



COMMUNITY ECONOMIES PILOT

**PROMISING *and*
EMERGING PRACTICES**



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COMMUNITY ECONOMIES PILOT PROMISING AND EMERGING PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

This document is meant for anyone looking for inspirations, ideas and examples for incorporating a place-based community-led economic development approach in their community. It will also be useful for thought leaders, funders, and policy makers who want to gain better understanding of how local actors approach community-led and place-based economic development in their locales, what strategies they use, and what challenges they face.

Inside, you'll find an overview of the Community Economies Pilot (CEP), an initiative launched by Shorefast, in partnership with the Community Foundations of Canada, the Coady Institute (St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, NS), and the Canadian Urban Institute. It begins with an introduction to the five Prototype Communities engaged in the pilot, then, using specific examples from them, it illustrates how communities approach community economic development in their locales through the lens of the four focus areas (Architecture for Collaboration, Capacity Building and Preparedness, Access to Data, and Access to Capital) that were identified to be of particular interest early in the project. This document is not meant to draw definitive conclusions on best practices (the process we took wouldn't support that), but instead provides a rich description of the five case communities, identifies commonalities in terms of practices and success factors, as well as common challenges, and finally, provides examples of some promising and emerging practices.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Place-based economic development is both unwaveringly specific and universally applicable; learnings from on-the-ground community development practice can be adapted to other communities, big and small. Five entrepreneurial communities across Canada were engaged by Shorefast and its partners to contribute to the CEP as “Prototype Communities.” Together, the Prototype Communities were working to distil place-based know-how, identify best and promising practices for community-based economic development, and inform the development of tools such as this document to share the learning from the communities, and the pilot itself. The Prototype Communities are the first cohort towards Shorefast’s longer-term vision of a sustained Community Economies program.

Underpinning this approach is the 2019 book [“The Third Pillar,” by economist Raghuram Rajan](#). Rajan makes the case that the three pillars that support society are government, business and community, and that they are out of balance. Specifically, he argues that the community pillar has been neglected and weakened. He suggests that until we see community as an integral part of resilience, the economic system will continue to fail us. To that end, the CEP is exploring how best to strengthen the community pillar so that it may be an effective and integral partner to business and government in economic development.

When we understand that the economy is the result of the decisions we make and the actions we take, we take back control as active participants with a vital role to play in shaping our economic fates and futures. Within a sea of broken economies, it’s not possible to find our way to solutions for the greatest social and environmental challenges of our time. New technologies and innovative solutions to broad-scale issues, like homelessness and climate change, can only be effective if they have functioning communities in which to land and take root. Shorefast’s work focuses on the root-cause interventions that are needed to build strong and resilient local economies – a prerequisite for a caring and just world.

The discussions and exploration within the CEP, and the 3-pillar framing are leading us to also explore how public policy intersect with community economies, and how to engage the business sector in this work.

THE PILOT

The Community Economies Pilot (CEP) was a year-long pan-Canadian initiative that launched in July 2021. Founded on the understanding that the unit of change is community, that capital must be employed to empower communities, and that place-based approaches are needed to deliver lasting solutions that scale, the CEP looks to answer the question “How do we strengthen community economies?” by mapping critical levers, relationships, and structures that will best catalyze positive

change, as well as strategically developing tools and resources to strengthen place-based economic development. To lead the development and implementation, Shorefast partnered with [the Community Foundations of Canada](#), [the Coady Institute](#) (St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, NS), and the [Canadian Urban Institute](#).

While some pilots have a prescribed trajectory, the CEP didn't presume a particular destination. Rather, it began from a place of not knowing and then sketched the dimensions needed to strengthen community economies, identifying the critical levers, relationships, and structures that will best catalyze positive change, and set Canada on a path for economic recovery and resilience

Having said that, ultimately the CEP's objectives were to:

1. Develop a national cross-sectoral network and a virtual platform for community economies;
2. Research, innovate and share best and promising practices, tools, frameworks and resources for place-based economic development;
3. Increase awareness and support for the Community Economies work across Canada; and,
4. Identify and map potential opportunities and next steps beyond the 1-year pilot.

THE COMMUNITIES

While we know that communities self-identify based on their specific history, culture and context, for the purposes of the CEP, we were looking at the communities that make up, and are bounded by, specific geographic communities. These are physical places – big and small, rural, urban, and suburban – where people live in some kind of a tangle with each other. They include residents, businesses, municipal governments, educational institutions, cultural and faith organizations, not-for-profit organizations, and all manner of associations that hold people together.

To this end, we partnered with five “Prototype Communities”: 1) the communities making up the South Island of Vancouver Island, BC.; 2) Hamilton, ON; 3) London, ON; 4) Prince Edward County, ON; and 5) Fogo Island, NL. Together we are exchanging knowledge, exploring critical questions, co-designing solutions and tools, and testing and expanding our understanding and approach.

THE FOUR FOCUS AREAS

We envision an economy as a dynamically reconfigurable network of nodes made up of companies and communities that are differently sized and geographically distributed. Within this network, communities are organized and have the capacities, knowledge, skills, and resources to lead their own economic development. In this vision, businesses are accountable to the communities in which they operate, and governments devolve relevant economic decision-making to local communities and create policy environments that optimize for community and place.

Building on this, as well as on Shorefast's own experience on Fogo Island, NL, and through the pre-pilot developmental work with key advisors and subject matter experts, four focus areas were identified for the CEP to explore; they are particularly focused on the community pillar discussed above, and resonated well with the Prototype Communities:

1. What Collaborative and Governance Structures are needed to advance local economies? (Architecture for Collaboration)
2. How to Build Capacity at the local community level? (Capacity Building and Preparedness)
3. What Data is needed, where to get it, who controls it, and where to store it? (Access to Data)
4. How to Attract and Retain Capital in communities? (Access to Capital)

THE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The five prototype communities came together once a month for the duration of the project. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this was done virtually. Each session was either a general pilot update meeting, or brought subject matter experts together with the communities to share knowledge and experiences in one of the four focus areas. The final session was a gathering held in person in London, ON in June, 2022. As well, the communities met outside the planned sessions to discuss topics of mutual interest, and to share practical knowledge in dealing with existing challenges.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS

Each community in the country has its unique characteristics, and the CEP's five Prototype Communities are no different. These characteristics are what drive local economic development initiatives and strategies. The following section provides a snapshot of the five communities, with an overview of each, and then what emerged in each within the CEP's four focus areas over the course of the pilot year.

FOGO ISLAND, NL

Fogo Island (its name comes from the Portuguese word for "fire") is the largest of the offshore islands of Newfoundland and Labrador, about 25 km long and 14 km wide with a total area of 237km². It lies off the northeast coast of Newfoundland, northwest of Musgrave Harbour across Hamilton Sound, and just east of Change Islands. Approximately five hours from St. Johns, five hours from Corner Brook, and an hour from Gander, the island is accessible by an hour-long ferry ride, and also has a small airstrip. Newfoundland is the traditional lands of the Beothuk and Mi'kmaw, and is considered part of Mi'kmaki, while Labrador is the lands of the Innu of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and the Inuit of NunatuKavut. Fogo Island itself is part of the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk and was likely a popular summer camp for the Beothuk who lived for generations in Notre Dame Bay before being decimated by the effects of colonization in the 19th century. The island is one of the oldest European settlements in Newfoundland; it was settled because of the cod stocks, and in many ways remained a very traditional culture until the demise of the cod fishery in the early 1990s. In the 1950s, Fogo Islanders refused to be part of the provincial government's [resettlement program for outport and remote communities](#), but by 1967 a downturn in the inshore cod fishery had forced many to turn to social service supports. That year was a pivotal one in the Island's history, as it played a key role in the development of what came to be known as the "[Fogo Process](#)," a model for using media production as a tool for addressing community concerns. A partnership between Memorial University and the National Film Board of Canada made a series of films on Fogo Island as part of the Federal Government's "[Challenge for Change](#)" program which used art to show how communities were solving social problems. One of the results of that was the creation of the [Fogo Island Co-operative Society](#) celebrating 55 years in 2022, it was originally started as a shipbuilding cooperative but eventually moved into fish processing; currently there are three processing plants on the island.

Fogo Island has 10 distinct cultural communities but is considered to be one economic community; on March 1, 2011, the towns of Fogo, Joe Batt's Arm-Barr'd Islands-Shoal Bay, Seldom-Little Seldom and Tilting and the Fogo Island Regional Council (which was comprised of the communities of Stag Harbour, Island Harbour, Deep Bay, and Fogo Island Central) amalgamated to form the Town of Fogo Island; prior to this, there had been five councils, which amalgamated to one. The population of the Island has grown smaller over the last three decades from a high of approximately 6000 in the early 1990s before the cod moratorium to 2,120 in 2021, although it appears to be stabilizing (Statistics Canada).

Despite the challenges similar to many rural communities dependent on resource industries in Canada (such as youth outmigration, the loss of basic services such as a doctor and banks, etc.), Fogo

Islanders continue to display their traditional resilient and innovative entrepreneurial attitude. The island's residents' lives are still very much tied up in the fishery although, as in most one-resource / industry communities, they are needing to transition to a more diversified economy. The traditional culture of the Island is still highly valued and while development is firmly rooted in the present, much of it is viewed through a lens of how to connect the past and the future. This can be seen especially in the connecting of the local arts and cultural sectors to the global marketplace; Fogo Island is home to a large colony of artists and craftspeople who continue the traditional ways of making, but who have become connected to the global marketplace. [Fogo Island Arts](#) was launched in 2008 to provide a platform for contemporary art on the island, through residencies hosted at different studios around the Island. Shorefast's charitable initiatives include a variety of projects that seek to make, preserve, and share knowledge. Examples include environmental stewardship work, heritage restorations, and cultural preservation projects that also serve as hubs for community connection. Shorefast also has a number of social enterprises: [the Fogo Island Workshops](#), [Fogo Island fish](#), Growlers Ice Cream and perhaps the best known, the [Fogo Island Inn](#) which opened in 2013; it is a 5-star hotel, and a community asset with 100% of operating surpluses reinvested into the community to help secure a resilient future. The island also attracts a wide range of visitors interested in its history, local wildlife and other attractions. It has a number of hiking trails, and many local museums and heritage properties. Shorefast also owns the [Punt Premises](#), a 100 -year-old traditional house and fishing stage that tells the story of the inshore fishery through interactions with community hosts, as well as private museums run by local individuals. Arts and Cultural festivals are held all year around, including the [Brimstone Head Folk Festival](#) held annually in August, Feile Tilting in September, and the Partridgeberry Festival in October, among others.

Fogo Island is home to a large colony of artists and craftspeople who continue the traditional ways of making, but who have become connected to the global marketplace.

Architectures for Collaboration

The Fogo Island Economic Development Partnership (EDP) is a partnership between the two major economic players on the island, the Fogo Island Co-op and Shorefast. In its earlier stages, the municipality was also part of the EDP, but is currently not taking an active role in it. The partnership was established in 2017 and since then has been working on building its governance and setting economic priorities for the community. Although there have been some challenges in making the EDP function well, in terms of staffing and funding, the partnership is committed to supporting the Island's economy by growing the economic eco-system on the island.

In some ways, the Fogo Islanders' fiercely independent, entrepreneurial character is a double-edged sword; with 44 community organizations on a small island, many of the key groups work alone on their own community development efforts. This has led to some siloing of development activity, rather than a collaborative approach. However, the [PLACE](#) model, developed by researchers at Memorial University from research they conducted on Shorefast's community economic development work, shows the value of adapting the culture and entrepreneurial history of Fogo Island to the contemporary world. In other words, holding on to the best of the past while also reaching out and connecting local and global.

Capacity Building and Preparedness

As noted above, many of the challenges that Fogo Island faces in terms of capacity building and preparedness are similar to many rural communities who have been traditionally dependent on a single resource-based industry. It also has the added obstacle of being a remote island in a remote province. It is not easy to get to Fogo Island, which can be problematic for the movement of goods and provision of essential services. However, Fogo Islanders are nothing if not resilient, as history has shown, and have overcome many hardships over the centuries. They are also entrepreneurial by nature, as many of those who live off the land and / or the sea need to be; this has taught them that if outside help isn't available, then they need to turn to and create a local solution themselves. Much of the work of Shorefast and the EDP is to support local businesses and business start-ups.

One of the biggest deficits is outmigration, especially youth migration. While many residents left following the collapse of the cod fishery, outmigration has stabilized over the last five years, and some families are moving back home. In fact, as is the case across Canada, there are labour shortages in the tourism and service sectors on Fogo Island.

There is a tradition of seasonal employment across the island, and one of the development goals is to create year-round businesses so that individuals are not reliant on government social supports to survive in the off-season times; however, there is also a culture that goes with seasonal employment as over the centuries, Fogo Islanders have used the non-earning times to support their needs in other ways such as hunting, or logging, etc. There is no getting away from the seasonal nature of some sectors such as fishing and tourism, which are most active between April-September and March-November, respectively, so that is a reality that needs to be incorporated into economic development planning.

[Fogo Island Central Academy](#) serves all public school education (Kindergarten to Grade 12) on the Island; for further skills training or post-secondary education, individuals need to go off island. Shorefast has created a youth mentorship program for senior high school students to expose them to career opportunities they may not have been aware of.

As is the case across the country, there is a housing shortage on Fogo Island. Some residents who have moved away hang on to their homes as summer residences or as short-term rentals; the prevalence of short-term rentals makes it hard for newcomers to the island to find long term accommodations, which has an impact on attracting workers from elsewhere, especially to fill professional positions. Recent changes to the Town of Fogo Island's development regulations are aimed at increasing housing stock to help with this, as well as the Co-op owning and operating a small motel to house off-island workers for nominal fees. Access to technology is also problematic; high speed internet is available here, but service varies depending on the community and the provider. This can make it difficult to work remotely in some locations on the island, which is also an impediment to recruitment.

Access to Data

Like with most smaller communities, accessing data to support evidence-based decision-making is very challenging for the community. Newfoundland and Labrador have a provincial [Community Accounts](#) system, which does have some more localized data, but much of what it uses is from Statistics Canada, and the program adheres to Statistics Canada's policies, so doesn't report data below a certain level of population. The [Harris Centre](#) at Memorial University also collects data for a Vital Signs report, but it is also at the provincial level. Thus, most of what's accessible is based on Statistics Canada data, in which Fogo Island is designated as a census subdivision, so finding disaggregated data specific to the communities on the island is difficult, even for the amalgamated Town of Fogo Island. This lack of localized data has an impact on the delivery of provincial and federal governmental services such as health care and education, and even the subsidizing of the ferry to the mainland, since the numbers related to very small communities are not considered. While there is some data gathering concerning numbers of businesses and sectors on the island, the economic impact of these businesses is not consistently measured.

As in other places, perhaps the biggest barriers to having good, localized data lies in finding the capacity to collect and analyze it, as well as to maintain any digital space it might be displayed on. As noted above, access to high-speed internet is uneven across the island, which has an impact on the dissemination of data to the island's residents.

Access to Capital

Fogo Island has access to traditional funding programs available through provincial and federal governments, and bank lending (although to access in-person banking services, residents currently need to leave the Island). In addition, the island benefits from the activities of Shorefast, which operates values-based social enterprises and charitable programs – including business support initiatives, such as microloans. Shorefast believes that business should be a way to develop people's – and communities' – capacities by generating employment and building meaningful connections between people and places. Through its own social enterprises, as a registered charity, all financial gains generated are reinvested in the community for the benefit of Fogo Islanders. Its development of the [Economic Nutrition Label Program](#) helps to illustrate how money flows on and off the island; the label allows a consumer to know what their money pays for, i.e., the percent of every dollar that goes to expenses like labour, materials or marketing and where their money goes – the geographic distribution of every dollar, local or abroad.

As a business incubator, the [Shorefast Business Assistance Fund](#) provides micro-loans on friendly terms to start or develop locally-owned businesses on the island. This program has supported ventures of varying shapes and sizes, including tourism operators, hospitality establishments and restaurants, and provides not just funding, but also business planning advice and assistance to new entrepreneurs and existing entrepreneurs. Currently, Shorefast is looking at evolving the program into a more robust Community Finance Fund initiative.

Going Forward from the Pilot...

While Fogo Island has many challenges to overcome as it works to strengthen and diversify its local economy, there are some short-term specific issues it wants to address first. One of the most important of these is developing a better way to collect and analyze local data to inform decision making. Improving the collaborative networks among the island's main stakeholders is also critical, especially in having a functioning economic development partnership, and working more closely with community groups and organizations. Thirdly, infrastructure in terms of health care, banking, childcare and internet access are also priorities. But having said that, building on the island's past to create a sustainable future with entrepreneurial communities and strong economies is proving to be a successful model.

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, ON

Ideally located between the major economic centres of Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal, [Prince Edward County](#) (PEC), ON, is a 1050 square kilometer island poking out into Lake Ontario. It is in the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples and is separated by a bridge to Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. The island has 800 kilometers of waterfront, a deep-water port in Picton, an airstrip, natural beauty, beaches (including [Sandbanks Provincial Park](#)), and varied landscapes. The county's population of approximately 26,000 is largely rural (65%), and the rest are situated in the two main towns of Picton and Wellington. PEC has an aging population, with 34% over 65; the median age on the island is 15.2 years higher than the Ontario average. It is also a significantly homogenous county, with only 5.2% of the population identifying as BIPOC.

Historically, PEC's economy was based in the maritime sectors of boat building, fishing, and shipping, as well as a strong agriculture sector with a flourishing canning industry, dairy industry, and cheese production. These were the two main economic drivers well into the twentieth century. However, all of this had almost disappeared by the 1980s, the result of globalization and industrialization. Over the last 30 years though, PEC has been rediscovered as a tourism destination, especially for its fast-growing wine and culinary offerings, as well as its vibrant arts and culture community. Today, the four strongest economic sectors are: 1) tourism, accounting for 31% of all jobs; 2) agriculture, which, although not a large employer in the economy, is responsible for the largest amount of economic or financial activity; 3) new home construction and renovations, a significant growth area of the economy; and 4) manufacturing, which isn't a traditional manufacturing base like many other communities, but rather of beer, wine, and cider production rooted in local agriculture. 99.4% of PEC's businesses have fewer than 100 employees, and almost half of those are microbusinesses employing between one and four individuals. As is common for rural economies, 51% of the workforce is engaged in seasonal or part-time employment and many people report having multiple jobs to make ends meet. 25% of workers are employed in food services, accommodation, or retail, sectors with the lowest average weekly earning rate in the community. As a result, PEC is 10% lower than the Ontario average for household income.

PEC is unique in Southern Ontario, but very similar to a lot of the governing structures in Northern Ontario, with a single tier municipal government, resulting from the amalgamation in 2002 of the island's ten small towns and villages. The County views its human capital as a critical asset; there is a

very large, active volunteer base bolstered by a current inflow of new residents (according to the most recent census, the population rose for the first time in more than a decade to 27,000) who are highly experienced with diverse and strong skillsets. However, this shift in demographics is also causing some tension in the community, which is further exacerbated by investor-driven tourism projects and several large-scale housing developments, potentially doubling the size of Picton and tripling the size of Wellington in the next 20 years. On the other hand, this population base has created a strong entrepreneurial spirit and small and microbusinesses are the primary creators of jobs at this time; business creation in the county tends to be driven by entrepreneurship and not large business relocations.

Architectures for Collaboration

The team representing PEC in the Community Economies Pilot was made up of three organizations: the [Corporation of the County of Prince Edward](#), the County Foundation, Upper Canada Equity (an early-stage equity investment fund), and was supported by SVX (an impact investing platform and financial intermediary). In addition, there are both formal and informal structures for collaboration in the region between the municipal government, The County Foundation, the Community Futures Corporation Community Futures Corporation, the County Workforce Partnership, the Centre for Workforce Development and intersectoral business associations, individual employers, and business improvement associations. There is collective work in key areas around education, food security, transportation, and housing for the municipality as a whole, as well as specific residential communities.

However, until recently, there has been no formal, intersectoral collaboration specifically focused on economic development; emerging from PEC's participation in the CEP is the THRIVE Prince Edward County Initiative. This initiative represents an attempt to shift towards a more holistic and community-driven economic planning process.

This process involves bringing together a variety of local actors including the Pilot project partners, various local businesses, residents and other community-based groups. THRIVE's collaborative structure may be useful for other parallel processes such as the tourism strategic planning currently underway, which includes looking at regulating short term accommodations on the island, currently, like most regions of the country, experiencing a severe housing crisis; this in turn is affecting the ability to address labour shortages. Looking ahead, THRIVE PEC is interested in pursuing more collaboration with the Indigenous communities and Nations in the region, especially the [Mohawk Tyendinaga](#). They are in the early stages of exploring the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations to develop an approach that supports reconciliation locally. As well, the THRIVE PEC group has taken the opportunity during the pilot to network with the other participating communities, especially the South Island (Greater Victoria), BC, which has a deep experience of working with their local Indigenous communities, to share learnings and approaches to support economic development planning.

Based on learnings from the pilot Thrive PEC was created, and an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach has been adopted to tackle these priority areas.

Capacity Building and Preparedness

While PEC's high school graduation rate is at 76% versus 88% across Ontario as a whole, and although there are no postsecondary institutions in the county itself, the community has a few postsecondary options in their vicinity. It is relatively close to [Queens University](#) in Kingston, and [Loyalist College](#) in Belleville, as well as a number of technical colleges such as the [First Nations Technical Institute](#) in Tyendinaga, and Prince Edward Learning Centre which is the basic skills and job training institution for those needing support and training. Mentoring and support programs are also being put in place to help increase graduation rates. And like most areas in the country, there are jobs available, but a shortage of workers to fill them. With tourism and agriculture as two of the main labour sectors, seasonal employment and short operating seasons can create difficulties for attracting workers; there is a shortage of educated and skilled labour in the County. This is in part due to a need for skills upgrading, and internships, as well as finding housing for those who would be able to find employment but not necessarily have the incomes to be able to find a safe, comfortable place to live. Connectivity is an issue as in many rural communities; in Picton or Wellington, there is typically more access to faster internet, but there is uneven coverage on the rest of the island. This is particularly problematic as 65% of the population lives outside of these centres. Through the participation in the CEP, PEC has started to focus on asset-based community development (ABCD) and will be working towards focusing strategic planning through that lens.

Access to Data

Good strategic planning requires good local level data. As in many smaller communities, this is somewhat lacking for PEC as in many data sets local data is aggregated with the larger region; while they are a census subdivision (CSD) for Statistics Canada's purposes, a lot of data pertaining to things like health and education is combined with the larger Quinte West region. Ideally, community-level data on employment, income, housing, education, food insecurity, health and wellness would be available for each community within a region. Typically, regional data is often bundled from an eastern Ontario or multi-regional perspective that limits disaggregation down to the community or county level; resulting in provincial or federal policy decision makers creating policies that may not be specific enough to address local challenges or take into consideration hyperlocal trends. While PEC's Community Foundation has a dedicated research and engagement staff person, and is a participant in the Community Foundations of Canada's [Vital Signs](#) program as well as [CCEDNet's Community Data program](#), it can be challenging to access local data. Through the CEP and with the support of the pilot partners [Esri Canada](#) and [Deloitte Canada](#), THRIVE PEC has been looking at expanding their capacity in this area including by looking at innovative ways to attain relevant data sets and novel approaches for measuring local economic development. There is also a desire to develop a more robust impact assessment strategy tied into the county's various social programs and business sectors.

Access to Capital

The diversity of capital options available in PEC is fairly robust for a small community or region, although there are still significant gaps for local entrepreneurs, organizations and projects who face challenges in terms of access to capital, particularly at early stage and / or for scaling of business development. The emphasis for capital tends to be less towards attracting new investments into the community, and more towards retention and expansion of successful local enterprises and entrepreneurs that are already operating; it is felt that it is easier to help to grow a business than bring a business to PEC. There are local and intermediate vehicles that bring capital into the community, such as Upper Canada Equity Fund, an early-stage fund headquartered in PEC; it focuses on impact-oriented tech companies. A place-based Seed2Impact fund, looking at providing data and equity financing specific to food systems, is in the planning stages. The Community Futures of Prince Edward Lennox Addington organization provides core and program-based capital, loan and grant programs, and the [Affordable Housing Corporation](#), focusing on the housing crisis, is funded and supported by the municipality with \$250,000 per year for four years. As well, there are other traditional institutions such as lenders including the Farm Credit Corporation, and the municipality. The County Foundation manages about \$6M in funds and coordinates community and neighbourhood grants funded by the municipality. It also manages the Huff Family Fund, which helps to support festivals, events and the creative economy. Finally, there is a small set of capacity intermediaries including County Coworking, First Nations Technical Institute, and SVX.

Going Forward from the Pilot...

Like most communities in Canada, PEC is facing complex issues that require input from diverse groups, businesses and citizens. At the beginning of the CEP, PEC identified the following as the priority areas they want to address: 1) changing local attitudes toward some of the issues around tourism while also seeking a fine balance between responsible and regenerative tourism opportunities; 2) enabling an accelerated funding for capacity building; 3) creating strategies to economic development that focus on equitable progress where nobody is left behind; and 4) increasing cross-sectoral collaboration, thus enabling accelerating funding to provide capital and operating infrastructure to intermediaries who can help start and scale innovative, inclusive, and high impact enterprises, organizations, and projects for the county. Based on learnings from the pilot Thrive PEC was created, and an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach has been adopted to tackle these priority areas. This model recognizes that sustainable community economic development isn't something that community groups, nor local businesses, can take on by themselves alone. Nor is it the responsibility of the only the municipality. Only by everyone working together to tackle these knotty issues can they be solved to the benefit of all.

Still a new organization, Thrive PEC's focus is currently on engaging the community around determining what the things are that it most values and would miss if they were to disappear. Currently it is in the process of finding individuals who wish to actively participate in this process of discovery, which is intended to move towards the development and execution of a community-led economic development plan.

HAMILTON, ON

Hamilton is situated in southern Ontario on the western end of the Niagara Peninsula, in the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas Nations. 58 kilometres southwest of Toronto in the [Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area \(GTHA\)](#), it is situated at the heart of the area known as [the Golden Horseshoe](#), the most densely populated corridor of economic activity in all of Canada. Hamilton's location provides businesses with easy access to a network of highways, international rail lines, local air connections, the port of Hamilton and is within half a day's drive of key major urban markets in the United States. With a population of 569,355 (Stats Can 2021 Census), the city wraps around the westernmost part of Lake Ontario with most of the city, including the downtown section, on the south shore. Its major physical features are Hamilton Harbour, marking the northern limit of the city, and the Niagara Escarpment running through the middle of the city across its entire breadth.

Hamilton has the ninth largest regional economy in Canada, and is the fifth-largest municipality in Ontario. Rich in history, Hamilton was incorporated as a city in 1846; it has a reputation as a gritty, working class town, but that is beginning to shift as the city becomes more diverse, with a number of unique entertainment venues, local events and numerous festivals creating a vibrant and thriving culture scene. It can be said that Hamilton is a “rustbelt cities” as North America's heavy manufacturing sector has declined over the last number of decades. It is currently transitioning from an economy based largely in the steel and heavy manufacturing industries (the city is home to two steel giants, [Stelco](#) and [ArcelorMittal Dofasco](#)) to a more diversified one. However, despite the decline of the steel industry over the last number of years, manufacturing is still Hamilton's largest industry, and within the last decade, the health care and social services industries have moved into second spot ([Hamilton Health Sciences](#) is the city's largest employer). Indeed, as a global city, the Conference Board of Canada ranks Hamilton's economy as one of the most diversified economies in the nation with economic growth coming from a broad spectrum of key industry sectors including agriculture and food production, life sciences (bioscience and medical industries) and creative and cultural industries. There's also been an increase in employment through construction in recent years, partly due to the gentrification that is happening in the downtown core. There is also a bit of a booming film industry with one home studio built and five or six more slated to be built in the city's North end. Hamilton is home to [McMaster University](#), [Mohawk College](#), and [Redeemer University](#) as well as a small satellite campus of [Brock University in St. Catharines, ON](#).

The city's population is also becoming more diversified: visible minorities account for just under 19% of the total population within the city, a number that has doubled over the past 20 years. As is common across the country, property values have been on the rise with an increase of 32% in average home prices between March 2020 and 2021. Further, rental prices have increasingly been on the rise with the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Hamilton more than tripling over the past two decades, and by approximately 25% of the last two years alone. Hamilton is now the [third largest least affordable](#) housing market in North America based on cost of living versus income, behind only Toronto and Vancouver. Much of this is due to gentrification of

city neighborhoods, resulting in a general trend of displacement with people who have been priced of their neighborhoods having to move further north and further east at this point, and even out of the city. This is having an effect on recruiting workers to fill some sectoral labour gaps.

Many of these coalitions work to address both the city's economic and social services needs, and there is an emphasis on deep engagement with the community to make sure their voice is being heard and at the table.

With over a billion dollars a year in new development in the last ten years, the city has changed for the better, as opportunities for new small businesses, new developments on the waterfront, new bars, craft breweries, coffee shops and restaurants, and boutique retail spaces have created jobs in the downtown core. However, Hamilton also struggles, like many rust belt cities, with poverty and other social issues which seem to deepen as the city transitions away from its traditional manufacturing base and people become displaced, both economically and literally; for many the city has become increasingly unaffordable and those who grew up there may find themselves less likely to be able to afford to stay there.

Architectures for Collaboration

Hamilton is a very politically active city, facing a host of challenges but also opportunities. Overall, there is a collective commitment to build bridges between institutions and across sectors to solve challenges. In fact, in 2018, Hamilton was recognized by the Intelligent Community Forum as a global TOP7 Intelligent Community for its commitment to progressing digital infrastructure, equity and advocacy. The city was noted for the innovative work and program delivery of its major institutions, as well as a willingness to work together, which was described as “world class.”

In addition, there are a number of collaborative networks, both formal and informal; although a big city by Canadian standards, Hamilton is still small enough for the major institutions to sit around one table to enable change. For instance, [The Hamilton Anchor Institution Leadership \(HAIL\)](#) is a partnership made up of Hamilton's largest public and private sector members: the [City of Hamilton](#), [St. Joseph's Healthcare](#), Hamilton Health Sciences (HHSC), [Local Health Integration Network](#), the [local school board](#), [Hamilton Police Services](#), [Hamilton Community Foundation](#), McMaster University, Mohawk College, [the Chamber of Commerce](#), ArcelorMittal Dofasco, and the [Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction](#). Its purpose is to build bridges between institutions across the city. Sub-tables have also been formed to lead on major issues. One of these is the Community Health Working Group, which in the fall of 2017 reached a formal commitment to support an integrated health care and social support system between the leadership of Hamilton's major institutions, the [Hamilton Family Health Team](#), and community representatives.

The [Hamilton Community Benefits Network](#) was founded in response to the opportunity presented by the Hamilton Light Rail Project. It is a community labour coalition that brought together a large number of diverse groups ranging from anti-displacement, anti-gentrification tenants groups to trade unions to Business Improvement Associations, to promote the idea that the changes in Hamilton should benefit all of the city's residents. The 63 members and partners of the coalition, some of whom bring other networks to which they belong to the table, began to collaborate on a variety of

different projects; while there was not always consensus in terms of priorities or projects, there were a number of areas where collaboration created opportunities to direct political capital, physical capital, volunteers, office space, even printing spaces for some community groups, as they came together to seize the opportunities of the changing city. Many of these coalitions work to address both the city's economic and social services needs, and there is an emphasis on deep engagement with the community to make sure their voice is being heard and at the table. Such organizations as [The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton](#), [The Disability Justice Network of Ontario](#), and [Acorn Hamilton](#) help to connect people's voices to the experts at the table.

Capacity Building and Preparedness

Hamilton is a city in transition. With any economic shift comes both displacement and opportunity, and a number of groups are working with the city to mitigate the first while seizing the latter. In recent years, there have been a number of large scale development projects, (with over \$1 billion in development annually over the last ten years). Some are still in the proposal stage, such as the Light Rail Transit Project (LRT), a \$3.4 billion investment in Light Rail; discussions are ongoing with the City to talk about propping up some of the businesses along the LRT corridor that will be impacted during the construction of LRT, as well as forming partnerships with the [Business Improvement Associations](#) and the Chamber of Commerce to support some of the racialized businesses that are not traditionally represented in the catchment areas of those institutions. There is also the [Waterfront Redevelopment Project](#) which is a number of initiatives to rejuvenate and improve the West Harbour area of the city. Hand in hand with these, a number of groups and coalitions have really pushed the city to think differently about planning in the wake of gentrification and development. For instance, in the wake of the first [Code Red Report](#) of 2015, which mapped the overall ranking of Hamilton neighborhoods based on cumulative scores for 24 health, social and economic variables, a [Neighbourhood Action Strategy](#) was developed. This strategy focused on localizing economy, not just to the city level but even further, down to neighborhoods using an asset-based community development approach.

The HAIL Partnership is also working on a number of development initiatives, such as implementing and leveraging technology to improve health services ([Clinical Connect](#)), the [Smart City Initiative](#), vital research on aging led by McMaster University, ([Optimal Aging Portal](#) and [Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging](#)) which is critical for an aging workforce, and the [Mayor's intelligent Community Task Force](#) which works directly with the community, private sector and telecommunications industry to identify gaps in broadband infrastructure and service offerings, especially in rural areas around the city.

Along with every other part of the country, Hamilton is facing labour shortages in a number of sectors. There is currently available work for skilled tradespeople and the retail and services sectors, and a number of programs set up to support diverse and marginalized residents into employment and entrepreneurship. There are a number of both publicly and privately-funded organizations such as [Employment Hamilton](#), [Workforce Planning Hamilton](#), and [Skills For Change](#), as well as post-secondary institutions such as McMaster University and Mohawk College.

Access to Data

Unlike more rural communities, Hamilton is its own Statistics Canada census subdivision, breaking down along neighbourhood lines, so there are actually quite a lot of data and ward reviews available. In some respects, the amount of data is overwhelming and the challenge is more how to organize and store it. It could also be said that the city is data rich but information poor; data can be hard to access, and tends to be siloed as it is held by various organizations and institutions. This is beginning to be addressed as collaboration between organizations and networks requires more transparency and data sharing. Some of this work is led by the [Hamilton Data Consortium](#), a partnership between the City of Hamilton, [Hamilton Health Sciences](#), [Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board](#), and the [Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton](#). Even when data is shared, however, there is still a lack of shared metrics, with a variety of methods, tools and indicators in place for measuring information. The result of this is that a lot of the accessible data is secondary, found in reports, etc., but the raw primary data isn't available outside of the originating organization. Some of this is due to privacy concerns, but also to proprietary attitudes sometimes driven by politics.

There are, as is the case in many communities, challenges with coming up with the financial and human resources for data gathering and analysis. Often, the work is handed over to volunteers; while this can work to some extent, when they leave (often the result of being overwhelmed by the amount of work), they take with them a great deal of institutional knowledge. Ideally, resources can be found to hire staff dedicated to data gathering and analysis.

Areas in which it would be beneficial to have more data for policy development at all levels include education, housing, race-based disaggregated data in education, healthcare, and employment, data around the LRT project and its impact on housing, labour force participation across sectors, as well as business make up (racialized, Newcomer, and women-owned business especially), and sectoral potential for economic development within and through such sectors as the growing arts and culture sector.

Access to Capital

Hamilton is a city in transition with lots of investment opportunities, with a number of grant programs available [for business development](#). Apart from these, sources of capital flows are through traditional financial institutions, philanthropy, government funding, and social finance. [Hamilton Community Foundation](#) (HCF) is part of a network of close to 200 Canadian community foundations who contribute time, leadership and financial support to initiatives that benefit their community most, based on an intimate understanding of local needs and opportunities. Beyond its traditional granting, HCF emphasizes impact investing, including for predevelopment costs in the affordable housing sector. It is unique in Hamilton as it also offers loans to charitable organizations and initiatives; it is able to increase the amount of funds available to Hamilton programs by leveraging partnerships and matching gifts from a range of private and public partners. With approximately \$250 million in total assets, \$32 million is placed for impact investing, and \$21 million committed across its portfolio. Impact investing currently makes up more than 14% of HCF's endowments. HCF also partners with other investment groups such as [Raven Capital Partners](#), which focuses on Indigenous economic development, to leverage their assets for social impact investing.

Going Forward From the Pilot

Not surprisingly, Hamilton shares many of the same economic and social challenges as most other communities in the country. However, it is one of the few true “rust belt” cities in the country, and as it transitions from an economy deeply rooted in manufacturing, to a more diversified model, it also has unique challenges. Transition can be a time of great opportunity; the many organizations, levels of government, anchor institutions and community-based groups in Hamilton are continuing to work together to create an equitable economic development strategy continue to collaborate and deepen their relationships.

LONDON, ON

[London](#) is a city in southwestern Ontario, situated approximately halfway between Toronto, ON, and Detroit, MI. It is located within the [Quebec City–Windsor Corridor](#), which is the most densely populated and heavily industrialized region of Canada. The seat of Middlesex County, London lies on the Thames River, midway between Lakes Ontario (east) and St. Clair (west) and Lakes Huron (north) and Erie (south). It lies in the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek (Ah-nish-in-a-bek), Haudenosaunee (Honden-no-show-nee), Lūnaapéewak (Len-ahpay-wuk) and Chonnonton (Chun-ongk-ton). Most recently, this land in the area we call London is the territory of the Chippewa of the Thames, the Oneida of the Thames, and the Muncey Delaware Nation.

London is defined in part by the major transportation routes it accesses and that have become an integral part of its economic development, transportation and logistics. Lying at the junction of highways 401 and 402, connecting it to Toronto, Windsor, and Sarnia, the Detroit/Windsor, Port Huron/Sarnia, and Niagara Falls border crossings to the US are easily accessible. The city also has an international airport, as well as access by both train and bus. With a population of about 515,000 (StatsCan) in the London census metropolitan area (CMA) (consisting of London and the neighbouring areas of St. Thomas, Thames Centre, Middlesex Centre, Strathroy-Caradoc, Adelaide Metcalfe, Central Elgin and Southwold), it is the [fastest growing city in Ontario](#), and the fourth fastest in Canada. This is in large part due to immigration from other countries (making London’s population extremely diverse) as well as from other parts of Ontario and Canada. The rural areas of this region (known as “the County”) however, are seeing the largest – and most rapid – population growth, concurrent with an all-time high of commercial and industrial development in in the County. As in most of Canada, this growth is also creating housing and infrastructure challenges, as well as creating some tensions between longstanding dwellers and newcomers into the rural region. Population growth has outstripped employment growth, so the number of available jobs has stayed relatively the same while the population itself had been growing at a rapid rate. Some of this is due to an aging population, but as well, nearly one in four working aged Londoners (25-54) are not in the labour force or are unemployed¹.

Home to a number of large anchor institutions, [Western University](#), [Fanshawe College](#), and three major hospitals, London is the regional hub for healthcare, social services, education and transportation. These anchor institutions have provided stable employment during increasingly turbulent economic times. Historically, this area’s economy was based in agriculture and

¹ Latest StatsCan data has London, ON with an unemployment rate of 5.7%.

manufacturing; with the loss of some large multinational manufacturers in the area (e.g., Kellogg's, Ford/Electromotive, and Caterpillar), currently the city of London is transitioning to a more diversified post-industrial economy. The city hosts a number of musical and artistic exhibits and festivals, which contribute to its tourism industry, but its main economic activity is centred on education, medical research, insurance, and information technology. Much of the life sciences (including agri-tech) and biotechnology-related research is conducted or supported by Western University and Fanshawe College. The largest employer in London is the [London Health Sciences Centre](#), which employs 10,555 people. - The County region surrounding London is seeing a trend towards a growing food sector and increasingly large farming operations as the agri-tech and value-added agriculture continue to expand, but this is due mainly to local families with deep roots in the region taking on additional land as opposed to foreign investors or large conglomerates buying up farms. The not-for-profit and charitable sectors are also very strong and well organized (see below) and are significant contributors to the local economy.

Architectures for Collaboration

The four partner organizations that represent London as part of the CEP are [Middlesex County](#) , [Pillar Nonprofit Network](#) , [London Community Foundation](#) , and the London Poverty Research Centre, specifically [Inclusive Economy London and Region](#). The region is made up of eight municipalities, rural towns and villages; the county council is made up of the mayors and deputy mayors of those eight municipalities and the council elects one person to serve as the county warden.

Overall, London boasts some strong and innovative collaborative networks. It is a small enough city to allow for tight-knit networks and collaboration between networks, especially within the strong social services sector. In addition to the usual chambers of commerce and business improvement associations, there are a number of cross-sectoral networking initiatives. For

instance, Inclusive Economy London and Region (IELR) is a network of organizations collaborating to implement economic development practices that create opportunities for more broadly sharing prosperity, especially for those facing the greatest barriers to wellbeing. With six leadership organizations, it follows a distributed leadership approach, with a total of 25 organizations who are engaged in different ways. As well, the Pillar Nonprofit Network is a 20-year-old charitable organization that

supports nonprofits, social enterprises and social innovators by sharing resources, exchanging knowledge and creating meaningful connections across the three pillars of nonprofit, business and government. Pillar is the backbone organization for a number of cross-sectoral collaborations, such as [Innovation Works](#) , [VERGE Capital](#) (a social finance program of Pillar Nonprofit Network, supported by many community collaborators who share the vision of a greener and more inclusive economy), and [CityStudio London](#), (which works with youth to get involved in community economic development, with the ultimate goal of retaining them in the community after graduation). ILER also hosts the [Community Ownership Collaborative](#), which facilitates the

Increasingly, organizations in London are recognizing that in order for the city's economy to truly thrive, there needs to be an integrated approach to involving both social service / social impact and economic development organizations.

transition of businesses or components of those businesses to more inclusive ownership in the form of cooperatives and not-for-profit enterprises, and the [Anchor Collaborative](#), which works with the city's anchor institution to examine opportunities for deepening connections among procurement supply chains while creating local procurement opportunities.

Increasingly, organizations in London are recognizing that in order for the city's economy to truly thrive, there needs to be an integrated approach to involving both social service / social impact and economic development organizations. An excellent example of this is the revitalization of the city's [downtown core](#). Another is the [Vision Soho Alliance](#) which was convened by the [London Community Foundation](#) to help create a mixed use housing development on old Victoria Hospital lands, which are currently sitting empty and unused. The Alliance is bringing together both for-profit developers and not-for-profit housing and other community-based organizations.

However, while there are a lot of very successful formalized collaborative initiatives within the city, the same cannot be said for city/county collaboration nor with the local Indigenous communities. Both of these are areas that are being explored currently.

Capacity Building and Preparedness

London, like many cities in Canada, is working to move away somewhat from a more traditional industrial model of economic development (e.g., attracting large, external companies such as Amazon as job creators) to a more holistic, smaller local concept of local / community economic development. While there are many very positive initiatives underway, nonetheless, this integration of social and economic impact organizations struggles at times with clarifying fuzzy boundaries and grey areas between what constitutes purely economic development and social services provision. This is due in part to the common challenges of competitive (versus collaborative) mindsets for funding dollars, and siloed mindsets; it can be difficult to embark on a new path, especially when large amounts of funding are involved or needed. This is also tied into the population growth without a concurrent increase in employment opportunities, and an aging population, as mentioned above.

Having said that, as is the case everywhere, there are labour gaps, so opportunities for employment exist. London is home to Western University and Fanshawe College, both of which are engaged in workforce skills development and capacity building. There are also social enterprises such as the [London Training Centre](#) which works with individuals to provide innovative, effective and integrated training opportunities. [Nokee Kwe](#) is an Indigenous not-for-profit organization delivering employment, training and transitional services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth and adults in London and the surrounding community; its services are free, and are geared to individuals experiencing unemployment or difficulty with career and life transitions. Western University has the [Indigenous Student Centre](#) which supports Indigenous students on campus through specialized resources focusing on Indigenous issues in areas concerning academic, cultural and social needs, including career and employment opportunities and training/workshops. Fanshawe College has the [Institute of Indigenous Learning](#), which among other services, supports Indigenous students in career exploration.

Access to Data

London is a city with a number of data hubs. Using a variety of tools and approaches, organizations and networks are collecting and analyzing both economic and social services data which all support an environment of evidence-based decision making. For instance, the London Community Foundations produces the [Vital Signs reports](#). The London Poverty Research Centre has played a role in gathering localized data from social service actors and working to share that with other organization and networks. The City of London has a [Community Data Consortium](#) and the city also releases a series of neighborhood profiles as part of their [Neighbourhood Building initiative](#). In the county, there is the [Middlesex Oxford Workforce Development Board](#) which develops many of the employment and economic growth strategies in the region, including the [Middlesex Homelessness Prevention and Housing Plan](#) and the [Middlesex Safety and Well-Being Plan](#).

But while there is a lot of good data available, there is still a desire for better local data in order to improve evidence-based decision making. There is also a move towards using the UN's Social Development Goals to create an integrated data framework which will include social, environmental, economic outcomes to address the region's challenges. However, as with most regions, there is a lack of funding for local data, especially disaggregated data on the marginalized, racialized, and / or impoverished populations, particularly at the neighbourhood level. Data collection and analysis can be very expensive. Also common to most communities are the challenges around privacy specific to both disaggregated data, as well as to the collection and / or sharing of place-based data at the neighborhood level, especially when dealing with historically excluded populations and impoverished areas of the city. While concerns around the potential for using data to stigmatize neighbourhoods are legitimate, nonetheless, the question of what should and shouldn't be public data needs to be discussed; it is also that data that invites investment from public institutions and other funders into a community to address challenges.

Access to Capital

London is a city which holds a lot of wealth as the creation of companies such as London Life Insurance, Imperial Oil, Canada Trust and [Libro Credit Union](#) , the second largest credit union in Ontario. Sources of capital flows are through traditional financial institutions, philanthropy, government funding, and social finance. VERGE Capital is a social finance program co-created by Pillar, the London Community Foundation, Libro Credit Union, Sisters of St. Joseph, and [SVX](#) . VERGE has invested almost \$4M through 37 loans to new and growing social enterprises, community hubs, affordable housing, and green energy projects across southwestern Ontario. The London Community Foundation's [Social Impact Fund](#) supports strengthening entrepreneurship in London's social enterprise sector, primarily through financial investments. However, while much of the work that VERGE and the London Community Foundation engage is innovative, and indeed, pioneering in Canada, the question of who can and cannot access that capital, and the decision making processes in place for its allocation are still barriers to many newcomers and marginalized populations. Additionally, as is often the case, capital flows out of the community, with only a small percentage recirculating within the community. Some of the work of the CEP is exploring how this can change.

Going Forward from the Pilot...

While London shares many of the same economic and social challenges as most other communities in the country, given its recent rapid population growth, it is also facing some unique ones, especially in terms of unemployment, bucking the trend of falling unemployment rates and labour gaps within many sectors. The London Middlesex Region is beginning to work collaboratively to address both the social and economic challenges such growth can bring. At the beginning of the CEP pilot, London identified a number of priorities it hoped to address at least in part during the pilot year: 1) a mindset shift or cultural change when it comes to local community economic development, especially in terms of thinking about systems change and a more holistic approach incorporating social services versus the traditional industrial model of only working towards attracting investment and large companies; 2) creating an enabling policy environment and vocal advocacy to support building an inclusive economy, integrating economic development with poverty / inequality reduction; 3) building better collaboration between city and county initiatives; and 4) exploring deeper relationships with the city's three neighbouring Indigenous communities.

Through the pilot, the team from London deepened their awareness of the importance of building networks, the effectiveness of working collaboratively across sectors and organizations, and had reinforced for them the need for integrative approaches to CED incorporating the four topic areas the CEP engaged with. Of course, they have been doing this already, but moving forward they plan to continue to build and deepen existing relationships with the other prototype communities, especially in terms of sharing knowledge approaches.

SOUTH ISLAND (GREATER VICTORIA), BC

The South Island, also known as “Greater Victoria,” is the provincial capital region of BC, comprised of 13 municipal and nine First Nation governments. The region is situated on the southern end of Vancouver Island in the Pacific Northwest or “[Cascadia](#),” bioregion about equidistant between Seattle and Vancouver and separated from the mainland by the Juan de Fuca Strait (known as the Salish Sea in Indigenous cultures). The region lies within the traditional territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) speaking peoples, today known as the Xwsepsum [Esquimalt] and Songhees Nations, the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples (S̱ÁUTW – Tsawout, BOKÉCEN – Pauquachin, W̱JOŁŁP – Tsartlip, W̱SIKEM – Tseycum, and MÁLEXEL Malahat Nations), as well as Scia’new Nation (Beecher Bay), T’Sou-ke Nation, and the Pacheedaht Nation. Greater Victoria is a Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) by Statistics Canada’s definition with a population 397,237 (2021 Census), but as the Capital Region it also includes some other peripheral areas, such as the Gulf Islands, and some unincorporated electoral areas that aren’t part of municipal structures.

Victoria’s location gives it excellent access to a variety of global markets. Although located on an island, it has major transportation linkages by air and by sea to the US Pacific coastal ports, as well as Asia. Access to the Mainland of BC is by air or ferry. Its status as a provincial capital provides it with a fairly stable economy defined by low unemployment, with well-paid, stable employment

through the various government ministries and crown corporations located there. The region is also home to Canada's Pacific navy, which employs about 7000 people. There is a fairly robust healthcare system, and education system, including post-secondary institutions like the [University of Victoria](#), [Royal Roads University](#), and [Camosun College](#). The last two decades has seen an emerging tech sector, with just under 1000 tech companies ranging in size from 5-10 people, to larger ones employing 200. Outside of the pandemic, the tourism sector has been a long-standing staple of the Victoria economic picture.

[South Island Prosperity Partnership](#) (SIPP) is a non-profit collaboration of over 70 public and private sector partners in Greater Victoria, including 10 local governments, nine First Nations, three post-secondary institutions, nine industry associations and nonprofits, and more than 30 major employers. It was founded in 2016 to address the challenges of rebounding from the 2008/2009 recession. Victoria did not recover as quickly as other parts of Canada; both business and civil society were the drivers of an examination of what are other regions doing to be able to be better organized and more deliberate and intentional with their economic development efforts. It was discovered that Victoria was significantly underinvesting in economic development and to address that, municipal support was sought and granted to create SIPP, and First Nations and private-sector support broadened it. The organization works to bolster the region's economic and social prosperity by catalyzing the creation of high-quality, household-sustaining jobs, so that more families can afford to live, work and build a life there. The goal is ultimately to nurture a more innovative, diversified, inclusive and sustainable economy.

One of the unique facets of the organization is its commitment to economic reconciliation and partnership with First Nations. This is embedded in SIPP's constitution, and the organization is very committed to advancing equity for the region's Indigenous populations. SIPP supports First Nation-driven economic development activities by collaborating with communities, sharing leading practices, and creating a platform for broader collaboration. A key metric of their success is that First Nation communities direct and drive their own economic development initiatives. There are approximately 18,000 Indigenous people between the nine First Nations communities and those living off reserve (as of the 2016 census), and the unemployment rate among them is significantly higher than in the non-Indigenous population. It is a growing population and an opportunity for further reconciliation. The First Nations, however, are in various stages of Treaty process, and by extension of that, they have different tools at their disposal in terms of what they're able to achieve with their economic development.

Architectures for Collaboration

SIPP operates a unique, highly collaborative model of governance, bringing the three pillars (Business, Government and Community) into its institutional fabric. Based on the [Regional Enterprise Network](#) model from Nova Scotia, there are three bodies: Funders' Council, Board of Directors, and Operations/Management (who oversees the day to day running of the organization). The Funders' Council is represented by SIPP's 70 plus members and was formed to hold the Board of Directors accountable in fulfilling SIPP's mission and mandate. It is the Funders' Council who

appoints the Board, and who conducts the annual reviews and audits, so it is truly a member-driven model. Members are partners in the organization and are divided into two categories: 1) lead investors, who are the private sector members, many of which are the largest employers in the region, and 2) prosperity partners who are all the others such as local governments, not-for-profits, industry and business associations and post-secondary institutions. SIPP started with 29 members in 2016 and has been steadily growing, although there are some questions about whether or not it would be optimal to grow any bigger. The operational revenue model is about 60-40 split between government and non-governmental funders, not including project funding through other grants and sponsorships.

Collaboration is core to everything SIPP does. No project or initiative is done without multiple partners; this comes from the belief that no one organization or person has all the tools for solving economic challenges, so only through cross-sectoral partnering can they be solved. SIPP works to involve its members in helping steer its direction and providing it with real strategic insights; projects move from planning to action and then bringing in the different stakeholders to implement actions. One example of this philosophy in action is the [Rising Economy Taskforce](#), which was tasked right after the pandemic struck in 2020 to come up with recommendations for moving the region's economy from relief to recovery and building in more resilience. The taskforce was able to come together in just a couple of weeks and had about 120 stakeholders from across all major sectors driving the South Island economy (ten sector committees and working groups from ocean and marine to retail and restaurants, to Indigenous economy, and the inclusive economy as well) which provided a broad perspective on how the pandemic was impacting the region's economy. The taskforce came up with 160 recommendations that were rolled up into 10 thematic pillars and 50 prioritized recommendations and published through Reboot: Greater Victoria's Economic Recovery Plan 2020-2022; the community then reconvened around this plan approximately every quarter over the pandemic recovery period. Other collaborative initiatives include [the Global Fluency Roundtable](#), the Magnet City Initiative (creating a new regional brand narrative for Greater Victoria), [the Centre of Ocean Applied Sustainable Technologies \(COAST\)](#), Municipal Partners Committee, periodic Executive Leadership Roundtables, the Prosperity Index steering committee, as well as the Indigenous Prosperity Centre Working Group.

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SIPP also directly involves the general public in discussions of the local economy in order to demystify the concept as well as share its perspective that the economy isn't something separate from the people but that they create it. This is done in part through conferences and convenings such as [Rising Economy Week](#), and others on topics like smart cities; they also use innovative methods such as pop-up polling stations to engage the public to care about the economy. There is also a [Monthly Ideas + Impact](#) series which features people from different places having direct dialogues with the community.

As noted above, one of SIPP's core values is supporting and partnering with the local First Nations to create a truly inclusive economy, both as a step towards reconciliation, as well as to advance the notion that a healthy economy must be an economy that works for all. Currently, SIPP is working with the First Nation communities on an initiative called the [Indigenous Prosperity Centre](#)

to provide Indigenous thought leadership and engagement, conduct research on Indigenous entrepreneurship and innovation, partnership and training development, and find pathways to taking advantage of procurement opportunities in the region. Currently, some of the region's First Nations are engaged in various marine projects (such as spill response, Orca and Fisheries monitoring, tourism and conservation, and aquaculture), as well as real estate, film, agriculture and arts and cultural-based economic development. SIPP was also involved in the development of the [Songhees Innovation Centre](#), which is a co-working and community-building project on Songhees Nation that works with Indigenous entrepreneurs and program leaders from any First Nation to help build a support community. This project illustrates the Indigenous-centric model of entrepreneurship, which focuses not on the individual entrepreneur gaining profit, but about the community around that entrepreneur, and how all benefit.

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Capacity Building and Preparedness

Like every other region of the country, South Island, BC is facing a number of challenges at the moment. Rising unaffordability in housing and essential goods and services is leading to widening inequality. As a growing region (approximately 1.2-1.9% population growth per year), transportation and suburban sprawl is a concern. As both Fogo Island, NL, and Prince Edward County, ON, know, living on an island brings its own set of challenges; land use, when surrounded by water on all four sides, becomes very important with a risk of not designing properly in terms of urban containment but also for the effects of climate change. Victoria has long been known as a retirement destination, so it has an aging population, predicted to be about 28% over the age of 65 in the next few years. The impacts of the pandemic on the tourism sector, which, in this region involves multiple sectors within it (cruise industry, arts, hospitality & entertainment, restaurants, small business, etc.) are still being felt. And acute sectoral labour shortages, especially in healthcare as the population ages, are concerning.

That stated, there are a number of unique opportunities that SIPP and its partners are looking at such as First Nations economic reconciliation, as mentioned above. Being an island also comes with a unique marine & oceans environment, which holds great economic possibilities. The strong tech sector and access to post-secondary opportunities are setting workers up for jobs in the 21st century knowledge economy. And the existing alliances, networks, assets such as strong anchor institutions are creating an environment for both government and industry transformation, as well as labour force development.

In terms of building capacity and preparedness, SIPP and its members have been developing a number of strategic plans. The most recent is the [Rising to Resilience report](#), a three-year strategic plan published in 2021; it focuses on how to develop a local economy by design, not default, in order to transform the region for the 21st century. It was built around four major pillars: 1) committed leadership and public engagement; 2) investment in innovation ecosystems; 3) investment in inclusion in the future workforce; and 4) telling the new story of the region (through the Magnet City initiative). The [Smart City Vision 2040](#), looked at how to develop more resilience using data and technology, asking how to involve municipalities and the private sector in solving some of the region's thorny problems. Finally, [Reboot](#) serves as the region's economic recovery plan and was developed by the rising economy taskforce in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was important that what was brought forward by the community would address short-term crises, but also support medium- and long-term resilience. One of the results from Reboot was the development of the Centre for Ocean Applied Sustainable Technologies (COAST). SIPP is incubating and providing support to COAST, which is aimed at opportunities in the global Blue Economy, including helping traditional industries transform and adopt new technologies that reduce GHG emissions. COAST will also utilize the strengths of small businesses and the innovative capacity that they have, as well as driving research and development towards solving some of the bigger ecological challenges, such as the decarbonization of the maritime sector.

Access to Data

The South Island region, unlike some of the other CEP Prototype Communities, has a lot of positives in terms of access to data. It is categorized as a Census Metropolitan Area, which means that a lot of very useful data are available through Statistics Canada; SIPP packages that in various projects. Because the various municipalities making up Greater Victoria are in such close geographic proximity to each other, there is a regional approach to data; you might live in one municipality, you might work in another, you might shop or go about your life in yet a third or fourth or fifth municipality, all within the same area. However, while there is access to good regional data, there are still many gaps: having meaningful indicators to track progress on local economy, equity and inclusion, and other areas; the ability to link data to policy levers so that it's not just measuring for measuring's sake, but to actually create evidence-based change to policies; and, some specific areas in regional and jurisdictional-level data.

SIPP creates a bi-annual [Prosperity Index](#), which provides a snapshot of the region's current competitive position in relation to peer cities across Canada and around the globe. These benchmarks provide the context needed to set priorities and then work with its strengths to attract investors, entrepreneurs and talent to build a robust and sustainable local economy. Another key data initiative is Victoria Foundation's [Vital Signs Report](#) that includes some indicators around the economy and related wellbeing measures. For over the past 15 years, the Victoria Foundation has been producing this report annually which ensures there is a strong connection between philanthropy and community needs and opportunities. It measures the vitality of the region, identifies concerns, and supports action on issues that are critical to residents' quality of life. Finally, there is also some municipal and government-gathered data which is used for various projects, like tracking the [Regional Growth Strategy](#), managed by the Capital Regional District.

Access to Capital

As an urban centre and the provincial capital, the South Island (Greater Victoria) region has access to a complex web of capital and funding. Apart from the usual government programs and financial institutions including credit unions, there is a network of funders with jurisdiction on the island. Specifically, the Victoria Foundation has committed a portion of their endowment investments to impact investing, and they are continuing to expand in that area, as well partner with the Community Foundations of Canada to deliver the Investment Readiness Program in the region.

There's also a variety of intermediaries (incubators and accelerators) such as the [Coast Capital Innovation Centre at UVic](#), the [Alacrity Foundation](#), the [Victoria Innovation Advanced Technology and Entrepreneurship Council \(VIATEC\)](#), [Capital Investment Network](#), [Futurpreneur](#), [Women's Enterprise Centre](#), [BDC Victoria](#), Aboriginal financial institutions such as [New Relationship Trust](#), and a number of new social enterprise funds that are currently being developed thanks to the federal government's [Investment Readiness Program](#) nationally.

However, there are some gaps in seed funding, and as is the case in most jurisdictions, challenges for underrepresented groups in accessing what funding already exists. A key gap for SIPP is financing for First Nations and Indigenous communities to pursue economic development projects. The Indian Act and other structural contexts make it often difficult for First Nations to access critical financing.

Going Forward from the Pilot...

SIPP and its partners and stakeholders continue to work toward a strong, resilient and sustainable economy for the South Island (Greater Victoria) region of BC through innovative, collaborative approaches to systems and policy change. Their emphasis on inclusion and cross-sectoral collaboration as well as some unconventional partnerships is leading to innovative programs, but they feel more emphasis on networked governance among various governments to solve a range of tough problems is needed. SIPP would like to see all levels of government work together toward reducing the barriers toward economic self-determination of First Nations. This goes hand in hand with funders allowing more flexibility with community-identified economic development goals and funding programs that help community networks create roadmaps to success (as opposed to funding each project in isolation), with an emphasis on actual final outcomes as opposed to the means, and the tactics of how activities align to program parameters and other constraints.

COMMON SUCCESS FACTORS: PROMISING PRACTICES

Each one of the prototype communities has its own unique contexts and challenges, but there are also some common challenges facing them. Many of these challenges are systemic, and / or national in scope, and in fact are faced by most communities in the country. While each community has come up with its own context-specific innovative and effective approaches to address them, when looked at across the five prototype communities, it becomes evident that there are some commonalities within those approaches that can be drawn from their experiences as a whole. Based on the thematic analysis of the data gathered over the year of the CEP, in this section we lay out some of these common challenges that the prototype communities are facing, then show some of the promising practices they've developed to address them. You'll see that while some of these have been solved, others have not, or have only partly been addressed. Perhaps you'll see your own community reflected in some of these and can adopt and adapt some of the Promising Practices to your own contexts.

ARCHITECTURES OF COLLABORATION

The question we asked in analyzing for the architectures of collaboration was "What Collaborative and Governance Structures are needed to advance local economies?"

THE CHALLENGES

Collaborative frameworks and models are often not intuitive to communities. Organizational roles and commitments tend to be narrowly defined or undefined, and as a result silos are created. Where partnerships do exist, there can be challenges as each partner struggles to find their own role within their own parameters and capacity to participate and contribute. A small community-based organization doesn't have the same capacity or resources as an anchor institution; therefore there can be issues of power imbalances and a resulting frustration and disengagement of partners. Even when formal or informal structures for collaboration are in place, the partnerships may be working on common problems, but an understanding of how to approach solutions are defined separately by each individual institution.

Many communities don't have a defined economic development strategy in place, nor have an economic development office or staff member. Again, this allows for competing priorities and often different groups working at cross purposes or duplicating efforts, wasting both time and resources. Where strategies do exist, they do not include a collaborative partnership framework so there is a lack of clarity of roles for partners at all levels.

Increasingly, the realization of the importance of partnering with local Indigenous communities is emerging across the country. Not just from an ethical, reconciliation perspective, but it is beginning

to be understood that if you want a strong and resilient local economy, you need to include ALL members of the community; economies are rooted in people, after all. But the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, as well as of the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in community economic development is often not understood, nor defined in a strategy. Collaboration moves at the speed of trust, and there is a long road that goes into building trust between Settler and Indigenous communities. Having all the voices at the table is a start in building that trust.

THE PROMISING PRACTICES

Expecting and encouraging flexibility in collaborative structures

Often collaboration begins around a single issue and over time, as new issues arise, becomes more formalized and widened as new actors are brought in to deal with emerging issues. Ultimately this leads to a mix of formal and informal working arrangements, which creates a network of organizations from a variety of sectors (e.g., NFP service providers, anchor institutions, municipal government, etc.). Depending on what challenges are being addressed, as some arise, and others are either solved, or move down the priority list, the networks shift and change as some leave and others come in. This also leads to a range of levels of co-ordination which usually depends on the purpose of the collaboration at any given time, as well as organizational capacity.

Having diverse voices at the table

The importance of diverse voices being at the table cannot be over-emphasized if community challenges are to be successfully addressed. While of course context-specific, this includes cross-sectoral representation from anchor institutions, NFP service providers, local business (Chambers of Commerce, large employers), representation from the community itself, whatever that community is, not for profit organizations, Indigenous community(ies)/economic organizations, municipal government, community foundations, and linkages to provincial and federal actors. It is equally important that there is an equity of voices, and that all are able to bring their views to the table for discussion. (SIPP is an excellent example of this.)

Allowing for varying levels of participation based on organizational capacity

While it's important that everyone one concerned have a voice at the table, it is equally important to recognize that participation and roles are going to be determined by individual organizational capacity. However, there should be some kind of role for both business organizations and community-based organizations, even if it's simply to review decisions before they're made, for instance. Usually capacity at least partly driven by funds available; smaller organizations may not have the human resource funding to do more than review. However, there are a number of funding models that can be followed for formal partnerships such as equitable contributions by members, community foundation funding, project-based funding, etc.

Focusing on the local in community economic development

While there are a number of ways to approach local challenges, whatever they may be, whether strictly economic such as major employers leaving the community or social challenges such as affordable housing or food security, the partners at the table use a local economic development lens and address them from that perspective. It is critical that local businesses are at the table even when dealing with social challenges because in a healthy functioning economy, all of these things are interrelated, and effective approaches are holistic in nature.

Enabling innovation and giving it a place at the table

Not everyone is comfortable with outside-the-box thinking and the innovations that can come from it. But often entrenched challenges need new ways of thinking, and unconventional approaches to their solutions to work. After all, as it famously has been said, the definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over, and expect a different result! Fostering innovation often means including non-traditional partners such as social entrepreneurs at the table.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND PREPAREDNESS

The question we asked in analyzing for capacity building and preparedness was “How can you build capacity at the local community level?”

The Challenges

The entire country has been struggling with labour shortages in a variety of sectors following the Covid-19 Pandemic. Some of these labour gaps are the result of the economic disruptions caused by two years of upheaval and shut-downs, while others come from the demographic shift resulting from the Baby Boom generation leaving the labour force. But whatever the reason, there have been challenges in finding, and then training, people to fill the gaps. Every community has felt this to a greater or less extent.

Some of the challenge is a lack of career education in school systems, and especially in rural areas. As a general rule, there are some inequities between urban and rural school resourcing, as school funding tends to depend on size. This has resulted in paring available programming down to basic curriculum and as a result, schools are not as integrated into economic development as they could be. This is not just a rural problem, but one seen across the board. There can also be lower levels of high school graduation rates in some areas, which has a knock-on effect for the labour market. Without bringing both public schools and post-secondary institutions into economic development planning, and addressing the school to work transition among youth, there can be limited opportunities available to communities for learning and training.

Sometimes communities don't recognize opportunities that exist within them. There is a tendency to focus on what isn't there instead of what assets exist. This has an impact on both finding solutions for current challenges, as well as on long range economic development planning, preparing for future challenges, but also exploring opportunities.

Promising Practices

Using what you have to get what you have not

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to community-driven sustainable development that focuses on a community's strengths and assets, on what it HAS, rather than on its challenges, and what it doesn't have. Not that those challenges and gaps don't exist, but instead of dwelling on them, by asking "what do we have here already or that we can find, to address them?" a community can move away from a scarcity mindset to an action-oriented one. By answering the following questions: 1) What do we have? 2) What do we know? 3) What do we love? and 4) What would we miss?, new sustainable solutions to local challenges can begin to emerge. This also applies to building capacity within the labour force. Approaches such as Recognition of Prior Learning (where all of an individual's lifelong/lifewide experience is assessed to discover transferable skills across a number of sectors), and mentorship programs, allow employers to build on or leverage workers' existing knowledge and can widen the labour pool. These can be supported by focusing on the existing and/or traditional skills already present in the community to train or retrain workers .

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to community-driven sustainable development that focuses on a community's strengths and assets, on what it HAS, rather than on its challenges, and what it doesn't have.

Taking a cross-sectoral approach to capacity building and workforce development

Taking a targeted approach to addressing labour gaps requires collaborative approaches from all parties involved, especially in a constantly – and rapidly – changing economy. No one group has all the answers but together local businesses, industry sectors, post-secondary / anchor institutions, and career services providers can work effectively together to address labour gaps and shortages. This can be especially effective with targeted labour force development, strengthened through utilizing anchor institutions such as hospitals, post-secondary institutions and large employers to their fullest extent. In turn, anchor institutions can strengthen collaborations through the creation of offices of community relations / innovations/ collaboration within them to provide a specific touchpoint (and possibly even a backbone organization) for external networks to work with towards capacity building initiatives.

Including sustainability and succession planning in capacity building programs for entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurial training is often overlooked when thinking about capacity building for workforce development. Developing entrepreneur training programs focusing on social enterprises as well as other innovative business models not only grows new businesses, but also addresses challenges of succession planning and sustainability with businesses. Which are, after all, employers! Programs through Chambers of Commerce and business incubator organizations, as well as post-secondary institutions can be offered to new business owners. A particularly interesting model is that of investors buying businesses who would otherwise close down and shifting them to a social enterprise model.

Focusing on both traditional and innovative community economic development models that focus on building skills for the labour market of the future, as well as those currently needed

There has been a focus on the “Industrial Model” of community economic development in Canada over the last number of decades: working to attract large employers such as manufacturers or call centres to a community to provide large numbers of jobs. The problem with relying solely on this model is that when those large employers leave for whatever reason, it causes major disruptions to the community’s economy. While there is of course still room for large employers to come into a community, shifting the focus towards smaller, more localized development both creates strong local businesses, as well as diversifying the local economy. Widening the concept of the labour market to look ahead to potential areas of growth such as the Circular and Green Economies can also work towards a Just Transition model with large employers leave or close down.

Working with local schools to support the continuum of school to work transition through early career education in public schools

There is a growing recognition that career education needs to start as early as grade 5, and definitely by grade 7. Although curriculum is set at the provincial level, local community development organizations can develop programs to help students with career exploration while still in public school, and continuing into post-secondary education. For instance, implementing after-school programs for high school students to expose them to different career options can spark an interest early on. Combining this with essential skills training helps students prepare for a labour market where shifting careers and professions is almost a given over the span of a lifetime.

ACCESS TO DATA

The question we asked in analyzing for access to data was “What data is needed, where can it be found, who controls it, and where can it be stored?”

The Challenges

Accessing and / or managing data to support solid evidence-based economic decision making is a challenge to many communities. Gathering and analyzing localized data is a resource-heavy activity, and not all communities have the capacity to do it. Statistics Canada collects large amounts of data from across the country, but it is expensive to obtain, and tends to follow its census regions, which combines many smaller communities with the region around them. Disaggregated demographic data for such things as education and health care services is also difficult find; it can be misleading to link the regional data with a more localized vision for informing policy and planning. This makes it difficult to show local economic impact of various programs and policies.

While privacy issues are important, privacy can be used as an excuse not to share data; often there is an unwillingness to share data, especially primary data, between organizations and other stakeholders. There can be a lack of policies and procedures around data security management,

resulting in questions being raised about the ways data is being used, as well as over issues of confidentiality, integrity, ownership and availability.

Some communities are in fact data rich, but then the issue becomes management and an ability to share digitally. Technology is expensive, and requires specialized staff to use it and to collect, analyze and then manage the data. It often tends to be done by volunteers or off the side of someone's desk. Evaluating impact of programs and policies can be challenging as a result, with a lack of solid indicators for measurement, or not aligning frameworks between organizations, such as using the UNs SDGs to integrate social, environmental, economic outcomes, as opposed to strict financial data, or only using quantitative methods instead of a mix of quantitative and qualitative ones.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Prioritizing data as the basis for local economic development and creating the organizational capacity to collect, analyze and disseminate it.

Good decision making needs to be evidence-based, and that evidence is found through data collection and analysis. Especially in smaller communities, however, these activities can be challenging, not least due to a lack of funding. With limited financial resources, the development of data for decision making often is not seen to be a priority and may land with volunteers or else be done by staff who have many other work responsibilities. Those communities who have at the very least a dedicated data analyst on staff have seen how it pays off, however. Having a data plan as part of strategic planning overall provides guidance and can help with building local capacity in terms of technology, data management and human resources to create the evidence for a number of local community challenges. Community foundations also can help with data gathering, both through funding to support others in their activities, as well as through their own data gathering activities. Those communities that participate in the Vital Signs program highlight its value for collecting local data; however, taking part in the program needs staff dedicated to data analysis and creation.

Tearing down the data-sharing silos between organizations and sectors

Again, collaboration between organizations and data sharing where appropriate lessens the load for any given organization, and contributes to collaborative decision making. Some local organizations collect a lot of local data, but don't necessarily allow access to it for a variety of reasons such as privacy, or the competitive mindset between organizations fostered by limited funding options. Some communities have created data consortiums to work across organizations and businesses, and sometimes between communities themselves; these can be augmented through the development of digital data hubs. Other useful partnerships include working with local academics and post-secondary institutions on research projects, or accessing secondary data by pooling resources to purchase data from Statistics Canada.

Using both quantitative and qualitative data to develop a complete picture of what community members need and want

Quantitative data is very useful, and tends to be the go to when looking for evidence to inform decision making; if you can put a number to something, you can usually also attach a dollar figure to it. However, by also talking to people to find out how they feel about an issue or need in a community you get a much more robust, and rounded evidence base to inform program development, strategic planning, local priorities, or to address local issues.

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

The question we asked in analyzing for accessing capital, and exploring how capital moves through communities was “How can communities attract and retain capital in communities?”

The Challenges

Smaller communities can struggle finding diverse options for accessing capital, unlike their larger urban counterparts, where investment tends to congregate. This can lead to gaps in coordinating, educating, and activating the local impact investor community and capacity building intermediaries. Even in larger urban centres where there are many options for seeking funding, it can be very difficult for small businesses and start up to access seed funding, especially for traditionally underrepresented groups, such as Indigenous and Newcomer communities. There is a lot of red tape for any new start up to cut through, but the complexity of laws and policies especially around Indigenous communities can make this even more challenging.

There is also a tendency in communities to want to attract large outside employers to set up shop there; this provides jobs in the short term, but these big companies tend to take their capital outside the community, to be extractive instead of reciprocal. And they have a tendency to move on to other places where the cost of labour is cheaper.

Promising Practices

Developing micro-lending programs, especially for new / expanding businesses

Supporting small business start-ups and expansion with micro-lending, and making such programs very accessible to populations who often are unable to access funding through banks or credit unions helps to diversify an economy. Small and medium size businesses employ over 90% of the labour force, according to Statistics Canada, so supporting local entrepreneurs through grants and loans, especially newcomers who often have business experience in their countries of origin, makes sense.

Encouraging collaboration between funders in a region

The common thread to many of these practices is collaboration. This holds true for funders. Whether through formal or informal partnerships, taking a network approach to creating new funding programs for local organizations, businesses, and new entrepreneurs allows for the

leveraging of local knowledge and experiences. Understanding the importance of relationship building both with other funders and with local community leads not just to greater opportunities for investors and community members, but such collaboration also helps to avoid duplication in coverage, as well as in the expansion of coverage, in a local context.

Moving to a new approach to philanthropy

There is beginning to be a shift in approaches among some philanthropic organizations. The traditional model of philanthropy is to grow funding capital through investment, while giving out a small percentage through a variety of programs. However, while it is of course important, especially in a challenging investment climate, to grow funds, the priority is becoming to give more of the money away to support a growing and strong economy. This also supports being able to effectively pivot within a challenging economic climate by developing new programs and funding streams to keep business and community organizations going through hard times.

CONCLUSION

While there are certainly lots of challenges to be found in local economies across Canada, there are also many new and innovative ways of addressing them. The CEP's prototype communities provided a plethora of rich data outlining many of these. Moving forward, it is hoped that the network formed during the last year will strengthen and grow, and local economies will deepen and strengthen.



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