



**CALGARY
FOUNDATION**
FOR COMMUNITY, FOREVER

**Pursuing a
Sustainable Future**
Environment Impact Report



Vital Priorities

Calgary Foundation initiated a collaborative re-examination of issues facing our community to:

1. Ensure current and emerging needs are effectively being addressed.
2. Add strategic focus, alignment, and impact to our collective work.

Through multi-pronged consultation with community partners and extensive analysis of research, five vital priority areas were identified.



Pursuing a Sustainable Future

is one in a series of vital priority reports that provide donors, community members, and charitable organizations with insights in order to:

- Understand the current sector landscape, areas of change, and desired outcomes.
- Inspire innovative solutions and develop strategy to move forward.
- Increase leadership and profile of organizations working for change.
- Comprehend the impact of Calgary Foundation's grantmaking.
- Measure impact and outcomes to guide strategic, targeted community investment.

Outcome Harvesting

To measure complex outcomes, defined as behavioural changes that include actions, relationships, policies, and practices, this report utilized an evaluation process known as outcome harvesting. Rather than measuring progress towards predetermined objectives, this innovative approach collects evidence of what works, what's changed, what's in the way, and what's ahead.

Process

Plan: Determine scope of work, identify partners and areas of impact, shape evaluation questions, and convene environmental stakeholders to discuss areas of change within the sector.

Harvest Data: Review and synthesize relevant data (i.e. interim/final reports, annual reports, emails, thank-you letters, and websites) to formulate preliminary outcome statements for stakeholder review

Substantiation: Substantiate and revise outcome statements based on input provided during the engagement process of environmental stakeholders.

Interpretation: Systems mapping, and additional analysis of data to draft theory of change.

Findings

This report focuses on areas of change identified through environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) consultations with stakeholders, communities, and government agencies within Alberta.

The outcome harvest was guided by four questions, which generated outcome statements highlighting the progress of ENGOs in the last five years, and impact of Calgary Foundation's contributions.

Government Policies

Q1

In the last five years, what changes occurred in policy and systems of the provincial government, and how did Calgary Foundation grantees contribute?

The change in government in 2015 was felt by the environmental sector. Though new relationships had to be developed, efforts to engage with the new government have resulted in change that more closely aligns provincial strategy with the environmental goals of ENGOs. Some organizations reported that they are better able to influence government policy.

The sector's adaptive approach has led to successful changes in land use policy, and wildlife management. ENGOs attributed their success to the diversity of organizations that are advocating policy change from both outside of government, and from within the system.

Prior to the election, ENGOs had already laid the groundwork for the Alberta Climate Change Leadership Plan which was subsequently introduced by the government. ENGOs reported the government's leadership role in climate change adds credibility to their work, freeing up resources to focus on new strategic directions.



Calgary Foundation Impact

In the last five years, Calgary Foundation has provided over \$14 million in funding to ENGOs. As one of the only major funders of environmental work in Calgary, the Foundation's support of environmental advocacy is important. Due to the current economic climate, corporate funding has decreased, and government funding has not grown significantly and is not consistent across ENGOs.

Policies in Action

Covering 14,000 hectares and containing an important wildlife corridor, the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Waldron conservation project is the largest conservation easement in Canadian history.

Community Engagement

Q2

In the last five years, how has public behaviour and attitude towards the natural environment changed, and how did Calgary Foundation grantees contribute?

ENGOS capacity to raise awareness and change public behaviour has increased due to the improved use of existing tools and the development of new tools, which include:

- Use of innovative technology like social media tools and custom mobile apps.
- Development of community engagement strategies and citizen action plans.

Some of the emergent technologies allow the public to be directly engaged in ENGO efforts. For example, Miistakis Institute used their app to recruit 'citizen scientists' who voluntarily contributed to environmental research which led to government action in wildlife collision mitigation.

Social media has the added benefit of tracking and measuring stakeholder engagement.

However, as funders lean towards supporting new programs, rather than ongoing operations, ENGOS reported existing funding models made long-term change difficult to measure and understand. Other challenges include:

- Insufficient program evaluation training for staff, and lack of time to follow-up on past efforts.
- High staff turnover, in part due to the prevalence of project-based funding which has the adverse effect of loss of systemic and organizational knowledge.

To address this issue, organizations suggested funders provide space on grant applications to highlight past funding of projects as a reminder to both the funder and charity of the good work being accomplished.



Calgary Foundation Impact

Particularly within the environment sector, change takes a significant amount of time and requires a variety of approaches. Calgary Foundation offers a range of granting programs that support the development of new technologies and provides funding to refresh older tools such as websites, that contribute to increased community engagement and public profile.

To build relationships beyond grantmaking, the Foundation plans to bi-annually convene ENGOS to understand ongoing needs and support the sustainability of the sector.

Volunteerism and Collaboration

Q3

In the last five years, what have been the impacts of successful and unsuccessful collaboration in the ENGO sector, and how has Calgary Foundation contributed?

The mainstreaming of environmentalism has amplified public awareness of ENGOs which has increased the popularity of environmental volunteerism. Some of the factors include:

- Increase of post-secondary graduates seeking volunteer opportunities to build their resume.
- Decrease in ability to donate financially has led to increased contributions of time and talent.
- Growth of “Day” fundraising events. (i.e. Earth Day, Water Day)

While the growth in volunteerism is mostly beneficial, volunteer management can be challenging, especially for smaller organizations.

By sharing knowledge and resources, ENGOs have increased their collaborative work to accomplish larger goals that advance environmental sustainability in Alberta. The development of partnerships and networking opportunities were identified as critical elements to success. Informal collaborations contribute to organizational social capital, which can then be leveraged to improve the effectiveness of formal collaborative opportunities.



Photo Credit: ©Dan Rafia - Parks Canada

Southern Eastern Slopes Collaboration

Miistakis Institute, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Southern Alberta Land Trust Society and several smaller non-profits collaborated to create a bold, detailed, proactive land use vision that prioritizes the protection and management of public and private lands along the Southern Eastern slopes of Alberta.



Calgary Foundation Impact

To remove the barrier of having to choose between an organization’s core work or a collaborative effort, Calgary Foundation has adapted a new funding model that allows applicants to apply on behalf of both an organization’s project, as well as on behalf of a collaboration.

Calgary Foundation provides grants for specific capacity building initiatives and offers learning opportunities such as Community Knowledge Centre workshops. By convening organizations to foster cross-sector dialogue, the Foundation creates opportunities for charities to collaborate.

Resilience

Q4

In the last five years, how has ENGO sector resilience changed, and how has Calgary Foundation contributed?

ENGOS have been working collaboratively to advance actions for environmental sustainability in Alberta.

Through the networking efforts of organizations like Alberta Ecotrust, and the development of *communities of practice*, ENGOS have opportunities to:

- Coordinate efforts and participate in peer learning exchanges.
- Initiate new sustainable partnerships between organizations.
- Develop and implement new programs.

The question of resiliency in the environmental sector was an important topic of discussion. The results were used to understand interrelationships between various resiliency factors and to inform the draft of the theory of change.



Calgary Foundation Impact

The outcome harvest captured the ENGOS efforts and impact of Calgary Foundation's granting. To further understand the Foundation's strategic role in pursuing a sustainable future and to visualize the impacts that lead to change, the **theory of change** was mapped to guide future grantmaking efforts.



Theory of Change recognizes that action from ENGOS is not a one-way street of advocacy as it identifies several different avenues of influence. The theory reinforces the need for donors and funders to understand that environmental efforts will be more impactful if, in addition to supporting program related expenses, funding for capacity building is increased.

Summary

The path of *Pursuing a Sustainable Environment* will require a multi-faceted approach to advance the work of ENGOs.

The Foundation will continue to provide flexible grantmaking to address current and emerging needs in the sector. While funding for both individual charities and collaboratives will have an impact, there are additional strategies that can be implemented to advance the efforts of ENGOs including:

DESIRED GOAL

A healthy environment provides life and prosperity for all in the Calgary and area community.

1 Offer flexible support for ongoing initiatives.

Remove barriers that only support new programs as it leads to loss of organizational knowledge and understanding of an initiative's impact.

2 Identify and share volunteer recruitment strategies.

Support capacity-building initiatives and provide a range of resources that support volunteerism in the sector.

3 Support advocacy efforts of environmental charities.

Ensure ENGOs efforts receive increased support to address current and emerging priorities.



Pursuing a Sustainable Environment Contributors:

Alberta Council for Environmental Education | **Ann and Sandy Cross Conservation Area** | **Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley** | **Calgary Zoo** | **Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society: Southern Alberta** | **Green Calgary** | **Miistakis Institute** | **Pembina Foundation** | **Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative**



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