

Getting Ontario Ready for the Social Finance Fund

Summary

April 2019

Introduction

In the fall of 2018, the federal government announced an \$805 million investment (\$755 M for a Social Finance Fund and an additional \$50 M for an Investment and Readiness Stream). This was based on the report entitled *Inclusive innovation: New Ideas and New Partnerships for Strong Communities* from the insights of the Social Innovation and Social Finance Co-Creation Steering Group.

Why a Survey?

A survey was one of the key activities of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network's engagement process to raise awareness of the Social Finance Fund and hear a range of grassroots perspectives. This process was guided by Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles.

Our Vision is to provide social economy stakeholders with an engagement process that sets the stage for coordination, collaboration, and growth.

Our Mission is that the social economy ecosystem in Ontario will:

- reflect new opportunities for sustainable growth and impact
- build on existing asset mapping of the Ontario Social Economy
- create collaborative proposals for the Investment and Readiness Stream to be ready for spring 2019

Guiding Principles

1. Community Benefit
2. Inclusive
3. Early Involvement
4. Transparent and Accountable
5. Co-ordinated Approach
6. Mutual Trust and Respect
7. Reflection and Evaluation

Who responded?

The completed contact list for potential respondents was 60 organizations, eventually producing a total of more than 150 respondents. The timing of the survey was during the period of February 21 – March 28.

We gathered ground intelligence on what sector members were thinking about and planning for in terms of projects and partnerships. We learned how best to support grassroots community groups. Through this process, we also mobilized knowledge and raised awareness of the Social Finance Fund.

What we heard

- 90% of responses were completed by senior leadership including the executive level management and the Board of Directors,
- Feedback came from Northeastern Ontario (22%), Northwestern Ontario (22%), Southwestern Ontario (41%), Eastern Ontario (38%) and the GTA (53%), some of which serve multiple regions,
- The top four industry sectors out of 12 are Employment/Business Development (19%), Health/Social Services (14%), and Financial Services/Funders (14%), Arts, Culture/Tourism (13%)
- 75% response rate of the 9 types of organizational structures were from Not-for-profit and Charities,
- The top 3 out of 10 populations that are being served are At Risk Youth/Youth (16%), Racialized Communities (14%) and Women (14%),
- 75% of responses were keen to build new partnerships for developing community assets, 59% are interested in developing new business streams and 52% are interested in using new forms of financing as examples of social finance and social innovation initiatives.

Priority Needs

We confirmed the priority needs of social purpose organizations based on the government framework.

Responses were coded, comments were summarized and examples are shared. All references to the organization or location were removed. Some of the solutions are tied to the UN SDGs.

Areas	Average Ranking
Awareness and Mobilization	3.74
Evidence and Knowledge	3.66
Policy and Regulatory	3.59
Funding and Capital	3.57
Market Access	3.46
Skills and Capacity	3.44

Key Elements

Strategic Planning: Clarity of Roles in the Ecosystem

The sector must develop a strategic plan to better understand the role of each stakeholder and be united in the common goals. It will be important to respect and appreciate the function of each player including grassroots organizations, consultants, intermediaries (regional, provincial and federal), financial institutions, business development agencies, incubators and post-secondary institutions. There is a sense that we need to put our resources (financial and human) into action and not just talk about it.

Equitable Funding Services to All Regions / Cultural Minorities with a Gender Lens

(UN SDG 5 – Gender Equality and UN SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities)

The development of this social innovation and finance initiative must understand the uniqueness of each region across Ontario at the same time it focuses on the urban/rural/remote realities. It will be important to develop programming with cultural sensitivity including a gender lens.

Effective and Impactful Partnerships

(UN SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals)

Partnership development among the various stakeholders will be key to the implementation of this social finance initiative. Adhering to the guiding principles will also facilitate better working relationships.

Shift Old Paradigms

Having new visionary leaders who are willing to build this initiative over the decade will be important. The focus needs to be on the needs of the community.

Respondents shared many potential projects

- Affordable housing – with new funding stream and national housing strategy
- Youth-employment – mentoring, homelessness, micro loans
- Employment – Good jobs, work exchange, incubator kitchen, 10,000 new jobs in 10 years
- Health – suicide prevention, travelling nurse, web-based application for mental health needs
- Food – production and marketing co-operatives
- Indigenous – self-determination, healing lodge
- Arts – Mortgage for Artists program, The Battle of the Arts, African Music Week
- Green Technologies – liquid biofuel replacement, innovative green building technologies
- IT – digital platform to match social finances opportunities with NGOs

Conclusion

What we also discovered was that there is no shortage of innovative ideas or interest in developing new services/tools. Social innovation is alive and well in the social economy sector. Key organizations were also noted for their support to development of social innovation in Ontario.

This survey confirmed the interest and opportunity that communities will work with stakeholders and investors in creating innovative solutions to the most vulnerable populations.

Authors: Denyse Guy and Carolyn Pletsch, Guy & Associates

Advisory Group: Michael Toye (CCEDNet), Liz Sutherland (ONN), Peter Frampton (LEF), Elspeth McKay (Operation Come Home), Rosalind Lockyer (PARO)

For the full report:
ccednet-rcdec.ca/OntarioSFF



Canadian
CED Network
Réseau canadien
de DÉC

59, rue Monfette, C.P. 119E
Victoriaville, QC G6P 1J8
info@ccednet-rcdec.ca
Toll Free/sans frais : 1-877-202-2268