

# COMPASS



## LEADERSHIP

### **Nordic CoLab Project – Report on Outcomes**

October 28-30, 2019

Delta Marriot Thunder Bay, ON

#### **Introduction**

On behalf of ourselves at Compass Leadership and Chris Walton and the team at CRIBE, the following is our summary report on the Nordic CoLab Project, of which you were a participant. The report highlights the objectives of the project, what we did and why, as well as the outcomes and path forward on this initiative, as determined by you the participants.

What initially began as exploratory discussions between Chris Walton of CRIBE and Per Tomani of RISE, resulted in CRIBE, partners from Thunder Bay and their partners from the region of Varmland, Sweden discussing the concept of holding a collaborative alignment session in Thunder Bay, ON in October. Participants in the proposed session included Paper Province, Region Varmland, Business Varmland, Sting Bio-Economy and Karlstad University along with Thunder Bay Community Economic Development, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Northwestern Ontario Innovation Centre, Lakehead University, FPIInnovations and provincial government agencies.

We asked the core participants to commit to participating in a two-day working event, which would include both large group working sessions and smaller task-oriented sessions built on each region's best practices and challenges. The desired results would be a series of identified collaborative opportunities and a six-month workplan. Together with our Swedish friends, we are proposing a follow-up working session in Sweden in the spring of 2020 (funding dependent), to ensure we continue our work and ongoing collaboration on tangible projects that make a difference for both regions. (See Appendix A for a full list of participants.)

#### **Nordic CoLab Project Objectives**

The intent and focus of this session was to strengthen relationships with our Swedish colleagues, in order to build a bio-economy whose aligned values, objectives and strategies result in success for all. Exploring industry collaboration, export and economic development, communication, education and how to accelerate the path of bringing innovative research to commercialization were central to the work of the participants and supporting organizations.

Ultimately, the project objective was to determine if the regions of Varmland, Sweden and Northwestern Ontario were prepared to work together, and to then identify and prioritize specific bio-economy opportunities and projects to act on.

## **What We Did**

For those of you that were fully participating or were only able to attend a portion of the proceeding there is no need to restate what we did for the two and a half days. You were there and you did the work. But for your colleagues and others that you may share this report with, here are a few highlights of our work together:

Monday, October 28

- The Nordic CoLab Project began Monday afternoon with our Swedish partners and out of town guests touring the CASES research facility at Lakehead University and the TEC Hub at Confederation College; both world class facilities. The group then met for dinner that evening.

Tuesday, October 29

- Our work together as a collective began Tuesday with Per Tomani of RISE and Chris Walton of CRIBE welcoming the participants and together, we shared how this event came to be, the expectations and the work we would be doing together.
- The day was all about getting to know each other and our respective regions. We began with a relaxed and lighthearted approach to making introductions by having pairs of participants interview each other, and then as a whole group, introduce those they had interviewed. The breadth, depth and variation of talent we had in the room was notable and everyone, including those in the room that had known each other for years, knew each other a little better by the time we finished.
- Tuesday continued with presentations and overviews of the region of Varmland and Northwestern Ontario. These were followed by a whole group discussion about the characteristics both regions shared, as well as differences that either region could leverage.
- The day finished with a discussion and identification of economic development practices and lessons, as well as a similar discussion about the importance of and application of sound communications and engagement strategies. In all cases, the importance of strong partnership engagement, proven economic and entrepreneurial develop systems, celebrating heroes and success stories, starting with what you are good at and monitoring progress, successes and failures were key components to developing a viable bio-economy sector.
- There were no scheduled activities Tuesday evening, but many took advantage of the opportunity to further the development of relationships between organizations, or in some cases, just adjust to the difference in time zones.

Wednesday, October 30

- Wednesday began with a recap of our work from the previous day, including a review of a number of potential project opportunities that had been identified throughout the day. The group then dug in to the challenge of creating pathways for innovation to commercialization, which began with a fantastic presentation from Victor Isaksen of Sting Bioeconomy followed by a Q&A. Notwithstanding the approach Sting took to supporting business startups and scale ups, it was the begin with “what’s possible” message from Victor that galvanized the thinking of the entire group for the balance of our time together.
- We then ran two concurrent working sessions, one focused on High Performance Lignin, the other focused on SME/College/University Pathways. Both sessions included presentations from a variety of participating organizations. The groups were challenged to identify high potential opportunities to collaborate on projects and initiatives and share those with the whole group.
- During the lunch break, the potential project opportunities identified during the morning were collated with those from the day prior and seven were identified as having the most group interest and momentum. That afternoon we held an old school (paper and pen based) “world café” where all participants were asked to individually note their thoughts, perspectives, recommendations, as to how these initiatives could be moved forward. And finally, we asked all participants to vote as to which of the seven agreed upon actions were most important to begin with.
- To conclude our work together, we shared with the participants the decisions they made as a collective and the priority initiatives that the Nordic CoLab Project would begin to work on. A key decision was to identify Paper Province and CRIBE as the co-leaders of this work going forward.
- Following thank-yous and a recap of our work, everyone met with members of the Thunder Bay community at a reception held at the Chanterelle on Wednesday evening. A perfect way to end a very engaging and productive gathering of committed people from the region of Varmland and Northwestern Ontario, and supported by colleagues from the rest of Ontario and Quebec.

You can revisit most of the electronic presentations at <https://cribe.ca/resources/>

### **Nordic CoLab Project Outcomes and the Path Forward**

All participants, including ourselves, were committed to doing the necessary work to not only deliver on the planned agenda for the two and a half days, but also meet the expectation that this event would result in agreed upon, tangible and doable action items. We can say with confidence that expectations of the event were met or exceeded and resulted in agreed upon action items.

The following seven action items were determined by the participants and are listed in order of priority. The first four were strongly endorsed as the ‘place to start’, but all are considered

important and doable. Obviously, there is work to do in order to bring more definition to these action items; the who needs to do what, when and how, but there was clear commitment on everyone's behalf to move forward.

In Appendix A you will find a complete record of each action/questions posed, as well as all input provided for each initiative. Some corrections were made, but the input is unedited in terms of content.

#### **Action #1**

Paper Province and CRIBE were identified by the participants as the organizations to champion and facilitate collaboration activities going forward. Maria Hollander, CEO of Paper Province and Chris Walton, CEO of CRIBE acknowledged and accepted their co-leadership roles.

#### **Action #2**

We will start exploring how we move forward together on the development and acceleration of Coatings, Asphalt and Flocculants.

#### **Action #3**

There is firm interest in continuing this conversation in Karlstad, Varmland in the spring of 2020 and we will begin exploring what that would look like.

#### **Action #4**

We will link/partner/learn with and between business support and development organizations.

#### **Action #5**

We will develop and leverage the positive brand image of each region to support economic development opportunities and success.

#### **Action #6**

We will work to improve the information sharing between industry/academia/entrepreneurs to ensure there's an increase in business development opportunities and success.

#### **Action #7**

We will begin to communicate 'what's possible' for forest and bio-economy products to help create market pull.

With respect to the path forward, Chris Walton and Maria Hollander have spoken and are beginning to consider their next steps as co-leads of the Nordic CoLab Project. They will be communicating with you in the near future.

#### **Acknowledgements**

On behalf of Chris, the CRIBE team and Compass Leadership, we would like to thank all our participants, local and international, for the fantastic and productive time we spent together two weeks ago. We had an ambitious agenda and you were all up to the task. We'd like to acknowledge the hard work and commitment you put forward that enabled the collective to meet the mandate of the Nordic CoLab Project. It was an honour to get to know our Swedish

visitors and we're confident that those relationships will continue to deepen in the months ahead. As expected, the discussions and thinking didn't end on Oct 30<sup>th</sup> with the collaborative work continuing amongst many of you.

In closing, we would like to thank CRIBE and Chris for the opportunity to co-create and deliver the CoLab project and to all of you for your support and enthusiasm throughout our time together. It was a pleasure working alongside all of you. We'd also like to thank Per, Victor, Maria, Anders, Marcus and Paul for accepting us from afar, prior to meeting in Thunder Bay. And thank you to Chris, Dave, and Nicola for your hard work along the way and during our time together. Based on the feedback, it was time well very spent for all.

Ian McCormack & Marla Morrison  
Compass Leadership  
November 7, 2019

## APPENDIX A

### Nordic Colab Event Participants

October 28th to 30th, 2019

Thunder Bay, Ontario

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