



ProteinMB

MANITOBA'S SUSTAINABLE
PROTEIN ADVANTAGE

PROTEINMB NAVIGATING RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS FORUM WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

[ProteinMB](#) is focused on facilitating protein industry growth through value chain collaboration, providing representation and advocacy for the sector, measuring sustainability performance, supporting research and knowledge translation, and industry promotion and marketing. ProteinMB engages with the protein sector across 10 strategic areas outlined in the [Manitoba Protein Advantage Strategy \(MPAS\) action plan](#).

The Navigating Research Partnerships Forum was held as an agenda item of the ProteinMB Industry Innovation Workshop to identify highlights and opportunities around collaborations between researchers and industry.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

ProteinMB held an Industry Innovation Workshop on June 18, 2024, in partnership with the Manitoba Sustainable Protein Research Symposium to bridge the gap between industry and research. The workshop attendees included 60 participants from industry, government, academia and industry support organizations. A summary of the workshop is available on the ProteinMB website.

This document provides a summary of the facilitated Navigating Research Partnerships discussion which used four key questions to identify existing barriers to research partnerships.

WHAT WE HEARD

What are the highlights and opportunities to partnering with research institutions in Manitoba?

HIGHLIGHTS

Strengthening Workforce

Collaboration with research institutions supplements and strengthens the company's workforce and focused research and training contribute to the development of the future research workforce. Training opportunities exist to prepare professionals for hard-to-fill positions and emerging programs.

Access to Expertise and Resources

Manitobans have access to highly qualified researchers and specialized equipment at local research institutions. There is significant capacity within research institutions, providing a wealth of expertise across various disciplines. Industry partners find it easy to connect with universities and stay informed about ongoing research.

Collaboration

Manitoba promotes collaboration across disciplines, such as health and protein sectors. Various funding models are available, making it easier for industry to engage in research partnerships. Federal and provincial knowledge and expertise are available for collaboration and exchange.

Sustainable Circular Economy

Research institutions support initiatives aimed at developing a sustainable circular economy.

Innovation and Risk-Taking

Research institutions foster an environment that encourages innovation and allows for greater risk-taking.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Incorporating Traditional Knowledge

There is an opportunity to incorporate the traditional knowledge of Indigenous partners into research initiatives.

Reducing Results Time

Additional collaborative efforts could reduce the time required to achieve research outcomes.

Developing a Co-operative Model

A co-operative model is needed to expand research areas beyond the current limitations of individual Manitoba research centers.

Networking and Collaborations

Networking opportunities with researchers at other academic institutions could enhance

collaborations and research outcomes. There is potential for deeper synergies between organizations, both within Manitoba and at the provincial level, to solve complex socio-economic issues, such as food security and school nutrition programs, by bringing in industry partners.

Workforce Development

Additional training and research opportunities for future needs of industry are required for workforce development.

Access to Expertise and Resources

Expanding facility access, particularly for non-food products like pet food, can open new avenues for funding and innovation. Startups and small companies often struggle to afford research; partnerships with research institutions could provide crucial support.

What are the highlights and opportunities regarding access to funding in Manitoba?

HIGHLIGHTS

Existing Funding Models

Manitoba offers diverse funding models providing significant support for innovation and growth across sectors. Manitoba's funding agencies are committed to assisting with funding processes and getting money out the door. This is especially beneficial for grant writing, where partnerships with academic institutions can provide essential support. Intellectual Property products and programs are available. Research Manitoba provides funding and public research outcomes.

OPPORTUNITIES

Availability and Accessibility of Funding Models

There is room to optimize access to funding, with an emphasis on improving grant writing and accelerating application processes. Growing interest exists in innovative funding models, such as social impact bonds, that can support emerging industries. Decentralized funding models also offer new ways to distribute resources more equitably across sectors.

Public funds are often used to support universities, though there are concerns about cuts to these institutions. IP programs and various federal funding opportunities are often difficult to navigate due to their complexity and the need for tailored proposals for each and lack of a centralized resource.

There is an opportunity to bring in venture capital dollars for innovative industries to bolster Manitoba's funding landscape. Industry involvement in addressing socio-economic challenges, such as global food security, can also attract public and private investment.

Indigenous and Community-Focused Funding

Indigenous entrepreneurs often face challenges with traditional funding models that dilute ownership, making it crucial to develop funding opportunities that respect and preserve Indigenous ownership structures. Indigenous entrepreneurs benefit from being part of a community rather than operating independently, suggesting a need for funding models that support community-based initiatives and collaboration.

What are your/the innovation needs?

The following is a summary of key innovation needs identified by forum participants.

- **Access to Facilities and Resources:** There is a need for more access to facilities specifically designed for non-human consumption products. Increased fermentation capacity is required to support growing innovation in various sectors. Scaling up infrastructure to accommodate new and expanding operations is essential.
- **Data and Technology.** There is an emphasis on advancing precision farming and digital agriculture technologies to enhance productivity and sustainability. A need exists for improved methods of gathering, measuring, and interpreting data. This includes better access to data, data sharing, and centralization to inform decision-making.
- **Circular Economy Insights.** Further exploration and implementation of circular economy principles, with a focus on optimizing food conversion ratios in animals and creating byproducts.
- **Cellular Agriculture.** Continued development and support for cellular agriculture as an innovative food production method.
- **Innovation in Feed.** There is significant interest in innovation related to feed, particularly in utilizing insects and plant proteins.
- **Creation of Byproducts.** Developing innovative value-added option from byproducts to maximize resource efficiency.
- **Workforce and Skills Development.** There is difficulty in finding skilled employees, particularly in emerging fields such as cellular agriculture and digital agriculture. There is a clear need for workforce development initiatives to address the skills gap and support innovation.
- **Collaborative Relationships and Networks.** Facilitating connections among protein sectors is crucial to creating new collaborative relationships and knowledge networks that drive innovation.
- **Certified Protocols and Standards.** The establishment of certified protocols, especially around carbon measurement in Canada, is needed to guide innovation and ensure consistency across the industry.
- **Funding and Support.** Indigenous organizations face challenges accessing funding if their ownership structure falls below 50%. There is a need for more flexible funding opportunities to support innovation within these communities. Increased access to Small Innovation Businesses is necessary to foster innovation, particularly in smaller and emerging businesses

How can ProteinMB help facilitate bridging the gap between industry and researchers?

Forum participants identified several opportunities for ProteinMB to help facilitate bridging the gap between industry and researchers, including:

Networking Events

Forum participants expressed strong support for regular in-person structured and unstructured networking events to provide opportunities to connect, exchange ideas, and build relationships that can lead to collaborative projects. Inspired by the BAM model, a Rapid Speed Dating Funding Day was proposed to facilitate quick, focused interactions between industry and researchers, fostering connections that could lead to funding opportunities.

Workshops & Webinars

Facilitating workshops focused on specific challenges and opportunities in the protein sector was identified as a key approach. Workshops could include hands-on sessions, knowledge translation, and education on emerging technologies and practices. Online webinars were recommended to reach a broader audience.

Connecting Expertise

Establishing a matchmaking program to connect researchers with industry partners who possess complementary expertise. This initiative could help facilitate partnerships that are aligned with the specific needs of the sector. Expanding the diversity of memberships within ProteinMB would bring together a broader range of perspectives and expertise, enhancing the potential for innovative solutions.

Funding & Investment

ProteinMB was encouraged to play a role in co-funding applications, helping to bring together industry and research teams to apply for grants and other funding opportunities. Providing seed funding or market funding to support early-stage projects was seen as a critical enabler for innovation and research collaboration. ProteinMB could help attract capital to invest in Manitoba businesses by showcasing the sector's potential to investors.

Digital Tools & Asset Maps

Leveraging digital tools to facilitate connections was deemed essential, especially for protein sector participants who may not be able to attend in-person events. Digital platforms could host virtual meetings, discussions, and resource sharing. Developing and maintaining asset maps and program guides that highlight available resources, expertise, and funding opportunities was identified as a valuable service ProteinMB could offer to the community.

Advocacy & Industry Voice

ProteinMB was encouraged to advocate on behalf of the industry, prioritizing the needs and challenges faced by industry players and ensuring these are communicated to researchers and policymakers. Participants suggested that ProteinMB should clearly articulate the gaps within the ecosystem, helping to align research efforts with industry needs.

NEXT STEPS

Thank you to all who participated in the forum. Next steps include the formation of ProteinMB facilitated Innovation and Information and Knowledge Acquisition Roundtables to identify existing initiatives, gaps and collaboration opportunities. Join [ProteinMB as an Associate](#) to sign up for the monthly e-news to stay informed of opportunities to engage with ProteinMB for the collaborative advancement of the MPAS action plan.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this report, please contact ProteinMB at info@ProteinMB.ca.



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