders on our own terms, noting that we cannot beat Silicon Valley and Singapore at their own game.

On a panel facilitated by Chair of the Supercluster, Bill Tam, Greg D’Avignon, Helen Burt, UBC’s Associate Vice President of Research, and Peter Payne, Chair of the Cascadia Venture Acceleration Network, all talked about the ongoing successes of the region, and where we need to go next. Successes highlighted included: the transition from a resource to an integrated digital economy (one that still includes extraction); the incredible breadth of research activity in the region’s many world-class



universities; the shared values, particularly environmental sustainability; and the strength of particular sectors, like healthcare research. There was unanimous agreement that in order to succeed, the region should narrow its focus to several key areas (health and digital technologies were provided as examples), expedite action within business and policy sectors, and find ways to further enhance, leverage, and embrace our shared values.

“CASCADIA PRESENTS A VIABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM; BY FOSTERING INNOVATION IN OUR REGION, WE ALL STAND TO GAIN.”

–Joy Johnson, Vice Preseident Research and International, Simon Fraser University



PARTICIPANTS

After context-setting by the panelists, the session was divided into breakout sessions to discuss three idea-generating questions:

1. What do we want Cascadia to be by 2021 (the 100th Anniversary of the Peace Arch Border Crossing), and where do you see existing synergies and areas of opportunity (political, economic, geographical) on which we can capitalize?
2. How do we get Cascadia to where we want/need it to be by 2021?
3. How do you, your organization, and your network want to be involved?

Question 1

What do we want Cascadia to be by 2021 (the 100th Anniversary of the Peace Arch Border Crossing), and where do you see existing synergies and areas of opportunity (political, economic, geographical) on which we can capitalize?

- A thin, flexible border that allows fast movement of talent, capital, and companies — an 'economic zone' akin to the Schengen area in Europe;
- Leadership of Cascadia is provided by a coordinating body that is highly trusted and inclusive. This body would develop, maintain, and grow a deep network of connectivity that extends through all sectors (e.g., governments, universities, large corporations, and startups) and at all scales, both public and private;
- A unified Cascadian brand that is innovative on all levels, urban, low-carbon, triple-bottom line, and forward-looking;

Existing Synergies

- A willingness to go after “massive” projects and go toe-to-toe with our global competitors, focusing on our strengths and driving those into innovative spaces that can scale (e.g., clean tech, precision health, etc.);
- Deep network of institutional collaboration, particularly between higher-education institutions, hospitals, research centres, accelerators, and other key innovation stakeholders;
- The high-speed rail system is under construction and is fully funded — Vancouver to Seattle, with supportive elements to other communities;
- A strong bedrock of data sovereignty that promotes movement and the sharing of ideas, yet protects privacy and the rights of users;
- Cascadia-wide pooling and targeting of investment capital; playing to our strengths but also pursuing new ideas in a strategic way all throughout the region.

- **Shared urban challenges and interests** around improving transportation systems, including building metropolitan train systems in both Vancouver and Seattle — perhaps opportunities to align policy, investment, and procurement;
- **Shared coastline** driving interests and policies around the protection of the water, and its use as a commercial gateway with our incredible network of ports;
- **Shared strengths** in healthcare innovation — despite economic and ideological complexities with how services are delivered — ongoing research for both systems could be shared and coordinated;
- **Differentiated educational institutions** throughout the whole region that do not often directly compete with one another.

Opportunities

- **Pacific North West's external perception**, especially Vancouver's, are seen as a progressive place where people are focused on 'purpose' driven activities, including a strong emphasis on the environment, social innovation, and inclusion;
- **Canada's Digital Supercluster** will drive an incredible amount of investment into Vancouver and could be leveraged by Seattle companies and into parallel initiatives;
- BC and WA have huge supplies of **clean energy** that can help advance both digital (e.g., data centres) activities, as well as new and traditional industrial businesses;
- Vancouver has a much stronger **connection to Asia** than Seattle — opportunity for both parties to leverage the BC experience;

- **BC's Indigenous communities** represent huge investment opportunity, both in the province, and as a gateway to the rest of the country;
- Despite problems with a “thick” border, **movement between BC and WA is already very smooth** on global standards and even compared to elsewhere in Canada — there must be opportunities to leverage this further.

Question 2

How do we get Cascadia to where we want/need it to be by 2021?

Governments

- Create a managing body or secretariat that can start initiating short and long-term projects that will help realise Cascadia — consider hiring a “cluster management officer” or team to coordinate activities;
- Governments at all levels could sponsor a branding exercise; Can we do more coordinated international trade missions — selling the Cascadia brand?;
- Do a thorough mapping of the whole Cascadia economic ecosystem to see where there are key opportunities and actions;
- On immigration: could we fast-track individual solutions, like increasing ease of movement at key points along the border (e.g., at SEA-TAC), or finding technology solutions (like facial recognition) that help advance movement at individual choke points, while bigger immigration questions are solved at the (inter)national level;
- BC and WA governments to make both operational and capital investments — e.g., building a cross-border tech park;
- Need Government of Canada's explicit buy-in to advance the Cascadia concept further and both provide resources and a negotiating platform;
- Promote increased commercialization of SME and startups' products to Americans;
- Look abroad at other models for organizing cross-border activity, particularly in Europe and East Asia, where 'economic zones' and free-trade areas have been very successful;

Private Sector

- Have to start coordinating branding amongst larger corporations so that people around the world understand that the Cascadian regional economy is strong;
- Coordinate joint meetings and projects — like having rotating board meetings for Chambers of Commerce in BC and WA, or having jointly appointed research chairs at multiple universities in both places;



- Ensure that through the Secretariat and other institutions, there are ways for all scales and types of businesses and other sectors to join Cascadian work.

Education System

- Need to coordinate co-op education placements by matching the needs of the region with student skills and capacity;
- Coordinate research chair and joint funding applications between universities, either through existing partnerships like the UBC-UW MOU, or networks like CVAN;
- Provide collective opportunities for both fundamental and applied research while allowing each to stand out in their own way;
- Continue using universities as a lightning rod for diversity.

Question 3

How do you, your organization, and your network, want to be involved?

Throughout the entire event, there was a strong focus on moving forward and developing quick, deliverable actions. Participants were asked in the final portion of the breakout sessions to detail ways in which they would like to be involved in the Cascadia Innovation Corridor moving forward. They were asked to think of this at three scales: as individuals, as leaders in organizations, and as parts of their respective networks.

Broadly, the participants felt that they could contribute in several key ways:

- Feeding into government, business, or association (e.g., BCBC, Washington Roundtable, etc.) led initiatives on Cascadia as participants, experts, or co-convenors;
- Providing awareness within a sector (e.g., public education, clean tech, agriculture, etc.) on how to engage with Cascadia-related work;
- Developing research agendas and case studies for cross-border collaboration and initiatives that showcase existing linkages and can be scaled for broader impact;
- Providing physical space for convening, working sessions, strategic planning, meetups, and networking;
- Work to build linkages between new and existing services or offerings that could be leveraged for Cascadia benefit (e.g. trade officers in Seattle and Vancouver, tax credits, research funding, etc.);
- Collectively act as brand ambassadors to bring talent and capital to Cascadia.



NEXT STEPS

This workshop was intended to start a conversation amongst new and old stakeholders to Cascadia. The work ahead will be long, but there is an enormous opportunity ahead for all of us. In the coming days, there are a few key pieces of follow-up to prepare for attendees:

1. Register for the Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference on October 9-10, 2018;
2. Look for future announcements of the World Economic Forum Global Shapers Hubs in Vancouver, Seattle, and elsewhere in Cascadia on projects related to the Corridor;
3. Continue to engage with Cascadia processes, including the Innovation Corridor Conference, continuing governmental engagement on infrastructure and policy, ongoing Cascadia Venture Acceleration Network events and projects, and higher-education collaboration.



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@ShapersVan

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