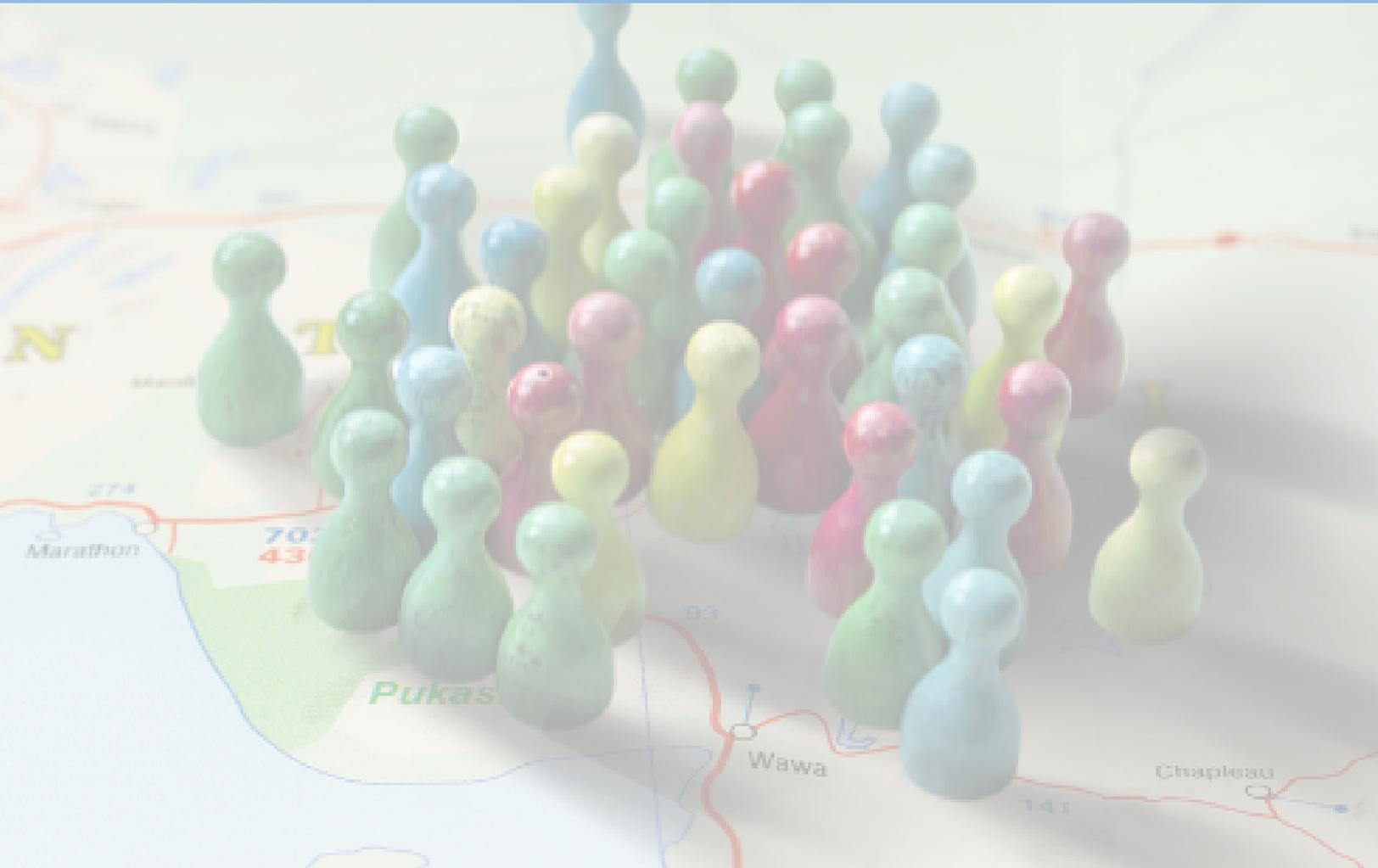


Regional Initiatives Project Call: Frequently Asked Questions



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- Melissa Sinfield

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-Sarah Leeson-Klym

March 22, 2023



Context

Community economic development (CED), social innovation, and related fields are rife with jargon and different understandings of various terms and language. Following multiple conversations with interested Regional Initiatives applicants we have realized we need to share how we relate to some of this language so it is easier for everyone to determine if this is a good fit.

The terminology in these pages might not be shared with everyone doing this work, and they are bound to change as we learn more about what works in Canada broadly, and each region specifically. But for now, they offer a glimpse into how we're understanding this emerging work of ecosystem building at CCEDNet.



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What is ‘ecosystem building’?



One of CCEDNet’s current strategies is Regional Initiatives and this work is centred around the concept of ‘ecosystem building’ at scales larger than local communities and smaller than national or federal.

For us, **ecosystem building** is all the convening, organizing, research, communications, and development work required to **connect interrelated areas of action** - so that more successful social innovation and community-led economic development can happen across the country.

Picture multiple sectors that are interconnected so well that they form a social web of support and collaboration in a region. These are the kinds of networks we are aiming at.

A strong social ecosystem is one where social purpose organizations, capacity builders, and everyone else committed to this work of community economic development are so well connected that they know who to connect with when facing each new challenge, or the next person they can ask to bridge that connection. It is about strong connections.

Some people have imagined this set of social connections to be similar to how different parts of an environmental ecosystem rely on each other to flourish and grow. It is an increasingly common frame of reference.

But that language of ecosystems doesn’t resonate for everyone and doesn’t get used the same way everywhere in Canada. We’ve tried adding ‘social’ to help folks understand this isn’t about ecological ecosystems. And we’ve tried ‘regional system building projects’ as another way to frame the work - refer to the section about [what projects](#) are eligible for more detail on specifics.

Some other descriptions that we’ve heard are:

- building networks of networks, or
- intersectoral collaboration

But all of this doesn’t necessarily clear things up!



The *Inclusive Innovation* report from the federal Social Innovation Social Finance Strategy Co-Creation Steering Group provides a helpful section explaining ecosystems and assessing them across Canada. The report says:

“Across Canada, social purpose organizations from different sectors of society are coming together and forming “ecosystems” by pooling their resources, launching collaborative ventures, and sharing skills and knowledge in order to strengthen their communities. Some of these ecosystems involve the use of a particular tool or approach, such as social finance or social enterprise; some focus on improving social and economic outcomes in a particular community, region or province; others bring together social purpose organizations working on the same persistent social or environmental issue across the country. ... Just as conventional businesses need certain conditions in place in order to become profitable, such as a favourable regulatory regime and a predictable investment environment, social purpose organizations require the right conditions and supports to stimulate innovation.” ([Inclusive Innovation, Section 3. Canada’s social innovation and social finance ecosystems: achievements and challenges](#))

The report goes on to frame ecosystem building as encompassing six interconnected areas for action: skills and capacity; funding and capital; market access; enabling policy and regulatory environment; evidence and knowledge sharing; and awareness and mobilization. We are interested in seeing projects that are convening, organizing, researching, or developing communications around these areas of action. [Chantier de l’économie sociale](#) is one example of how this is happening with the social economy in Quebec. [CCEDNet-Manitoba](#) is another example of a supportive CED ecosystem approach.

Why social innovation & CED?

Community Economic Development (CED) is the heart of CCEDNet’s mandate. You can learn more about the characteristics of CED that we’re focused on – as well as our values, role, and intended outcomes – in our [Theory of Change](#). However, CED is as varied across Canada as the issues facing communities and is closely related to fields like social economy, social enterprise, asset-based community development, and neighbourhood or community revitalization. So, we tend to use flexible language to meet members and communities where they’re at.



The federal government has been using Social Innovation and Social Finance as a key way to organize relevant work since about 2017. The Social Innovation Social Finance Strategy Co-Creation Steering Group released a report called [*Inclusive Innovation*](#) that has been guiding action and informs the program that funded this current call. In that report, the definition of social innovation and the many examples throughout feel like a good match with what we hope CED can accomplish in communities across Canada.

So, for now, we've used these two frames throughout to focus our work building regional social ecosystems.

Quick Answers



Deadline: April 16, 2023

By midnight Pacific Time.

What type of projects are you looking for?

- Regional social ecosystem building projects that are supporting CED or social innovation, which are ideally at the provincial level. Some call this “networks of networks” or “enabling social infrastructure”.
 - It is about **building relationships** and **cross sector connections**.
 - **Intersectoral**: it *links* multiple sectors, functions¹, and industries.
 - **Intersectional**: it centers the leadership of communities with diverse lived experiences.
- This funding is ideally for cross sector relationship building, not typically for work in a single sector, segment, or industry. This funding is not meant for sector service delivery (such as funding food banks).
- **Regional means** provincial/territorial, sub-provincial (such as Northern Ontario), or pan provincial/territorial (Atlantic Canada or Northern Canada).
- **Do local community projects qualify?** No.
- **What is social ecosystem building:** It is regional relationship building efforts that generate and sustain connections across sectors to build a network of support for CED.
 - This work can include convening, organizing, or networking which function to support CED and social innovation, or directly relevant fields.
 - The work can be cross sectoral or exist within sector segments. It is regional relationship building, convening, and organizing efforts.
- **Does our project align with CCEDNet’s values?** Refer to our [Theory of Change](#) to see if your values align.

¹ Functions include activities like capacity building, funding/finance, research and evaluation, and networks.

Sorting out the jargon (as best we can!)



Ecosystem

Also known as social ecosystems, social economy ecosystem, social innovation and/or social finance ecosystem. The set of connections between all the organizations and supporters that make social innovation and community economic development possible. This is made up of intersectoral, intersectional, and collaborative relationships across different efforts. Some people have imagined this set of social connections to be similar to how different parts of an environmental ecosystem rely on each other to flourish and grow. It is an increasingly common frame of reference for efforts also sometimes known as ‘sector building’, ‘field building’, or ‘networks of networks’.

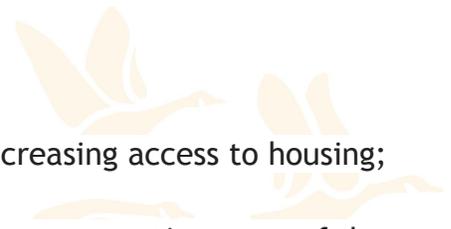
Sectors

Sectors are the broadest categories of organizations. Public and private sectors are fairly commonly understood. But there is a ‘third sector’ of non-profit, community, and civil society organizations. Co-ops and social enterprises are often referred to as sectors. And in community economic development and social innovation, there is often an interesting blend of sectors working together or creating new models.

Sub-sectors

Sub-sectors, industries, impact areas, functions, or service providers. There are many ways to identify the various elements or components within a broad social ecosystem. Sometimes these components come together in associations, coalitions, or networks. Often the language describing components or sectors are conflated or used differently in different places. For the purposes of this call for proposals, we’re not planning to support projects focused only on one particular sub-sector, but rather projects aimed at building intersectoral links (refer to intersectoral). This is how we’ve come to understand some sub-sector segments:

- Sub-sectors and industries are often also just called sectors. This might include groups working in agriculture, food services, retail, IT, renewable energy, housing, or construction, etc.
- Impact areas might include poverty reduction, affordable housing provision, settlement services, accessibility services, literacy, climate change mitigation, etc. Sometimes this also refers to work with key populations in one or multiple impact areas, perhaps working with newcomers on employment development; Indigenous, Black, or other People of Colour tackling issues of equity in the job



market or other systems; people with disabilities increasing access to housing; etc.

- Functions or service providers might focus on different supportive parts of the ecosystem like capacity builders and organizational developers, finance and funding organizations, researchers and evaluation support, etc.

Intersectoral

Collaborative action that includes or addresses multiple parts of the ecosystem, perhaps across the big sectors or multiple sub-sectors or functions. The long-term ideal is that social ecosystems bring together multiple sectors, cross-cutting industries and the non-profit, for-profit, and co-op world towards the goal of better outcomes for communities through CED and social innovation.

Intersectional

Action that centers the leadership of people or communities with diverse lived experiences. An intersectional approach recognizes that individual identity is multidimensional and varied, and can encompass both privilege and oppression that changes over time and in different contexts.

Collaborative

Action that includes more than one organization in partnerships, networks, or other coordinated efforts.

Regional

For the context of this call, regional can be interpreted as sub-provincial/territorial, pan-provincial/territorial, or provincial/territorial. The ideal scope is likely provincial/territorial but given local context, we recognize a sub-provincial/territorial or a pan-provincial/territorial effort may make sense. Essentially, it should encompass more than a local community and not be national in scope.

Systems building projects

We use this as an alternative to “social ecosystem building” projects in the hopes that the language of ‘systems building’ might be a more accessible way to frame this emerging work. Please refer to “[What is ‘ecosystem building?’](#)”

Application Details



What is the Deadline: Apr 16, 2023, by midnight PDT

Do projects have to end by March 2024?

Projects can potentially continue past the end date, especially for established collaboratives already sustaining ongoing work, but all of this funding must be spent by March 2024 and we'll want to know what progress is made by then with the funds provided. This is funded by the federal government so we must provide our final reporting to them in March 2024.

Where can I find the call?

Our official page for this call is the [Regional Initiatives: Project Call](#) page where you can find information on the call and links to the application form at both the top and bottom of the page. *If you have accessibility problems please contact Melissa Sinfield at m.sinfield@ccednet-rcdec.ca.*

What are the eligible expenses?

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to: direct project staff or contractors, meeting or event costs, communications, and administration.

I already submitted, can I make adjustments?

Yes. Anyone who has already submitted is welcome to resubmit. The updated submission will be the one we evaluate. Get in touch if you need support to do this.

Why switch from rolling intake to a deadline?

In an effort to be flexible, we began this project with a rolling intake, believing some good projects might need time to get organized. However, as we heard from interested applicants, it's become clear that the lack of a deadline creates more stress than it eases. So, we are taking the feedback in stride and adjusting our plan. Folks who have already applied are welcome to re-submit or adjust their submissions with us if this FAQ causes them to reconsider their proposal.

Expanded questions



What does “regional” mean?

For the context of this call, **regional can be interpreted as sub-provincial, pan-provincial, or provincial (or territorial)**. The ideal scope is provincial/territorial but given local context, we recognize a sub-provincial or a pan-provincial effort may make sense. Essentially, it should encompass more than a local community and not be national in scope.

We specifically chose the word "regional" to allow for a broad interpretation that can accommodate regional diversity. We recognize that different provinces and territories are very distinct and require different approaches. For instance, some folks in the sector have expressed a desire to work across provinces or territories in regions like the Maritimes or Atlantic Canada (another example would be Northern Canada). Whereas densely populated provinces like Ontario and BC may prefer to function sub-provincially (for example, Northern Ontario).

We are not funding projects in single geographic communities like a town, municipality, or neighbourhood.

Do local community projects qualify?

No, community level projects do not qualify. The project should include more than a local community or municipality. The ideal scope is provincial or territorial but given local context, we recognize a sub-provincial/territorial or a pan-provincial/territorial effort may make sense.

Do national scope projects qualify?

No. National level projects do not qualify. Projects should be provincial/territorial, sub-provincial (like northern Ontario), or pan-provincial/territorial (like Northern Canada). Part of our aim is to strengthen the cross-sector network connections between actors who must navigate similar regionally specific constraints, such as provincial policies and regulations.

What types of projects qualify?

We are not funding projects in single geographic communities like a town, municipality, or neighbourhood. Your project should be intersectional and intersectoral (multiple sectors).



This call is meant to support regional **social ecosystem building** for Community Economic Development. For instance, this could look like building a strong regional "networks of networks" where multiple sectors are interconnected, forming a web of social connections one another can draw on. It is centred on regional relationship building efforts that build and sustain connections across sectors, which can then serve to support the region's social ecosystem (i.e social infrastructure).

Please refer to [What is 'ecosystem building'?](#) and ["What does regional mean?"](#)

Do you have examples of projects?

Some common examples are below, though applicants are not limited to these ideas.

- Meetings or events that bring together a variety of social ecosystem components to plan, learn from each other, or coordinate activities.
- Coordination of a round table, collaborative, or other networking organization that is bringing together multiple parts of the social ecosystem.
- Research or consultation with the field to understand what your regional ecosystem needs.
- Projects that test or build new infrastructure and involve multiple partners to better coordinate services or support.

Advice on strengthening application?

Please remember that this funding is about strengthening **regional social ecosystem building**. You do not have to use the language of ecosystem building, but please make sure to make it clear how your project will strengthen cross-sector networks in your region. It is easy to get so focused on defining your project and emphasizing community economic development that you forget to mention the network piece.

Also, building regional ecosystems is a long-term endeavour, but this funding is very short-term. Showing how your proposed activities take concrete steps to advance an existing, long-term agenda for regional ecosystem development is welcome.

What kinds of organizations can apply?



Do we have to be incorporated?

Considering the nature of social ecosystem building, we are aware that many collectives are not incorporated. **Ideally there would be at least one incorporated entity with whom CCEDNet can enter into contractual agreements** and is willing to take on that role of accountability.

Are sector specific organizations eligible?

Sector specific projects are not eligible. However, a sector specific organization can **act as the primary organization that applies on behalf of a *cross-sector collaborative***. The key distinction is that we are not funding sector service delivery projects.

Can for-profits apply?

Yes, for-profit social enterprises can apply so long as the project fits the parameters of regional social ecosystem building and broadly aligns with our values. Please refer to our [Theory of Change](#) if you are not familiar with CCEDNet's values.

Can municipalities apply?

The project should include more than one local community or municipality. Please refer to [“What does “regional” mean?”](#) With that said, a municipality can act as the primary applicant on behalf of a collective that is provincial/territorial in scope or spans a sub-provincial/territorial region (such as Northern BC) and their project meets the criteria of regional social ecosystem building.

Can one organization submit more than one project?

Yes, but please keep in mind that funding is limited. It is extremely unlikely that two projects submitted by the same organization will be funded.

Should organizations in the same region submit one joint application or multiple individual applications?

We definitely encourage coordination! This call is all about building stronger regional networks. Also our funding is very limited, so if you are collaborators submitting separately it will create an unfortunate situation where you are competing with each other.