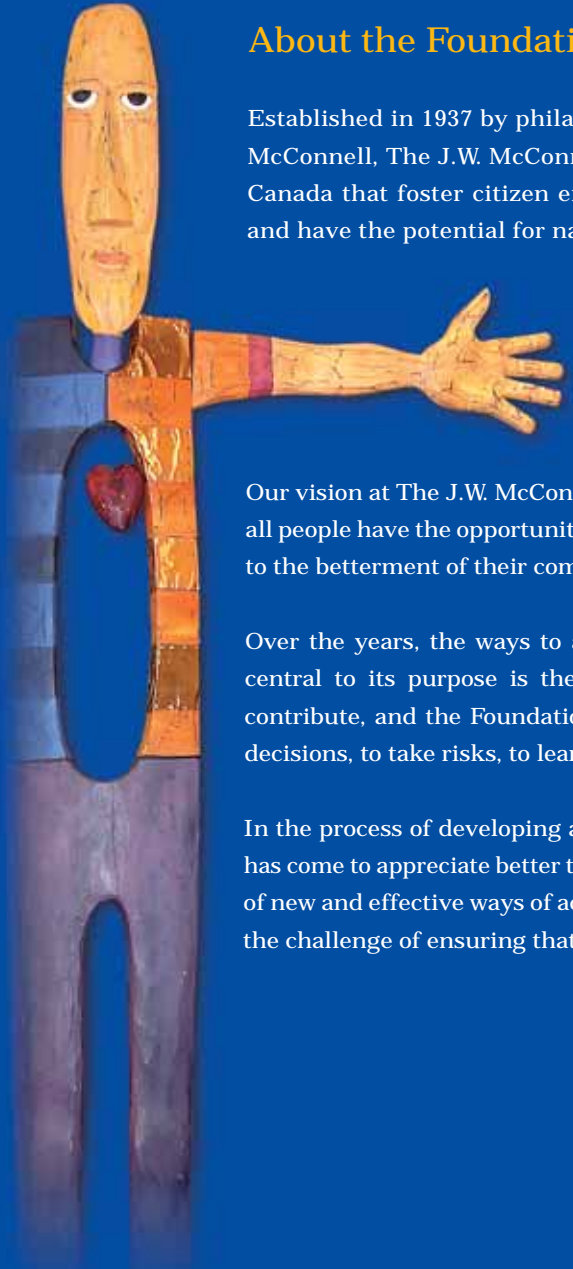


# Accelerating our Impact: Philanthropy, Innovation and Social Change

Katharine A. Pearson

Director, Social Innovation Generation @ McConnell

The J.W. McConnell  
Family Foundation



## About the Foundation

Established in 1937 by philanthropist and entrepreneur John Wilson McConnell, The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation funds projects in Canada that foster citizen engagement, build resilient communities and have the potential for national scale or impact.

Our vision at The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation is a Canada where all people have the opportunity to develop their potential and contribute to the betterment of their communities and country.

Over the years, the ways to achieve this have evolved; what remains central to its purpose is the importance of community, how people contribute, and the Foundation's need to make choices in its granting decisions, to take risks, to learn and to be engaged with its grantees.

In the process of developing and supporting programs, the Foundation has come to appreciate better the importance of innovation, the exploring of new and effective ways of addressing intractable social problems, and the challenge of ensuring that these new approaches are sustained.

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# Table of contents

Introduction	5
Background	9
1 Getting Started	13
1.1 The Ecocycle or Panarchy Model	15
1.2 Complexity theory	20
2 Working with Social Innovators	25
2.1 Beyond funding	29
3 Sharing Knowledge	33
3.1 The role of developmental evaluation in sustaining social innovation	35
3.2 The role of policy and research	40
4 Accelerating Our Impact	43
The McConnell Foundation's approach	47
Conclusion	51
Resources and tools related to scaling up and sustaining social innovation	53

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# Introduction

# “The possible’s slow fuse is lit by the Imagination”

Emily Dickinson

In today’s complex world we face both peril and possibility. With grave social and environmental challenges to our collective future, a growing number of social innovators and their supporters are taking bold action. They are becoming intentional about shifting structures, cultures and institutions.

Such practices are not yet wide-spread. For years, many funders have been supporting diverse social innovations<sup>1</sup> and experimenting with approaches to “scaled-up” grant-making. But our efforts have often been too narrow or short-term and the results uneven. Wisdom and experience now suggest that we need a clear vision, firm commitment, and persistence to remove the barriers to enduring social change.

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to an emerging body of knowledge and reflective practice on the role of funders in supporting innovation and social change. Our goals are to:

- Encourage funders of all sizes to accelerate their impact;
- Provide practical insights and examples of some of the opportunities and pitfalls of funding for durable social change;
- Refine our own foundation’s performance through feedback and engagement with our readers and fellow grantmakers.

<sup>1</sup> By *social innovation* we mean both new things that work and existing knowledge applied in new ways to solve social problems. The examples cited throughout this paper are current or recent Foundation grantees, partners or initiatives.

*Accelerating our Impact: Philanthropy, Innovation and Social Change* comprises this introduction, background on our foundation's efforts to contribute to social change over the past decade, and four sections.

The first section, *Getting Started*, outlines two conceptual frameworks that we have found particularly relevant. It describes the mindsets needed to navigate the obstacles that are involved in tackling deeply rooted social problems and concludes with an exploration of starting points for funders' consideration.

The second section, *Working with Social Innovators*, outlines how to identify social innovations. It provides seven patterns of activity common to innovations that achieve impact, durability and scale, and explores the critical role of accompaniment that grantmakers can play.

Ongoing reflection and learning are essential to working effectively in complex situations. To this end the third section, *Sharing Knowledge*, suggests approaches to evaluation and research that can augment our efforts.

The concluding section, *Accelerating Our Impact*, looks at strategies that grantmakers can adopt to extend the scale of social innovations. These include creating or working with intermediary organizations, convening communities of practice, and collaborating with leaders in the public and private spheres to support policy and regulatory reform.

In this section we also introduce a framework that The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation has recently adopted to support sustainable social innovation in Canada.

## Background

The McConnell Foundation's mission is to fund "initiatives of national significance which address challenges for Canadian society by engaging people, by building resilient communities, and by developing a strong knowledge base for the work that the Foundation supports." With a small program staff based in Montreal, the Foundation could not expect to have detailed knowledge about what is going on in communities across the country. Instead, we developed a strategy to pursue our goals that we termed *Applied Dissemination* (AD). By this we meant that in addition to supporting innovators to disseminate *information* about new programs, processes, knowledge, skills or concepts, we would also help them to work with communities and organizations to *apply* or adapt these innovations in different settings.

Over the past decade, the Foundation has helped dozens of organizations to share a wide range of promising social innovations with interested communities across Canada. They have included teaching the skills of empathy to young children in order to reduce school bullying<sup>2</sup>, creating social networks for people with disabilities<sup>3</sup>, and tracking the "Vital Signs"<sup>4</sup> of a community as it measures its social, economic and environmental progress.

Some rich learning has emerged from our Applied Dissemination approach about the process of spreading programs and ideas.<sup>5</sup> One important lesson is that the resources we initially developed, such as our 1998 primer *Should you sow what you know?*<sup>6</sup>, did not pay enough attention to the complexities involved in achieving lasting impact. We seriously underestimated the time and the skills required to move from a successful pilot to wide-spread implementation. After close to ten years, we have a much better appreciation of the contextual, operational, and organizational issues that are directly correlated with the ability to effect change.

At the same time, many of the organizations we supported have run up against the limits of growth alone in achieving meaningful outcomes for the communities they serve. When the Foundation began supporting Applied Dissemination projects, we thought that AD was mainly about reaching larger numbers of people. We soon realized, however, that growth alone does not guarantee increased impact – but since impact is more difficult to measure than growth, the latter often becomes a proxy for the former. While growth has a role to play, it may be only one of several paths to getting results. In reality, a range of different strategies is usually required.

2 Roots of Empathy website <<http://www.rootsofempathy.org>>.  
3 PLAN website <<http://www.plan.ca>>.  
4 Vital Signs Canada website <<http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca>>.

Such complexity can contribute to uncertainty: without knowing which specific strategies will in practice be most effective, many innovative organizations make an educated guess about their potential reach. This is not a fault. In many cases, clear intentions and commitments can serve as a stable platform on which to plan a course of action. For example, one Foundation grantee, *The Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement*, develops comprehensive community initiatives to reduce poverty in Canadian cities. It has a specific goal (helping 40,000 households reduce their level of poverty) and a consistent framework, but the participating communities choose very different pathways to achieve results.<sup>7</sup>

Rather than a blueprint, organizations like Tamarack have a *strategic intent*, which gets fleshed out as they develop and execute. Since their intentions are clear, their plan can evolve coherently and in the right direction – provided they have established reasonable indicators to track their progress.

Which strategy will have the greatest potential for maximum impact will depend upon a host of factors – such as the nature of the innovation, community receptivity, the institutional framework/system to be changed, and the disseminating organization's own mandate and resources.

Typically, then many social innovators begin with the development and testing of an idea, for example a new approach to helping homeless youth. If it is sufficiently promising and fills a gap that others have not addressed, it is likely to attract attention. Other communities seek information on the model, the initiating organization responds, and Applied Dissemination begins.

But a single-minded focus on growth will inevitably run up against barriers, such as competition, political or institutional resistance to change, or lack of resources that affect the originator's ability to sustain the innovation. At that point, many will turn their energy to finding long-term solutions. Their efforts may challenge existing systems and will almost certainly demand new skills, relationships and mindsets – including those held by funders.

5 See for example "A Summary of Lessons from Applied Dissemination Grants" (September 2006) on the McConnell Foundation's website <<http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca>>.  
6 Available on the McConnell Foundation's website.  
7 See the Tamarack website <<http://www.vibrantcommunities.ca>>.

The McConnell Foundation's evolving experience led us to create the 2005/06 **Sustaining Social Innovation (SSI) initiative** in partnership with the PLAN Institute for Caring Citizenship and DuPont Canada. This unusual collaboration among a national funder, an entrepreneurial non-profit organization with an interest in systems change, and a corporation with a history of innovation, has actively explored the conditions that lead to social innovations becoming “scaleable,” transformative and enduring. With this partnership, the Foundation's goals were to:

- design a comprehensive and long-term process to help grantees sustain their innovations;
- continue to learn from, build the capacity of, and promote exchanges among innovative organizations and leaders;
- document and disseminate the Foundation's knowledge of effective social change initiatives to a variety of audiences, including other funders;
- improve the Foundation's grantmaking practice;
- grow a network of practitioners that becomes increasingly competent at sustaining social innovation.

Building on the learning from the AD projects, the SSI initiative has helped us to better understand the factors that support – as well as those that constrain – social innovations that are trying to shift systems (a key dimension of sustainability). This paper is a product of that learning.

As PLAN Institute's Vickie Cammack reflected in a letter to the Foundation in 2004, “when we started dissemination many years ago, we thought it was about replication. Today we have a very different conceptualization. We've come to understand how time intensive it is, and how working at the level of policy and regulatory reform could make a much bigger change [for the people we serve].”

As the McConnell Foundation adjusts its practice, we consider ourselves learners in this emerging field. The following sections outline our growing knowledge, but are by no means intended as a blueprint for success.

# 1

## Getting Started



Social change leaders and funders recognize that thinking comprehensively is essential: piecemeal approaches will not work. Effective social change requires:

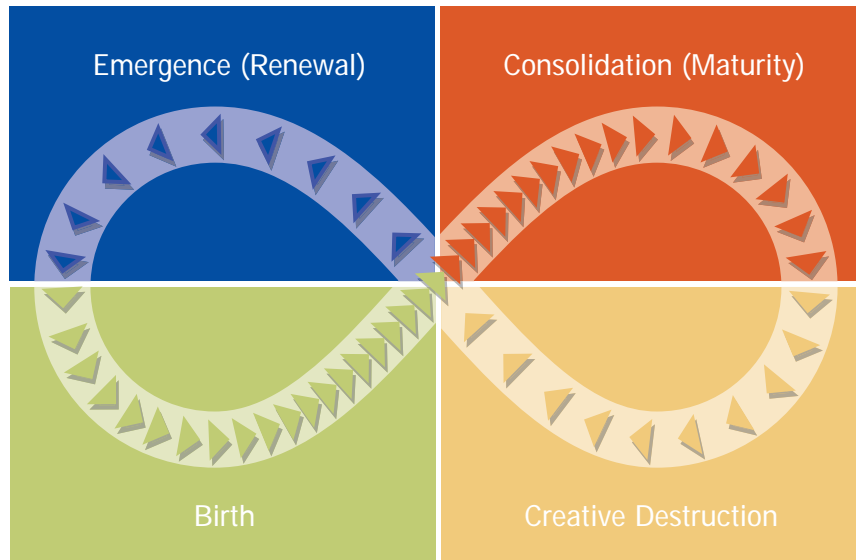
- a long-term commitment;
- a willingness to take risks;
- the ability to work across sectors and silos;
- investments in strategic research and policy analysis.

However, as with a focus on growth, the mere presence of these factors does not guarantee success. Maximizing an innovative program's potential for community engagement and progressive impact calls for an understanding of how these factors are interrelated and the role each plays in the highly dynamic process of social transformation.

Toward this end, there are two conceptual frameworks that we have found particularly illuminating. One is the panarchy model of transformation in human and ecological systems; the other is complexity theory. They serve as ways to think about the context and dynamics of social change processes and the role that philanthropy can play.

# 1.1

## The Ecocycle or Panarchy Model



The panarchy concept first described by the ecologist C.S. Holling<sup>8</sup> is one thought-provoking way to look at the life cycles of social innovations (and often organizations) as they are invented, tested and spread, then decline and either disappear or re-emerge as new approaches or entities.

“The ecocycle concept is used in biology and depicted as an infinity loop. In this case, the S curve of [a typical] business life cycle model (birth, growth and maturity) is complemented by a reverse S curve. It is the reverse S curve shown here with the dotted line that represents the death and conception of living systems. In our depiction of the model, we call these stages creative destruction and renewal. The importance of the infinity loop is that it shows there is no beginning or end. The stages are all connected to each other. Hence renewal and destruction are part of an ongoing process”.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> C.S. Holling and L. Gunderson, eds. *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural Systems*. Washington: Island Press, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> See Brenda Zimmerman and David Hurst. “From Life Cycle to Ecocycle: A New Perspective on the Growth, Maturity, Destruction and Renewal of Complex Systems.” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 3.4 (1994): 339-354. See also the work of the Resilience Alliance at <[http:// www.resalliance.org](http://www.resalliance.org)>.

## An example of panarchy: the PLAN experience

Evidence of the panarchy model can be found in many contemporary social change programs. Planned Lifetime Advocacy Networks (PLAN) began as an innovation in Vancouver. Its purpose is to serve the families of individuals with intellectual disabilities by giving them practical advice about such things as will and estate planning. In addition, it provides a vital social network function – and peace of mind to aging parents – by supporting a life-long relationship between the individual with a disability and a circle of friends and family. This initial organizational design corresponds to the birth and consolidation cycle in the panarchy model.

As it spread outside of British Columbia, PLAN began to change even while preserving its core business – the services that it is offering to families. Its founders broadened their focus by posing a different question: “What is a good life for individuals with disabilities?”, which led to a growing emphasis on increasing opportunities for people who are isolated and labeled to experience *contribution and citizenship*. Further, the organization began to substantially expand its model of social enterprise to generate income for its programs and services.

PLAN founders Al Etmanski and Vickie Cammack concluded that “To achieve sustainability, PLAN needs to get its principles, concepts and values into the ‘water supply.’ This will happen when we’ve succeeded in embedding a full citizen perspective into our social structures and institutions, and in changing the cultural consciousness from needs and inability to contribution and participation. This is not a quickly achievable objective – it will likely take a generation or two.”

It could be argued that PLAN went through a period of “creative destruction” and “renewal” as it wrestled with the challenge of achieving impact. This took some time, and the conversations among staff, board members and affiliates were not always smooth. Ultimately, they led to a shift in focus from establishing PLAN affiliates across Canada and abroad to working on changing perceptions and systems in support of people with disabilities. To achieve this broader goal, the original PLAN organization created a new entity, the PLAN Institute for Caring Citizenship.

## What are a few of the implications of the panarchy model for funders?

### Different skills for different stages

Social innovations like PLAN typically evolve through the birth of ideas, consolidation, creative destruction and renewal (the fallow period during which new ideas are germinated). They are in a continual process of evolution, as contexts and strategies change. Change and even “creative destruction” are not to be resisted, but embraced: they nourish innovation and are crucial to sustainability as long as there is a sense of progress.

At each stage and in each of the panarchy quadrants, different skills (and perhaps different people) will be required. For instance, the creative genius behind a new initiative may not be the best person to lead the growth stage; those who value stability will not be comfortable in the uncertain environment of both endings and beginnings; and so on. Innovators and their supporters can benefit from positioning themselves accordingly.

### A place in the life cycle for all funders

Although funders are typically more comfortable in the front loop of the S curve (the birth, growth and maturity of organizations and/or ideas), they can enter into this process at any point. Some, less amenable to risk, will choose to support initiatives that are at the stage of consolidation; that is, they are already tested and ready for larger scale implementation. At this point, predictability, systems, accountability and so forth become essential to rolling out programs and services in order to reach large numbers of citizens. Other funders will want to invest in research and development – the generation of ideas (“renewal”). Still others such as venture philanthropists may want to step in just as ideas are ready to be turned into prototypes (moving into consolidation). And some may want to follow and support an entire cycle.

Funders can also work together to support promising initiatives through these various stages and thus “share the risk.” Community foundations, for example, are often early funders of promising local innovations. They may then turn to national or regional funders to increase the innovation’s reach and impact beyond the community of origin.

### Consider exit strategies

One challenge for funders is to allow organizations or initiatives to come to a natural end (“creative destruction”) so that new ideas or entities can emerge. Many of us are justly accused of funding innovations only to abandon them once they have been tested in order to pursue the next great idea; but we are equally guilty at times of propping up organizations or ideas well beyond their natural life cycles. An innovation may need in fact to be taken apart – to be “creatively destroyed” – in order to be re-assembled at another level, for example when it is being disseminated and applied in a different context.

Having the room to experiment is vital. Funders need to be mindful of their role and work closely with organizations to determine both support and exit strategies. Important questions to ask include:

- At what point in its life cycle is an organization, a leader or an initiative?
- What skills and supports will they need as they shift from one stage to another?
- Why, when and how do we wind down our support?
- How can we enlist the help of others who might be better suited for a group’s emerging challenges and opportunities?

# 1.2

## Complexity theory

**Complexity theory** offers another framework for understanding the processes involved in social innovation and transformation. As with panarchy, it too is modeled on biology. However “complexity science is not a single theory. It is the study of complex adaptive systems – the patterns of relationships within them, how they are sustained, how they self-organize and how outcomes emerge... The science encompasses more than one theoretical framework... [it] is highly interdisciplinary including biologists, anthropologists, economists, sociologists, management theorists and many others in a quest to answer some fundamental questions about living, adaptable, changeable systems.”<sup>10</sup>

Reduced to its essentials, complexity science reminds us that social change is complex, not simple; emergent, not fixed; and generally, although not always, long term rather than quick.

Again, there are implications for funders, the major one being accepting the unpredictable nature of social change processes. Paradoxes and contradictions will inevitably emerge in any change initiative, and can prove to be fertile ground for innovation, especially if they can be balanced rather than resolved through the forced selection of one alternative over another. In many cases, the answer should not be “either/or”, but rather “both/and”. For example, one can be purposeful while allowing for ideas and directions to emerge; hold to a higher vision while attending to the practical dimensions of change initiatives; and so forth. Being innovative means allowing for surprises and unintended consequences, being comfortable with the unknown, and learning from mistakes. Margaret Wheatley<sup>11</sup> has observed “The things we fear most in organizations – fluctuations, disturbances, imbalances – are the primary sources of creativity.”

One is not working entirely in the dark, however. Complexity theory<sup>12</sup> provides some insights into what to expect and how to work on change in complex environments. Understanding complexity can serve to reassure boards and participants that the lack of a precise blueprint is not an omission or a fault; rather, that the dynamics they are seeing and experiencing are normal. Brenda Zimmerman suggests that organizations build a good-enough vision by providing minimum specifications rather than trying to plan every little detail. Have a good enough sense of where you want to go but don't over-specify and don't expect a detailed blueprint.”

<sup>10</sup> *A Complexity Science Primer: What is Complexity Science and Why Should I Learn About It?* Page 3 <<http://www.plexusinstitute.org>>; adapted from Brenda Zimmerman, Curt Lindberg and Paul Plsek: *Edgware: Lessons From Complexity Science for Health Care Leaders*, VHA Inc.: Dallas, 1998. (Available by calling toll-free 1-866-822-5571 or through Amazon.com).

Funders can however request a well articulated vision and a robust strategy, while being ready for significant variability as the social change initiative is implemented. Above all, funders should accept that complex is not synonymous with unmanageable and that there are recognized guidelines that can help maintain a consistent direction at all stages, from choosing an initiative to measuring results.

## Where to invest?

Concepts and frameworks help. But of course there are additional steps. A fundamental decision for grantmakers interested in innovation and social change is determining *what* to invest in. A funding strategy should include an assessment of timing, context, opportunity to achieve results and resource requirements. Grantmakers may wish to focus on:

- a sector, such as education or health care;
- a specific issue, such as poverty or global warming;
- a particular community or region;
- a demographic, such as youth or seniors or new immigrants;
- or a mix of the above.

More specific criteria and considerations are presented in section two of this paper. Two key points are relevant here. First, successful grantmaking begins with clear alignment between the funding organization's mandate, values, and experience and those of the initiative and the people behind it. Second, it is not necessary to be a large grantmaker with major geographic reach to influence change. Deep change processes often begin at the local level, and in any case must be rooted there if they are to last.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret Wheatley is a writer and management consultant who studies organizational behavior. Her approach includes systems thinking, theories of change, chaos theory, leadership and the learning organization: particularly its capacity to self-organize.

<sup>12</sup> Zimmerman, Lindberg and Plsek, 1998. Another good overview of complexity theory and its implications for organizations is Margaret Wheatley's *Leadership and the New Science: Learning about Organization from an Orderly Universe*, (1st edition), Berrett-Koehler: 1992.

## What is the potential impact?

Criteria or guiding questions can include the following:

- What social challenge is this innovation intended to address?
- How does it propose to have a significant impact on this challenge, whether it is reducing child poverty, improving educational performance, or preserving bio-diversity?
- Do we know what others are doing in this area? Is there potential for a collaborative approach? (see for example the Ashoka Foundation's *Changemakers* site<sup>13</sup>)
- What demonstrated level of demand exists for a fresh approach to what is likely a chronic problem?
- If the innovation is local, has it been tested in a new site and does it appear adaptable to varying conditions?
- Is the policy environment (local/provincial/federal) receptive and capable of supporting or integrating the innovation? Is there actual or potential public support?
- Is the innovating organization both vigorous and flexible enough to undertake the complex process of growth (if that is part of their strategy) with a social change agenda?
- Are the innovation's values clearly expressed? Ultimately, social innovations result in lasting change only when they are clearly and explicitly wedded to values that inspire others. These values include social justice, compassion, trust, reciprocity, hospitality, and so on.

<sup>13</sup> Changemakers website <<http://www.changemakers.net>>.

A final point related to panarchy and complexity is the notion of risk. Developing a tolerance for risk – especially among trustees and boards of directors – is vital. In highly complex and evolving environments, an initiative may not achieve its initial objectives, may take much longer than anticipated to get results, may generate controversy as established norms are challenged, or may not work at all. *Innovation is inherently risky.*

One way of managing that risk is to set aside a modest proportion of a funder's granting to higher risk initiatives, and learn from the results together with the grantee. At the same time, funders should be ready to commit to an initiative over time, to tap into the rich reservoir of knowledge that will be created with both successes and failures.

In a provocative speech to a group of private foundations in November 2005, Dr. Janice Stein from the University of Toronto urged the audience to ask themselves the following question:

*“What smart failures did we have this year? If you tell me none, you are not where you should be. A smart failure is a risky project in which the risks are understood and the foundation decides to proceed regardless – the risks are reasonable. When it fails – not if it fails, but when it fails – then you do an analysis to find out what can be learned from the failure, how much is controllable, what can be changed. Great failures define a great foundation.”<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Janice Stein, Director of the Munk Centre for Conflict Studies, University of Toronto, in an address to the Philanthropic Foundations of Canada Conference, November 2005.

# 2

## Working with Social Innovators

**How do foundations decide which social innovators to support?** In addition to the basic questions listed in the previous section, the following seven characteristics<sup>15</sup> may help to identify candidates<sup>16</sup> for large-scale change. Successful innovators tend to:

### Understand that the “who” is as important as the “how”

Social innovators who get results are usually persistent, collaborative, good communicators, comfortable with paradox and ambiguity, creative, and entrepreneurial. Their ability to forge relationships is crucial to their success, since these are critical to spreading and adapting ideas at all levels, from neighbourhood residents to local business leaders to politicians and researchers. Such connections will deepen and sustain new approaches over time.

### Think and act like a movement

The most effective change processes are characterized by broad approaches that encompass multiple actions, at different scales (from local to national, organization to sector, individual to institution), different stages, and varying time frames. *It may take ten years or more to achieve profound change, often in the face of considerable opposition.* Because of this, it is important for funders to recognize that they are supporting not so much a specific program, but a movement or long-term social campaign, and to support organizations that manifest this perspective – think of the civil rights movement, or women’s rights, or the process of ending apartheid in South Africa. A Canadian example is the evolution of action by and for people with disabilities, where the acknowledged progress on rights is now being accompanied by a growing focus on participation, contribution and belonging<sup>17</sup>.

### Convene others around a common goal

Bringing people together to learn, solve problems and inspire one another can move vague aspirations towards significant action. Properly supported and over time, networks can become agents of change. It is tricky, but critical to effectiveness for networks to stay true to their core purpose while remaining open to different points of view. Examples include networks of social change funders<sup>18</sup>; local community

leadership programs connected nationally<sup>19</sup>; national environmental organizations collaborating on a “Green Budget”<sup>20</sup>; etc.

### Communicate effectively

Innovative ideas take flight when they are framed in accessible and inspiring ways. Knowing how to use the popular media is vital. Social change is facilitated by a compelling vision accompanied by actions that can easily be taken by citizens. For example, recycling took a major step forward in Canada with the introduction of curb-side boxes that residents could fill and put out every week in addition to their non-recyclable garbage.

### Remove structural barriers

Successful change-makers are adept at navigating power, policy and politics. They work across silos to forge alliances with the public, private and non-profit sectors and to uncover unexpected allies. They identify common ground and develop timely coalitions and collaborations. In this way, step-by-step and sometimes painfully, structural barriers to change begin to come down and policy and regulatory reform can be achieved. Again, this requires time, flexibility, agility and perseverance in meeting what can be very stiff resistance to change.

### Utilize market forces

Increasingly, innovative organizations search for ways to deepen their impact by working with the private sector. For example, they might aim to develop innovative financial instruments, such as designated trust funds or investment opportunities offered in cooperation with financial institutions. Some non-profits are creating social enterprises that compete in the market place, but offer a high “social return on investment”. An example of this is Renaissance in Montreal<sup>21</sup> – a chain of used clothing stores that hires and provides job-readiness skills to immigrants and chronically unemployed individuals. Another is the Clean Air Foundation of Toronto<sup>22</sup>, which aims to improve air quality by building innovative partnerships among companies, governments and consumers and offers incentive-based activities to replace aging cars, inefficient air conditioners and other appliances.

<sup>15</sup> Vickie Cammack and Al Etmanski, PLAN Institute for Caring Citizenship, for the Sustaining Social Innovation initiative, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Funders work of course with organizations rather than individuals, and many social innovators insist that they are members of skilled teams and cannot achieve their goals alone; these seven patterns can be broadly applied to both leaders and organizations.

<sup>17</sup> See for example the work of Philia: <<http://www.philia.ca>>.

<sup>18</sup> Community Foundations of Canada website <<http://www.cfc-fcc.ca/socialjustice>>.

<sup>19</sup> The Canadian Community Leadership Network website <<http://www.cclnet.org>>.

<sup>20</sup> Green Budget Coalition website <<http://www.greenbudget.ca>>.

<sup>21</sup> Renaissance Quebec website <<http://www.renaissancequebec.ca>>.

<sup>22</sup> Clean Air Foundation website <<http://www.cleanairfoundation.org>>.



As social marketer Eric Young has observed, “Social innovation is not just about improving the innovative capacity of social organizations. Rather, it is about innovations in our capacity to organize social and financial resources to achieve large-scale social impact.”

### Finally, adept social innovators

- balance thinking and acting, standing still in order to perceive system patterns and moving quickly to take advantage of opportunities;
- engage both the power of established institutions and that of the grassroots;
- manage both the dynamics of success and the dynamics of failure and are not drawn off course by either.<sup>23</sup>

When Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of First Nations Child and Family Caring Society<sup>24</sup>, studied the enormous gap that existed between the Canadian voluntary sector and First Nations agencies dealing with children and families, she discovered a self-perpetuating stalemate. Agencies on reserves were reluctant to get in touch with voluntary agencies because they had no experience of working with them, few if any contacts, and a history that advised strongly against inviting outsiders to work on questions of child welfare. On the other side of this cultural divide, voluntary agencies refrained from getting involved on reserves, saying “We don’t go where we are not invited.”

Cindy is a classic social innovator: she sees opportunities where others see barriers and she is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve results for her community. She began to systematically remove obstacles by creating the Caring Across Boundaries (CAB) program. Using a curriculum developed by First Nations writers, CAB provides workshops to on-reserve family and child welfare agencies, and to voluntary sector organizations, informing each about the nature and approach of the other. Through structured encounters hosted by the reserve, mutual understanding leads to joint agenda setting and a range of collaborative projects, such as an Aboriginal Mentorship Project in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada. Trust is slowly building and families and children are benefiting as a result.

<sup>23</sup> These abilities with corresponding examples are described by Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman and Michael Quinn Patton in *Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed*, Toronto: Random House, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> For more information on this initiative, visit: <http://www.fnfcfs.com>.

# 2.1

## Beyond funding



Supporting social innovation often requires funders to develop a closer rapport with leaders and organizations than is generally the case in the typical foundation/grantee relationship. Defining objectives together should make us collaborators. As such, we stay with the relationship through all of its inevitable twists and turns – assuming evidence of progress, of course. Relationships should also extend beyond the Executive Director to include other key staff and board members. Over the long-term it may even be possible to mitigate the power dynamic that inevitably seeps into many if not all such relationships, when one partner controls the resources, and the other is expected to achieve certain benchmarks in order to continue receiving funding.<sup>25</sup>

There are a number of ways that grantmakers can provide assistance beyond sending cheques, as well as within the funding arrangement itself.

### Connect innovators with sources of expertise

Funders can create communication platforms or connect interested individuals to a source of information, such as a research network, think tank or university-based program with similar interests with which they can work to enhance their learning and practice.<sup>26</sup>

### Improve planning and management skills

Organizations and funders alike may need assistance in:

- Planning for sustainability (including winding down an initiative if it makes sense to do so) in its broadest sense from the outset, working back from the desired long term outcomes;
- Scanning the environment: identifying the “moment” or “moments” when significant change is possible, for example, a receptive policy environment, appetite for change, vigorous leadership, etc.; this means being alert, flexible and responsive;
- Defining an innovation’s “minimum specifications” – what to preserve and what to set aside or modify as it grows; frequently these minimum specifications will include a set of core values that are integral to the social innovation’s impact;

- Developing a rigorous evidence base that is appropriate for the context or the phase an innovation is in (since different kinds of evaluation are suited to different stages of innovation, as described in the following section on sharing knowledge);
- Ensuring diversity, since a variety of backgrounds and skill sets among staff in organizations (including funders) is more likely to generate innovation.

A framework of supports to develop these skills could include:

- support for core costs as well as for specific initiatives and explorations, over a *minimum* of five years, assuming the first 12 to 18 months are likely to be spent on explorations, consultation and planning<sup>27</sup>;
- technical assistance and professional development;
- peer exchanges and other opportunities for learning and building knowledge;
- research and policy analysis as appropriate.

Saltwater Network, an organization that connects community-based marine resource management organizations in the Gulf of Maine region, observed in a report to the Foundation:

“Since the beginning there has been a creative tension between innovation (designing our network as a complex adaptive system) and functionality, that is getting the work done in a timely fashion. We lean towards one or the other of these depending on the circumstances. Generally speaking, it is harder to be innovative without a high level of stability.”

Coaching and support for professional development are valued. But they are difficult for most social innovators to identify, let alone purchase. Funders can make available a roster of screened consultants, coaches and mentors to provide timely, targeted advice to organizations at various stages of initiative design and implementation. These coaches and mentors should include peers.

25 Funders can actually operate from inside the sector they fund, though they need objective ways of selecting (and rejecting) proposals. This is part of the experience of the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program, a national initiative of the McConnell Foundation and co-founder Dr. Edward Jackson of Carleton University. For a brief account of this kind of philanthropy, see Edward Jackson, Grantmaking from the Inside in Accompaniment Philanthropy: Canada’s Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program in D. Bruce and G. Lister (eds). *Rising Tide: Community Development Tools, Models and Processes*. Sackville: Rural and Small Town Programme, Mount Allison University; Sackville, 2001. 94-111. The chapter is summarized here <<http://www.carleton.ca/cedtap/home/AccompanimentPhil.doc>>.

26 Examples of potential resources are listed at the end of this paper.

27 The Foundation has discovered that starting as the full funder of an initiative and then reducing support every year thereafter to ensure sustainability is not always the best course of action. Funds typically are used less during the initial planning phase (*even if* a preliminary planning grant has been received) as organizations marshal their own resources and solidify partnerships. Expenditures rise during the subsequent implementation period (a year or more into a project). It may be at least three years before a funder can begin to reduce its funding although planning for diversification needs to happen much sooner. Other options – such as matching grants – can also strengthen initiatives.

### Allow flexibility in the use of funds

Funders can facilitate innovation by allowing funds to be used flexibly within an overall budget, to allow for probing and exploration, “giving permission” to organizations to keep asking difficult questions and testing new approaches, and revisiting old ideas that may now have greater potential for impact. Holding organizations to rigid timelines and budgets may be counter-productive, if innovation is the goal. This does not mean ignoring accountability and results.

In considering their experience of supporting new PLAN organizations across Canada, Vickie Cammack wrote us:

“It takes a long time for the concepts to be understood, internalized and integrated. For example, it has taken four years of focusing on skill development related to social enterprise to see results. We are not sure (or at least don't yet know how) this process can be hurried.”

### Broaden the definition of financing

Funders can provide organizations with access to other sources of capital and finance the development of new ideas (research and development), including experimentation, testing, refining and marketing. Funding can also be applied to the infrastructure to grow new institutions and for technical assistance and human resources. Additionally, foundations and investors can use program-related investments and similar financial instruments at their disposal.<sup>28</sup>

### Create a culture of continuous innovation

As the ecocycle model suggests, innovation is not a finite process. Adroit leaders and organizations are continually innovating, adjusting, adapting, reworking, and creating. Organizations need to have the space and the mindset for this kind of activity, which is nourished by diverse staff and boards, and funders can help by making long-term commitments that may free up room for creativity.

<sup>28</sup> See for example the approach of Social Capital Partners in Canada <<http://www.socialcapitalpartners.ca>>.

# 3

## Sharing Knowledge

**Effecting lasting social change** takes both knowledge and wisdom. These are not the same things. Knowledge can be gained and shared through study, consultation, evaluation, research and development, and traditional dissemination, but the wisdom to properly apply knowledge in the service of social change also requires experience and critical analyses over time. All of these are part of the process of continuous learning in which funders and organizations must engage to become better at what we do.

*“Where is the wisdom we have  
lost in knowledge?  
Where is the knowledge we have  
lost in information?”*

T.S. Eliot

# 3.1

## The role of developmental evaluation in sustaining social innovation

**Evaluation** is a particularly challenging dimension of innovation and social change initiatives. While the original innovation will require evidence of its applicability obtained through an impact evaluation before it can be replicated or “scaled up”, *sustaining* an innovation through the latter process requires a different approach. In both cases – during the creation of the initial innovation itself, and during the process of applying it in other locations or contexts – organizations may benefit from a *developmental* evaluation<sup>29</sup>. Traditional evaluation approaches that are imported too early into a process may constrain innovation. Evaluation is about **critical** thinking, while development is about **creative** thinking. Developmental evaluation is about holding these in balance. It is particularly suited therefore to the creation phase of a social innovation (from renewal and emergence through to birth in the ecocycle model described in Section I).

The experienced American evaluator Michael Quinn Patton<sup>30</sup> suggests that developmental evaluation entails long-term, partnering relationships between evaluators and those engaged in innovative initiatives. The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualize, design and test new approaches in a long-term, on-going process of continuous improvement, adaptation and intentional change. The evaluator’s primary function is to ask questions and gather data, as well as to facilitate assessments of where things are and how they are unfolding, what directions hold promise and which ones should be abandoned, what new experiments should be tried, etc. Such feedback supports decision-making and course corrections.

Developmental evaluation is a way to understand innovation and growth, as well as a stimulant to the innovation process. Many social change leaders welcome being challenged, and it is the role of the developmental evaluator to find the natural places to ask probing questions such as: “Is this decision consistent with your original goal?” and “Are you really being open to different perspectives?” At the same time, it does not replace other forms of evaluation. Rather, it serves as a complement during a particular phase of the innovation’s life cycle.

29 With thanks to Jamie Gamble, developmental evaluator, Imprint Inc. (2006).

30 Through the Sustaining Social Innovation initiative, the Foundation and DuPont Canada worked with Michael Quinn Patton on a training program in developmental evaluation, which was tested by 10 Canadian non-profit organizations. A report on the learning from that training can be found on the Foundation’s website (Jamie Gamble, “Emerging Learning about Developmental Evaluation”, May 2006).

When the Foundation decided to fund the national school-based environmental program Green Street<sup>31</sup> for a second five-year phase in 2004, it created an opportunity to reflect on how the program should be managed going forward. Areas identified for urgent attention included the nature of the (sometimes strained) relationships among the diverse program partners and the mechanisms for decision-making. The issues were complex, there was a range of at times contradictory perspectives, and it was difficult for participants in the process to have all of the information they needed to adequately assess the situation. Fortunately, Green Street had the assistance of a skillful evaluator who had been accompanying the program for several years. Equipped with developmental evaluation training, she documented the decision-making process from the perspective of multiple partners. In doing so, she identified a significant governance challenge and brought this information back to the group so that it could determine different options for Green Street’s future management. The evaluation process led to major changes in how the program is being run in the second phase. If Green Street had not had the assistance of a trusted developmental evaluator to guide it through this stage of its evolution, it is quite possible that the partners would have reached an impasse and a popular and innovative program would have been discontinued (one case where ‘creative destruction’ might not have resulted in re-emergence).

A good developmental evaluation allows people to feel heard – the process of interviewing is a release valve for issues that may otherwise be blocking the initiative. Innovative environments are by their nature turbulent and often stressful. In skillful hands, developmental evaluation acts as a form of coaching in constantly shifting environments.

Developmental evaluation may therefore be particularly helpful to dissemination because it is more anticipatory than prescriptive. Traditional evaluation pushes for a high degree of internal validity (a tight experiment), which may be necessary in certain circumstances, but may constrain the adaptive capacity required for the adoption of complex approaches. In contrast, developmental evaluation lays out the issues and a range of potential responses, which is useful information for potential or actual program implementers.<sup>32</sup>

31 Green Street website <<http://www.green-street.ca>>.

32 Ibid.

The Montreal-based L'Abri en Ville<sup>33</sup> provides secure and comfortable homes within a caring community for persons suffering from mental illness. The organization helps residents to integrate into society and lessen their chances of re-hospitalization. Its strength is rooted in faith communities, which provide many of the volunteers. L'Abri is using developmental evaluation to track its Applied Dissemination process with several partners. "Each new site demands an adaptation of our model and each group grapples with unique challenges... we have learned that these variations demand flexibility and creativity in the groups' practices while staying grounded in the core values of the (L'Abri) model... There doesn't seem to be a way to speed up the learning process. It is a maturing process of trial, then retrial when the results are not as hoped for. New sites are inspired by the example of success – the spirit and the competences are transferred through sharing and seeing L'Abri en Ville in action." (L'Abri's report to the Foundation, December 2005).

**A cautionary note regarding social innovation and evaluation: in any innovation, measuring success will vary depending on the long-term goals; funders need to pay close attention to what is happening and modify expectations when appropriate even if initial results are contradictory or alarming.**

In 2003, with the support of an anonymous foundation, the McConnell-funded ArtsSmarts<sup>34</sup> program was introduced to a northern Alberta school which for years had scored at the bottom on provincial standardized achievement tests. The Metis community served by the school has high levels of unemployment, substance abuse, and family violence. At the school, discipline problems are widespread, with dozens of suspensions and dismissals monthly. The ArtsSmarts program has been associated with a number of changes – some promising, and others perplexing.

- As First Nations cultural content was integrated into the curriculum, the community became involved in the school, overcoming years of mistrust and alienation. Student projects and well-attended public performances frequently take place in the community. An indicator of improved trust of the school is that the parents of numerous students with behavioural and learning problems have

signed forms allowing the school to offer specialized assistance – a step few had been willing to take before.

- After initial resistance to ArtsSmarts, teacher practice has changed. 73% of teachers report they are better able to address the needs and interests of children with varying aptitudes and abilities, a key challenge in this school.
- Student attendance increased marginally, but particularly during ArtsSmarts activities. Vandalism and graffiti declined, as students took more pride in their school. However, reports of bullying and aggression increased. While there is some indication that this reflects a willingness by staff to confront previously ignored issues, it is difficult to reconcile these numbers with anecdotal reports by students, teachers, parents and school officials, that students take more interest in their learning and cooperate better.
- Most disconcertingly, overall academic scores declined during the first year of the program, and fell further in the second. Although they rose somewhat in the third year, they have yet to attain the level at which they were before the program was introduced. The results of a standardized reading test, however, using a smaller sample, showed dramatic improvement.

Judged by standardized academic test results alone, the introduction of ArtsSmarts was a failure. As indicated by community-school relationships, and school culture, however, it is succeeding. By helping to address some underlying issues associated with chronically poor academic results, it is hoped that the program will contribute to increased levels of community cohesion and improved prospects for its children.

33 L'Abri en Ville website <<http://www.labrienville.org>>.

34 ArtsSmarts website <<http://www.artssmarts.ca>>.

# 3.2

## The role of policy and research

**Sustainable social change** requires both grassroots, community-based support and appropriate policy support from governments and institutions. Yet few organizations have access to solid policy analysis and relevant research. Funders should consider adding a policy and/or a research component in their framework of supports for organizations.

Policy analysis by a credible research institute will identify the level of interest and opportunity to influence decision-makers. It can help organizational leaders decide when and how to present their work, and to identify and align with potential allies. Connecting relevant academic research with organizations working for social change is also helpful. It requires contacts with motivated and sympathetic researchers who are interested in serving community change.

When the McConnell Foundation wanted to know what people in the federal government might think about a new way to frame support for family caregivers, it asked the Caledon Institute of Social Policy to prepare an overview. Their succinct, candid and timely report, titled “What are Policy-Makers Saying about Respite?”<sup>35</sup> (February 2003), helped the organizations participating in the Foundation’s “Care Renewal: Reaching out to Family Caregivers” program to present their project results in ways that would make sense to policy makers.

### Connecting researchers with practitioners

Frances Westley comments that the demands for timely knowledge and continuous learning as a support for social innovation demand *new forms of knowledge production*, forms focused on bringing researchers out of the universities and into teams with practitioners. The teams are focused not only on building knowledge, but also on solving problems. They rely on a mix of methodologies and frameworks to integrate knowledge drawn from multiple spheres and disciplines, where the knowledge that matters most is that which serves the problem’s resolution best.

Such new forms of knowledge production can be challenging. In the Applied Dissemination workshops<sup>36</sup>, the Foundation was able to forge a new relationship between academic and practitioner knowledge by creating a context in which the

<sup>35</sup> Available on Caledon Institute’s website, <<http://www.caledoninst.org>>.

<sup>36</sup> The Foundation has held six such workshops with its grantees and partners since 2003.

invited experts not only presented their frameworks, but also worked with the innovators to help them solve particular challenges. Learning from peers was valued as much as learning from experts. Through the process a new community of thoughtful practitioners and practical experts was formed, centered on the common purpose of accelerating impact.

# 4

## Accelerating Our Impact



What additional high impact activities can grantmakers undertake to extend the impact, durability and scale of the social innovations they are supporting? In this section, we examine a number of possible approaches including working with intermediary organizations, convening communities of practice, and developing partnerships to address policy and regulatory reform.

### Intermediary organizations

Intermediary organizations are often well-placed to advance a social change agenda. They may act as program designers and implementers on a foundation's behalf, particularly if they have domain expertise and geographic reach that the foundation does not. For example, the McConnell Foundation is partnering with the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Canada to manage Care Renewal, a national program in support of family caregivers. VON has the administrative and health care knowledge, as well as the capacity to connect with decision-makers and researchers to enhance the impact of individual projects across the country.

In the case of Vibrant Communities, a pan-Canadian effort to reduce poverty, Tamarack and the Caledon Institute of Social Policy serve as intermediaries to provide the participating communities with a range of supports, including policy analysis and dialogue among community representatives and decision-makers.

*“In addition to promoting policy ‘enablers’ or measures that build self-sufficiency, the policy focus seeks to identify and reduce barriers rooted in federal or provincial programs or practices. The purpose of this work is to link the problems of individuals to broader public policies – basically to turn ‘private troubles into public issues’. In fact, this type of analysis helps ‘scale up’, or bring to a higher level of attention, the individual efforts of the projects.”<sup>37</sup>*

We also know that intermediaries themselves evolve. They build and lose capacity. Sometimes, they step up and take on new responsibilities. Other times, they should be able to step back, and let others take the lead. And intermediaries must institute a culture and system of partnership, being open to building mutual respect, trust and accountability with peer organizations.<sup>38</sup>

37 Sherri Torjman. “The Group of Six.” *Caledon Institute of Social Policy* (2005): p.6.

38 Edward Jackson, “CEDTAP: Contributions, Lessons Learned and Next Steps”, 2006.

### Communities of practice or learning communities

Communities of practice or learning communities enable individuals and organizations with similar goals to work with one another to learn and problem-solve. Such groups can come together in particular sectors, such as health care or education, or they can have related strategies, such as scaling up local initiatives.

The McConnell Foundation has supported several initiatives that rely for their impact on creating such communities. In 1998, we supported the McGill-McConnell Masters Program for Voluntary Sector Leaders, an innovative educational initiative designed around peer and experiential learning, one goal of which was to forge new communities of practice.

The Applied Dissemination initiative brought together a group of diverse grantees working on bringing successful innovations to scale. They have been successful in generating learning not just to improve their individual efforts, but also to contribute to a field of practice focused on scaling up.

Communities of practice can be facilitated through websites, list-serves, and conference calls, but there is no substitute for regular face-to-face gatherings. When well-organized, with plenty of formal and informal conversations, they foster trust, learning and a common sense of purpose. Over time they may also emerge into “systems of influence”<sup>39</sup> that amplify the signals of the members beyond their individual capacity to do so.

### Incubation initiatives

Funders can provide innovation funds and support incubators to foster the development of new ideas free from the stresses and strains of survival in the non-profit world. Incubation initiatives can be lodged within existing or new organizations, or even with individuals who need time set aside from their day-to-day responsibilities to focus on the development of ideas and concepts. Incubators nourish these individuals with time and intellectual support to help them research, strategize, and plan.

39 See for example the work of Margaret Wheatley's Berkana Institute <<http://www.berkana.org>>.



## Partnerships

Partners, collaborators and strategic alliances are essential to the spread and uptake of social change innovations. Again, funders play a role in identifying and supporting such partnerships. Community foundations, for example, are often seen as unbiased, and they can create an environment where diverse interests can come together to work out strategies for advancing social change.

Funders can convene key actors around major issues to:

- learn about emerging approaches;
- pool resources if and when appropriate;
- develop, debate and (where it makes sense to do so) align strategies;
- develop policy recommendations;
- agree on appropriate overall outcomes and how to measure them.

One Canadian example is an ambitious effort by several partners (among them, venture philanthropists, enterprising non-profits, and community economic development leaders) to identify new and long-term sources of capital from individuals, institutions and private and public funders. In so doing, they aim to change the financing landscape in this country in support of social innovation. Such funding is urgently needed to help social innovations achieve a “tipping point” from local success to systems transformation.

In Québec, the *Chantier pour l'économie sociale*<sup>40</sup> has been extraordinarily successful in moving a concept – the promotion of democratically based and sustainable economic development strategies – from the margins to the mainstream of society over the past decade. Today there are an estimated 6,500 social economy enterprises that together employ 65,000 people and generate annual sales in excess of \$4 billion (about 4% of the province's GNP). The *Chantier*, which represents a wide range of networks and social movements across the province of Québec in such areas as recycling, disability, health care, daycare and affordable housing, has been key to this growth. Its skillful and determined leadership has built successful funding and policy partnerships with local, provincial and federal governments. It has also developed research collaborations with universities that have added considerable credibility to the practice of social economy enterprises.

40 Information is available in French only on the Chantier's website, <<http://www.chantier.qc.ca>>.

# The McConnell Foundation's approach

The McConnell Foundation has been deeply influenced by what we have learned about panarchy, complexity theory, leadership development, evaluation and applied dissemination. We are committed to applying this knowledge in our evolving approach to grantmaking. Our goal is to address major social challenges in Canada in innovative ways that contribute to community resilience and citizen engagement.

Through a more rigorous selection and design process, we will increasingly focus on initiatives with the potential for broad-scale social change. In addition to funding, these initiatives will be supported through four inter-related activities:

- mobilizing and brokering relevant knowledge among researchers and practitioners;
- convening individuals and groups with a common purpose across sectors to generate learning and collaboration;
- developing leadership capacity for social change;
- offering systems transformation (such as skills development, coaching, and fund diversification strategies).

## Knowledge Mobilization/Brokering

There is currently a great deal of powerful research knowledge that is not being used by the community sector. Sector leaders may not know about it, the information may be packaged in a form that makes it inaccessible to practitioners, or the conditions for successful collaboration with researchers do not exist.

To address this gap, we will strive not only to build bridges between the academic and practitioner communities, but also to identify processes and methodologies that will help the two groups to produce knowledge jointly. We will identify and disseminate how best to generate and mobilize learning in a few selected areas that appear ripe for major change, such as environmental protection or social inclusion for people with disabilities. We will also continue to generate and share knowledge about cross-cutting approaches, such as the generic learning from scaling up local innovations.

## Convening

We will bring grantees and experts together on a regular basis to build knowledge and encourage peer support. The Foundation may also convene at the national level those who are working on common issues locally or regionally. The objective would be to create cohesion and momentum in addressing deeply rooted challenges, to overcome persistent fragmentation and “silo” mentalities (organizations and individuals working in isolation on their own issues with little contact with others even within their sector, let alone outside it). Such cohesion is a first step in identifying opportunities to influence policy change and to build broader infrastructural support for social innovation.

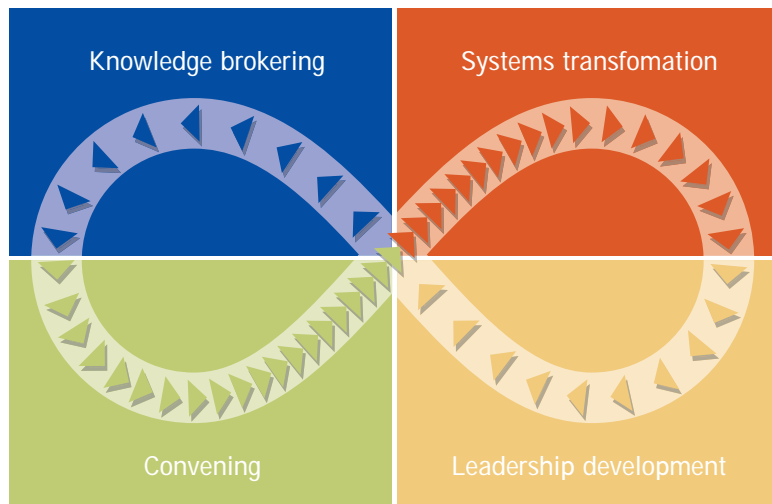
## Leadership Development

The Foundation will help train practitioners who have the knowledge and skills to address serious social challenges. One proven model is the McGill-McConnell Program for National Voluntary Sector Leaders (now closed) which led 120 Canadian senior and emerging non-profit leaders through an intensive Master’s level program dealing with national issues in the context of today’s global realities. The goal was to strengthen the capabilities of national voluntary organizations to respond to new demands and opportunities. In the future, we will design other professional development and academic programs specifically for social innovators and involving representatives of all three sectors (public, private and non-profit).

## Systems Transformation

The Foundation will provide targeted support to promising initiatives that are attempting to address systems such as education, health care or environmental protection. We will offer coaching, mentoring and professional support tailored to the needs and priorities of coalitions, organizations and individual leaders. We will also identify opportunities for these initiatives to advance their ideas with policy makers, to build networks, and to access financial capital. By being both structured and responsive, long-term and focused on rapid problem-solving when particular issues arise, we hope to bolster the capacity of a variety of organizations to tackle social change in innovative ways.

The Foundation has various frameworks and resources at its disposal. In relation to the panarchy or ecocycle model mentioned earlier in this paper, for example, our support decisions will consider the life cycle stage of an initiative. Leadership development is well-suited to the initial phase of a project as leaders prepare to take an idea to scale (**birth**), although it may also be timely during the period of **creative destruction** when leadership transitions often take place. Systems transformation could serve the periods of birth and **consolidation**. Knowledge brokering and convening might play a critical role in **emergence** as new ideas are being generated. There will be no template or step-by-step guide. Instead, we will ensure a fluid, interconnected and open process and carefully evaluate all of these approaches to sustaining social innovation in the years ahead.



## Conclusion

**Funders** are increasingly concerned about the scale and impact of their investments, while social change leaders struggle to figure out how to make change last. By working together, we have an opportunity to transform our practices and relationships and solve problems that presently seem insurmountable.

The capacity for innovation is abundant across all sectors of society, and there is a great deal of hard-earned wisdom to draw upon. Through taking risks, harnessing resources, sticking with change processes over time, investing in leadership, collaborating, tracking, adjusting, and communicating, we have seen brilliant, but isolated experiments become widely accepted and practiced. Civil rights, anti-smoking campaigns, the fight against child labour, and better stewardship of natural resources are all examples.

We have learned, however, that growing programs is only one approach, and that it has limitations. Innovative leaders also need relevant and timely research, customized training, and the opportunity to forge alliances with influential individuals, institutions, and organizations. Most of all, they need unflinching support to enable them to explore and make mistakes. These processes are essential to learning, to the discovery of new and lasting solutions to chronic problems, and to the pursuit of the sustainable world to which we are all committed.

*“Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.”*

Robert F. Kennedy

## Resources and tools related to scaling up and sustaining social innovation

## Reports and books

Anderson, Malcolm. Towards a Holistic Approach to Sustaining Innovative Projects. The Change Foundation ([www.changefoundation.org](http://www.changefoundation.org)) March 2004.

This paper examines the long-term sustainability of grant-funded projects beyond their initial funding period and identifies approaches that can be used to enhance sustainability. Fundamentally, the paper suggests that sustainability can best be achieved through an integrated holistic approach that is applied systematically throughout all aspects of a project's life cycle.

Scott, Katherine and Deborah Pike. "Funding Matters... For Our Communities: Challenges and Opportunities for Funding Innovation in Canada's Non profit and Voluntary Sector." Canadian Council for Social Development. June 2005.

< <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/fm/p2report.pdf> > .

A report summarizing the findings of workshops and presentations undertaken through a two-year project, including common themes and innovative community practice. It includes an analysis of the different proposals for funding reform raised over the course of the project.

Ford Foundation, "Asset Building for Social Change: Pathways to Large Scale Impact." Feb. 2004 < [http://www.fordfound.org/publications/recent\\_articles/docs/asset\\_pathways.pdf](http://www.fordfound.org/publications/recent_articles/docs/asset_pathways.pdf) > .

An overview of the Ford Foundation's experience in supporting the scaling up of initiatives in the US and overseas, with recommendations for funders.

Kohl, Richard and Lawrence Cooley. "Scaling Up: A Conceptual and Operational Framework; Preliminary Report to the McArthur Foundation's Program on Population and Reproductive Health", Fall 2005. Available through the Boreal Institute for Civil Society, located with the Munk Centre for International Studies (University of Toronto). < [http://webapp.mcis.utoronto.ca/resources/pdf/Boreal\\_Institute.pdf](http://webapp.mcis.utoronto.ca/resources/pdf/Boreal_Institute.pdf) > .

Westley, Frances, Brenda Zimmerman and Michael Patton. Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed. Toronto: Random House, 2006.

Getting to Maybe applies the insights of complexity theory and harvests the experiences of a wide range of people and organizations – including the ministers behind the Boston Miracle (and its aftermath); the Grameen Bank, in which one man's dream of micro-credit sparked a financial revolution for the world's poor; the efforts of a Canadian clothing designer to help transform the lives of aboriginal women and children; and many more – to lay out a brand new way of thinking about making change in communities, in business, and in the world.

Schorr, Lisbeth B. Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America. New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1997.

A thoughtful examination of how to "spread and sustain what works" in programs that promote social change. Though the context is the U.S., the lessons are universal and the numerous in-depth examples effectively illustrate her conclusions and recommendations.

The Finance Project. Sustainability Planning Workbook, (2003)

< <http://www.financeproject.org/engage/workbook.asp> >

A tool and training process to help users clarify their vision, identify key issues in sustaining their work, and develop strategies to achieve their long-term goals.

Mulgan, Geoff, et al. "Social Silicon Valleys – a manifesto for social innovation: what it is, why it matters and how it can be accelerated." The Young Foundation, 2006.

A booklet aimed primarily at funders. "Silicon Valley and its counterparts have shown what can be achieved when intelligence and investment are devoted to innovation in technology. Over the next few decades we argue that comparable investment and attention need to be directed to innovations that address compelling unmet social needs."

W.K. Kellogg Foundation. "Applying Policy Tools to Achieve Long-term Change." 2003.

This brochure for grantees addresses the ways policies shape, hamper, or encourage social progress.

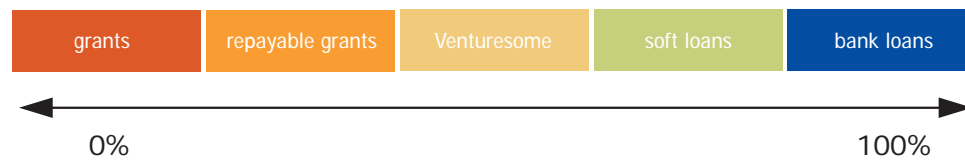
## Websites

### New approaches to financing:

Charities Aid Foundation (Venturesome) [www.cafonline.org/venturesome](http://www.cafonline.org/venturesome) (UK)

“Venturesome aims to be a financial partner, which supports charitable work achieving high social impact by providing loans and investments. We provide custom-built funding for charities, who aim to repay the money. We fill the gap in the financing spectrum between grants and bank loans.”

### Chances of repaying the money



### Knowledge and tools for social innovation learning and impact:

Changemakers [www.changemakers.net](http://www.changemakers.net)

“Changemakers.net is an Ashoka ([www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org)) initiative that connects the insights of Ashoka’s social entrepreneurs with the best work in the citizen sector to spark action on a global scale.”

Resilience Alliance [www.resalliance.org](http://www.resalliance.org)

“The Resilience Alliance is a research organization of scientists and practitioners from many disciplines who collaborate to explore the dynamics of social-ecological systems. The body of knowledge developed by the RA, encompassing key concepts of resilience, adaptability and transformability within the notion of a panarchy of adaptive cycles, provides a foundation for sustainable development policy and practice.”

Society for Organizational Learning [www.solonline.org](http://www.solonline.org)

“SoL was formed in April of 1997 to continue the work of MIT’s Center for Organizational Learning (1991-1997). Peter Senge, author of the *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* is the founding Chairman. It connects corporations and organizations, researchers and consultants to generate knowledge about and capacity for fundamental innovation and change by engaging in collaborative action inquiry projects.”

Skoll Foundation [www.socialedge.org](http://www.socialedge.org)

“Social Edge is a program of the Skoll Foundation that was inspired by Jeff Skoll’s commitment to connecting people with shared passions. Its mission is to: connect social entrepreneurs, their partners and allies to discuss cutting-edge issues shaping the field; foster frank dialogue, mutual respect and a sense of community among all in the sector; promote learning from the best, promising and disastrous practices.”

Stanford Social Innovation Review [www.ssireview.com](http://www.ssireview.com)

A quarterly journal of case studies and resources for people interested in social innovation, e.g., “Scaling Social Impact: Strategies for spreading social innovations” by Gregory Dees, Beth Battle Anderson and Jane Wei-Skillern, Spring 2004.

**The Pathways Mapping Initiative [www.pathwaystooutcomes.org](http://www.pathwaystooutcomes.org)**

“The Pathways Mapping Initiative (PMI) provides a broad, deep, and coherent body of information that individuals and organizations can use to take action. PMI was established in January 2000 as part of the Project on Effective Interventions at Harvard University and developed in partnership with the Technical Assistance Resource Center of The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Its objective is to build on the wealth of findings about what works by going beyond both anecdotes and traditional evaluation literature.”

**Theory of Change [www.theoryofchange.org](http://www.theoryofchange.org)**

“A joint venture between ActKnowledge ([www.actknowledge.org](http://www.actknowledge.org)) and the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change ([www.aspenroundtable.org](http://www.aspenroundtable.org)), it is an interactive online suite of tools for creating, sharing and using Theories of Change (which are) an innovative tool to design and evaluate social change initiatives. By creating a blueprint of the building blocks required to achieve a social change initiative’s long-term goal, such as improving a neighborhood’s literacy levels or academic achievement, a Theory of Change offers a clear roadmap to achieve your results identifying the preconditions, pathways and interventions necessary for an initiative’s success.”

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