

PARTNERING  
FOR IMPACT:

# From crisis to opportunity

CASE STUDIES OF CORPORATE-NONPROFIT  
PARTNERSHIPS DURING COVID-19



# FOREWORD

Last November, Imagine Canada published [Wake Up Call: Navigating New Pathways for Corporate Community Investment in Canada](#), which shed light on the state of Canada's nonprofit sector during the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the insights shared and conversations sparked by that report, we have seen greater collaboration across the nonprofit and corporate sectors in recent months. As a result, deliberately focused funding has reached the communities that desperately needed it during these challenging times.

While we have made great progress, there is still much to do and learn. This next iteration of Imagine Canada's research will encourage learning by sharing – a practice that will serve our collective, global community well going forward.

Within this report, there are many interesting case studies – including RBC's own partnership with DataStream through [RBC Tech for Nature](#). Each presents a tangible example of how the nonprofit and corporate sectors are partnering to find new, creative ways of serving the needs of our communities. What I have learned from this work is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. These unprecedented times have called for unprecedented ideas and solutions. It is time to reevaluate our funding approaches, ideate and co-create across sectors, and embed 'more-than-money' mindsets to generate community and societal impact.

I hope you will take the time to reflect, share, and leverage the insights within this report in tandem with your own learnings. We have an opportunity to drive the social changes needed to create the more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive future we all want to see. Working together, we can build back better.

*- Valerie Chort, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & Sustainability, RBC  
and Executive Director, RBC Foundation*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was made possible by the generous support of our National Partner, [RBC Foundation](#).



Foundation

Imagine Canada would also like to thank our Knowledge Partner, [Blackbaud](#), for their support.

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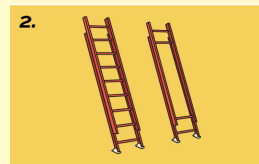
# IMAGINE CANADA RELEASED A REPORT ON CORPORATE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN FALL 2020



## 10 trends shaping community investment



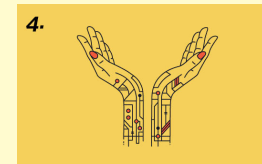
1. The Uneven Pandemic



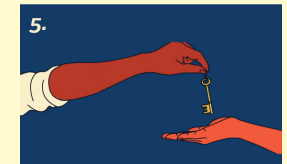
2. Time for Racial Justice



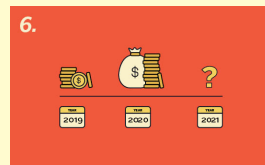
3. The Great Cataclysm



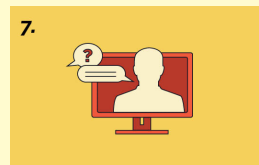
4. The Constant Pivot



5. Unrestricted Funding During Covid-19



6. Companies Stepped Up



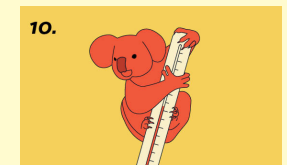
7. Engaging Virtual Employees



8. The CEO as Social Advocate



9. Partnering for Impact



10. Covid-19 and Climate Change

Available for free download at:  
[imaginecanada.ca/wake-up-call](https://imaginecanada.ca/wake-up-call)

## ABOUT IMAGINE CANADA

We work to bolster the charities, nonprofits and social entrepreneurs that build, enrich and define our nation and the communities they support.

Corporate community investment is an integral part of Imagine Canada's vision for a strong charitable sector, and resilient and thriving communities.

## THE OPPORTUNITIES OF PARTNERSHIP AND THE RISKS OF THE STATUS QUO

“

Now is a great window of opportunity to change how we operate and how we collaborate. If we don't, the loss of faith in our companies, our society, and our institutions will only grow. If we do, we may unlock new solutions, new opportunities, and innovate in ways that will shape our country and our communities for decades.

”

- *Community Investment Professional*

## CASE STUDIES

**This report presents case studies of 9 nonprofit and corporate partnerships.**

The case studies are based on almost 40 interviews with people involved in the partnerships and on documentary evidence relating to the partnerships.

Some case studies reported here are entirely new initiatives; some reached unprecedented growth during the pandemic; some are examples of what our interviewees believe we need more of going forward.

# PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC, CANADIANS BELIEVED THAT NONPROFITS, BUSINESSES, AND GOVERNMENTS WERE FAILING AT PARTNERSHIP

Percentage of Canadians who think each institution is doing well/very well at working collaboratively:

NGOs	
Transparency about funding	28
Avoid becoming politicized	29
Expose corruption	30
<b>Partner with business</b>	<b>33</b>
Set goals with regular public updates	34

Business	
<b>Partner with NGOs</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Partner with Government</b>	<b>30</b>
Sustainable business practices	35
Jobs that pay a decent wage	35
Invest in employee training	37

Government	
Reduce partisanship	19
<b>Partner with NGOs</b>	<b>24</b>
Community-level problems	27
<b>Partner with business</b>	<b>29</b>
Social services for the poor	30

# CHARITIES ARE STILL FACED WITH SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES



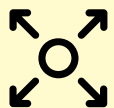
**Revenue declines remain significant**

More than half (**55%**) of charities reported revenue was down versus before the pandemic, with an average decline of **43%** of revenue.



**Demand for services keeps increasing**

**45%** of charities reported demand increased since the beginning of the pandemic (up from **35%** in early 2020).

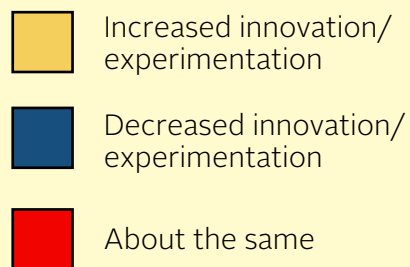


**More need than capacity**

**34%** of charities are seeing demand increase faster than capacity.

# STILL, MOST CHARITIES REPORTED INCREASING INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

Pandemic Driven  
Changes to Innovation/  
Experimentation  
among charities,  
late 2020



Most nonprofits  
have increased  
their innovation  
and experimentation  
during the pandemic.

# These are the 9 case studies covered in this report:

Network approach  
to partnership 01



Tri-sector  
partnerships 02

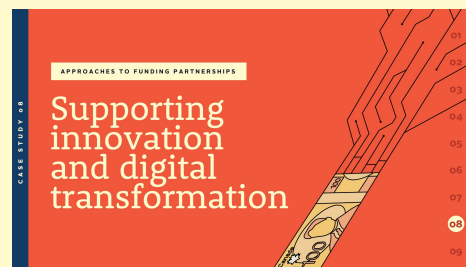
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APPROACHES TO PARTNERING

# Network approach to partnership



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## NETWORK APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIPS

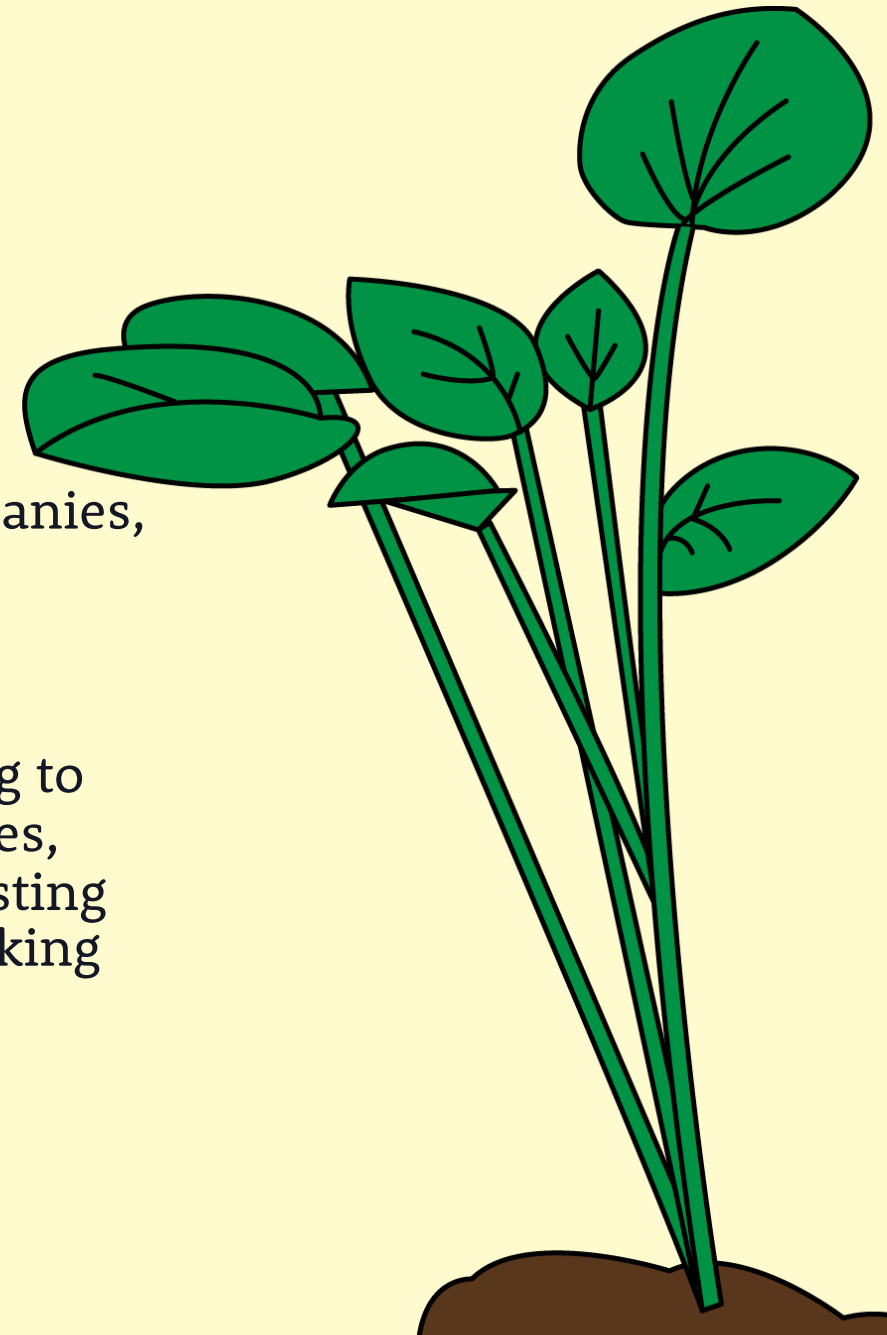
“When you’re trying to achieve population level change, [companies] don’t have enough money to do it alone... Companies need to be willing to partner with other companies, funders, and foundations, and share the glory.”

- Paul Born, Co-CEO and Co-Founder, Tamarack Institute

“I think collaboration on projects is going to be something to move forward to as well. Collaboration on major initiatives, including the corporate world working together and investing in certain initiatives, but also different organizations working together on building an initiative.”

- Julie L’Heureux, Director, Donations Committee, Power Corporation of Canada

Source: [Imagine Canada's Sector Monitor, February 2021](#)



# Cisco and Connected North

“To bring digital connectivity to remote schools across the North, we needed to attract other partners to the table, and we were never going to do that if it was branded as a Cisco program.” - *Willa Black, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Cisco Canada*

## Overview

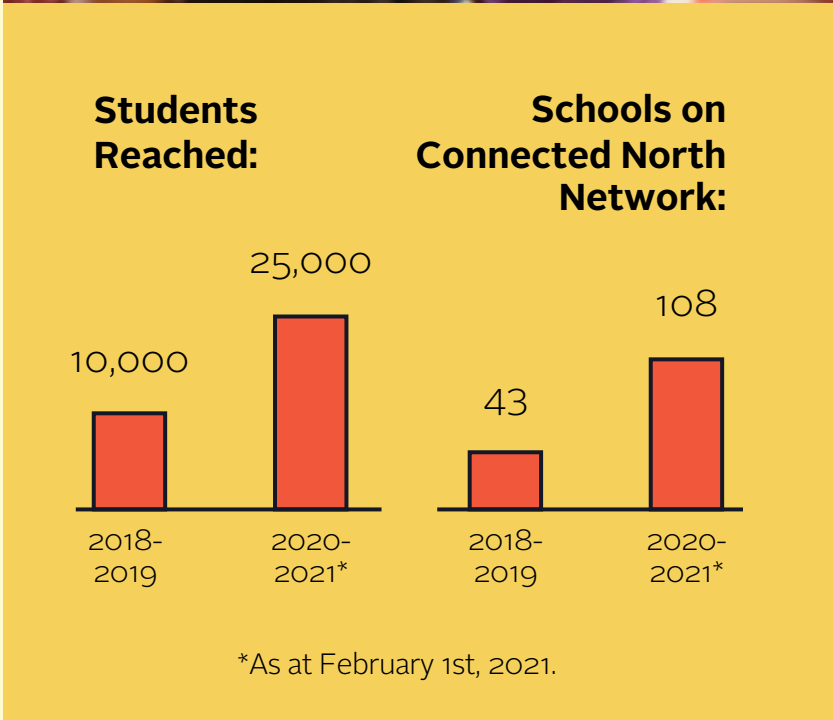
Connected North is a leading-edge program that delivers virtual and interactive education and healthcare services to remote, underserved communities through high-definition, two-way video collaboration technology.

Founded by Cisco in 2013 and now led by registered charity TakingITGlobal, Connected North connects students living in the remote North to virtual experiences and opportunities not available to them locally.

The organization has partners ranging from network providers, governments, service providers, community partners, schools, content providers, research partners, and private and public sector funders.

## Key Partnership Takeaway

During the pandemic school year of 2020-2021, Connected North more than doubled its students, number of sessions delivered and number of schools. Black is emphatic that the partnership structure they setup over the last 8 years was what allowed the organization to grow even as it was substantially adapting their programming due to COVID-19.



1

## Avoid corporate branding on your partnership

“Avoid corporate branding on the program – but own the solution to the problem. If it is too heavily branded you will not attract partnership in a meaningful way... There is still good brand recognition to be had in the form of good citizenship. That’s powerful. Cisco has benefited significantly from the founding and ongoing impact of the Connected North program.”

2

## Project design and pilots can play a key role in successful partnerships

“Be rigorous in scoping the issue, understanding who the key stakeholders are to identify potential partners at an early stage. Build the pilot solution and start small – in our case – one school. Engage governments and key potential funders early on – if the pilot is successful, you will be better positioned for potential funding partnership for scale. Invite input into pilot design. This approach was highly successful for us and resulted in full funding partnership with the Government of Nunavut.”

3

## Understand the full set of assets you can bring to a partnership

“You need to understand what your resources are as a large organization. What can you leverage... what are your products and services? What’s the expertise? Where can you leverage the talent of your employees? What about your customers?”

4

## Leverage your customers and suppliers as partners

“Most of our Connected North partners are Cisco customers and re-seller partners. We sell through a network of partners globally and as the program grew – we identified the gaps and figured out who could fill those gaps, and much of the time that was from us reaching out to our customers. Then it’s critical to demonstrate alignment and the value proposition for them.”

**Note:** All quotes are from a conversation with Willa Black, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Cisco Canada.

APPROACHES TO PARTNERING

# Tri-sector partnerships



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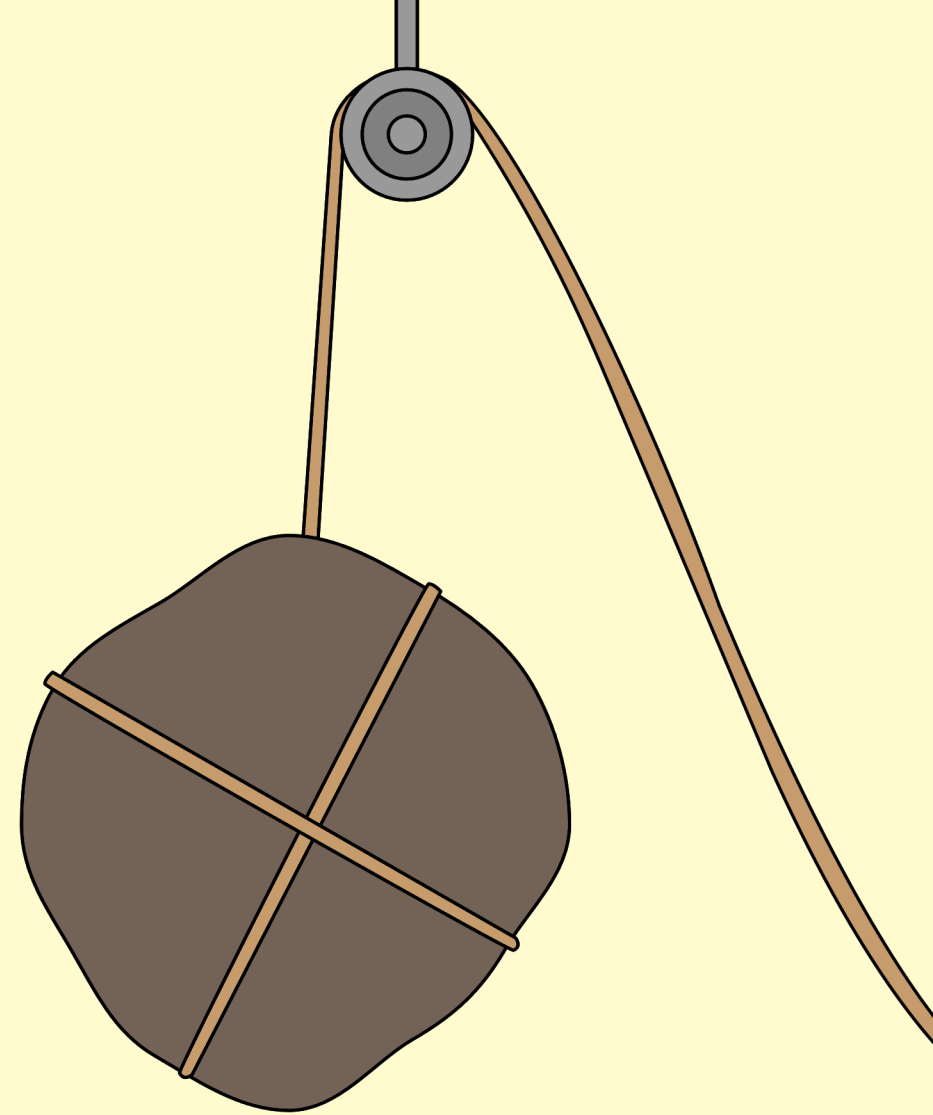
## TRI-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

“As much as we have funds and we have the willingness to want to participate and support and drive change, it’s not doable unless everyone’s at the table.”

*- Senior CSR Staff at large Canadian company*

“If we bring and harness business, government, and nonprofit... we have a much better ability to address what the economy will need moving forward... [In the past] what we have failed to do is direct ‘what are the societal outcomes we need to collaborate around’?”

*- Senior CSR Staff at large Canadian company*



## WoodGreen Community Services and Tri-Sector Partnerships

The partnership brings new “affordable units into the marketplace in less than a year. Normally ... it takes four years.”

– Anne Babcock, President and CEO, WoodGreen Community Services

### Overview

Developer Daniels Corporation, Sun Life Financial, WoodGreen Community Services, and the City of Toronto partnered to add 34 new affordable housing units to a 346-unit building through a unique tri-sector partnership.

WoodGreen Community Services will offer the units to graduates of the Homeward Bound program along with service to support the mother-led households.

The City of Toronto is providing tax relief and a grant while Daniels and Sun Life are forgoing \$19 million in total revenue over the course of the project.

### Key Partnership Takeaway

Like many of the most critical issues in society, the cost and complexity of building new affordable housing units is beyond most organizations; new types of cross-sector partnerships are needed to muster more resources.

**Note:** This case study was developed based on a conversation with Michelle German, VP Policy and Strategy at WoodGreen Community Services as well as press releases and news articles around the partnership that included additional quotes.



# 1

## Shared vision critical for success of tri-sector partnerships

“There is a lot of complexity in this deal and a lot of details to iron out. But because we had such a strong shared vision, we were able to keep driving towards it. Partnership really comes down to trust and the ability to develop shared objectives and shared goals.”

- *Michelle German, Vice President, Policy and Strategy, WoodGreen Community Services*

# 2

## Each partner contributes unique expertise

This partnership harnesses “the social housing expertise of the non-profit sector, the development and construction engine of the private sector, and the financial tools that government brings to the table.”

- *Mitchell Cohen, President and CEO, Daniels Corporation*

# 3

## A proof of concept and model going forward

“Developing 34-units is only a small step in addressing the affordable housing crisis. But it’s a great proof of concept that we can apply going forward.”

- *Michelle German*

# 4

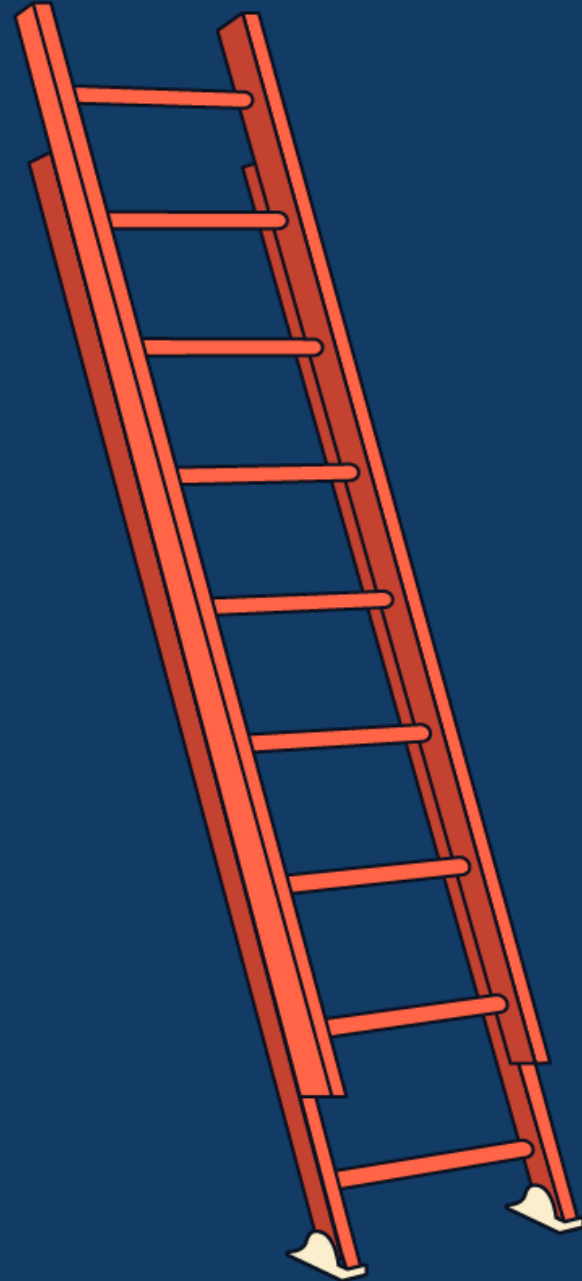
## Ambitious goals for ambitious partnerships

“We’ve set a Big Hairy Audacious Goal of increasing from 900 affordable housing units to 3,000 over the next 10 years. And that has created a sense of urgency for us to start having a lot conversations with a lot of different people. These days, I am talking to up to three developers a week... And we’ve been very intentional about getting out there and doing research, and meeting people and showcasing success; all of it is integrated and helps us build credibility as a partner.”

- *Michelle German*

APPROACHES TO PARTNERING

# Nonprofits collaborating for scale



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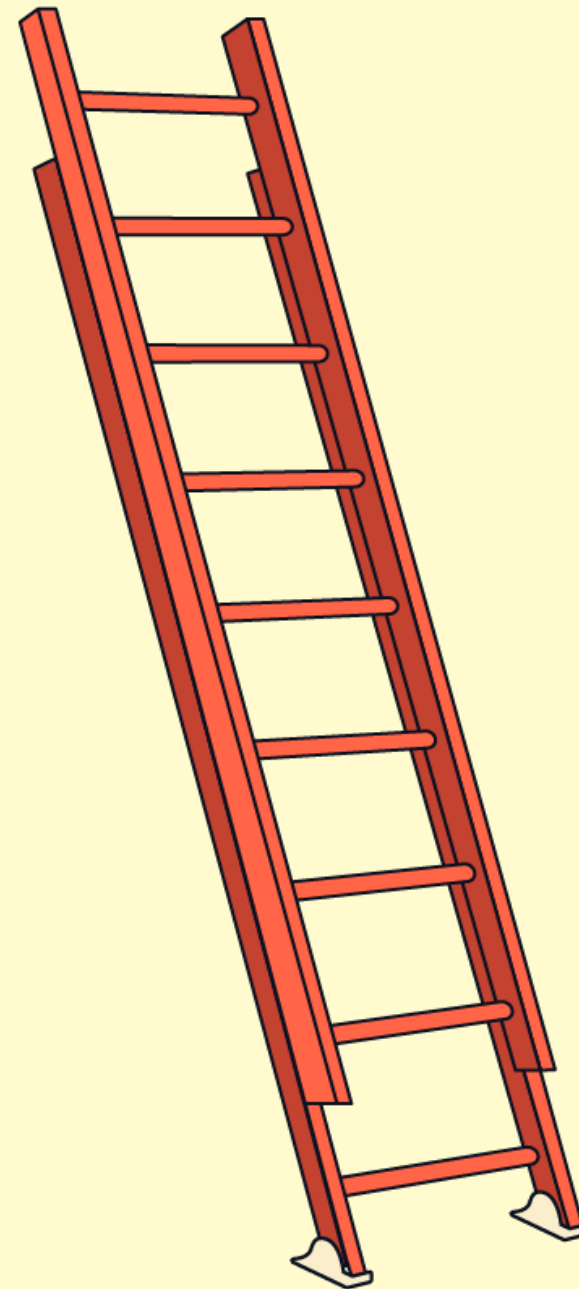
## NONPROFITS COLLABORATING FOR SCALE

“Thinking further than funding, we can connect nonprofit partners across the sector to increase collaboration, working faster to achieve shared goals and increase their collective impact.”

*- Valerie Chort, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & Sustainability, RBC  
and Executive Director, RBC Foundation*

“What we want to see is different nonprofit organizations working together on building an initiative instead of working separately. That way, when we invest our dollars, they have a bigger impact.”

*- Senior Community Investment Staff at large Canadian company*



## Saskatchewan SPCA: Emergency Pet Food Bank

“Our local food bank shared with us that pet food had become a popular request for folks. As the pandemic hit... we evolved from distributing donated pet accessories and transitioned into an emergency pet food bank.”

*- Josh Hourie, Community Relations Coordinator, Saskatchewan SPCA*

### Overview

The Saskatchewan SPCA Emergency Food Bank is a partnership between the SaskSPCA and eight food banks around the province to distribute pet food through food banks.

In the wake of the pandemic, just as needs were growing at traditional food banks, so too were people struggling to afford pet food.

The Emergency Pet Food Bank was launched without any in-kind contributions or long-term funding. After the SaskSPCA's announcement of the initiative received widespread media coverage, Horizon Pet Nutrition stepped in and donated 20,000 pounds of pet food and reached out to their logistics partner, Jay's Transportation Group, to arrange free shipment to each of the food banks.

### Key Partnership Takeaway

Josh Hourie believes the efforts they went to secure partnerships with food banks around the province attracted more interest and media attention in the program, leading to securing the corporate partnership.



**1** Engaging partners in needs assessments can accelerate the launch of new programs

“We already had a local food bank partner, and they shared that pet food had become a popular request from folks... We surveyed pet food banks around the province and determined which food banks had need of pet food, and which didn't. Nearly all of the food banks that responded to our surveys ended up becoming partners”

**2** Companies can leverage their supply chains to increase their impact

“Not only did Horizon Pet Nutrition make the donation of the pet food, they committed to paying for the transportation to ship the food to the communities as well. They ended up talking with one of their transport partners, which was Jay's Transportation Group. And they decided that they would transport the food for us to our partners free of charge.”

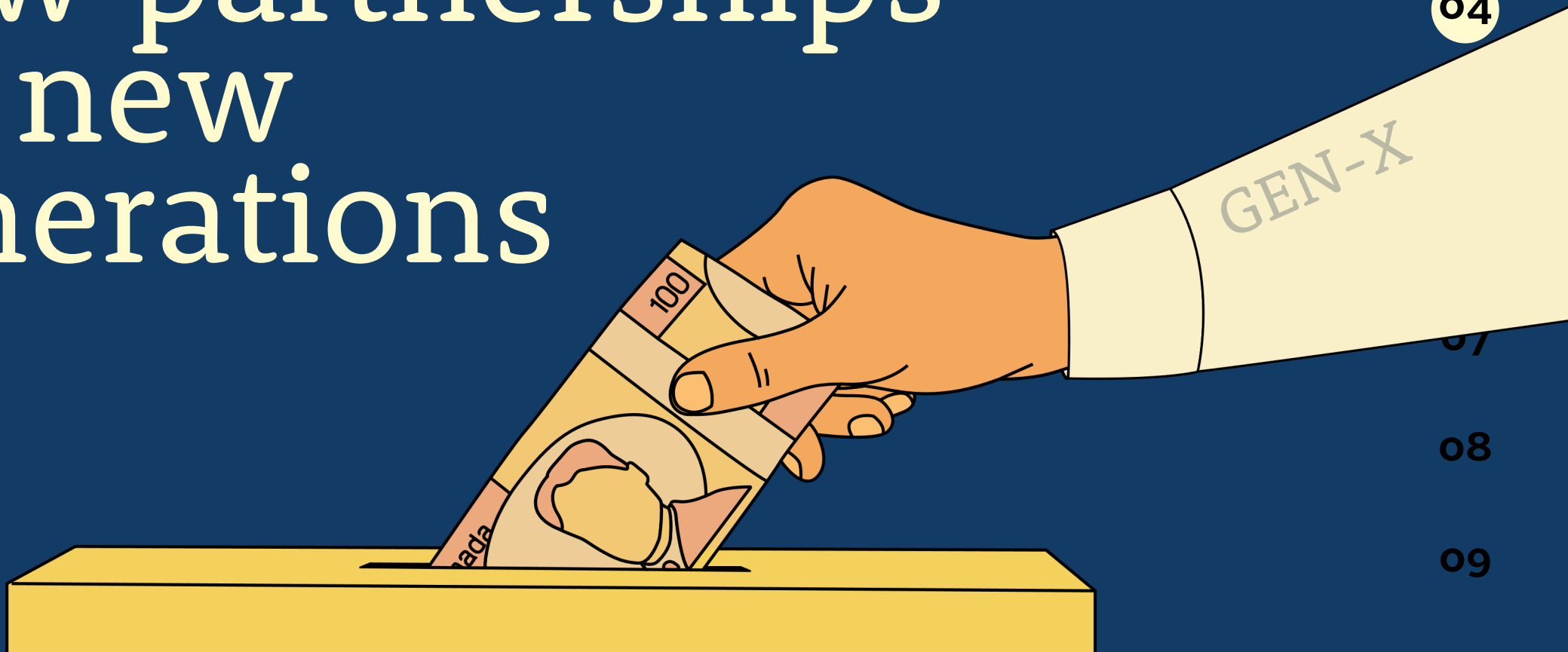
**3** Awareness of the emergency pet food program drove pet food donations to food banks

“Now that folks in the community are aware there is pet food available through food banks, they [the food banks] are getting more donations from the community as well. It's not to say they never got donations before, but they were so sporadic that they couldn't offer the program on an ongoing basis.”

**Note:** All Quotes are from a conversation with Josh Hourie, Community Relations Coordinator, Saskatchewan SPCA.

APPROACHES TO PARTNERING

# New partnerships for new generations



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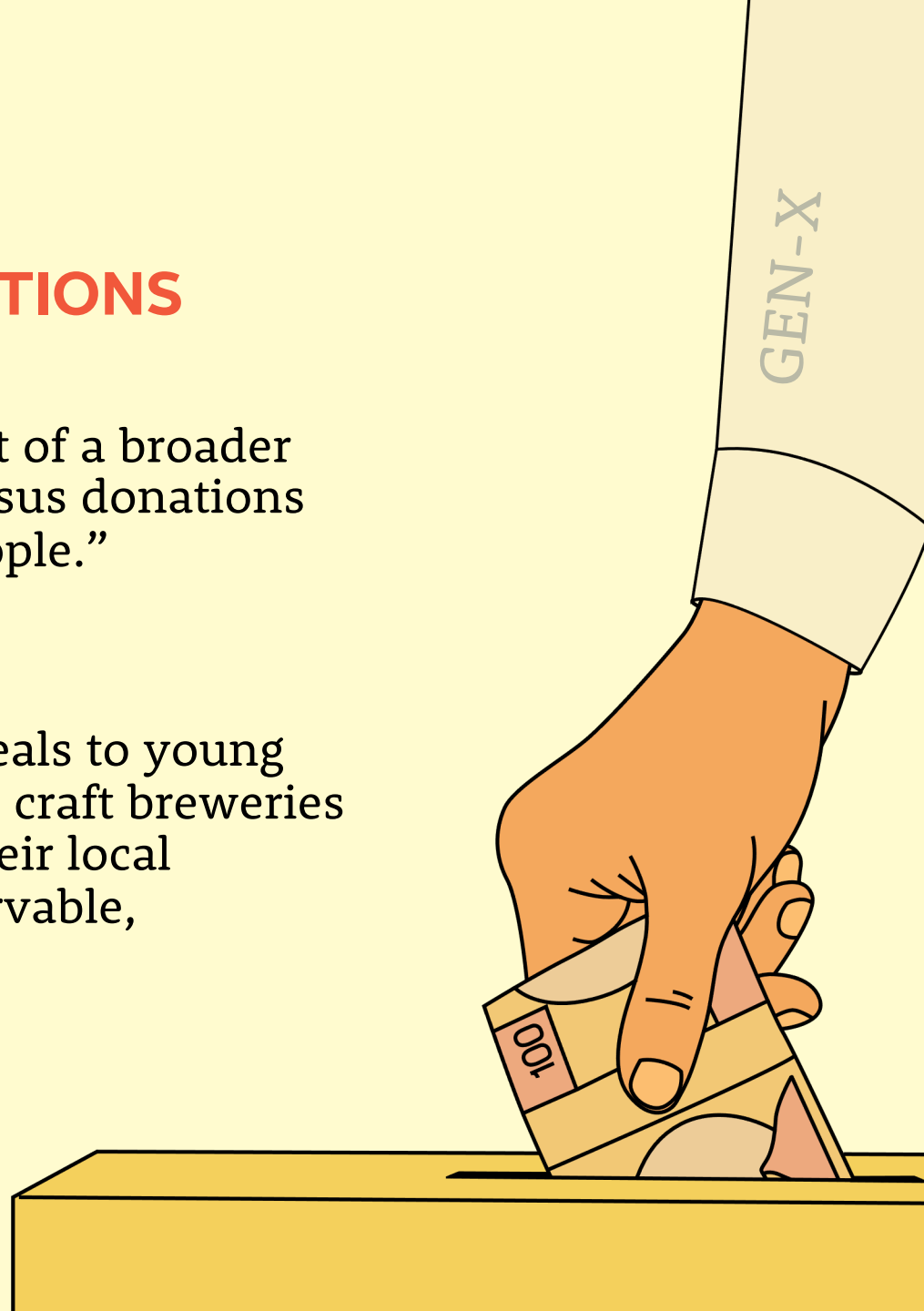
## NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR NEW GENERATIONS

“The success of CanadaHelps’ new Cause Funds is part of a broader trend towards causes as a method of engagement, versus donations to individual charities – particularly among young people.”

- Marina Glogovac, CEO, CanadaHelps

“We’re focused on hyper local work. It absolutely appeals to young people and that mirrors consumer trends, whether it’s craft breweries or farmer’s markets. We’re showcasing our work in their local neighbourhood communities... and they can see observable, tangible impacts.”

- Executive Director of a local United Way



## CanadaHelps and Cause Funds

"Based on research, we anticipated that younger people would love funds. But we did not anticipate the level of interest from businesses and brands that turned to our Cause Funds to support timely crises. That surprised us."

- Marina Glogovac, CEO, CanadaHelps

### Overview

Early in the pandemic, CanadaHelps announced the launch of cause funds. These aggregate funds include small and medium sized charities all working on a particular cause area or community. In a single transaction, Cause Funds enable people to easily donate to many charities supporting the same cause.

Among the most prominent funds were the COVID-19 Hospital & Healthcare and Community Care Funds, which raised more than \$4.5 million in their first six weeks, including \$2 million in matching donations from Gore Mutual.




The Black Solidarity Fund, which was particularly popular with younger donors and which supports the charities focused on the advancement of Black Canadians, received a \$1 million matching commitment from P&G.

### Key Partnership Takeaway

CanadaHelps created a new mechanism for Canadians to donate, which attracted substantial interest from young donors and also attracted numerous corporate funders offering matching contributions and large donations.

## The Black Solidarity Fund

Stand in solidarity with Black Canadians

		
\$1,921,750	5,188	34 days
Raised	Supporters	To go

**Note:** The Black Solidarity Fund Statistics are accurate as of May 26th, 2021.



**1** Simple ways of giving to many charities at once resonates with younger Canadians

“Researching specific charities, evaluating them, it’s a lot of work. Not everybody is up for it... But many of them do want to support causes.” CanadaHelps has seen very high levels of support among younger donors for these funds, particularly the funds for social justice.

**2** Companies want simple ways to give to demonstrate their commitment to specific causes

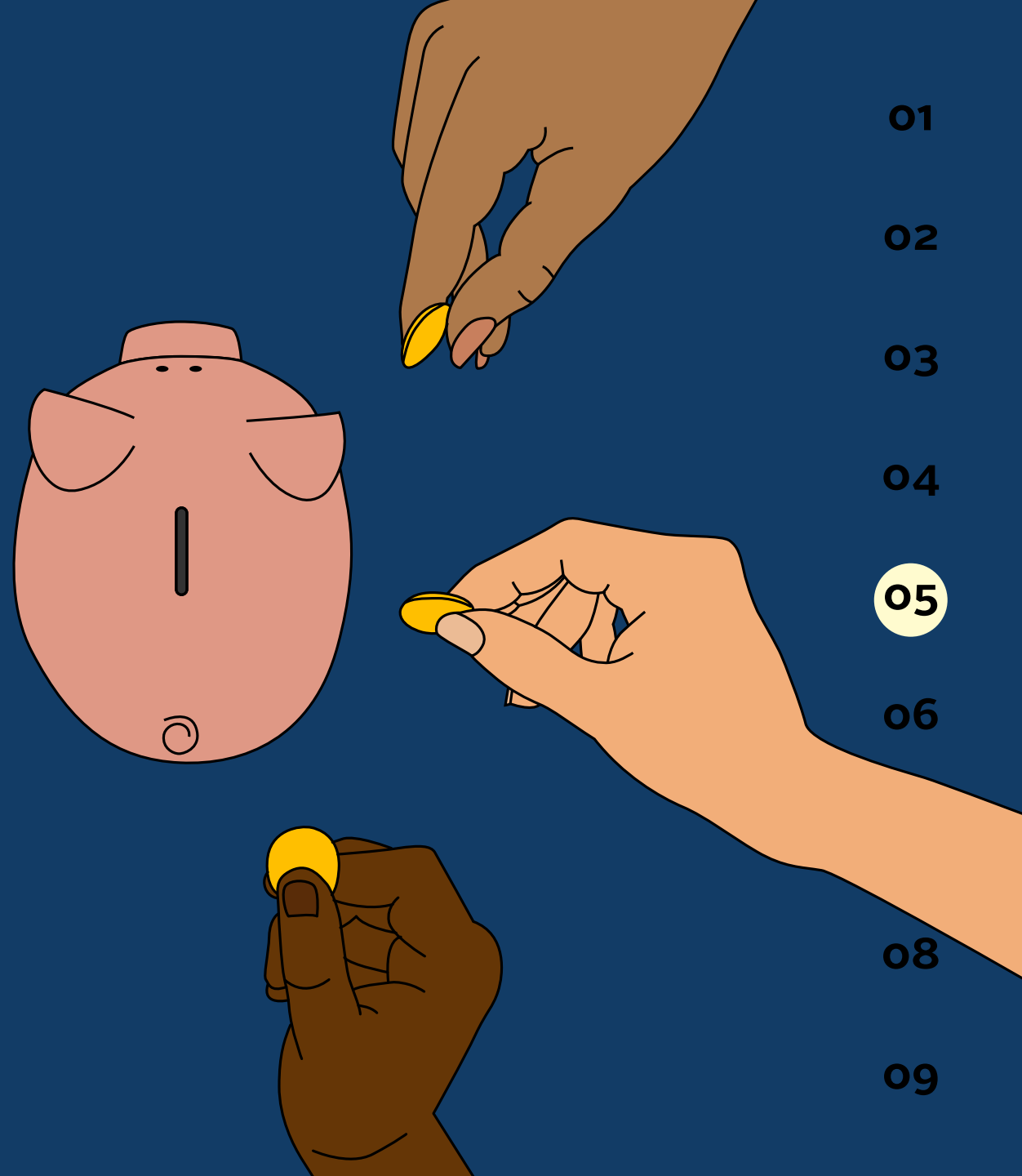
“In addition to having internal employee donation programs, companies increasingly want to be out there and perceived as taking a stand for their customers, their prospective customers, and the world out there.” For companies, donating matching funds to CanadaHelps “is an opportunity to have their efforts promoted to the almost 700,000 Canadians who have used CanadaHelps in just the last year.”

**3** Matching donations, for employees and the general public, amplifies companies’ impact

“Matching is very powerful for driving donations, I think that is an absolute truism. People get super motivated by matching.”

APPROACHES TO PARTNERING

# Collective funding



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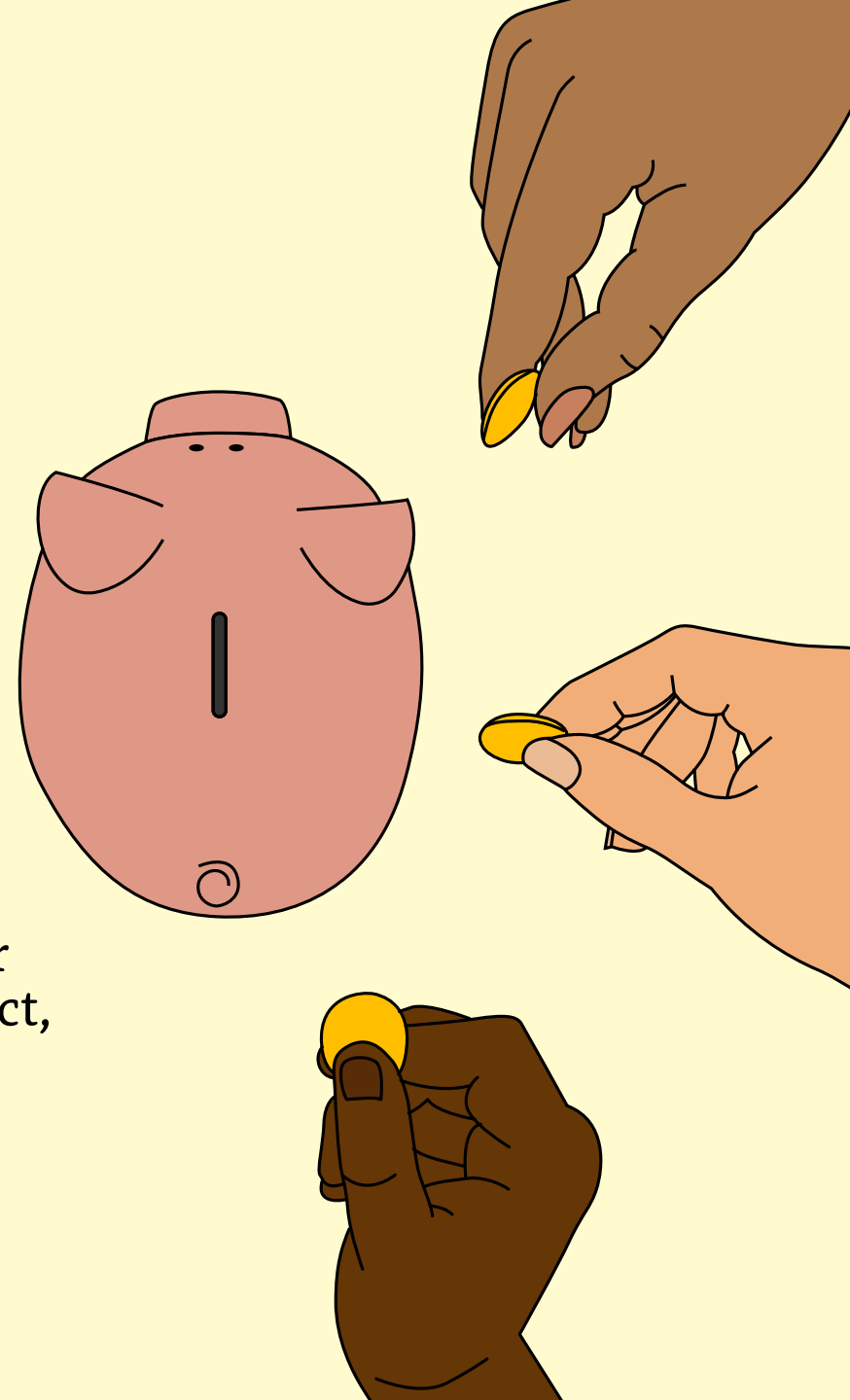
## COLLECTIVE FUNDING

“We are just starting to get involved in a few funding collaborations, but we haven’t done very much. It’s hard because everyone wants to own their issue. But there’s definitely an opportunity to do more of this to leverage others’ time and resources.”

- Community Investment Leader

“So I think, government and philanthropy should shift on how they’re thinking about funding and program funding or project funding and look at systems change, collective impact, and long term funding with a larger group of collaborators. And then we will see change.”

- Executive Director of a nonprofit



## Technovate Collaborative

“I’ve been in this field for a long time. And the optimistic side of me would say that the conversations around partnerships are deeper now than in all my years working on these issues.” – *Doug Gore, Lead, Partnership Development, Ontario Trillium Foundation*

### Overview

For decades charities and nonprofits have done their best with often limited digital resources. At the outset of the pandemic, charities were forced to quickly move their programming online, and many struggled with a lack of digital infrastructure.

The Technovate collaborative was formed to help address the immediate and long-term digital needs of charities and nonprofits. This digital infrastructure can no longer be considered a luxury for nonprofits, but instead is essential for them fulfilling their mission.

The collaborative includes the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), RBC Community Investment, IBM Corporate Social Responsibility, Community Foundations Canada, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities, and the Canadian Internet Registration Authority.

The exact nature of the partnership is still evolving, but it will be working on the following areas:

1. Connectivity
2. Access to tools and resources
3. Building institutions and infrastructure to support the sector
4. Comprehensive digital transformations and bridging the tech skills gap

### Key Partnership Takeaway

The goals of the Technovate partnership are evolving and the partners are collectively working together on solutions. All parties realized that progress is needed, and the driver of the partnership is this joint commitment to make progress on nonprofit technology use.

**Note:** These insights were derived from a conversation with Doug Gore, Lead, Partnership Development for Trillium. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

**1** Partnerships don't have to be fully defined from the start and don't have to be overly complicated

"When you're starting off, you don't know what the solution is going to be... So, as we are starting all these partnerships, sometimes we fumble around a little bit, and we can figure out a solution together with our partners. And partnership doesn't have to start from scratch. The easiest starting point is to leverage what already exists."

**2** There is a growing appetite for partnership

"There is a recognition that the approaches used in the past haven't worked, and there is a growing appetite among organizations to work together to achieve transformative results."

**3** Partnership doesn't mean you have to do everything together

"Partners don't always have to work on the same exact things, as they all have different expertise and different priorities. Partners should identify how they can best use their resources to achieve a common goal."

**4** Take adequate risks with your partnerships

"When you're doing innovation, you have to be prepared to fail. In philanthropy, we don't like to fail, but if we just do the same thing over and over again, we're not going to get any new solutions."

**Note:** These insights were derived from a conversation with Doug Gore, Lead, Partnership Development for Trillium. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

APPROACHES TO FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

# Long-term funding commitments



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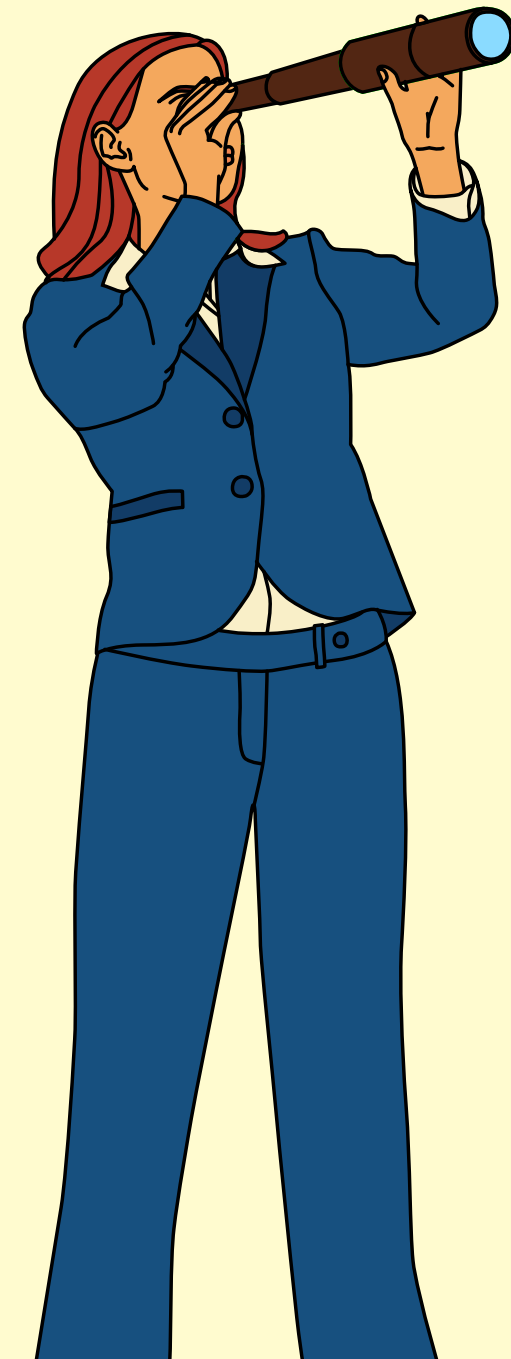
## LONG TERM FUNDING COMMITMENTS

“You cannot change a systemic issue by just funding a one or two-year project. Government and philanthropists need to shift how they’re thinking about funding and programs and look at system change and long-term funding with a larger group of collaborators”

*- Liben Gebremikael, Executive Director, TAIBU Community Health Centre*

“We do our philanthropy the way we do our business: it's a long-term investment. With the pandemic, this philosophy has never been more important.”

*- Julie L'Heureux, Director, Donations Committee, Power Corporation of Canada*



## Tamarack Institute and Long-Term Funding Relationships

“Tamarack is a field catalyst... meaning that we're driving change by bringing networks of local into a common agenda, and then having a national impact... More companies need to invest in these field catalysts if they want to increase their social impact.”

- *Paul Born, Co-CEO and Co-Founder, Tamarack Institute*

### Overview

The Tamarack Institute consists of two parts, a Learning Centre where they support changemakers with education, and their Vibrant Communities initiatives, which support cities and local leaders to develop and implement large-scale change.

Their first initiative, the Cities Reducing Poverty network, is one of their vibrant community programs. “When we started Cities Reducing Poverty, there wasn’t a single city in Canada that had a poverty reduction strategy. Now, we’re supporting more than 330 municipalities,” says Born.

And the pandemic has truly catalyzed interest in their work and approach, as organizations around the country are struggling to create system changes. Born explains that “before the pandemic, we averaged maybe 100 people on our webinars. Now, we’re disappointed if we get under 500 signing up.”

### Key Partnership Takeaway

“One of the things that has enabled our success is that all of our funders from when we started 20 years ago are still with us. They all made a long-term commitment.” Suncor Energy Foundation (SEF) is one of the original supporters of the organization, and funding Tamarack Institute is part of SEF's focus on creating transformational change in Canada.

**Note:** Quotes are from a conversation with Paul Born, Co-CEO and Co-Founder, Tamarack Institute.



**1** Companies need to make long-term commitments to drive impact

Companies can be challenging partners because “companies can be fickle.” Born encourages companies that want to have bigger impact to make long-term commitments to their partners.

**2** Funders cannot achieve systems level change on their own

To achieve impact, Born shares that “companies need to be willing to partner with other companies, other funders, and foundations and share the glory.”

**3** Close relationships needed for long-term partnerships

Lori Hewson, Director of Community Investment and Social Innovation at Suncor Energy Foundation explains: “Because so much of the work we do is in the transformational space, relationships are really important. We’ve learned particularly from our Indigenous partners the importance of close relations to have the greatest impact.”

**4** Evaluation frameworks for organizational partnership

“It can be hard to understand impact... In the past, our evaluation reports have summarized observations about how our funding has helped a partner advance their work. In these long-term partnerships... we are increasingly taking a developmental evaluation approach to understand the impact we’re having.”  
– *Kimberly Nordbye, Manager, Suncor Energy Foundation and Community Investment*

APPROACHES TO FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

# Funding advocacy



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## FUNDING ADVOCACY

“For every big signature initiative, a company should be supporting the advocacy efforts of agencies working in that space, to drive sustainable change, to change laws and to change the system. And it will work.”

*- Helen Seibel, Global Leader, Community Investment & Philanthropy, AstraZeneca*

“It’s not people that are broken, it’s parts of the system that are falling down. We’re looking at innovative ways for our funding to actually bring these people forward... so we’re looking at granting to partners exploring universal income.”

*- CSR Manager, Large International Software Company*



## AstraZeneca's Approach to Integrating Advocacy into Corporate Philanthropy

“We have three pillars of activity that we fund: and advocacy is a whole pillar. We have research, advocacy, and community programming. Each one of these is a circle that interacts with the others.”

*- Helen Seibel, Global Leader, Community Investment & Philanthropy, AstraZeneca*

### Overview

AstraZeneca's Young Health Programme, working with young people aged 10 to 24 and active in more than 30 countries including Canada, is a global disease prevention initiative to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases – responsible for 41 million deaths worldwide each year and disproportionately impacting people in low-income settings.

### Key Partnership Takeaway

“For every big signature initiative, a company should be supporting the advocacy efforts of agencies working in that space, to drive sustainable change, to change laws and to change the system. And it will work.”

**Note:** All quotes are from an interview with Helen Seibel, Global Leader, Community Investment & Philanthropy, AstraZeneca.



# 1 Philanthropic investment in advocacy is cost-effective

“In a projects we supported in Mozambique, we invested \$10,000 in a pilot project... It eventually resulted in the Ministry of Education adopting the programming and replicating it across every single school in the country. We helped influence the healthy-schools agenda across all of Mozambique for \$10,000. Investing in programming alone can’t achieve that impact.”

# 2 Training can enable participant advocacy

“In our partnership with UNICEF, the goal is for them to train 1,000 young advocates. UNICEF is developing the training materials and then supporting these young people to go out and be advocates for change.”

# 3 Advocacy can be measurable

AstraZeneca’s agreements with partners will sometimes include specific goals for the number of policies that will be changed by the partnership. This helps shape the scope of the work.

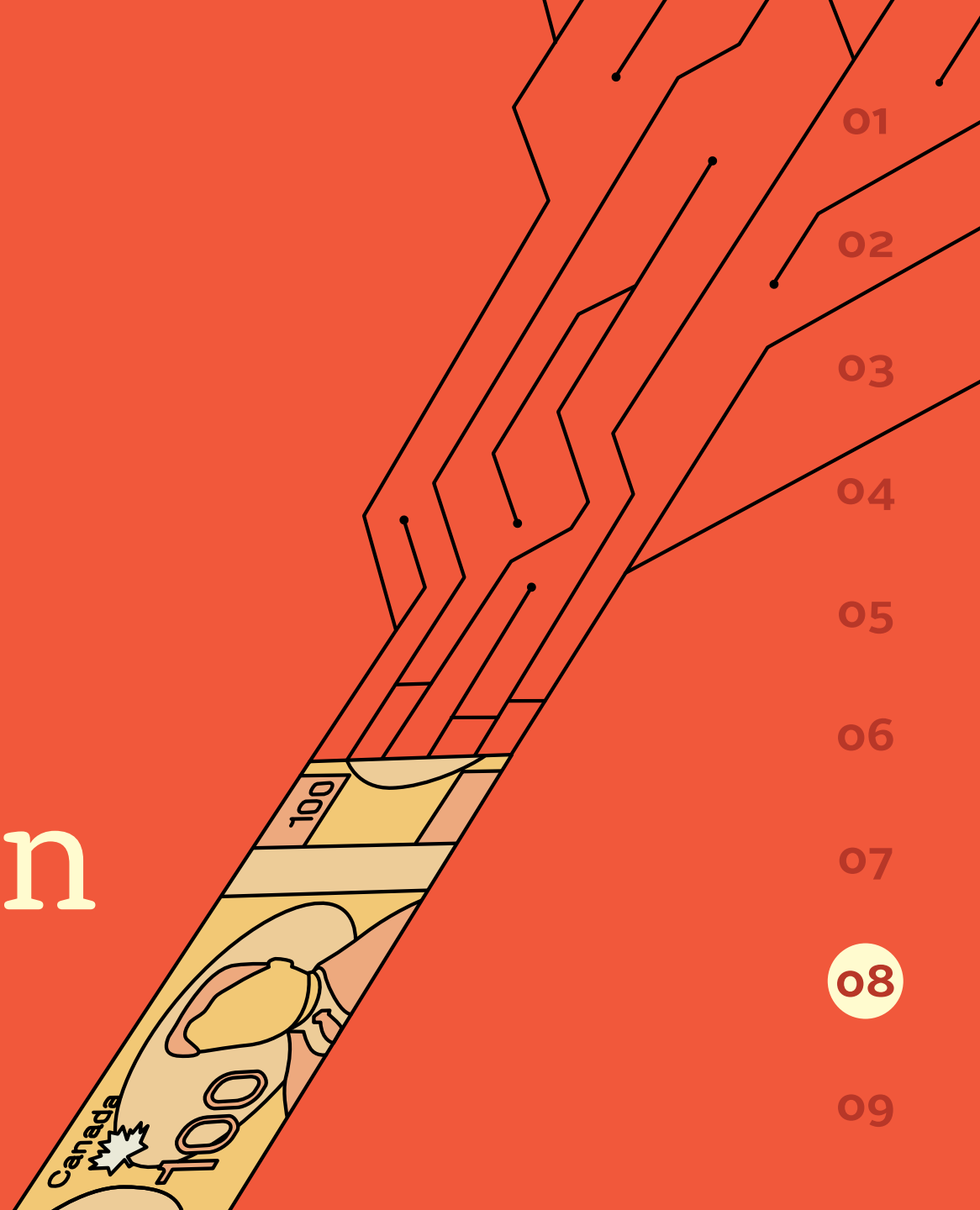
# 4 Long-term commitments to give time for real change

AstraZeneca secures funding and makes agreements with partners in 5-year tranches. “You cannot look for innovation and do something in a year. Our five-year partnership agreements are also signed by our CFO, and that shows our partners that we are committed to them.”

**Note:** All quotes are from an interview with Helen Seibel, Global Leader, Community Investment & Philanthropy, AstraZeneca.

APPROACHES TO FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

# Supporting innovation and digital transformation



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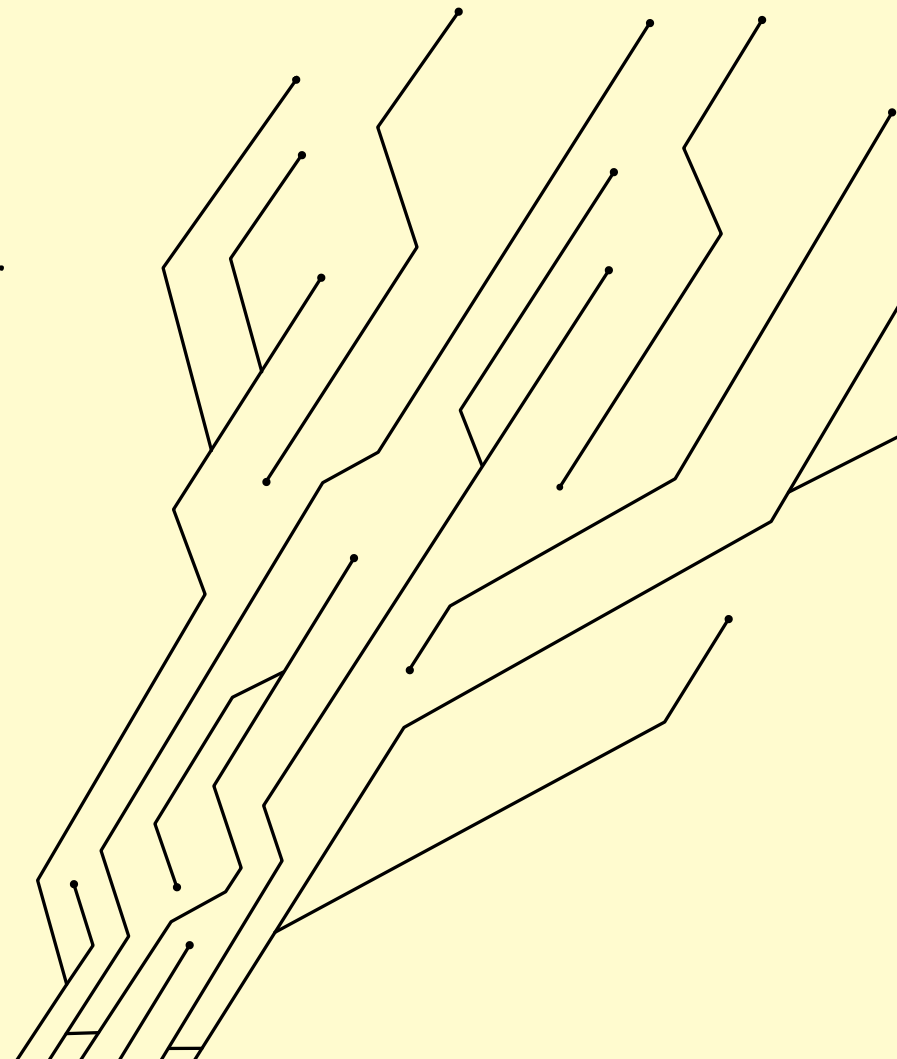
## SUPPORTING INNOVATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

“We have an opportunity to challenge ourselves to think differently about how we can support the sector – whether it’s considering to take on risks that governments might not, catalyze ideas and innovations, or rethink the need for operational versus programmatic support.”

*- Valerie Chort, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & Sustainability, RBC  
and Executive Director, RBC Foundation*

“We're living in what we would call a digital-first world and we should be planning for more digital, but we also have to make the investment”

*- Rachel Hutchisson, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & Philanthropy, Blackbaud*



## Second Harvest's Food Rescue App

Addressing food security “is too big to be done by one organization. Collaboration is the only way forward so that no Canadian is left behind.” - *Lori Nikkel, CEO of Second Harvest*

### Overview

Food Rescue is a platform that Second Harvest launched in 2018, that now connects more than 2,500 businesses with surplus food to more than 2,300 nonprofits in need of food.

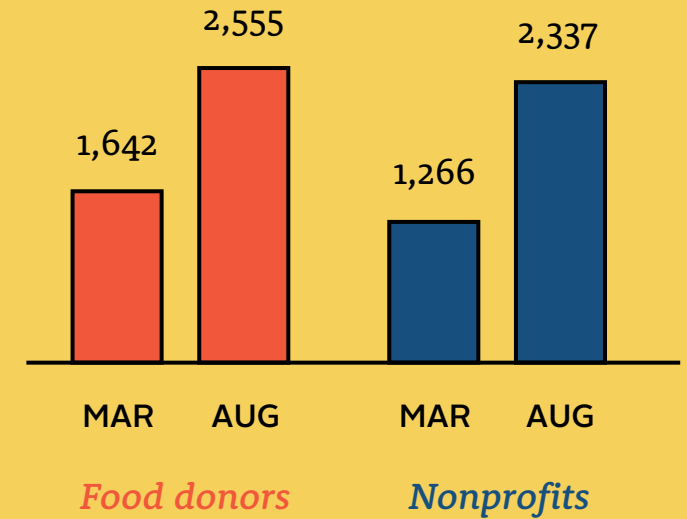
The platform easily enables businesses to indicate what food they have available to donate and the pickup details or to select a nonprofit they want to donate to, while nonprofits can select food they need.

They also used the platform to distribute \$11.2 million in federal government funding to more than 500 frontline organizations and distribute \$6.3 million in Loblaws grocery cards to partners.

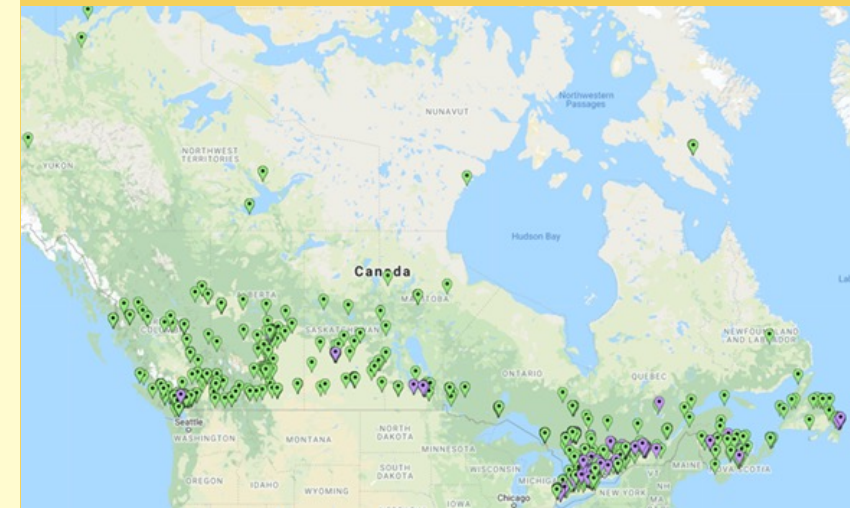
### Key Partnership Takeaway

Second Harvest used technology to scale partnerships around food security at a pace and level never seen before in Canada, using their platform – funded by major food retailers – to allow companies with excess food to connect directly to nonprofits that need it.

**Note:** This case study was derived from a conversation with Kiera Toffelmire, Vice President Programs and Partnerships at Second Harvest. Additional quotes were provided by several members of the Second Harvest Team.



From Second Harvest's 2020 annual report. Food donors grew from 1,642 to 2,555 between mid-March and August 31, 2020 and receiving nonprofits from 1,266 to 2,337 in that same period.



1

Partners can help with many challenges

Funders like Loblaws pre-pandemic funded the expansion of Food Rescue beyond Ontario and during the pandemic made a \$1 million contribution to on-board its banner stores to the platform. Food delivery partner Uber Freight helped us transport over 3.5 million pounds of food across the country. In-kind marketing support from Post Media, The Globe and Mail and PR agency Navigator helped with public relations, advertising, and securing new partners.

2

Innovation builds on preparation

Second Harvest already had a multi-year plan to expand the Food Rescue App. “COVID-19 forced us to do in three weeks what we’d planned to do in three years,” says Nikkel. A research project completed just prior to the pandemic had already identified 60,000 nonprofits in Canada that relied on food in programming, giving them a great starting point for adding partners.

3

Innovation requires long-term, flexible commitments

“To ensure the best customer experience possible, you need to evolve your technology to keep up with the needs of industry and the charitable sector. We’re fortunate to have donors and partners who believe in us and provide us the flexibility we require to pivot when necessary.”

– *Veronica Summerhill, Director of Product Development, Second Harvest*

4

Collaboration needs to be at the core of your business

“For Second Harvest to scale as effectively and expediently as we did required collaboration with Industry, Charity, nonprofit and Government, there is no organization that can succeed without building a strong network.”

– *Lori Nikkel CEO, Second Harvest*

APPROACHES TO FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

# Funding platforms and convening



## FUNDING PLATFORMS AND CONVENING

"RBC is working to connect nonprofit partners across the sector to increase collaboration, acting faster to achieve shared goals and increase their collective impact. We are leveraging our corporate partnerships to build innovative coalitions and transform the sector's digital supports to ultimately strengthen our communities."

- Valerie Chort, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & Sustainability, RBC  
and Executive Director, RBC Foundation

"Some companies align their partnerships around moving the needle on one sustainable development goal like water quality or access to water. Their partnerships are all structured around making progress on that goal."

- Rachel Hutchisson, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship  
& Philanthropy, Blackbaud



## RBC's Tech for Nature and DataStream

"Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time. RBC believes that the whole economy, and RBC included, has to step up and help the world transition to a more sustainable future."

- *Brian Hong, Senior Manager, Social Impact, RBC Tech for Nature*

### Overview

RBC Tech for Nature is a global, multi-year commitment from the RBC Foundation to support new ideas, technologies, and partnerships to address our most complex environmental challenges. Bringing together charitable partners, technology experts, the public and private sector – as well as RBC's own unique capabilities – RBC Tech for Nature is building the multi-partner coalitions needed to build a more sustainable, inclusive future.

DataStream is an online blockchain-enabled open access platform for sharing data about freshwater health. The organization is one of the flagship funding initiatives for RBC Tech for Nature. DataStream provides a digital backbone for diverse monitoring groups to upload, access, visualize, and download full water quality datasets. RBC worked with DataStream to bring blockchain technology to this growing platform. The distributed and transparent nature of blockchain helps to set DataStream apart while building and maintaining trust in the platform.

### Key Partnership Takeaway

RBC provided financial resources to support DataStream and help network and grow this initiative by fostering connections with many of RBC's 150 Tech for Nature environmental partners. RBC also contributed technological expertise to work through how to incorporate blockchain into the DataStream infrastructure. This came at a pivotal time for this initiative which has since grown into new regions across Canada.



1

High quality data to support environmental decision making

“We’re living in a biodiversity and climate crisis. WWF Canada’s watershed reports show us that we don’t even have a real understanding of the health of water and quality of water across the country,” explains Megan Leslie of World Wildlife Fund Canada. Hong adds “we want to solve those issues and democratize environmental data and make sure it’s actually accessible to the stakeholders that want to use it.”

2

Supporting technology to magnify impact

“Tech For Nature was born out of the idea that our environmental portfolio should align with one of RBC’s business strategies. Technology is an increasing priority for RBC. When these are aligned, we can have more impact,” explains Hong.

“When RBC came along, DataStream had already started; the foundation was there but we needed to invest in the tech itself. And having both RBC’s support and input about what kinds of technologies we could use to improve the platform was critical,” says Carolyn Dubois of DataStream.

3

Connecting and convening nonprofits to spur innovation

“We’ve supported over 150 environmental organizations, giving us one of the broadest perspectives in the country. So we try to connect organizations that may not be familiar with each other,” explains Hong. Megan Leslie agrees, noting “we’re able to exchange ideas with [RBC], they’re able to connect us with other people working on the ground... so we can borrow ideas.”

4

Engaging employees to magnify impact

“Our employee Earth Day Challenge had more than 10,000 employees participate, surpassing an extremely ambitious goal we had set for ourselves. Tech for Nature related activities were extremely popular and gave employees new opportunities to get involved.”

**Note:** Quotes in this case study were derived from a conversation with Brian Hong Senior Manager, Social Impact, RBC Tech for Nature, and recordings of interviews with nonprofit partners provided by RBC.

## READ OUR INITIAL STUDY

“

The insights within the Wake-up Call report shed further light on the state of Canada's nonprofit sector and support the importance of taking a 'more-than-money' approach...

While financial support remains critical, as funders, we know that we can deliver value beyond writing a cheque – especially as businesses and corporations also face their own complex challenges.

”

- Valerie Chort, Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & Sustainability, RBC and Executive Director, RBC Foundation



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Strong Charities. Strong Communities.

