



The Landscape of Foundations Collaborating in Canada

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Executive summary

The Landscape of Foundations Collaborating in Canada

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Purpose of the study

The study describes the landscape of collaboration between grantmaking foundations in Canada: how and why philanthropic organizations are working together towards shared goals. This topic was selected because of the dearth of research on Canadian philanthropic organizations (Rigillo et al, forthcoming; Pole, 2016) and because collaboration has been identified as part of the trend towards strategic philanthropy.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with 23 key informants from the Canadian philanthropic sector, including 18 involved in current collaborations. The paper draws upon Canadian grey literature and a companion literature review prepared by Pole (2016) to examine the features unique to Canadian foundation collaboration. The study focused on collaborations of two or more foundations, while recognizing that other types of organizations are often part of collaborative activity involving grantmakers. A list of funder affinity groups as well as 37 examples of collaboration are provided in the report.

Findings

- Actors in the Canadian philanthropic sector have a high level of interest in collaboration.
- Collaborative activity between foundations has increased over the last ten years and has accelerated over the last five years.
- There are several vehicles or venues in which collaborations develop: organized networks of foundations; funder affinity groups; place-based collaborations; and emergent or ad hoc collaboration.
- Examples of Canadian foundation collaborations can be identified across the entire spectrum of collaborative types, from information exchange and informal alignment to pooled funding, joint venture and advocacy.
- The three most common reasons why Canadian foundations collaborate: to increase impact and better address complex social and environmental issues; to learn and improve their practice of philanthropy; and to mitigate risks.
- Actors in the Canadian philanthropic sector do not perceive funder collaboration as a panacea and instead approach collaboration with realism, offering several cautions including: good strategy does not always call for collaboration, human and financial resources required are often significant, and it is important to consider the effects of funder alliances on grantees and communities.

Future trends

Key informants predicted that collaboration among Canadian foundations would change and evolve in the following ways in the near future:

- More action-oriented collaboration among foundations versus simply information exchange
- Better, more equitable and mutual partnerships with communities and grantees
- Increased multi-sector collaboratives involving public, private and nonprofit partners
- More regional funder collaboratives
- Increased collaboration in social finance

Conclusions and insights on collaboration in the Canadian philanthropic sector

- Collaboration is part of the trend towards more strategic and connected philanthropy in Canada. Foundations active in collaboration are keen to make the best use of their role and their resources in Canadian society.

- Form follows function in funder collaboratives. We should not expect to see exact replication of collaborative models in the years to come, but instead an increase in the depth and diversity of collaborative action.

- Foundations are learning as they go. Collaboration is necessarily a dynamic practice, requiring ongoing adjustments in strategy and action. Most respondents expressed an orientation towards learning and reflection that is well suited to effective collaborative practice.

- Canadian philanthropy has a significant opportunity: foundations are taking a more active, collaborative role in society at a time when philanthropy is recognizing the need to adjust power dynamics with grantees and to work collaboratively across sectors. The Canadian experience could help us to learn:
 - What happens when foundations increase their collaborative activity while also learning to value equitable relationships with grantees and communities?
 - What happens when foundations realize the role they can play in influencing change while also realizing their limits and the importance of cross-sector collaboration?

Introduction

About the study

The purpose of this study is to provide a landscape assessment of funder collaboration in Canada, particularly an overview of how and why foundations are working together towards shared goals. The perceptions and observations of people within the Canadian philanthropic sector provide the basis for the study, which explores the prevalence, types, critiques and current and future trends related to foundation collaboration.

This topic was selected because of the dearth of research on Canadian philanthropic organizations (Rigillo et al, 2016; Pole, 2016) and because collaboration is seen as part of the trend towards strategic philanthropy (DP Evaluation, 2012; Patrizi, Thompson, Coffman and Beer, 2013; Fulton, Kasper and Kibbe, 2010). The study was focused upon collaborations that involve two or more foundations, while recognizing that a great deal of collaborative activity in the philanthropic sector involves other types of organizations.

Data was collected from 23 representatives of private, public and community foundations and philanthropic networks across Canada. Some sector experts no longer affiliated with one organization were also interviewed for their broad perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 respondents while one responded to questions by email. Interviews lasting 20-45 minutes were conducted by Juniper Glass and Nancy Pole in April and May 2016. See the interview protocol in Appendix C. Interviewees were selected through convenience sampling and snowball sampling to represent a wide range of geographic locations, scale of focus (local, regional, national) and type of philanthropic organization (see Appendix A for the list of organizations approached). A majority of key informants (18) were actively involved in collaborations between foundations at the time of the interview, either as a funder representative or as a facilitator of a collaborative. In the text of this report, quotes from respondents are followed by the type of organization or perspective they represent (*Public foundation, Private foundation, Community foundation, Philanthropic network, Facilitator of funder collaboratives, or Independent sector expert*). Table 1 describes the sample of respondents.

Interview data was collated by theme. Points of convergence, or agreement shared across several respondents, and divergence were noted during analysis. Themes and insights arising from interview data were compared with a review of the academic and grey literature on funder collaboratives, which has largely originated from the United States (Pole, 2016). During analysis, particular attention was paid to trends and changes key informants observed during the last five years regarding funder collaboration in Canada, as well as the unique context for philanthropy in Canada.

To confirm facts and collect additional information on the examples of foundation collaboration cited by respondents, we emailed follow up questions with some respondents and conducted document review of publicly available websites and reports.

Description of Respondents (n=23)

Role/Type of organization		
	Philanthropic network (large network of foundations)	3
	Private foundation	3
	Public foundation	4
	Community foundation	1
	Facilitator of a funder collaborative	8
	Independent sector experts	4
Geographic scope of work		
	National	15
	Regional	6
	Local	2
Province/territory of residence		
	BC	2
	AB	1
	MB	1
	NWT	2
	ON	11
	QC	6
Currently involved in funder collaboration?		
	Yes	18
	No	5

Table 1: Description of respondents

What is meant by collaboration?

Hughes (2005) defines collaboration as the full spectrum of inter-foundation relationships. The same author distinguishes partnership as a particular form of collaboration in which relationships are formalized and include investment of tangible resources by partners such as funds. Gibson (2009) contends that a certain kind of co-investment, in which one foundation mobilizes others to grant to the same initiative, should not be called collaboration because of the limited amount of engagement beyond the spearheading funder.

As exploratory research, the present study did not restrict the definition of collaboration beyond limiting our focus to instances where at least two foundations worked together to advance a common purpose. Furthermore, the term “partner” is used in a broad sense meaning a foundation participating in a collaboration of any type across the spectrum. Such an inclusive conceptualization allowed us to gather a broad set of examples and experiences of foundations working together. This approach also gave respondents the freedom to describe their own understanding of the concept. Some, without being prompted, questioned the meaning of collaboration. For example, one key informant has observed that:

funders are very effective at keeping each other informed around what they're doing, talking about common goals, looking for opportunities... [but] we've made very little progress on funder collaboration if what we mean is funders actually sitting together and jointly funding initiatives in a coordinated fashion... in a truly collaborative way in terms of how the funds are allocated and managed. (Public foundation)

Later in this report, several types of collaborations are identified with Canadian examples. Both the literature and the present study indicate that instances of collaboration vary in the engagement of each partner and the extent to which the partners are required to align their goals, processes and governance. Several key informants and researchers suggest that collaboration be seen as a spectrum, made up of many possible types of arrangements. One of the insights arising from the study is that “form follows function” - that different forms of collaboration can be developed and should primarily serve the function or purpose of the collaborative, and that these can also change over time. This finding echoes the findings of the grey and academic literature on foundation collaboration (Pole, 2016).

The state of foundation collaboration in Canada

High level of interest in collaboration

Partnership and collaboration is a topic of increasing interest to grantmakers in Canada. Most respondents in this study observed that collaboration is being talked about more frequently in the last five years, indicative of what one respondent called a “real appetite for collaboration in our network” (*Philanthropic network*).

There is a real interest in learning what other funders are doing. Naturally as foundation networks have grown and people have become more familiar with each other, this has provided conditions for collaboration. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

There has been a lot of conversation among foundations about how we can marshal our resources and work more collaboratively towards systems change. (Public foundation)

An emerging set of case studies on specific collaborations among foundations in Canada reflects this growing interest (McDougall, 2016; Berthiaume and Lefèvre, 2016; Pole and Community Foundations of Canada, 2015; Longtin, 2015a; Longtin, 2015b). In addition, several recent Canadian reports explore and promote the potential of funder collaboration to help address social and environmental challenges (for example Richardson, 2013). A recent report on *The Future of Freshwater Funding in Canada* recommends expanding the number of regional water funder groups and deepening the level of collaboration amongst funders (Morris, 2014). An assessment of the role of Canadian philanthropy in addressing climate change found that the two most frequent recommendations by actors in the field was that grantmakers: “scale up, pool, and focus climate grants, in order to help achieve far-reaching policy change and offer a strong, well-funded, positive voice for change” and “collectively structure their efforts for climate action, with dedicated Funder Groups and clear grantmaking strategies, coordination, and communication” (Dunsky Energy Consulting, 2015, iv). A recent survey of Canadian food-related funders found a high level of interest in collaborating with each other (4.2 on a 5-point scale), but that their perceived capacity to collaborate was lower (3.6 on a 5-point scale) (Silkes, 2016).

It is likely that, as one respondent stated, “foundations are talking more about collaboration than they’re actually doing it” (*Philanthropic network*). Some key informants were concerned that the trend toward grantmakers working together was more conversation than action, and that there was a risk that it would become a “flavour of the month” (*Independent sector expert*). The number and substantiveness of foundation collaborations that have emerged in the last ten years, however, indicate that the talk about working together may be a necessary early stage in the process towards the implementation of collaborative action across the Canadian philanthropic landscape.

Collaboration between foundations is increasing

No question, there is more collaboration, different kinds, with a greater degree of rigour and depth, than in the past. (Independent sector expert)

Collaboration among foundations is on the rise in Canada. Although this study did not collect survey data, it is likely that the occurrence of foundation collaboration is greater in 2016 than in 2010 when only 30% of Philanthropic Foundations of Canada members indicated that they were collaborating or planning to collaborate with other foundations (Pearson, 2010). The great majority of respondents in had participated in or observed multiple recent examples of funder collaboration. Examples of many types of contemporary collaborations are offered later in this report.

Some key informants pointed out that certain foundation alliances date back several decades. For example, a small group of foundations that wanted to support the nonprofit sector to develop stronger capacity and national voice co-funded the creation and expansion of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, which later became Imagine Canada.

One important sign of increased collaboration has been the significant rise in philanthropic affinity groups across Canada in the last decade, focused on specific geographic or issue areas (see Table 3 for a list of affinity groups with founding dates). Fourteen such funder working groups were identified as being founded in the last decade.

Things have changed, even rapidly and, in my view, in an interesting direction. When [our foundation] attempted to network with others in 2009, there was something not quite ripe. I think that people had an intellectual interest but it was as if it was not yet clear enough for them the added value of coming together. Today I think we are somewhere else. Foundations know each other better now. (Public foundation)

Four years ago when I researched what funder collaboratives were happening, I did not find many doing collaboration in the way that [our collaborative fund] wanted to. Now more are moving in that direction. We're getting less unique! (Facilitator of a funder collaborative)

The context of the Canadian philanthropic sector

Many key informants were quick to point out that while the number of foundations engaging in collaboration is increasing, the proportion that participate remains very low compared to the entire number of foundations. Over 10,000 foundations are registered in Canada, divided fairly evenly between private and public foundations. The vast majority of these have small budgets and are operated by volunteer boards, characteristics that reduce their capacity to partner with other organizations.

We have to remember how small the foundation community in Canada is. There is a relatively small number of foundations that are staffed and have a strategy or a set of goals that might make them think more about collaboration. (Philanthropic network)

While one key informant believed that most partnerships among foundations involved the same small group of 15 or 20 organizations, a scan of the collaborations and affinity groups identified in the study reveals a larger pool of 60 to 80 foundations. The limited number of foundations that are active in the public sphere may also favour collaboration because it is easier to get to know the actors in a field. One respondent believed that Canadian foundations that are engaging in collaboration have tended to develop a “somewhat shared value base, a similar ethos and a parallel structure,” supported by of the relative intimacy of the philanthropic sector.

Large or nationally-focused foundations, which have provided leadership in many funder collaboratives, remain a small minority in Canada. At the same time, there appears to be an increasing number of smaller foundations with professional staff that are participating actively in collaborative initiatives.

Scale is a big issue. The foundation sector has some big players, some tiny players, some medium players - operating in different universes. When a larger foundation takes leadership, there are not a lot who are in a position to play with them. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

The Canadian geographic landscape and regional diversity also provide a backdrop for funder collaboration. Several key informants had observed that, from one province or region to the next, the issues that foundations seek to address or even the style of working may be different.

In Canada, national collaboration is very hard because it is such a huge, decentralized country with a low population. The US has a bigger philanthropic sector per capita. Most foundations don't operate at a national scale and each region has its particularities. You've got a bunch of old money in Ontario, there is the francophone world, there are community foundations that are, by definition, provincial, and so on. (Public foundation)

The size and regionality of Canada is a barrier. I can try to align foundations in Montreal, Vancouver and Edmonton, but sometimes there is not a lot that they have in common. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

There may be differential tendencies to collaborate by type of funder. Community foundations and United Ways, as local leaders and as well as fundraisers, appear to engage in collaboration with a variety of organizations but, as some respondents noted, not often with each other because of their competing need to develop their donor base. Several authors have noted this trend as local-level grantmakers “have sought to position or to brand themselves in ways that give them a comparative advantage with donors” (Pole, 2016, 24). One facilitator of a funder network observed that private foundations were more interested in collaboration compared to other types of members of the network, namely, community foundations, corporate donors and government funders. This may reflect the fact that private foundations usually have a secured income base from an endowment and may have more freedom in decision making compared to other types of funders accountable to a larger set of stakeholders. One respondent also observed an increase in non-granting foundations in Canada who see their role primarily as “convening, to be a catalyst, to create collaboration” (Public foundation).

Finally, while there is growth in collaborative information sharing and action on many issue areas or sub-sectors, some may not yet be adequately covered by funder collaboratives. For example, CEGN's landscape assessment of funders addressing climate change noted that, “while there is some alignment in the work of these funders... strategic coordination among funders has been relatively rare” (Dunsky Energy Consulting, 2015). Similarly, a report on foundations' role in promoting urban sustainability in Canada noted that a key challenge is lack of collaboration among funders:

There is a lack of vehicles for facilitating learning among funders interested or involved in [the urban sustainability] sector... There is strong support among funders ... for greater collaboration and coordination among themselves. This has been discussed in informal forums across the country, but as yet, no formal plans have emerged. (Tomalty, 2013, 77, 91)

Vehicles for collaboration

How do collaborations between foundations emerge? The study identified several venues or vehicles that have supported the development of funder collaboratives in Canada.

Foundation networks

It's important to remember that Community Foundations of Canada and Philanthropic Foundations of Canada - two key foundation networks - did not exist 25 years ago: most of those individual foundations saw no benefit at all in working with each other; it took time before there was a critical mass that said: "It's important for us to know each other and work together." The creation of these and other networks has influenced collaboration. (Independent sector expert)

Key informants noted that networks of foundations have been very important in creating opportunities for foundations with overlapping interests to meet and “begin the courtship process that can ultimately lead to collaboration” (*Private foundation*). Community Foundations of Canada (CFC) and Philanthropic Foundations of Canada (PFC) are membership organizations that support capacity building and exchange among community and private foundations respectively. Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network (CEGN) has a general issue focus and membership that includes grantmakers of many types, unlike PFC and CFC, however it has played a similarly broad role in the sector of facilitating relationship and capacity building for large numbers of foundations. Each of the three networks offer annual conferences or symposia which appear to have been instrumental in increasing foundations’ knowledge of each other, which is a prerequisite for collaboration. In addition, these networks also house affinity groups of foundations focused on specific issues (see below on *Funder affinity groups*), indicating that these networks may be incubators for collaboration.

	Year Founded	Number of Members
Community Foundations of Canada	1992	191
Philanthropic Foundations of Canada	1999	129
Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network	2001	~65 including some American

Table 2: Networks of foundations

In addition, some respondents also reported that an informal group of larger Canadian foundations meet at a retreat each year to discuss their work. The purpose of this informal closed network appears to be open-ended although the relationship building that takes place likely supports the development of more focused collaboration.

Funder affinity groups

Affinity groups are formal or informal alliances of funders that focus on a specific topic or field of action. Particularly in the last 8 years, the development of affinity groups has picked up pace and will likely continue. Foundation networks such as PFC, CFC and CEGN often house or provide support to affinity groups, but many have been spearheaded outside of these networks.

Often affinity groups are started to support basic information sharing about who is doing what (and funding what) in a given field. Over time, however, most such working groups in Canada have given rise to, or are currently planning, forms of coordinated activity such as new research to build knowledge in the field, co-funding initiatives, or policy advocacy, in addition to continuing to facilitate the exchange of information among foundations. Several key informants working closely with affinity groups indicated that many of them are currently planning to increase the level of substantial collaborative activity.

Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples

The Circle was founded in 2008 by a group of private foundations that met at a PFC conference and wanted to continue sharing their learnings and work to support Indigenous people, organizations and communities. The Circle quickly expanded to include not just funders but also national and community organizations. A key purpose of The Circle is to change the way philanthropy is done, from a transaction to a relationship. "Our Indigenous communities are not charity cases, nor is philanthropy a new concept, though the word itself may not be familiar. Philanthropy, in the sense of caring for our fellow human beings, is a deeply held principle of Aboriginal peoples." (The Circle, 2010) A national Gathering is held every two years to highlight Indigenous-philanthropic partnerships and engage in mutual learning. <http://www.philanthropyandaboriginalpeoples.ca/>

A lot of the early discussions [in this funders network] were information sharing and best practices sharing. From that there has been an interest and a desire among funders to strategically coordinate. (Facilitator of a funder collaborative)

The table below describes active affinity groups. In addition, some respondents indicated that new funder groups were currently in the works, including one focused on international development and another on youth homelessness prevention.

Affinity group	Year initiated	Scale	# of funders involved	Supported by Network
Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples	2008	National	~40	
Arctic Funders Collaborative	2008	Regional / international	11 (2 Canadian + 9 American)	
Peace Grantmakers Network	2009	National/ most activity in Quebec	9	
Early Child Development Funders Group	2009	National	8	PFC
National Water Funders' Group	2009	National	~30	CEGN
International Alliance of Mental Health Research Funders	2009	International	21	
Great Lakes Funder Collaborative	2011	Regional / international	~50	
Mental Health and Wellness Affinity Group	2013	National	~20	PFC
BC Freshwater Funders Collaborative	2014	Regional	18	CEGN
Foundation Impact Investing Affinity Group	2014	National	17	CFC
BC Sustainable Food Systems Working Group	2014	Regional	3 funders + 4 nonprofits	CEGN
Sustainable Cities Funders Group	2014	National	~15	CEGN
Low Carbon Future Funders Group	2014	National	~30	CEGN
Canadian Food Funders' Group	~2014	National	~14	CFC

Table 3: Funder affinity groups

International funder collaboratives

Some Canadian-led funder groups involve foundations based in other countries. Both the International Alliance of Mental Health Research Funders and the Arctic Funders Collaborative were co-initiated and are currently coordinated by Canadian foundations. An interesting example of international collaboration in “knowledge philanthropy” is the Community Foundations of Canada’s assistance to community foundations in other countries that are adopting the Vital Signs model to report on indicators of community well-being. Local foundations in New Zealand, Brazil, Germany and the UK have used or are planning to create their own Vital Signs initiatives.

Arctic Funders Collaborative

Eleven foundations are members of this collaborative, which started meeting in 2008. At first members mainly focused on sharing information about who is funding what and discussing Arctic issues and philanthropic investment opportunities. Today AFC organizes field trips to the North for members as well as potential members to learn first hand about Arctic communities and ecosystems, sometimes pools funds from members to support important initiatives, and promotes best practices in philanthropy regarding responsive, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous and remote communities. <http://arcticfunders.com/>

Some Canadian foundations also participate in funder affinity groups with international leadership. For example, the J. W. McConnell Family Foundations is the only Canadian member of the Global Alliance of the Future of Food and of the US-led Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Funders. The Neptis and Vancouver Foundations are the two Canadian funders part of the American-led Funders’ Network for Smart Growth and Liveable Communities (Tomalty 2013). The Great Lakes Funder Collaboration is unique in that it is co-chaired by one American and one Canadian funder:

The neat thing about this [Great Lakes] Collaboration is that it is intentionally trying to be binational and there are a different set of external conditions (policies, politics, public perceptions), capacities and cultures between the US and Canadian philanthropic communities. So there’s lots of learning between funders on both sides of the border (although the Canadian contingent is a lot smaller in number and resources). (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

As the philanthropic sector evolves in Canada, it could be possible that an increasing number of foundations develop linkages with those in other countries working toward shared goals.

Place-based collaborations

Collaborations have also emerged in a particular location or region, when foundations are motivated to work together to achieve greater coordination and impact. Often place-based collaboratives involve not just foundations but a variety of funders, including public sector agencies, corporations and nonprofits who flow funds to community-level initiatives.

A leader in initiating regional-focused funder collaboratives is Tides Canada Foundation. Tides has played a leading role in starting many regional pooled funds and funder affinity groups including Arctic Funders Collaborative, the Manitoba Food, Culture and Community Fund, the NWT On the Land Collaborative Fund, the Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project and, in the past, the funder collaboration that supported conservation of the Great Bear Rainforest.

NWT On the Land Collaborative Fund

This funders collaborative was initiated in 2014, when it was realized that many different institutions in the Northwest Territory provided financial support to on-the-land programming that offered people deep experiences of their natural environment. The purposes of programs varied widely, from research and community environmental monitoring to restorative justice, education, and mental health promotion. Despite this variety, several government departments and one corporation as well as foundations decided it was worthwhile to provide financial resources to communities through a single Collaborative Fund. In addition to a pooled fund, the collaborative facilitates learning among and between funders and communities. The Fund has already launched two calls for proposals and is administered by Tides Canada. <http://nwtontheland.ca/>

City- or local-level collaborations, not surprisingly, often have participation or leadership from community foundations or United Ways. Many public and private foundations as well have a highly local focus. A more fulsome national survey of local-level collaborations would likely turn up many informal and some formal arrangements among foundations.

Quebec 'Nature deficit syndrome' initiative

Responding to growing concern that children and adults living in cities were alienated from the benefits of exposure to nature, three Quebec foundations initiated a scoping study to build understanding of the issue and options for addressing it. One of the funders is an operating foundation that is now implementing programs to increase urban Quebecers' connection to the natural world. <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/2013/the-nature-project-executive-summary-and-final-report/>

Emergent and ad hoc collaboration

Foundations sometimes come together for single actions or time-limited initiatives. Often this is in response to current affairs such as government cutbacks to services, the welcoming of Syrian refugees or the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. In addition, ad hoc collaborations can develop when staff or board members from a small number of foundations decide to work together,

Open letter by Quebec foundations

In March 2015, eight Quebec foundations, both large and small, published a letter in a major newspaper addressed to the provincial government. In response to fiscal policies of austerity and cutbacks to public services, these philanthropic organizations expressed concern that Quebec's social safety net, quality of life and social equity would be negatively impacted. This joint action resulted in media coverage and a sense of potential for a new progressive role for foundations in the public arena. The foundations continue to meet as a collective and are currently reflecting upon the role of foundations in the public sphere and future collaboration.

<http://www.ledevoir.com/non-classe/434058/cri-d-alarme-contre-la-rigueur-budgetaire>

often building on existing relationships of trust.

Syrian Refugee settlement

A large number of refugees from Syria arrived in Canada in late 2015 and 2016. The situation catalyzed several formal and informal collaborations between foundations and other funders. Community Foundations of Canada partnered with corporate donors and local community foundations to deliver financial support to communities through the Welcome Fund for Syrian Refugees. At the local level, foundations have played a leading role in some cities to coordinate funders and other organizations during this unprecedented and complex settlement process. For example, United Way of Peel Region and Fondation du Grand Montreal convened other organizations in their respective cities to discuss what each was doing and address problems arising.

Types of collaboration by form and purpose

Collaboratives have many purposes, governance arrangements and levels of integration between participating organizations. In the literature review companion to this report, Pole (2016) has provided a comprehensive list of types of foundation collaborations:

- Information exchange
- Co-learning and knowledge production
- Informal alignment, coordination and strategic co-funding
- Formal alignment, coordination and strategic co-funding
- Co-investment
- Pooled fund
- Joint venture
- Joint advocacy

The entire array of collaborative types can be found in Canada's philanthropic sector today. Canadian examples of each type are provided below.

Some respondents had observed a "sequence of increasing commitment" (Public foundation), particularly moving from information sharing among foundations to strategic coordination to pooled funding. These same respondents cautioned, however, that "there is no ascendant way" (Public foundation).

There is a spectrum of collaboration; you start with info sharing and hopefully find alignment between your interests, then start to coordinate and get to strategic alignment and then collective impact. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Put this way [the typology of funder collaboratives] looks like a sequence, but it is not exactly so. Most collaborations are very practical mixes of these things that tend to be tailored to the situation, and to the needs and skills, attributes, interests of the participating organizations. (Public foundation)

Many collaborations between foundations involve multiple purposes. In particular, respondents noted that information exchange and knowledge building were vital features of collaboratives that also involved aligning financial resources. More complex collaboratives with a large number of participating funders often had flexible models that allowed newer members to learn before committing resources while more committed or long term members engaged with each other to coordinate grantmaking. Nevertheless, the typology is useful for shedding light on the

The Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action

The Declaration is an example of advocacy that is not focused on changing government policies, but instead on increasing the level of commitment and action of actors in the philanthropic sector toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Coinciding with the closing events of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015, several foundations and philanthropic networks collaborated to write the Declaration and gather initial signatories. Over 50 organizations, mainly foundations, have signed to date.

<http://www.philanthropyandaboriginalpeoples.ca/declaration/>

many options that foundations have for designing tailored collaboration models.

In addition, there have been noteworthy recent examples of collaboration that defy these types somewhat in that their goal is to advance the capacity of the sector, such as Foundation House and The Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action (see side bar).

Foundation House

Three private foundations worked together to found this new location as a "hub for philanthropic collaboration, learning and sharing in Toronto." Established in 2015, the open concept office is now shared by Toronto staff of several philanthropic networks, foundations as well as nonprofit organizations. As one of the foundation partners stated during the interview: "Foundation House is a prime manifestation of a changing environment; it's first time in Canada that a space like this has been created in which we are not only sharing space with walls, but sharing space with no walls! This is a project about collaboration and connection. I don't think we wouldn't have seen this five years ago." <http://lawson.ca/wp-content/uploads/foundation-house-case-study-july-2016-1.pdf>

Information exchange

Purpose: "to provide ongoing venues for funders to exchange information, discuss common interests and learn about issues of common relevance" (Pole, 2016)

The information sharing and the learning end of the spectrum are the easiest to engage in for foundations. They have the least at stake. It's hard to see why it wouldn't be useful, because you just avoid duplicating. (Independent sector expert)

Information exchange among foundations has become more frequent and common over the last decade. Most respondents could identify collaborations for which a major purpose was sharing information about granting strategies, experiences in a particular field, and other knowledge that impacts foundations' work. Affinity groups in particular often start as a venue for information exchange, though they often evolve into more active collaboration over time.

The funders in the group do more than info sharing and networking, but just that has been valuable enough to keep the collaboration going. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Affinity Group for Foundation Impact Investors

This group is an informal pan-Canadian network of 17 public and private foundations that actively dedicate part of their endowments in mission-related investments. As this is relatively new practice in Canada, the basic process of getting to know about the investment approach of each participating foundation was important before considering potential collaborative work. The members of the group are now discussing how to work more closely together, such as sharing due diligence or co-investing.

Co-learning and knowledge production

Purpose: “to facilitate funders’ ongoing engagement and exploration around a defined issue or problem, usually with the goal of developing a common intellectual framework, a shared approach or agenda, and/or positioning an issue differently ... Also assists in identifying emerging issues and strategic opportunities. Can involve jointly commissioned research.” (Pole, 2016)

A growing trend is for Canadian funder groups to collectively finance research related to their field of focus, often as an early step in collaboration. Such research commonly includes surveys of actors in the field, landscape mapping of organizations and issues, and the identification of strategic opportunities for philanthropy. This type of endeavour results in a better picture of the field and can bring foundations onto the same page about what is needed in the field and the role that they could play, individually or collectively.

Another way in which groups of foundations engage in co-learning and knowledge production is to support conferences and identify and share best practices in their field of focus. Such work advances knowledge among funders but also among other actors in the field, particularly community and nonprofit organizations.

Low Carbon Futures Funders Group

This funders group emerged out of relationships built between members of Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network. Several members were already engaged in climate change granting, and realized that there may be potential to increase impact by through more strategic coordination among funders. Seven foundations thus supported research and the creation of recommendations to inform future strategies, called *En Route to a Low-Carbon Future: A landscape assessment for Canadian Grantmakers* (Dunsky Energy Consulting, 2015). The report encouraged foundations to a) review their own investment policies through a climate change lens and b) create a structure for collaborative grantmaking on climate. <http://www.cegn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EnRouteToALowCarbonFuture.pdf>

Peace Grantmakers Network

Initiated in 2009, this group of 9 foundations “aims to make peace a more widely known and better-supported area of philanthropy.” In addition to raising awareness among potential donors, the Network has organized several events to highlight knowledge and practices to prevent bullying and previously funded a coordinating position to facilitate sharing successful practices among its partner nonprofits working to prevent violence. <http://www.peacegrantmakers.ca/en/>

Informal alignment, coordination and strategic co-funding

Purpose: “to align different foundations’ resources within a common area of activity. Rationale might be to avoid duplication, increase coverage, ensure complementary support” (Pole 2016).

Examples provided by respondents indicate that informal collaborations tend to involve a small number of foundations and those that have an existing relationship, which allows for a higher level of trust. Foundation staff or board members may reach out to one another to discuss a promising opportunity because they already know each other’s philanthropic priorities and approach. The lack of formal collaborative structure can allow for each foundation to act nimbly using their own grantmaking and governance procedures to take advantage of an emerging opportunity.

Strathmere Group

When the 2015 federal election resulted in a change in governing party, several foundations concerned about climate change perceived an opportunity to advance Canada’s policy progress on the issue. Building on relationships already built through participation in philanthropic networks, they decided to each contribute to funding a government relations position to support the Strathmere Group, an assembly of the heads of eleven of Canada’s leading environmental organizations, in order that the group could make the most of this policy window.

I’m seeing more of this: when two or three foundations look at funding a particular initiative together. This is becoming more common. (Private foundation)

Informal coordination also sometimes takes place when funders making large investments in a particular field agree to keep the lines of communication open to stay generally informed and avoid duplication.

[Our foundations] are operating separately, within our own structures and processes, but collaborating in terms of: what are we trying to accomplish, to what extent can we align what we do to achieve a common goal, recognizing that we’re not at all the same?” We have highly aligned and complementary funding initiatives, but minimal overlap in terms of what we fund. (Public foundation)

Building Canada’s social innovation infrastructure

Significant financial support for the development of knowledge, organizations and training related to social innovation in Canada has come from certain funders, including Ontario Trillium Foundation and the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation. These funders communicated about their work and generally funded distinct but complementary initiatives such as Social Innovation Generation (SiG) supported by McConnell Foundation and the Ontario’s School for Social Entrepreneurs supported by OTF. As a result of these combined efforts, one respondent noted, “we have really advanced the social innovation landscape over the years.”

Formal alignment, coordination and strategic co-funding

Purpose: “to align different foundations’ resources around a shared strategy... Each partner retains ownership of its individual strategies and autonomy over its own grantmaking process... Some joint decision-making and some established rules for governance and contribution.” (Pole, 2016)

Between informal collaboration and clearly structured pooled funds, foundations sometimes participate in arrangements where they discuss and set priorities together but maintain their individual granting processes. One decision facing collaboratives considering more formal alignment is who and what the coordinating function will be. Sometimes staff of one or more foundation will administer the group; sometimes foundations will jointly fund a coordinator position. Respondents noted that both have their advantages. Similarly, formalization may create greater opportunities for participating foundations to make an impact, or it may create rigidity that limits impact.

BC Freshwater Funders Collaborative

A small group of foundations initially coordinated their grantmaking informally around a shared goal, funding grantees working to modernize the B.C. Water Act. When that goal was achieved after a few years, the Collaborative was formalized, hiring coordination staff and inviting additional members to join together. The Collaborative identified three buckets or themes - policy, people and places - with most of the participating funders concentrating in one area while increasing their understanding of how policy work, grassroots citizen action, and watershed protection all fit together. The Collaborative is now focused on ensuring effective implementation of the B.C. Water Act. 18 funding organizations currently participate, including private and public foundations, government and quasi-governmental agencies, and corporate funders. <http://www.cegn.org/connect/working-groups/bcwater/>

Trouble happens when you try to build the collective infrastructure prematurely. Often people just get as much done off the sides of their desks as they can. Too many times I have seen the creation of a structure and then people cease to be involved; everyone is relieved when a hub gets built but sometimes they don't put the continued effort it and the voluntary nature is lost. (Private foundation)

It is not a priority of many foundations to fund the expense of collaboration! This project required us to build in huge new level of flexibility to fit each foundation's needs. We were challenged by the question: how do you have both flexibility and coherence in a collaborative project? (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Vital Signs

Community Foundations of Canada's program, Vital Signs, is an example of a non-grantmaking collaboration, or "knowledge philanthropy". In 2016, about 30 local community foundations collaborated with CFC to simultaneously release their reports on indicators of community well-being. CFC coordinates the collation and sharing of data on economic, social and health indicators and provides branding and communications support to promote Vital Signs nationally. Each community foundation make a modest financial contribution and retains local control over the focus and format of their community report. www.communityfoundations.ca/vitalsigns/

Co-investment

Purpose: to support “an existing entity/ initiative; [often] one funder raises money from other donors to support a specific initiative or organization... reporting to donors is often done jointly, coordinated by the lead funder.” (Pole, 2016)

This form of collaboration emerges when one foundation takes the lead to engage other funders and coordinate an initiative. Often a foundation has particular expertise or capacity and is able to identify opportunities in a field that may interest other funders. One question is how this form of collaboration is different than fundraising. Respondents indicated that the level and type of engagement of the supporting foundations was what made for meaningful collaboration.

Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project

Led by Tides Canada and The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples, this collaborative provides grants, mentorship and capacity building for Indigenous youth to create their own community projects. An important goal is to change the transactional model of grants by “building reciprocal relationships between Indigenous youth and a community of support” that includes donors. The initiative has gradually involved additional partners that now include six foundations and a corporation. Opportunities to meet and discuss have increased mutual learning and understanding between youth and partners.

<http://oiypp.weebly.com/>

An important factor was the presence of [the lead foundation] which had the capacity, the expertise and the resources to take on the operationalization of the project. The other foundations that got involved recognized that and agreed to it. If it was six foundations that decided to get together and you have to create a new joint granting structure, good luck! I don't think that would have been possible. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

I've been impressed with how engaged the active funding partners are and how open to learning. This is the real core benefit for them to participate. Their willingness to engage in conversations with youth and other funders and come to our annual gathering as a participant as opposed to just an observer has been really huge. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Projet impact collectif, Montreal

The PIC is a collaboration led by Centraide/United Way Montreal with involvement of other private and public foundations. The initiative aims to provide tailored support in 17 neighbourhoods to reinforce the work already being done by communities to weave together their efforts for poverty reduction. In part inspired by the desire of communities to have funders coordinate themselves instead of relying on small community organizations to deal one-to-one with each funder. Foundations have committed \$21 million over 5 years towards the initiative, which also involves collective learning by the funders about community issues and change strategies. <http://www.centraide-mtl.org/en/agencies/collective-impact-project/>

Pooled fund

Purpose: “to create a funding pool from multiple sources in order to re-grant for a given area/sector/set of issues. Money is typically granted to, held and re-granted by the collaborative entity... In some cases, the whole collaborative makes decisions, while in others grant-making is delegated to an intermediary.” (Pole, 2016)

Respondents observed that pooled funds are becoming more common in Canada and they predict that more will be developed in the future. Some key informants perceived that pooling money with other foundations reduced the level of risk for each, while others saw this form of collaboration as challenging because “the governance is intensely scrutinizing. Everyone wants to maintain a key say in what happens, to keep their own authority and ideas in the centre” (Private foundation). A collaborative infrastructure is necessary and agreement reached about granting priorities and processes, which means each foundation must invest more than just dollars that will be redistributed to grantees.

Everyone likes idea of pooling funds but it requires shared administrative burden. In kind contributions from representatives of each collaborator are necessary, even more so if they didn't pitch in towards hiring a coordinator. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Northern Manitoba Food, Culture and Community Fund

Fifteen public, private and community foundations and government and corporate donors participate in the collaborative. The goal of the initiative is to increase food security and economic development in Northern Manitoba communities, including several Indigenous communities. Funds contributed by partners are pooled, generally with no restrictions and an agreement that the collaborative, following the criteria set by a group of Northern Advisors, will make annual funding decisions. The collaboration is staffed and, in addition to granting, includes several other important elements: site visits to funded communities, calls and events that bring partner communities together to learn, and community-led evaluation. The leadership of local people has been placed at the centre of the collaborative, both grantee partners and the Northern Advisors who know the communities and cultures intimately. <http://nmfccf.weebly.com/>

Joint venture

Purpose: to create “a new entity, either for the purpose of re-granting or of operating particular projects. Usually emerge out of perceived void in policy and/or practice, to raise the profile of an issue, or to develop new ideas. Often interdisciplinary or cross-sectoral. May evolve into more traditional organizations over time.” (Pole, 2016)

Although joint ventures are sometimes conceived as the pinnacle or top of the ladder of funder collaboration, they are not necessarily those that require the most integration

Canada's Ecofiscal Commission

Several foundations collaborated to fund the establishment of CEC in 2014. This new organization explores and promotes fiscal policies that for growing economic and environmental prosperity. Participating funders mobilized diverse resources, including financial, technical, and strategic, to help launch the CEC and developed a working agreement about how they will continue to interact with the CEC aside from disbursing funds. Each grantmaker has committed to multi-year funding and provides in-kind support when needed. <https://ecofiscal.ca/>

and shared governance between foundations. The fact that new organizational entities are being created can reduce the level of human resources or risk involved for each foundation. One respondent indicated that joint venture was one of the most common types of collaboratives that their organization engaged in: “This approach has the benefit of not challenging the existing governance structures of the partners involved, whereas the Strategic Alignment and Coordination type could” (Private foundation).

Joint advocacy

Purpose: “to plan, coordinate and conduct direct policy advocacy as foundations (as opposed to through funded grantees), in order to influence ... attitudes and debate about a policy issue of concern.” (Pole, 2016)

It is only recently that the potential role of foundations in public policy has been discussed in the Canadian philanthropic sector. This was the focus of PFC’s 2015 national symposium and several foundations have recently hosted or participated in national meetings on the regulation of advocacy by charities, including foundations. There are many stages at which foundations can be active in the policy process (Elson & Hall, 2016), and increasingly, they appear to be doing so in collaboration. Such actions appear to be changing the views of foundations’ role in society, on the part of foundations themselves as well as observers of the philanthropic sector.

Early Child Development Funders Group

Eight private foundations have been working together since 2009 to promote quality, publicly funded early childhood education (ECE) for all Canadian kids. The alliance supports policy change by documenting the rationale for increased public investment in ECE, polling Canadians on the issue, and monitoring ECE policies across the country. In 2015, the Funders Group took their work a step further through an open letter, published in newspapers, calling on governments to recognize the importance of ECE to building a healthy, prosperous country. The group is now also meeting with public sector decision-makers to promote an evidence-based approach to ECE policies. <http://ecdfwg.ca/en/>

[This initiative] served to reposition foundations. There were many groups that supported and congratulated the initiative who had in the past disregarded foundations. [The foundation collaborators] left feeling proud at their audacity and happy with the impact and reach that it had. We realized that when we take the risk to work together, it can have an impact. (Public foundation)

Ontario Greenbelt

“There are many good examples of funder involvement in policy development related to urban sustainability in Canada, but one of the most successful has been the joint funder-NGO effort to set up the Ontario Greenbelt. Several Canadian foundations – principally the Metcalf and Ivey Foundations but also the Neptis, McLean, and Salamander Foundations – collaborated with NGOs such as Environmental Defence and the Greenbelt Alliance over a one year period leading up to the province’s decision to create the Greenbelt.” (Tomalty, 2013) http://www.greenbelt.ca/about_the_greenbelt

Why Canadian foundations seek to collaborate

External drivers: Political-economic context and stakeholder demand

Key informants identified several external drivers that have strengthened the trend towards funder collaboration. Shifts in Canada's political and economic context have been partly responsible for the increasing attention and effort among foundations to seek alliances with each other. The 2008-09 economic recession reduced the rate of return on most foundations' endowments, driving some to reflect upon partnership with other organizations as a means to maintain the impact of philanthropic activity while the amount available for grants was decreasing. Several key informants described how measures that reduced public funding for nonprofit organizations and services provided impetus for foundations to band together, such as in 2015 when six foundations in Quebec wrote an open letter to the provincial government cautioning against cuts to social services. Canadian current affairs have also acted as flashpoints for convergence among funders. In particular, key informants mentioned that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, the change in the federal government's approach to climate change, and the Syrian refugee crisis have each given rise to new philanthropic collaborations in just the last year.

Foundations' important stakeholders may also be contributing to a demand for greater collaboration. There are signs that community partners are becoming more proactive, requesting that funders assume greater responsibility in assembling the patchwork of grants that is the revenue reality of most nonprofit organizations. In addition to more harmonized granting, funder collaboration can alleviate the burden on communities to teach funders about their context, needs and issues.

Communities wanted a relationship, not a transactional approach to partnership with funders. They said, "Now could you get organized amongst yourselves? And not put it all on us to educate each and every funder on how to work well with us? Talk to each other, get together!" (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

A turning point that inspired the collaborative was when community organizations questioned the foundation, saying that funders need to see things in a new way. We have to go a step further, beyond the current model of disjointed funding, in which it is up to each community organization to find and piece together many different sources of funding. They came to sound the alarm. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

There is also an indication that organizations such as United Ways, which rely on fundraising revenues and have seen decreases in revenue in recent years, may seek alliances with other funders to maintain or expand their support for community services. One key informant also observed that government bodies and corporate partners prefer working with alliances of organizations rather than one at a time. Thus, it may be that as philanthropic organizations

interact more with the public and private sector, they are driven to consider presenting a more common front to their cross-sector partners in order to advance shared goals.

Collaboration for what purpose?

There are many reasons why foundations in Canada collaborate. The following are the top three purposes, in order of frequency as mentioned by respondents:

1. Increase impact: improve outcomes, improve efficiency and coherence in philanthropic activity, and better address complex social and environmental issues
2. Learn and improve their practice of philanthropy
3. Mitigate risks

These motivations and goals closely reflect those described in the literature on funder collaboratives (see Pole, 2016). At the same time, certain motivations described in the literature did not emerge in this study, for example, to “walk the talk,” or demonstrate leadership in collaboration because a foundation requests of their grantees (James, 2013; Gibson, 2009), or collaboration as a response to the proliferation of foundations with overlapping interests in an issue or geographic area (Hughes, 2005, describing the American context).

Increase impact

Several studies and reports have linked foundations’ desire for greater results and more effective grantmaking to the increase in collaboration (Hughes, 2005, GEO, 2014; James, 2013; Morris, 2014).

In this study, strengthening positive outcomes of philanthropic activity was the most common reason cited for why funders consider and undertake work together. Respondents perceived that pooling or aligning their grants could lead to better results. They also indicated that coordinating and contributing non-financial resources - such as power, influence, organizational capacity, knowledge and networks - could lead to better outcomes for society compared to when foundations work in isolation.

A lot of foundations are now understanding that they would have more impact and go further, make a significant difference in a social problem if they worked together more.
(Philanthropic network)

Instead of everyone doing their separate mini-thing, we are coming together around a common goal. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Better address complex issues

The literature indicates that more foundations are realizing the limits of their individual contributions in the face of social and environmental challenges. In fact, this is the most common incentive to collaborate cited in the literature (Pole, 2016). One way that foundations seek to improve their response to complex issues is to align their resources, knowledge and

action strategies with those of other organizations, including funders (Walker, 2004; Fulton, Kasper and Kibbe, 2010; Gibson, 2009; Huang and Seldon, 2015; Nolen, 2015).

This trend was identified by one quarter of the key informants in the study when asked why foundations seek to collaborate. Deepening understanding of complex issues combined with a more realistic sense of the contribution that can be made by each foundation seem to support the movement towards partnership with other philanthropic actors.

A major driver of the interest in collaboration has been an awareness that the problems that foundations are taking on are complex; by definition you can't act alone if you want to take them on, not if you want to make a difference. And so foundations have been searching for ways to do this, to structure working together. (Philanthropic network)

A key motivation for creating [this collaborative] was that funders realized they did not have a clue about the region or how to operate in such cross-cultural complexity. They realized: we don't have the staff or knowledge to do this on our own; if we worked as a collaborative, it would just make sense. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Increase coordination

Several respondents identified efficiency and coherence as an objective of funder collaboration. Most foundations make granting decisions separate from each other, and organizations seeking grants must develop relationships with each potential funder. In a given field or geographic area, there is often little coordination between these discrete investments and interactions. Respondents believed that steps such as problem definition, objective setting, granting and evaluation would be more efficient, or at least more coherent, when done in collaboration with other foundations.

The motivation to collaborate came partly as a reaction to the fragmentation of the field, the sense that so much work is marginal because people are working at cross-purposes, tackling pieces of the problem but no one is looking at the overall picture. Out of this frustration grew the belief that surely we could get better results if we try to coordinate our efforts. (Independent sector expert)

I think we could become much more efficient in the use of our funds. But more importantly I think we could drive to greater impact if we were all much more aligned and on the same page in terms of what we are really trying to accomplish. How do we define the success of those initiatives, and how do we really work together to support the grantee organizations that we're investing in so that they can be as successful as possible? (Public foundation)

Combine strengths

A number of respondents noted that funder collaboratives in Canada often allow for different roles and levels of involvement by each participating organization. They identified this as a challenge to manage, but as an important strength if managed well. Leveraging the diverse capacities of each foundation can lead to better outcomes. For example, the financial resources of a large foundation allow for substantial investment by the collaborative, while the dexterity

and flexibility of another foundation allows the collaborative to respond quickly to new needs in the field.

When funders build relationships and understand the field they are trying to impact, they can say, these are constraints my organization faces, this is our strength; others can say, ok we don't face those barriers, so we can take on this piece. There is a real diversity in types of funders out there: small, large, those that have staff, some that are just family driven, some have an extensive process to review grants, others are very nimble. I have seen in practice how that diversity can be a real strength. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Some foundations only want to support policy advocacy. Others won't touch policy with a ten-foot pole. Knowing what others are good at, you can usually put together a good coalition. (Private foundation)

Facilitate evaluation

A review of the role of philanthropy in promoting urban sustainability found that “each funder in this field has a different set of indicators to define success in its funding programs. This makes it more difficult for funders to find agreement on what works well and why” (Tomalty, 2013, 77). Facilitating evaluation is one of the reasons why Canadian foundations may be favouring working more closely together in a given field or geographic area. Two respondents in this study believed it was easier to assess the impact of a combined philanthropic investment than a single grant, because of the increased size of grant as well as coordination between funders that results in more coherent investment.

Through this collaborative funding approach, we are creating the conditions that allow us to evaluate the impact of our support in one community [versus when funders are granting independently]. While there are still external social and economic factors that influence the community, because we are several foundations that invest together, we can have a reasonable sense of whether we have contributed to the change in the community. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Learn and improve their practice of philanthropy

Sometimes foundations agree to do something together for a while because it helps each become smarter at what they do. (Public foundation)

The literature on funder collaboration describes the value added when foundations share knowledge and expertise. Working together increases foundations' access to each others' knowledge and skills as well as networks of organizations and individuals working in a given field, which can lead to a better understanding of the issue or community and better strategy (James, 2013; Tomalty, 2013; GEO, 2014; Morris, 2014). As Tomalty notes in a Canadian context, in fields that “include some seasoned players as well as relative newcomers, it is important that funders share knowledge to help each other avoid common pitfalls and reinventing the wheel. Participating in a collaborative network is a good way to enhance social learning and improve the overall effectiveness of grantmaking” (2013, 92).

Sharing expertise and learning together

The 23 respondents interviewed for this study demonstrated a keen interest to advance the practice of philanthropy in Canada; they each expressed a desire to do their work better. They frequently identified the benefits of peer exchange to gain creative ideas, get introduced to new opportunities and improve their skill in grantmaking.

Several respondents described how foundations are often motivated to join a collaborative because they are seeking more knowledge in a field. Foundations that are interested but not yet well-informed about a given issue or region recognize that they can benefit from their peers' expertise. Some key informants also described funder collaboratives as venues in which foundations can experiment and gain experience in different ways of doing philanthropy, such as having more input from communities and grantees in determining strategy or funding systems change activities in addition to programs addressing symptoms. Three respondents observed that foundations involved in collaborations often found highly valuable the opportunity to "learn by doing" together.

The members [of the collaborative] are sharing approaches as grantmakers: how to be responsive and invest in this region responsibly. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

The collaborative was an opportunity for [the other funders] to benefit from the expertise that our foundation already had. They very much want to learn. They will now be able to read with greater understanding the funding requests that they receive and to have a more strategic approach. They are developing a more refined understanding of community issues. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Learning together is important. This resonates with a lot of the collaborators. They especially want to know how to be good partners to rural and northern communities and what relationship development really means in Indigenous communities. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Canadian foundations, if they have employees at all, are usually supported by a small professional staff. One respondent indicated that working with other philanthropic organizations helps fill the need of foundation staff to exchange with colleagues: "Many program directors have been working on their own in isolation. It is great for them to be able to work with others. We also realize that it's going to be a lot more fun to collaborate!" (Private foundation)

Better support grantees

The relationship and support offered to nonprofit and community partners is a central aspect of the practice of philanthropy. Several key informants described a desire to improve supports for and reduce burdens on grantees through working with other funders. This was most common of foundations seeking to develop partnerships with Indigenous communities but was also mentioned regarding efforts to address environmental and poverty issues. Funder collaboratives may be better able than single foundations to respond to what nonprofit organizations and communities appear to be requesting, such as more consistent or core funding, simpler or more

harmonized application or reporting requirements, support for strategies that address root causes, and a deeper understanding of the issue context on the part of funders.

We aim to come together as a community of funders to make sure that this emerging coalition [of nonprofit organizations working on a specific issue] has enough resources. How do we make sure [grantees] do not have to jump through all of our respective hoops to access funding? (Public foundation)

One of the things that the funders expressed interest in about [the collaborative] and what made it unique was that it was more than just a traditional granting program. They really valued the opportunity to learn from the process and use that to inform how they support Indigenous youth. (Public foundation)

Mitigate risks

Several authors have noted that collaboration appears risky for many foundations because adopting a common objective and aligning resources with other funders would require a change of usual practice and a potential loss of independence (Bartczak, 2015; Hughes, 2005). On the other hand, when foundations are seeking to enter an unfamiliar field or test out a new approach, working together could actually be seen to limit risk by spreading it among several organizations. The type of collaboration appears related to the level of risk incurred, or risk mitigation provided. A review of the literature on foundation collaboration noted that 'light-touch' forms of collaboration, such tend as shared learning and informal alignment, to be seen and experienced as less risky than deeper forms of collaboration, such as pooled funds and joint ventures (Pole, 2016).

Six respondents in this study specifically identified risk mitigation as a motivation for foundations to collaborate. For example, one of the Canadian collaboratives identified by respondents brings together foundations that practice impact investing, a relatively new and potentially risky approach in philanthropy. The exchange of information and experiences regarding mission-related investing assists foundations to make better decisions and, as the collaborative considers the possibility of co-investing they may further limit risk.

The collaborative serves as a safe entry point. The foundations can take time to learn about the opportunities and the funding gaps. It poses a lower risk for each funder [than if they were to make grants on their own]. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

I have seen that collaboration can enhance level of due diligence, if foundations share the due diligence they have already done. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

The funders took a tentative step in this first phase [of the collaborative]. It was not a huge amount of money, not a great risk at first. We had to convince people to leap a bit and it helped that we could spread risk around. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Thus, funder collaboratives are perceived by many actors in the philanthropic sector to be a relatively safe means for foundations to become active in new areas or test innovative approaches while remaining accountable to their boards and ensuring their funds contribute to positive outcomes.

Cautions and critiques of funder collaboration

We have to be careful about romanticizing collaboration. It is not always the better choice.
(Private foundation)

Respondents were generally positive about the role of collaboration in improving the contribution of foundations to the public good. Half of respondents also offered critical reflections to qualify their support for collaboratives.

Do not underestimate time and resources required

The discourse regarding funders working together often asserts that “collaboration is key to getting more from less” (Murray, 2013). Several respondents, however, challenged this notion of the inherent efficiency of funder collaboratives. In the short- or medium-term, working in concert with other philanthropic organizations often takes more time and human resources, a point corroborated in the literature (DP Evaluation, 2012).

The assumption is often that collaboration is a more efficient way of operating, it will save us money or at least it's going to have a greater impact for the money we commit. (Independent sector expert)

Don't be naive about how much time it's going to take to do it well. Collaboration takes a lot of time; investing in developing trust and confidence takes time. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Strategy does not always call for collaboration

Collaboration is a strategic decision. Several respondents noted that certain factors, such as the timeliness of an opportunity and the wealth of expertise already within a foundation, can favour the choice to go it alone. Indeed, collaboration is “not always a productive option when radical innovation is required (Mulgan, 2016), or when an organization needs to be able to make fast and flexible funding decisions to take advantage of windows of opportunity and influence” (Pole, 2016, 26).

I am reminded of the proverb, “if you want to go fast go alone; if you want to go far go with others.” This is true, and sometimes a foundation does want to move more quickly. (Private foundation)

There are times when foundations are better off going on their own, for example, when it is a time sensitive issue; when the foundation has a clear objective already; or when it has a depth of expertise that no one else has. We have to acknowledge that collaboration is not an either-or proposition. It's all about context: can we as Foundation ABC better achieve goal by ourselves or work with others? (Independent sector expert)

Lowest common denominator effect

Two key informants had experienced a reduction in the quality or innovativeness of an initiative when philanthropic organizations tried to work together, because the group of organizations attempted to respond to the concerns of the most conservative partners. This has also been noted in some of the literature on foundation collaboration (Mulgan, 2016).

There's a real trade-off to collaboration – there have to be compromises and that can lead to a loss of independence of theory, thinking, approach. There can be a drive to the lowest common denominator in which riskier approaches get sacrificed. Collaboration can squeeze out innovation. That's one of the costs that rarely gets recognized. (Independent sector expert)

Consider impact on communities and grantees

Very often funder collaboration is looked at from the point of view of the grantmaker; it doesn't necessarily look the same way from the point of view of the recipient. (Independent sector expert)

As noted earlier, the top reason why Canadian foundations undertake collaboration with each other is to improve outcomes. Several respondents questioned, however, whether funders working together was always better for the communities and grantees whose work funders rely upon to achieve impact. First, from the perspective of nonprofit organizations, it can be challenging to understand the granting process when foundations work together: do they apply to one, to all or to a pooled fund? Are the foundations' priorities changing from what grantees have come to expect? Who is accountable? One respondent observed that sometimes in the early phase of a collaboration between foundations, the participants themselves may not have clarity about such processes, let alone communities seeking philanthropic partnership.

For outside organizations like grantees, collaborations can be confusing because there is not always transparency around how it works. Who's driving it? How are decisions being made? (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Sometimes funders show up as a group, for example, in a capacity-strapped Indigenous community. It is a good idea on one level to not overburden the communities by everyone making a separate trip, but the risk is creating a misunderstanding that the funders are all working collectively - when it comes to things like how to present grant proposals. If the collaboration is half-baked cake, funders may be reticent to talk about it, or may not know yet how they want to work together. (Public foundation)

Several respondents also caution that funder collaboratives can reinforce a misguided view of foundations' role as leaders and drivers of change initiatives, rather than equitable partners with other stakeholders. When philanthropic organizations become too directive about strategy it can cause distortions or imbalances in a field. As one key informant pointed out, considering funder collaboration raises the question of the role of foundations: "Do foundations have to be the driving force? Should we play a supportive role? What is a foundation's role in relation to other actors in the field?" (*Public foundation*).

There's a kind of elitist approach that is part of how foundations operate generally. We have to get away from, "We foundations are going to get together to solve your problems more effectively" to: "We can't solve your problems without you, and therefore we have to figure out how we work with you to develop a common perception of what the problem is that we're trying to address." That's a different order of collaboration. That's the big challenge facing funders and foundations now. (Independent sector expert)

If a big funder comes in and creates a collective impact initiative, even with all the best intentions it is potentially quite problematic. A big amount of money is announced and put on the table. The funder announces the results it wants to achieve and how we want to help everyone to do this, which means: how we want you all to do this, and here's the funder-designated lead who is going to make sure you all do it properly. (Independent sector expert)

When foundations have competing interests

A few respondent also described how the involvement of foundations with significant resources can restrict space for smaller foundations to participate in projects of common interest, for example in impact investing:

Are we working in collaboration or competition in the social finance sector? Larger foundations could have the ability to push out smaller philanthropic actors from the field by offering better interest rates. But that would have the effect of eliminating competition. Smaller foundations could leave the space unless they can find their own niches. (Public foundation)

Some respondents who work with locally-focused philanthropic organizations such as community foundations and United Ways identified that there are sometimes competing interests that act as barriers to meaningful collaboration. Especially for local funders that must fundraise, they are motivated to maintain their unique niche or positioning in order to attract donors, which can make it awkward for them to work together on joint initiatives.

There is an inherent rivalry between United Ways and community foundations, based on a systemic factor driven by the branding of both organizations and the need to take some credit. Both are fundraisers driven by similar imperatives of competitive positioning vis-à-vis donors. And this is one of the biggest barriers to collective impact initiatives in the first few years: could you get the organizations at the table away from the need to take credit? (Independent sector expert)

Even non-fundraising foundations can still be concerned by the need to get recognition of their specific contribution.

I have been involved in collaborative efforts where one of the partners claimed success as if no one else was involved. It's a question of attribution: in a collaborative, it's more difficult to demonstrate individual foundations' impact; At the end of day, the board of each foundation will want to know: what did we achieve? (Independent sector expert)

Signs of a maturing philanthropic sector

The trend towards greater funder collaboration interacts with and is supported by several other shifts in the Canadian philanthropic sector. Taken together, as one respondent stated, we seem to be witnessing “the maturing of the Canadian philanthropic space” (Facilitator of funder collaboratives). There appears to be a growing number of foundations that are taking an active role in the public sphere and increasing the sophistication of their strategies and approaches, including collaboration.

Professionalization

While the large majority of registered foundations in Canada do not have paid staff, anecdotal evidence indicates the philanthropic workforce is growing. Key informants noted that foundations that explore and engage in collaborative action nearly always have professional staff; without those human resources, collaboration may not even be considered. Some respondents in this study noted that facilitating partnerships between foundations requires a great deal of skill and that there are more individuals being hired specifically to fulfill that role, several of whom were interviewed as part of this research. As one respondent stated, “this is a niche professional area emerging in Canada” (Facilitator of funder collaboratives). Moreover, a small community of practice was recently convened of professionals who manage Canadian funder collaboratives. Located across Canada, they meet together virtually to discuss and share learnings from their work.

Strategic outlook and approaches

The trend towards collaboration among foundations is interwoven with the trend toward more strategic philanthropy that has greater focus and clarified goals. Respondents concurred that Canadian foundations “are becoming much more thoughtful regarding root causes and changing fundamentals as opposed to symptoms” (Public foundation). The means to achieve their goals are also expanding beyond short term or discrete grantmaking to more nuanced or complex approaches.

There has been an evolution in philanthropy from traditional approach (responsively funding projects and organizations that request it) to a more strategic philanthropy that is seeking impact, that is seeking to act not only with money but with other resources as well. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

There's much more openness now among foundations regarding trying new approaches and taking risks. (Independent sector expert)

The only valid approach to complex issues in society is that you've got to get more people working on them. You've got to reduce competition, create more synergy. The solutions are not known in advance, they emerge out of collaboration. (Independent sector expert)

Experience to stand on

Many affinity groups and collaborative efforts in Canada are relatively young. Respondents pointed out, however, that some collaborations in which foundations have been involved have existed for long enough to provide the sector with solid experience and learnings about how to sustain effective partnerships. A sign of this body of practical knowledge are reports of funder collaboratives being called upon frequently to share their experience with philanthropic organizations beyond their partners, to share their stories of success.

Certain regional examples [of collaboration] are maturing to the point where people pull their heads out of the weeds and look around to see where they fit in a national or global picture; often it takes 5, 10 or even 20 years of toiling away at focused regional collaboration and then people want to take stock. We're reaching this point in this country, which I think is great.
(Public foundation)

[A foundation] had the original idea to bring actors together for the [pooled fund]. We demonstrated art of the possible by showing how it had been done elsewhere [in other regions] to get interest and buy in. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Values-driven leadership

Five respondents referred to the values of leaders and those working in philanthropic organizations when discussing how collaboration is growing and changing in Canada. Key informants are seeing philanthropic leaders be driven by a commitment to innovation and impact instead of individual career or organizational interests. As one stated, “we are becoming more issues focused as a sector, willing to leave our logos and egos at the door.” Another key informant observed that Canadian foundations are “much more collegial than in US. In the US, if you’ve got one of the big players, you can’t get the other large foundations to work with you. I don’t think we have in Canada that sort of territorial, proprietary approach” (Private foundation). A generational shift among people leading foundations and funder collaboratives was also cited as an influence that favours increased collaboration.

There’s been a shift in perspective among some of the more important players that has really helped move things along. The efforts of particular leaders in the sector who have been big on looking at ways to collaborate have lead to more foundations working together. (Public foundation)

Foundation leadership in Canada is pretty darn impressive, smart, caring. They are often values-driven leaders thinking about how they can make a change with the resources they have. They are starting to become much more entrepreneurial. They are people who are truly more flexible in their approach and are willing to come around to other side of table [with grantees and partners] rather than rely on a transactional model of philanthropy. (Public foundation)

There is a generational change happening; the old guard is slowly turning over. I am observing more and more people in 40s and less in their 60s at sector events. I don’t have a primordial youth-is-better perspective, but more younger people are used to having

collaboration as an imperative. The impetus to find ways to multiply what they are doing is primordial - instead of "what can our foundation do" asking, "what can our foundation get involved in, participate in..." I'm seeing that attitude a lot. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

Interaction with international philanthropic actors

Another sign of evolution in the Canadian philanthropic sector is an apparent increase in foundations' interaction with American foundations, especially on issues of shared geographic interest such as sustainability in the North or the Great Lakes. Some respondents mentioned that they looked to the United States for examples of how to develop their collaboratives in a specific issue area, such as homelessness prevention. Three respondents indicated that Canadian foundations are often leading their American peers in such collaboratives when it comes to developing meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities.

Somewhat less frequent but of interest to note, foundations from other Western developed countries appear to be both influencing and being influenced by Canadian philanthropy. For example, a foundation from London, England, recently contacted the funders involved in Montreal's *Projet impact collectif* to learn more about the process.

American funders that are engaged in cross-border collaboratives sometimes observe to Canadian funders, "This is really cool what's happening in Canada, this story needs to be told." (Public foundation)

A number of US and now New Zealand foundations are contacting Foundation House, wondering how we are doing it, asking for advice. This seems to be the first time this type of shared space has been built with several foundations. (Private foundation)

Another trend is non-Canadian funders working in Canada, sleeves rolled up, in collaboration with Canadian funders, in an increasingly knowledgeable and respectful way. They are being welcomed and invited into Canadian-led collaboratives. Canadian funders don't want to be subjected to imposition; it requires sustained relationships and humility by international funders. (Public foundation)

On the horizon: Future trends for foundation collaboration

The following were the future trends most frequently cited by key informants regarding collaboration involving multiple foundations.

More action-oriented collaboration

There is not a lot of getting together just to talk anymore; there is strong bias to action and this will grow in the future. (Public foundation)

It is no longer tenable to consistently invite people to events or meetings for which there is no concrete outcome. If the meeting is not relieving the pressure they feel in their workloads and towards achieving their goals, they ask, where is the value for me? We're interested in: how could we create more good together? (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

This is a trend: we now need to move to the next step much more quickly. I sense a lot of impatience from myself and others. We need to move beyond just information exchange. We have to do concrete stuff together: how do we roll up our sleeves and do something meaningful? (Private foundation)

Better partnerships with communities and grantees

Given context of where Canada is regarding reconciliation, it is important for funders and philanthropy, if they are going to be engaging Indigenous peoples, to think about what they might need to do to become more aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. I think this calls for them to audit their own systems about how they do or don't work well with Indigenous communities. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

One approach I am working on is to have funders and nonprofit leaders trying to work together to come up with strategies. This is not easy because there is both a knowledge imbalance (nonprofits have more) and financial resource imbalance (foundations have more). (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

If you're talking about collaboration, it can't just be the people who are providing resources. You have to put a value on the people who are executing the program or receiving the funds and regard them as much a part of the collaboration as the funders. It really opens up the question of: what kind of collaboration is really healthy? What kind of relationship between grantor and grantee is desirable? (Independent sector expert)

Increased multi-sector collaboratives

We have funder collaboratives but getting other opinions, from "unlikely bedfellows", getting other types of stakeholders into the mix is important as well. (Philanthropic network)

If you want to take it to the next level, you have to involve a wider range of funders, not just those in the club, and grantees, communities. You have to get out in the field. The learning that needs to inform philanthropy should include academic research, social science, and in addition it's got to involve relationships and practical experience in communities and on the ground. (Public foundation)

I think we will see more multisectoral engagement - involving funders, community organizations, municipalities, provincial and federal policymakers. (Independent sector expert)

More regional collaboratives

Given that the size of Canada and regionality is a barrier, I think regional collaborations may be a trend in the future. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

An emerging trend is for regional collaboratives to learn from each other. National enabling organizations such as CEGN and PFC can create the conditions for the sharing of those regional stories. (Public foundation)

“There appears to be interest in collaborating [regionally]... Many of the issues related to urban sustainability are regional in nature and lend themselves to regional solutions, such as urban sprawl, the transport system, greenbelts, and local food systems. Collaborating at this scale can help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of grantmaking ... with different funders concentrating on different pieces of the puzzle. This approach would maximize the impact of funders with limited resources who need to focus their interventions on a limited number of issues and at a limited scale.” (Tomalty, 2013, 92)

Increased collaboration in social finance

I think there will be increasing coordination in social finance in the near future. It is so hard to do by yourself, so it lends itself to collaboration. (Facilitator of funder collaboratives)

There is a desire to leverage our assets for social change - to do more in terms of getting housing built; our endowment assets are underutilised. (Public foundation)

There will be more collaboration between the philanthropic sector and the social finance sector. Until now, there has been very little collaboration between philanthropy and the social economy and social finance. Slowly this is an area that is opening up. There is a need for financing in these sector currently so philanthropic organizations represent a new possibility. For foundations, there is a desire and an opportunity there to maximize their impact. (Public foundation)

Future research

This study has been focused upon the perceptions of funders and observers within the philanthropic sector. During the research the following two complex research questions emerged that would be fruitful areas for future stud. It should be noted that case studies and some research on grantees' perspectives exist from other jurisdictions but there is a gap in Canadian research and knowledge sharing.

Key questions for future research:

- What outcomes does collaboration produce? Does it achieve the benefits that foundations are seeking when they take part in collaboration?
- How do grantees, communities and nonprofit partners perceive funder collaboratives? What is their experience engaging with foundations who are working together?

In addition, regular surveys of foundations would help fill data gaps, not only about the prevalence and types of collaborations in which they engage, but other aspects of philanthropic practice as well.

The following were topics for future research that foundations identified as potentially useful to their work:

- In-depth case studies on Canadian funder collaboratives
- Identifying success factors and promising practices in philanthropic collaboratives
- Examination of the infrastructure of funder collaboration in Canada, particularly philanthropic networks and affinity groups: how do they create the conditions for collaboration?
- Explore ways that foundations can create mutual partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations
- Explore multi-sector collaboration between foundations and governments, foundations and private sector, and foundations' role in multi-sector initiatives

Conclusions: Insights on collaboration in the Canadian philanthropic sector

Collaboration is part of the trend towards more strategic and connected philanthropy in Canada

The Canadian experience indicates that collaboration between foundations is, indeed, closely related to their interest in having a greater impact through their philanthropy. Foundations active in collaboration are keen to make the best use of their role and their resources in Canadian society. The key reasons why Canadian foundations work with each other are to better address complex issues, improve outcomes of grants, increase coordination and improve their practice of philanthropy including support provided to grantees.

It clear that foundation collaboration is a burgeoning area. While we do not have a baseline for comparison, the perspectives of people who have been active in the field for the last ten to twenty years indicate that the number of foundations taking part is growing substantially. Many

foundations are taking a more active and public role in their fields of interest and increasing the sophistication of their strategies and approaches, including collaboration.

Furthermore, despite this study's focus on interactions between foundations only, many Canadian collaborations involve other types of actors as well as philanthropic organizations: communities, leading nonprofits, researchers, public agencies, and corporate donors. As foundations in Canada seek to be more strategic and impactful, they realize the need to work not only with each other but also with other stakeholders and leaders working for the public good.

Form follows function in funder collaboratives

The purpose of each initiative, the people and organizations involved, and the external environment in the field of action are factors in determining the design of a funder collaborative. In addition, many of the examples of collaboration that emerged in this study evolved in phases, with different forms of governance and coordination required at each phase based on changing purposes and participants. A common trajectory is for basic information sharing - talking about who is doing what - to evolve into consideration of what is needed in the field, such as research and landscape mapping of organizations working on a specific social or environmental issue. From there, collaboratives often start doing more together, such as pooling funds or joint advocacy. That said, many collaborations move quite quickly to action, and some are one-time rather than long-term engagements. The typology of collaborations used in this study is useful to unearth different forms and purposes, but the practice of collaboration rarely fits just one form. Respondents were realistic and sought not a perfect form or model of collaboration, but the most appropriate form for any given moment and set of circumstances.

Each social or environmental issue, and the collaborations set up to help address them, are necessarily unique. We should not expect to see exact replication of collaboratives in the years to come, but instead an increase in the depth and diversity of collaborative action.

Action and reflection: foundations are learning as they go

Many respondents described their collaborations in terms of pioneering or learning as they go. In part this is because there are not yet many Canadian examples to draw upon when mapping out a new collaborative. At the same time, many respondent described how useful it was to learn from others' experiences. Some looked explicitly to the US to get good ideas about how foundations could work together while others had taken part in meaningful learning and exchange with other Canadian funder collaboratives. Since collaboration is a necessarily dynamic practice, the learning and reflection orientation that many respondents expressed is well suited to the ongoing adjustments in strategy and action that the practice demands.

Coming of age? Opportunities for evolution in the Canadian philanthropic sector

A major potential pitfall of foundation collaboration, and of philanthropy in general, is that funders can develop an unrealistic sense of what they can achieve on their own, or of their role as leaders or drivers of change - in a single project or indeed in society.

There is a general perception in the Canadian philanthropic sector that it has “lagged behind” that in the US. Canadian foundations have, until recently, generally worked in isolation and out of the public eye, and not communicated clear strategic objectives. Seen another way, the fact that Canadian philanthropy is maturing now, at a time when so much has been learned about the opportunities as well as the pitfalls of foundations taking a more active role in society, it may be an ideal period for foundations in Canada to “come of age.” In addition, several respondents described what they have learned about working respectfully and humbly with Indigenous communities and organizations; this is likely to be a growth area in an era of truth and reconciliation about Canada’s colonial past and present.

The Canadian experience could help us to learn:

- What happens when foundations increase their collaborative activity while also learning to value equitable relationships with grantees and communities?
- What happens when foundations realize the role they can play in influencing change while also realizing their limits and the importance of cross-sector collaboration?

It may be that contemporary Canadian foundations are currently well-placed to “do philanthropy differently.” Time will tell if foundations strengthen their ability to empower, support and learn from communities and grantees, and to engage meaningfully in collaboration with other sectors and subsectors. Given the substantial change seen in the sector over the last two decades, particularly over the last ten years, it is likely that the pace of evolution in foundation collaboration practice will only pick up.

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Appendix A: Organizations approached to participate in study

Arctic Funders Collaborative
BC Water Funders Collaborative
Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network
Catherine Donnelly Foundation
Centraide du Grand Montréal
The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples
Community Foundations of Canada
Fondation Beati
Fondation Chagnon
Fondation du Grand Montréal
Lawson Foundation
Max Bell Foundation
McConnell Foundation
Northern Manitoba Food, Culture and Community Fund
NWT On the Land Collaborative Fund
Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Philanthropic Foundations of Canada
Rideau Hall Foundation
Tamarack, an Institute for Community Engagement
Tides Canada
United Way/Centraide Canada
and several independent sector experts

Appendix B: Examples of collaborations

The following are examples of foundation collaboration identified through the key informant interviews or from the grey literature on foundations in Canada. This list is not exhaustive and most certainly leaves out a large number of local level collaborations that are not as prominent in the grey literature.

Examples of foundation collaboratives

Arctic Funders Collaborative
BC Freshwater Funders Collaborative
BC Sustainable Food Systems Working Group
Canadian Food Funders' Group
Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples
Early Child Development Funders Group
Foundation House
Foundation Impact Investing Affinity Group
Great Lakes Funder Collaborative
International Alliance of Mental Health Research Funders
Low Carbon Future Funders Group
Mental Health and Wellness Affinity Group
National Water Funders' Group
Northern Manitoba Food, Culture and Community Fund
NWT On the Land Collaborative Fund
Peace Grantmakers Network
The Philanthropic Community's Declaration of Action
Sustainable Cities Funders Group
Vital Signs

Examples of initiatives supported through foundation collaboration

4Rs Youth Movement
A Way Home: national coalition to prevent youth homelessness
ArtReach Toronto
Building Canada's social innovation infrastructure
Canada's Ecofiscal Commission
ClimateSpark Social Venture Challenge
Community Food Centres Canada
Community Fund for Canada's 150th
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development

Quebec 'Nature deficit syndrome' project
Projet impact collectif, Montreal
Ontario Greenbelt advocacy
Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project
Quebec 'Nature deficit syndrome' initiative
Strathmere Group
Syrian Refugee settlement in Canadian cities
Vibrant Communities Canada
The Winnipeg Boldness Project

Appendix C: Key Informant Interview Protocol

INTRODUCTION

- Describe Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian Foundations
 - The topic of how foundations collaborate with each other was identified by our partners as a useful area for study
- Describe purpose of this study: to gain a broad view of the trends and types of collaborations that grantmaking foundations are undertaking *with each other* in Canada
 - We recognize that philanthropic organizations collaborate with their grantees and many other groups. All of these are important, but in this initial study we are focused on collaborations in which more than one philanthropic organization work together.
 - This will help build knowledge in the field
 - This will help identify more specific topics for future research

GENERAL TRENDS

1. What are your observations of trends in the field regarding foundations collaborating with other philanthropic organizations?

- In the last 5 years, what changes have you seen in this field?
Prompts as necessary: new collaborations, collaborations pursuing different purposes than before, areas where there is more or less momentum than before....
- Why do you think this is?
- Are foundations:
 - Collaborating more, less with each other?
 - Collaborating differently in the last 2 or 5 years? In what way?
 - Views or level of interest in collaboration changing?

2. (If not answered in Q1:) According to what you have been observing, what is motivating foundations to collaborate with other philanthropic organizations? What kind of purposes are they pursuing (what are they aiming to accomplish)?

LANDSCAPE SCAN

3. I am going to name some different purposes and forms of collaborations between foundations (philanthropic organizations. I'd like to know if you have heard of or observed any collaborations of this type. (Based upon Hamilton 2002):

1. Information exchange: To provide ongoing venues for philanthropic organizations to exchange information, discuss common interests and learn about issues of common relevance.

2. Co-learning: To facilitate philanthropic organizations' ongoing engagement and exploration around a defined issue or problem, usually with the goal of developing a common intellectual

framework, a shared approach or agenda, and/or positioning an issue differently in the foundation world. Also assists in identifying emerging issues and strategic opportunities.

3. Strategic alignment (informal): To align different foundations' resources around a shared strategy – participation is generally tied to the expectation of collaborative grantmaking. Governance and administration are kept to a minimum. *\$ not in same pot*

4. Strategic alignment (formal): A more selective and formal grouping than above with specific giving expectations. Generally a smaller group. Still maintains a lean administrative structure, with an emphasis on aligning funds rather than pooling them. *\$ not in same pot. Structure to the collaboration. Partnership agreement.*

5. Pooled funding: To create a funding pool from multiple sources in order to re-grant for a given area/sector/set of issues. Often requires a specific financial commitment. Money is typically granted to, held and re-granted by the collaborative entity. *\$ in same pot. One entity (management of re-granting).*

6. Joint ventures: To operate particular projects rather than serve as a re-granting entity. Usually emerge out of perceived void in policy and/or practice, to raise the profile of an issue, or to develop new ideas. Often inter-disciplinary or cross-sectoral boundaries.

- For each:
 - Who was involved, what did they do, what was their goal, is it still active, how did it go, who is the best contact person there?
 - Do any other collaborations come to mind of this sort?

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

4. What do you think are some key opportunities for foundations to collaborate in Canada?

- Where do you think that collaboration between philanthropic organizations could make the greatest difference? Do you see any areas where there is a gap between this potential and what is actually happening?

5. In your view (according to your experience), what do you see as being the key factors that contribute to successful collaborations between foundations (philanthropic organizations)?

6. In your view (according to your experience), what do you see as being the key challenges that groups involved in these collaborations must navigate?

7. Do you have any cautions about foundation collaboration?

- Are there any potential negative outcomes of foundations increasing or expanding the nature of their collaboration with other philanthropic organizations?

FOCAL TOPICS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

8. What questions are you wondering about with regards to foundations & collaboration in Canada?

- What are your suggestions for topics to research in the future?
- Among the subjects that we just talked about, where do you see the greatest needs (opportunities) for the field to grow its knowledge and understanding?
- What are your burning questions? What are you reflecting about?