

Designing the EIA Endowment Fund for meaningful employment and a pathway out of poverty

Moved by: SEED Winnipeg

This is a new policy resolution.

Whereas: In April 2021, the Province of Manitoba announced a \$20 million Endowment Fund to be managed by the Winnipeg Foundation. The administration and distribution of grants will be handled by the Department of Families. Annual revenue from the endowment fund will be distributed as grants to community organizations and agencies to enhance training and opportunities to support individuals toward financial empowerment, stability, and as a pathway out of poverty. Potential projects to receive grants could include wage subsidies, work placements, financial and wellness supports, wraparound or culturally appropriate pre-employment programs, and unique partnerships with employers and community supports.

Whereas: Access to meaningful employment opportunities represents a significant pathway out of poverty, including for the roughly 44,000 Manitobans on Employment & Income Assistance (EIA). However, many individuals receiving EIA may face multiple barriers to meaningful employment, making transitioning to work a challenge.

Whereas: Many CCEDNet members, particularly community organizations and social enterprises, are interested in working with the government to carry out the priority of reducing the EIA caseload and transitioning people to meaningful employment. The forthcoming endowment fund will be more effective if community stakeholders and rights holders are consulted in its design to capture the diversity of experiences on the ground of these organizations. Many members provide training and employment opportunities that help EIA recipients find employment and/or strive toward financial empowerment with proven success. A 2018 Proactive survey conducted through the Manitoba Social Enterprise Strategy found that for social enterprises who were tracking this data, almost half (47%) accessed employment through the traditional labour market following their experience within the social enterprise. They span multiple sectors, including construction, waste management, food services, childcare, renewable energy, textiles, retail, and more. It would be the hope that these organizations would be considered strong candidates for successful applications, given their strong alignment with its stated goals.

Whereas: This recommendation fits within the Province of Manitoba's own Poverty Reduction Strategy, focused on working together to improve health outcomes and standard of living,

promoting economic inclusion through employment, education and training, and making positive change through social innovation.

Whereas: This \$20 million endowment will yield a limited amount of annual funding and will not meet the training and support needs of the 44,000 Manitobans on EIA.

Whereas: Programs that support transitioning Manitobans off EIA should focus on meaningful, long term employment as opposed to short term, precarious opportunities that lead to a revolving door back to EIA. This Endowment Fund should take a Community Economic Development approach, building local wealth, job creation, keeping money within communities, and strengthening the existing capacity and assets of local communities and economies. Criteria, performance indicators, and evaluation should be geared toward this ultimate goal to ensure the forthcoming fund supports sustainable pathways out of poverty.

Whereas: This resolution fits within the theme of Ending Poverty, as it will support addressing and ending the cycle of poverty for Manitobans. If the fund is successful, projects funded will support addressing poverty in a meaningful way with a CED approach, that also contributes to the theme of Local, Fair Economies, and Community-Led Development since primarily community-based organization would benefit.

Be It Resolved That: In designing the forthcoming \$20-million endowment fund launched by the Department of Families, the Department should:

- Engage in meaningful consultation, and where appropriate co-creation approaches, with community stakeholders including social enterprises, community-based organizations, and network/member associations, to ensure a wide breadth of types of organizations and approaches are eligible to apply for the endowment fund;
- Pay special attention to social enterprises and community-based organizations as future candidates for applications given their alignment with the goals of the fund in transitioning Manitobans receiving EIA into meaningful employment, including their business model focus on workforce integration, building wealth in the community, and wraparound support for individuals facing barriers to employment;
- Ensure that the success criteria, KPIs, and evaluation of applications prioritizes long term positive outcomes for Manitobans, with a particular focus on meaningfully transitioning Manitobans that are receiving government assistance into the labour market as opposed to precarious employment.

Be It Further Resolved That: Beyond this fund, the Province of Manitoba should provide additional resources to adequately fund training and opportunities for financial empowerment for all Manitobans on EIA.

How the Resolution will be Advanced: Currently, staff members of the Network as well as staff at member organization SEED Winnipeg have joined a working group led by the Department of Families that is working to design the fund. This will be the primary avenue for advocacy over the next year. Support for this resolution will also be led directly by Network staff in direct advocacy to the Department of Families including the Minister.