



City North Social Innovation Precinct & Innovation Spine

Skills-led urban renewal

Acknowledgment of Country



RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University.

RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

Before colonisation, the Social Innovation Precinct site was part of a system of waterways that fed the Birrarung. The site formed part of an important cultural landscape for the Woi Wurrung who gathered resources, cared for Country, and interacted with other Aboriginal groups there.

The area's renewal offers an opportunity to build further connections with truth-telling, community engagement and the cultural heritage of this part of Melbourne.

Artwork 'Luwaytini' by Mark Cleaver, Palawa.

CONTEXT

Action 3.4

Use key RMIT locations as platforms for common growth

Source: Knowledge with Action: RMIT's strategy to 2031

RMIT's Strategy to 2031, Knowledge with Action, outlines a commitment to use key RMIT locations as platforms for common growth and civic partnership

What will this look like in practice?

RMIT's key city locations are at the heart of long-term urban renewal and development. RMIT works with cities, governments, industry, and community partners to develop shared visions and frameworks for the future growth and vitality of our cities. We recognise the traditional landowners and celebrate First Nations peoples, cultures, and contributions, along with relevant cultures and traditions in Europe and Asia.

Campus environments, physical and virtual, are permeable, interactive and welcoming to diverse communities, supporting wellbeing, safety and inclusion. They are testbeds and platforms for the skills, communities and industry partnerships of the future. They enable and connect active communities of lifelong learners, innovative researchers and partners.

We develop distinctive clusters of disciplines, industry networks and placemaking partnerships to realise their long-term potential. We support RMIT people with digital systems and networked models of learning, teaching and working across our locations.

RMIT's key locations connect with innovation hubs and centres to enhance innovation ecosystems. RMIT's organisational practice and culture are used to create positive impact through employment, procurement, gender equity, staff development and water and energy.



RMIT's proposal for a Social Innovation Precinct and connected Innovation Spine in City North

- In 2023, RMIT submitted a proposal for the City North Social Innovation Precinct to the Victorian Government.
- The proposal describes a skills and innovation-led urban renewal of the City North site, which would see the area transformed into a world-leading Social Innovation Precinct.
- Precinct activity will support critical and high-demand industry clusters in social care and wellbeing, clean economy, and future engineering and technology.
- Urban renewal of the area has the potential to achieve significant benefits, strengthening Parkville NEIC, leveraging RMIT's City Campus and the new State Library Station to create a distinctive, targeted centre for skills and innovation, ideally positioned to meet the demand for priority skills.
- The proposal is a demonstration of RMIT's commitment to place-based innovation that benefits City North neighbourhoods and communities.



RMIT's 2023 City North Social Innovation Precinct & Innovation Spine proposal to Vic Gov

RMIT's proposal draws on over 5 years of engagement and collaboration with the City of Melbourne (CoM), Victorian Government and City North partners



2016
MID City North established

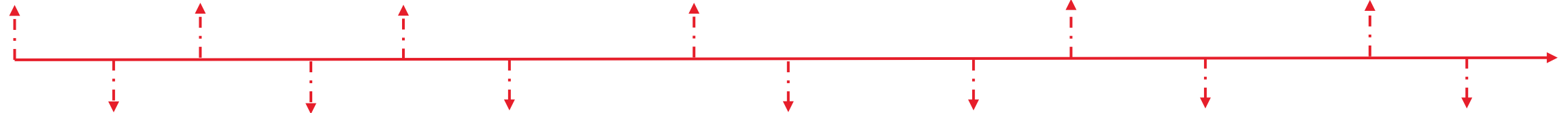
Sep 2018
RMIT Social Innovation Precinct Concept Draft

Oct 2021
VHESIF allocated for masterplan process

Jul 2022
Municipal Planning Strategy (Amendment C432) endorsed at Future Melbourne Committee

Aug 2023
Vic Gov Departmental reps. confirm proposal accepted and RMIT can issue final for noting

Dec 2023
Vic Gov + RMIT joint working group collaborate on next steps



2018
CoM Urban Realm Action Plan

2020
MID City North Opportunities Plan

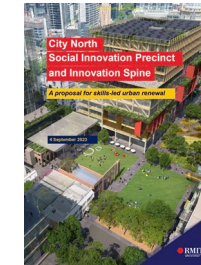


Feb – Dec 2022
Options & Proposal Development

Oct 2022 – Nov 2022
Masterplan proposal CoM briefing & workshops

Jun 2023
Final DRAFT precinct proposal to Gov for feedback

Sep 2023
Final Social Innovation Precinct Proposal issued



Feb 2024+
Preparation for seeking whole of Gov implementation endorsement

THE POTENTIAL OF CITY NORTH

The City North area boasts a long and rich history of social innovation, skills delivery and civic impact through the work of public institutions and not-for-profit organisations based in the neighbourhood, dating back to the nineteenth century.

Some of Melbourne's earliest social innovations committed to civic prosperity and public benefit, can be traced back to the work of iconic institutions established in the area, including Trades Hall, Queen Victoria Market, Melbourne City Baths, The State Library, and the Working Men's College—now RMIT.



The potential of City North

In the last two decades, the urban innovation district model has emerged internationally as a way to respond to major social and economic challenges. The strategic partnership of industry, education and non-profit organisations physically co-located and purposefully working together as part of an 'innovation ecosystem' can create a powerful environment for delivering skills and solving complex problems.

The Social Innovation Precinct site is a significant land holding jointly owned by RMIT and the State, in a pivotal location at the centre of the Melbourne Innovation District and within the wider Parkville Precinct and National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC). It boasts a rich history of social innovation, skills delivery and civic impact through work of public institutions and not-for-profit organisations based in the neighbourhood, dating back to the nineteenth century. It currently houses thousands of students enrolled in vocation education including trades, technology, nursing and social care. It also includes key advanced manufacturing and technology research facilities and higher education programs.

Already well-served by public infrastructure, the site will soon become one of the most widely accessible parts of metropolitan Melbourne: at the northern edge of Melbourne's CBD, a short walk from Melbourne's Swanston Street tram corridor and with a new Metro Station about to open. It is a short walk from major cultural sites including the Queen Victoria Market, Lygon St and the Royal Exhibition precinct beyond, close to major hospitals, businesses and research centres.

Yet, because of historical accidents in planning, tenure and activity mix, many of the buildings in the precinct are not fit for purpose, with some requiring urgent refurbishment or replacement. There is little open green space and wide expanses of on-street parking and asphalt. Current heritage and planning controls, design and development overlays and mixed ownership of small plots interact to create unintended consequences – a situation where long-term precinct renewal and investment are prevented.

The timing is right for renewal, and with the support of the City and the State, RMIT is working towards future-focused land and planning arrangements that will facilitate development.

The potential of City North

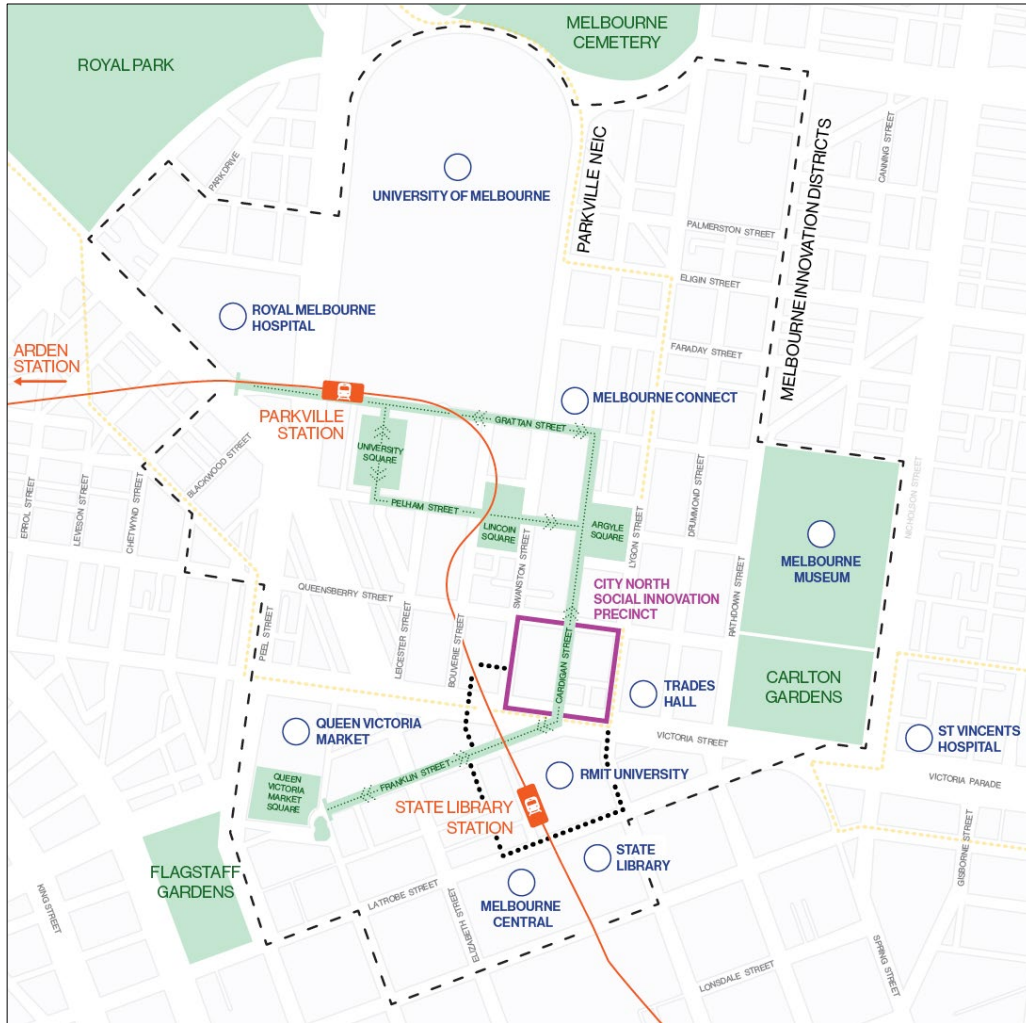










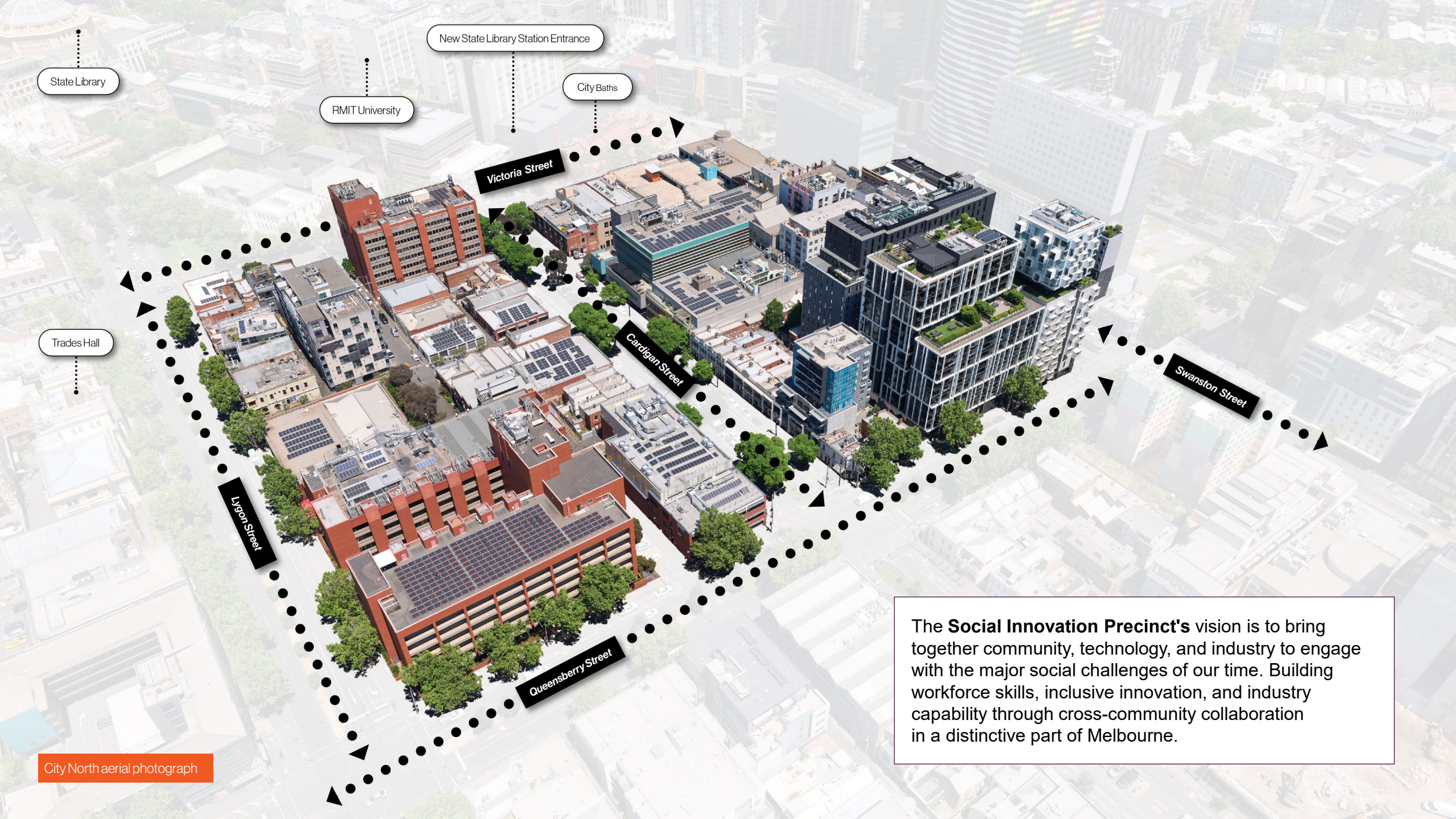


Figure: Social Innovation Precinct proximity map

-  City North Social Innovation Precinct
-  RMIT Campus
-  Melbourne Innovation Districts
-  Parkville NEIC
-  RMIT owned buildings
-  Minister owned buildings
-  Privately owned buildings
-  Innovation Spine
-  Landmarks
-  Train Station



City North Social Innovation Precinct & Innovation Spine



State Library

RMIT University

New State Library Station Entrance

City Baths

Victoria Street

Cardigan Street

Swanston Street

Queensberry Street

Lyon Street

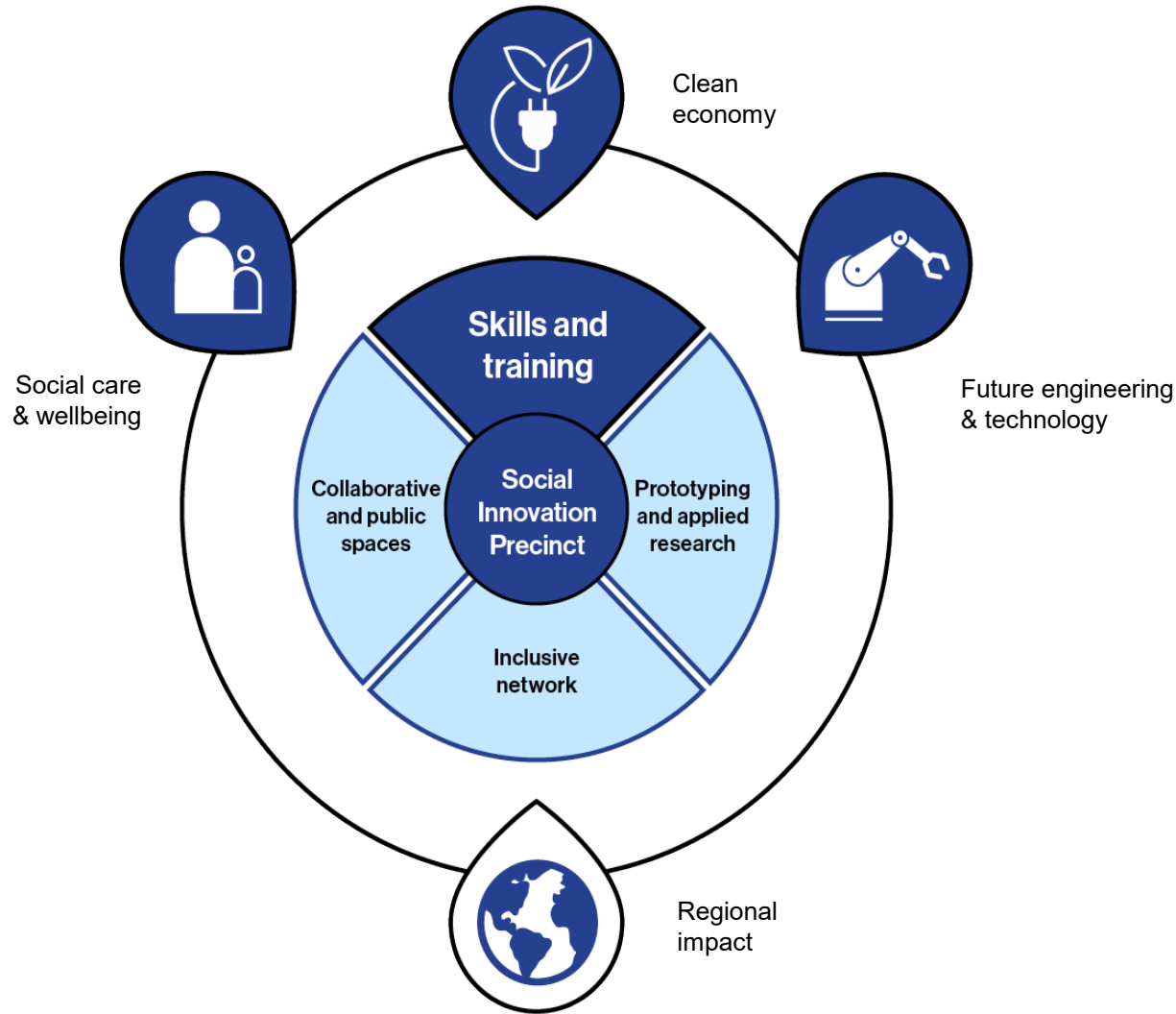
Trades Hall

City North aerial photograph

The **Social Innovation Precinct's** vision is to bring together community, technology, and industry to engage with the major social challenges of our time. Building workforce skills, inclusive innovation, and industry capability through cross-community collaboration in a distinctive part of Melbourne.

A VISION FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

Delivering inclusive skills and innovation in critical sectors



Social care and wellbeing

Delivering critical training in nursing, aged care, disability, and other areas of workforce shortage. Driving innovation in human services and healthcare in response to diverse community needs and an aging population. Co-locating human services, NGO partners and ethical businesses. Prototyping and connecting health, housing and social services to digital and engineering capabilities.

Clean economy

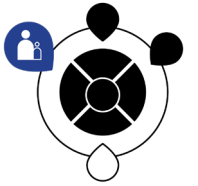
Growing sustainability skills to support clean energy and transport, construction, and the circular economy. Providing access to small scale prototyping spaces, developing centres of excellence and innovation in electrification. Making the precinct a living lab for smart, sustainable urban planning and climate change adaptation.

Future engineering and technology

Growing digital and engineering skills and industry partnerships that contribute to innovation across sectors. Developing critical technology expertise in automation, cloud, AI and fabrication technologies. Supporting the pivot from traditional manufacturing to tech-enabled future manufacturing and re-skilling workers. Providing inclusive access to digital skills.

Regional impact

Leveraging RMIT's well-established presence and networks across the Asia Pacific, especially ASEAN. Providing a front door to Asia for Victorian business and engagement. Expanding a landing pad for new regional talent and investment into Melbourne.



Responding to community health needs

We have an opportunity now to accelerate the design and implementation of new care models that offer more inclusive and effective service delivery and better conditions for sector workers. This includes service model innovation and the application of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and robotics.

The challenge

- Transformation in social care and wellbeing is essential to supporting Victoria's growing, ageing population.
- The sector is struggling to develop and cultivate workforce scale and skills to meet community needs.
- Job vacancies in health care and social services remain the highest of any industry, with an estimated additional 110,000 workers will be required over the next five years.
- Digital transformation is compounding skills needs in health and social sectors, as IT and broader health workforces face increasing pressure to maintain pace with digital innovation.

What RMIT is already doing in this space

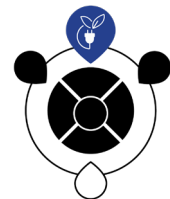
RMIT will be a key partner in addressing the scale of demand, supplying more than 15k graduates in HE and VE health-related studies by 2027 and improving the application of technologies.

Current initiatives include:

- College of Vocational Education, Social Care and Health Cluster.
- Health Transformation Lab (HTL).
- Nation Industry Innovation Network Health Alliance.
- The Workforce Innovation and Development Institute (WIDI).
- The Centre for Innovative Justice (CIJ).
- RMIT's Clinical Translation Research Partnership with Northern Health.
- The Victorian Medical Device Prototyping and Scale-Up Facility.
- Victorian Medtech Skills and Devices Hub partnership.

Partner opportunities

- Development and scaling of workforce training solutions.
- Digital, design and engineering skills support.
- Co-design practical experiences for students.
- Incubation spaces for innovators, start-ups and social enterprises.
- RMIT's partnership ecosystem and onsite co-location.
- Co-develop research and applied innovation.
- Develop and access research-informed public policy advocacy.



Supporting the transition to a circular, climate-resilient economy

The path to net zero presents an important opportunity to provide inclusive access to quality jobs. This is crucial for workers displaced from within the energy sector and can also provide an alternative for workers currently engaged in other declining sectors.

The challenge

- Jobs and Skills Australia forecasts an additional 19,000 workers in the specific clean energy workforce and 213,000 workers in adjacent 'enabling' occupations, with most growth occurring in VET-qualified occupations.
- The required scale, pace, and distribution of change make for a complex and multidimensional lifelong learning challenge. Any solutions will require strategic coordination across government, industry, unions, and education to respond to local challenges.

What RMIT is already doing in this space

RMIT is already addressing these challenges.

Current RMIT initiatives include:

- Vocational Education Built Environment and Sustainability Cluster of teaching programs.
- RACE 2030 Cooperative Research Centre.
- Clean-Living Energy Lab.
- First Electric Vehicle Living Lab in the southern hemisphere.
- Victorian Circular Activator.
- Circular Economy Hub.
- ARC Industrial Transformation Research Hub.
- Sustainable Technologies & Systems Impact Platform.
- Urban Futures EIP.
- Post-Carbon Research Centre.
- Melbourne Secretariat for the UN Global Compact.

Partner opportunities

- Develop green skills in clean energy and transport, construction, and the circular economy.
- Co-design innovative, high-quality learning programs.
- Cutting-edge applied research hubs.
- Make the precinct a smart, sustainable living lab.
- Lead by example through sustainable design.

Supporting future engineering and technology



Engineering, technology and digital skills are transforming the way we work. The development of robotics, automation, AI and data-driven insights will drive business transformation in increasingly practical ways.

By focusing on technology-enabled, high-value-added activities, RMIT can contribute to Victorian strengths in workforce training, innovation, and design, to meet critical industry and public needs in areas ranging from construction to medical manufacturing and aviation.

The challenge

- An estimated 70% of new job listings in Australia require a high level of digital skills.
- This will continue to grow as technology integration across sectors continues, with an estimated 33% of employers reporting they had bought new technology due to the pandemic.
- The National Skills Commission estimated that the Victorian engineering workforce will require an additional 8,315 workers by 2026.

What RMIT is already doing in this space

RMIT is Victoria's largest provider of engineering higher education and creates pathways into these occupations through Vocational Education in engineering, technology, and computing.

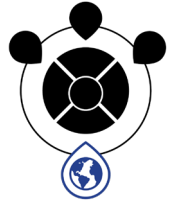
RMIT initiatives include:

- Apple Foundation Program.
- RMIT Online: 80+ courses with industry partners.
- RMIT Centre for Additive Manufacturing (RCAM).
- RMIT Blockchain Innovation Hub.
- RMIT Architectural Robotics Lab.
- Australian Steel Manufacturing Research Hub.
- ARC Automated Decision-Making Lab.
- ARC Training Centre in Fire Retardant Materials and Safety Technologies.
- Digital3 - collaborative and holistic research solutions in disruptive technology.
- Centre for Cyber Security Research and Innovation.

Partner opportunities

- Grow digital and engineering skills.
- Grow cross-industry innovation partnerships.
- Develop critical technology expertise in automation, cloud, AI and fabrication technologies.
- Support the pivot from traditional to tech-enabled future manufacturing and re-skill workers.
- Provide inclusive access to digital skills for in-demand occupations.

Driving regional impact



Melbourne's position as one of the world's most innovative cities provides a strong basis for international partnerships and investment to deliver solutions to the challenges of tomorrow.

Sitting at the geographical heart of Melbourne's thriving community of deep Asia knowledge, the Social Innovation Precinct draws on the expertise of RMIT's Asia Trade and Innovation Hub, APEC Study Centre and Australia Vietnam Policy Institute.

The challenge

- International collaboration and investment are critical to securing the skills, capabilities and technology to drive change and contribute to long-term, sustainable economic growth by 2026.

What RMIT is already doing in this space

RMIT's commitment to be a leading university of impact in the Asia Pacific, combined with the strong enabling environment of the Social Innovation Precinct, will deliver deeper research and innovation connectivity across the region.

RMIT initiatives include:

- The Asia Trade and Innovation Hub (ATIH).
- APEC Study Centre.
- Australia's first policy institute focused on Vietnam.
- RMIT Vietnam campuses in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.
- RMIT Singapore commitment.
- 1.6% of all Singapore's workforce RMIT educated.
- RMIT Europe in Barcelona's 22@ Innovation District.
- RMIT-BITS Pilani Partnership.
- RMIT global alumni community.

Partner opportunities

- Grow incoming regional research, investment and knowledge partners in clean economy, engineering and future technology, and social care and wellbeing.
- Deliver economic benefits and regional prosperity by addressing skills gaps and future workforce needs.
- Trade opportunities in Asia.
- Connectivity to RMIT hubs in Singapore and Vietnam.
- RMIT's multi-year Commitments to Vietnam (2023) and Singapore (2024).
- RMIT-BITS Pilani partnership, strengthening engineering and future technology skills and industry partnerships between India and Australia.
- Strategic local and international NGO partnerships.
- Occupations.

CREATING SHARED BENEFITS

The Social Innovation Precinct embodies RMIT's Place & Community principles

Since its founding, RMIT has been motivated to positively impact the social, cultural and economic life of the city. Our institutional commitment to create and oversee vibrant, inclusive innovation ecosystems, such as that proposed for City North, is non-negotiable. RMIT's Place and Community principles express not only what RMIT is committed to doing in City North but also in each of our places.



[Click here for the RMIT Place & Community Principles](#)

The Social Innovation Precinct can unlock significant, social, cultural and economic benefit

These benefits are driven by:

- Increased industry innovation — an additional \$52 million* in R&D expenditure p.a. due to an increase in research and collaboration space, which can help tackle pressing societal issues by applying knowledge and connecting economic, physical and networking assets.
- Increased student and staff activity — ability to house 15-20,000 EFTSL on the precinct by 2042 with additional associated teaching staff.
- Improved student skills and employment outcomes — a 27% to 34%* increase in lifetime earnings for the additional students taught
- Increased commercial activity — due to a greater level of open space and additional space for retail businesses to operate.
- Greater Indigenous recognition through design
- Better community experience and improved sustainability.
- Agglomeration — connecting and collocating skilled workers has the potential to enhance productivity by strengthened sharing, matching and learning.
- Capital investment — the capital expenditure provides a boost to the economy (particularly in the construction sector) and maximises the use of the land while also maintaining appropriate urban character, density and height.

*Sourced from 2020 Deloitte Economic Benefits Analysis

As a precinct anchor institution, RMIT can promote an inclusive ecosystem of collaboration and partnered innovation

*In addition to a range of organisations and hubs dedicated to innovation and skills development in social care, RMIT is already prototyping an approach to the social innovation precinct via the **RMIT Social Innovation Hub** located in City North.*

- This hub houses an established ecosystem of partnered interventions that are realising the opportunity for a precinct-based approach to health and social transformation.
- Current collaborations and funded work show a strong value proposition in applied innovation, immersive learning experiences and advanced prototyping spaces.
- Examples of groups working in the hub include: the RMIT-CISCO Health Transformation Lab; The Workforce Innovation and Development Institute.

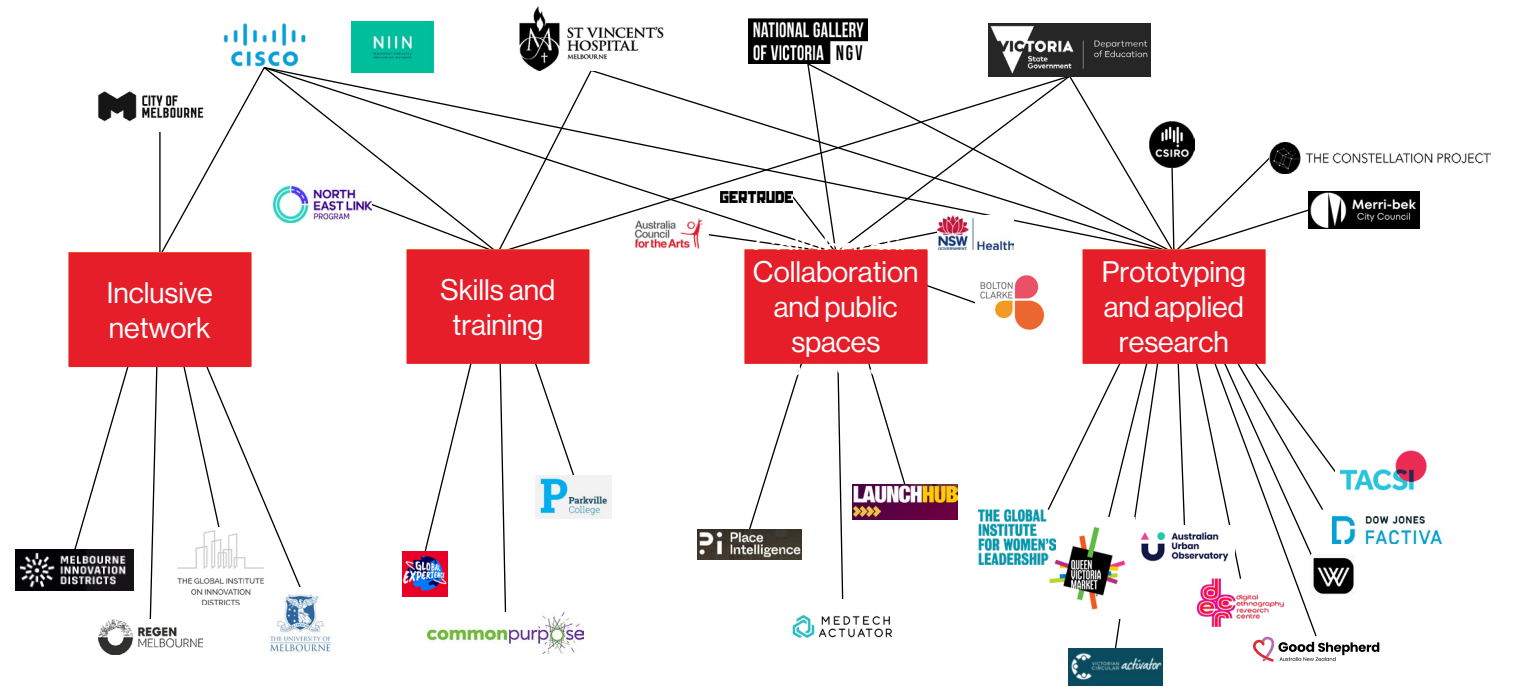
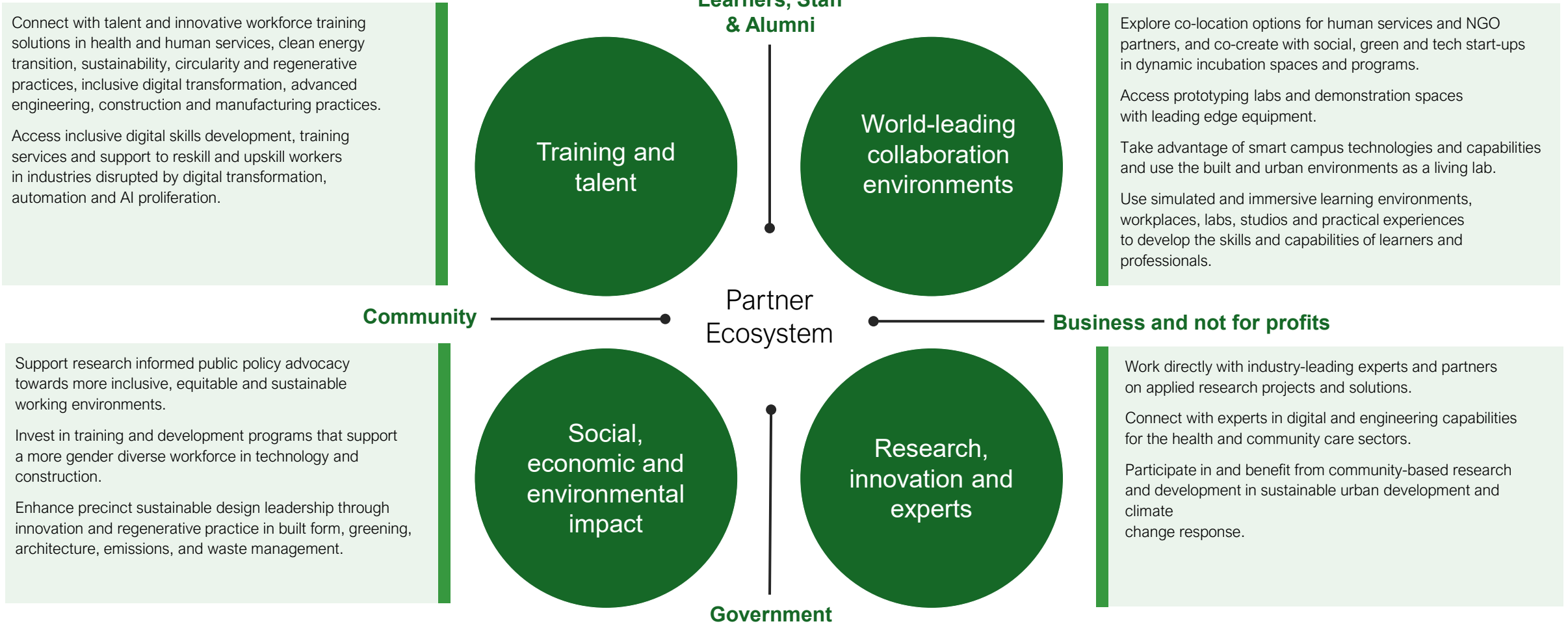


Figure: Example of how RMIT currently promotes an inclusive ecosystem and partnered innovation as a precinct anchor institution

Providing a range of benefits and opportunities for precinct partners



Partners who have expressed in principle support for the City North Social Innovation Precinct



For more information on RMIT's vision for City North, including partnership, collaboration and co-location opportunities, please email psi@rmit.edu.au.