



SDG 8 focuses on decoupling growth from environmental destruction, providing decent work for all, delivering economic benefits to all members of society and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.



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Many community foundations are exploring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their planning, granting, convening, Vital Signs and more. This Fact Sheet is part of a series that focuses on specific SDGs to engage and inspire community foundations of all sizes to deepen their work around these goals.

What is this approach?

SDG 8 calls for economic systems that are inclusive and provide prosperity and decent work for all while protecting and preserving our environment. Global development has been driven by economic growth, which has improved the material well-being of billions while contributing to extreme inequality and causing enormous environmental destruction. Emissions from industrialized economies have led to dangerous climate change; the consumption of the world's resources is driving mass extinction; and the richest 1% have twice as much wealth as 99% of the world's population ([source](#)). The [targets of SDG 8](#) focus on decoupling growth from environmental destruction, providing decent work for all, delivering economic benefits to all members of society and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. In Canada, over 1 million people are working while still living in poverty ([source](#)), while 2 million Canadians work in precarious and temporary employment ([source](#)). Canada is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gas, while the richest 1% of families own 17% of the nation's wealth ([source](#)).

Rethinking Economic Growth and the SDGs

When rethinking economic growth in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important to remember that the SDGs are an integrated framework and that one goal cannot be fully achieved unless all are. As a result, sustainable economic growth needs to be able to create jobs and prosperity while not adversely affecting any of the other economic, social or environmental goals. This is the global challenge that we have set ourselves through the SDG agenda.

At the national level, economic growth and job creation have been a core priority of successive Canadian governments. Canada's current approach to SDG 8 is captured in a range of government policies, with Employment and Social Development Canada acting as the federal lead for SDG 8.

Across these policies there is a common national approach that emphasizes:

- Inclusive job creation to bring more people into the Canadian middle class.
- Transition to a green and low-carbon economy through sustainable infrastructure and clean technology.
- Innovation and adapting to the future of work, including the rise in automation and the growth of the knowledge economy.
- Youth employment opportunities and skills development to tackle unemployment and meet the needs of the future economy.
- Equitable opportunities for women to succeed in the economy.

This national approach includes a shift to a green, low-carbon economy that is no longer driven by fossil fuels, which will reduce the environmental impact of economic growth. In doing so, the government is pursuing a "Just Transition" that supports workers most affected by the changing economy as well as those communities most affected by climate change. The Canadian approach to SDG 8 also recognizes the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) Calls to Action including the development of a "joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians" ([source](#)).

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW **Just Transition**

The Government of Canada understands a just transition as “an approach to economic, environmental and social policy that aims to create an equitable and prosperous future for workers and communities as the world builds a low-carbon economy. No worker or community can be left behind, so government climate action must be focused on those workers.”

— [NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA](#)

For economic growth to be inclusive and sustainable, it must be anchored in local communities and driven by local businesses and jobs. Economic growth must be able to meet the needs of local communities, respect their diversity, protect and preserve local ecosystems, and ensure that no one is left behind.

At the community scale, approaches to SDG 8 include:

- Supporting local economies by buying local and supporting local businesses.
- Encouraging community entrepreneurs and supporting new businesses and start-ups that are making the shift to a green economy and providing decent work.
- Calculating and providing a local living wage that enables families to meet their needs and look to a better future.
- Supporting or joining unions that are fighting for workers' rights.
- Providing skills training to access better-paid jobs and transition to new opportunities in the low carbon, green economy.
- Working with youth to provide more opportunities for youth employment and access to relevant work experience and skills.
- Rewarding sustainable local business models, including sustainable tourism.
- Encouraging active participation of the community in local economic development and deciding the kinds of businesses and jobs we want in our towns and neighbourhoods.

Why is it important for grantmakers?

Canada's economy is changing like never before, and community foundations can play a key role in navigating these changes. Even before the pandemic, the future of work was changing, with the rise of automation, the knowledge economy and the shift away from fossil fuels ([source](#)). The pandemic has emphasized the need for a new economy and revealed the inequities embedded in the existing system. Frontline workers and health professionals who are most at risk from COVID-19 have often been underpaid, overworked and disproportionately from racialized and marginalized communities. One in four youth is now unemployed ([source](#)), while the employment rate for women has dropped to 55% ([source](#)). Our economy is not a safe place for women, with half of all reported incidents of discrimination occurring in the workplace or when applying for a job ([source](#)). The pandemic, combined with systemic racism, has contributed to higher death rates for Indigenous Canadians who have also experienced higher unemployment and a slower recovery, with Indigenous women worst affected ([source](#)).



An Equitable and Just Transition: “Canadians have expressed their expectations that the government will ensure that the low-carbon transition is just and equitable so that equity-deserving groups — such as women, Indigenous Peoples, racialized individuals, people with disabilities and youth — are able to benefit from new jobs and opportunities.”

— [NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA](#)

As we move beyond the pandemic, there is growing agreement that, in order to “**build back better**,” Canada will need to embrace a **just, green and feminist** recovery — an economic recovery that is in line with Canada’s climate change targets, our commitment to reconciliation, equity and fairness, and the need to address pressing social and environmental issues. A just and green recovery could create 3.9 million construction jobs by 2050 ([source](#)), and there are already positive signs, with a surge in green jobs occurring in 2020 despite the impact of the pandemic ([source](#)). Community foundations can play a role in ensuring that these opportunities are available to all Canadians and especially those who have been excluded from prosperity in our current economy. In particular, foundations can support reconciliation and the TRC’s Calls to Action through programs that help close educational and employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians ([Call to Action 92](#)), ensure Indigenous communities benefit from economic development projects and promote “equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector” ([Call to Action 92.ii](#)). The transition to a sustainable and inclusive economy must be built on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and their full participation in deciding Canada’s economic future.

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Social Enterprise

Social enterprise is an organization or venture that generates financial return while achieving a social, economic and/or environmental mission.

— [OTTAWA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION](#)

Community foundations and grantmakers are already responding to the challenge of building an economy that is more inclusive and sustainable. Impact investing and social enterprises are a key way of generating economic growth and decent jobs through businesses that address social and environmental issues. CFC has worked with 24 community foundations to deliver the **Investment Readiness Program**, which has provided grants to help social enterprises (and other social purpose organizations) attract investment.

These include social enterprises that are:

- Supporting a **just and green transition** by providing training for the fossil fuel sector and Indigenous workers to make the transition to the renewable energy industry.
- Generating revenue streams to support the **healing and empowerment of Indigenous women** and to **support Indigenous businesses and heritage**.
- **Advocating for mental health issues** and promoting **property ownership and community spaces** for the African-Canadian community.

Businesses themselves are supporting SDG 8 and exploring new approaches to economic growth that advance the SDGs. The **Global Compact Network Canada** brings together over 160 organizations that are spearheading the SDGs in the Canadian business sector.

In addition to impact investing, CFC partnered with RBC in the **Future Launch Community Challenge** aimed at empowering Canadian youth for the jobs of tomorrow. Over 150 community foundations from small to medium-sized communities participated in the initiative, which funded over 200 youth-led projects and a series of youth-led engagements on the future of work, including [ffwd2020](#) — a four-day virtual summit.

At the city and community scale, foundations have been involved in a range of projects that support decent work and more sustainable and inclusive economies:

- The Clayoquot Biosphere Trust has calculated and tracked the local living wage for communities of the Clayoquot Sound region and has used Vital Signs to identify declining economic sectors and a widening income gap.
- The Prince George Community Foundation used Vital Signs reporting to identify a gender pay gap for Indigenous women in the community and is developing a giving approach to address this.
- Community foundations in London, Edmonton, Hamilton and Peterborough have all engaged in impact investing to improve local housing.
- Edmonton Community Foundation partnered with the City of Edmonton to support the launch of a community development corporation (CDC), which finances social enterprises, encourages local businesses and builds financial skills.
- The Victoria Foundation supported entrepreneur training for newcomers, including 14 refugees from Syria, and provided access to micro-lending and networking events.
- The Ottawa Community Foundation has partnered to create the Social Enterprise Platform. The Platform connects organizations with the knowledge, capability and resources that they need to create successful social enterprises.

Common principles to get started

There are many opportunities for community foundations to support SDG 8 and promote decent work and sustainable and inclusive economic growth in their communities. The SDGs themselves provide a useful framework for assessing the sustainability of community economic development. We will know when we are achieving SDG 8 in our communities when economic growth is having a positive impact across all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

01 Learn and build relationships

- Investigate what a green, just and feminist recovery could mean for your community by reviewing existing just recovery roadmaps and just transition reports, such as those produced by Unifor Canada, the OECD, and IISD.
- Learn more about different approaches to supporting community economic development by reviewing the resources at the end of this document, including information on community development philanthropy and social enterprises.
- Use Vital Signs reporting to assess the economic development needs and opportunities in your community. See the work of the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust.
- Meet with local business networks, unions and workers to better understand the challenges that community members are facing in providing and finding decent work.
- Find out which local businesses and social enterprises are already addressing sustainable development issues and the challenges and opportunities they see in the community.
- Find out what the local living wage for your community is or calculate it yourself by visiting the Living Wage website.

02 Strategic grantmaking

- Develop a granting strategy for supporting a shift to a more sustainable and inclusive economy. See the [Ivey Foundation's granting strategy](#) for an example of how to integrate economy and environment in grantmaking.
- Develop an impact investing strategy, and consider allocating 10% of your portfolio to community impact investing that supports sustainable and inclusive economic growth. See the [Impact Investing Guidebook](#) to get started.
- Develop programming to support youth skills and access to employment opportunities so youth can be well prepared for the future of work. See the role of [impact investing to support experiential learning for future work](#).
- Develop relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities and consider targeted grants and impact investment that would respond to Indigenous priorities for accessing employment and business creation opportunities. See the work of the [Prince George Community Foundation](#) and the [Winnipeg Foundation](#) for examples.
- Visit the [Indigenous Business Directory](#) to learn about Indigenous businesses in your community and review [this toolkit](#) and [these guiding principles](#) to learn more about Indigenous approaches to community economic development.

03 Lead and collaborate

- Consider endorsing the [Just Recovery principles](#) for building a sustainable and inclusive economy after COVID-19.
- Use Vital Conversations to convene community discussions on what a just transition would look like in your community, and develop targeted grants and investments to support this transition.
- Become a [living wage employer](#), and provide funding that allows grantees to pay a living wage to staff and contractors.
- Consider partnering to create larger social impact funds, such as those supported by the [Edmonton Community Foundation](#), the [Ottawa Community Foundation](#), and the [Vancouver Foundation](#).
- Dedicate funding to support the transition to a just, green and feminist recovery, such as the [Ottawa Community Foundation's contribution to the Ottawa Climate Action Fund](#).
- Support the creation of a community development corporation to support sustainable and inclusive economic development. See the work of the [Edmonton Community Foundation](#) as an example, and review [this manual](#) and [this website](#) for more information on the role and benefits of community development corporations.
- Consider advocacy work to confront systemic barriers and push for equal access to job opportunities and economic benefits for all Canadians. See the [Canadian Women's Foundation and their work spotlighting the devastating effects of the pandemic on mothers and family caregivers](#).
- Use the SDGs to connect with businesses exploring economic growth that advances environmental and social objectives. See the work of the [Global Compact Network Canada](#), an SDG-focused business network.

Resource list

The Canadian Community Economic Development Network

- The Resources & News page has a community economic toolbox with links to a wide range of tools and guides for supporting community economic development.
- The membership page makes it possible to connect with other Canadian organizations working on community economic development.

The Impact Investing Guidebook for Foundations

- Pages 15–20 provide an introduction to impact investing in concept and practice.
- Pages 27–39 present a roadmap for an impact investment strategy.
- Pages 8–14 provide case studies of impact investing.

Building Community Wealth: A Resource for Social Enterprise Development

- Pages 9–10 introduce the concept of social enterprise and key principles.
- Pages 27–34 provide an overview of the social enterprise development process.
- Pages 35–56 contain a checklist for social enterprise development.

Social Enterprise Council of Canada

- Has six pillars for supporting social enterprise development in Canada.
- The Community Links page has links to a range of guides and toolkits for understanding and supporting social enterprises.

Community Development Philanthropy

- A six-page introduction to the concept and practice of community development philanthropy, which combines philanthropy with community economic development.
- Links to toolkits, guides and resources to support community development philanthropy.

Community-Wealth.org

- An American website with a variety of resources for supporting community economic development, including resources and information on community development financial institutions, community land trusts, social enterprises and impact investing.
- A good introduction to community development corporations — what they are and how they function.

Community Development Corporation Manual

- A 29-page manual that explains the formal purpose and procedure for establishing a community development corporation (CDC).
- Pages 2–5 introduce what a CDC is and how it functions.
- Pages 6–14 cover the key operating guidelines for a CDC.

Building Momentum for a Just Transition in Canada: Perspectives from Civil Society

- Pages 5-11 cover existing civil society approaches to a just transition.
- Pages 21-24 outline the consensus on civil society approaches and pathways forward.

SDG Challenge 2019: Creating Strategies for a Better, More Sustainable World

- The webpage shows how Canadian businesses are engaging with and incorporating the SDGs.
- Pages 5-10 of the global report provide key findings, including which SDGs businesses are focusing on and which kinds of businesses are most engaged with the SDGs.