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## Reviewing the Structure and Function of Self-Described Living Labs

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# Reviewing the Structure and Function of Self-Described Living Labs

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## I. Abstract

“Living labs” have been promoted in recent years as platforms for engaged and locally-embedded research. However, the term is itself somewhat vague and applied in a large variety of contexts. This poster provides a preliminary review of self-described living labs, characterizing both the types of functions they serve and their organizational structures, with the goal of identifying functions and structures appropriate for engaged research on and in the Wildcat Creek Watershed in Riley County, Kansas.

## II. A variety of Living Labs

Self-proclaimed living labs range from outdoor classrooms, to experimental spaces on university campuses, to pilot projects in urban environments.

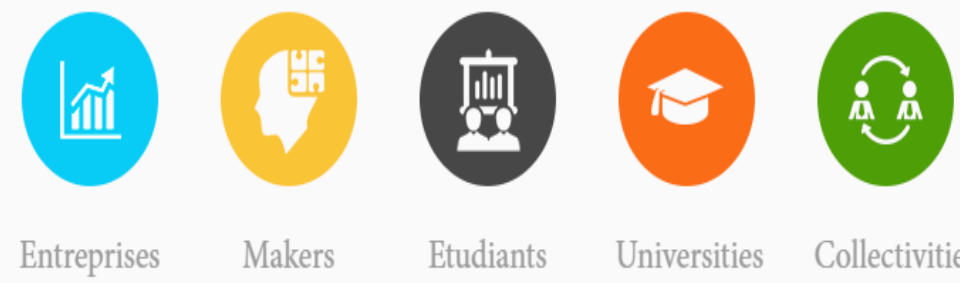
The most common type of living lab in the U.S. (11 out of 22 reviewed programs) is the university campus, where faculty and students are given space on campus to conduct experiments in the campus environment, and where funding, input, and other support is derived almost entirely from within the university.

Less common in the U.S. (1 out of 22 reviewed programs) are living labs that are collaborative Public – Private partnerships composed of some combination of academic institutions, businesses, governmental organizations, and/or citizen groups that perform research in and for communities.

## III. Examples of Living Labs

### Lorraine Smart Cities Living Lab (LSCLL) – Lorraine, France

Function: Support the design, implementation, and evaluation of new processes for co-designing smart and sustainable territories and businesses.

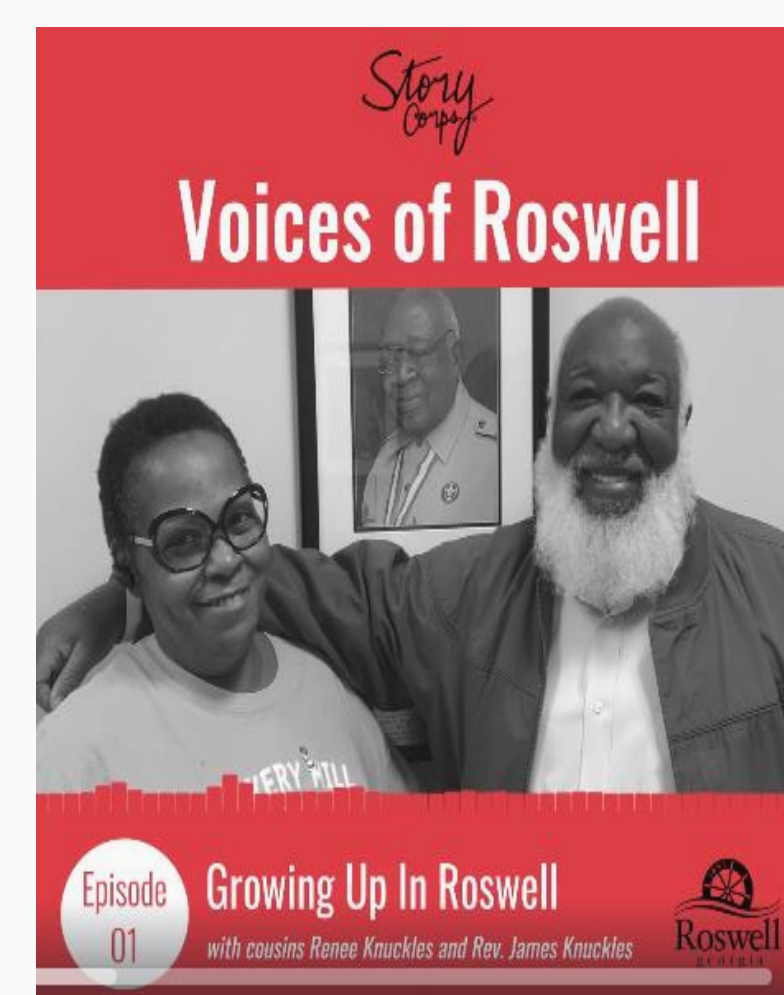


Structure: Interdisciplinary project with open governance involving several academic and private laboratories and other public and private partners (particularly venture companies).

Support: Initially funded by the regional government with continued support via a laboratory at the local university.

### Roswell Voices – Roswell, GA

Function: To use emerging technology in information science and communications for community goals and to provide a venue for service learning and engaged research.



Structure: Teams of students and faculty from UGA gather information about Roswell, through examination of civic information and interviews with Roswell residents. Information is processed in a back-office operation at UGA, using advanced ICT resources available there. Raw information is returned immediately to Roswell.

Support: Unknown, may be inactive

### Leeds Living Lab – Leeds, England

Function: Tackling global challenges at a local scale, researching and testing sustainable and innovative ideas, and driving the university to think and operate differently. It is about people, processes and infrastructure and focuses on the cultural and social sciences as well as STEM.



Structure: The program is open to all staff and students across the University, whether academic or professional, undergraduate or postgraduate and provides support for selected projects.

Support: University funding

### Living Lab Pilot Program- Boulder, CO

Function: To develop “Complete Streets” that offer safe travel for drivers, bicyclists, transit users and pedestrians and that could include features such as protected bicycle lanes.



Structure: The city set up transportation pilot projects and collected data. Community feedback as available through the project website. At least one open house on the program was held.

Support: City of Boulder

## IV. Takeaways

- **Most** “Living labs” related to some form of innovation.
- **Often** include education and training objectives.
- *Sometimes* include engagement.
  
- **Often** include a physical “test bed” for pilot projects.
- *Sometimes* include public-private partnerships.
- Rarely fully embedded in the community environment.
- **Most** have loosely defined organizational structure.
- **Often** organizational structure is defined by associated higher education partner and funding mechanism.
- **Most** researchers are university faculty and students.
  
- **Most** are funded by universities via seed grants for qualifying projects.

## V. Thoughts for Wildcat Creek

- Research and pilot projects would take place in community space, not university space.
  - City and county cooperation essential
    - Identify allowable research spaces
    - Determine acceptable activities in designated areas
  - Private business and property owners cooperation would be helpful
- Funding support needed from both city/county and university
  - Seed grants for projects approved by joint university-city committee
  - Potential information/education exchange via internships