



SDG 9 focuses on delivering prosperity through inclusive and sustainable industries driven by resilient infrastructure and innovation.



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA

**The Learning
Institute**

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?

The [targets of SDG 9](#) prioritize infrastructure development, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and enhancing research for innovation. The world continues to see rapid technological progress, but investments in research and development have stagnated, and only 54% of people use the Internet ([source](#)). 75% of the global infrastructure needed by 2050 has yet to be built ([source](#)), and Canada will require up to \$22 trillion to meet its infrastructure needs by 2067 ([source](#)). The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted industrial production, threatening livelihoods around the world ([source](#)), but the slowdown has also benefited the environment, with reduced pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Recovery from the pandemic will need to preserve these environmental gains while continuing to provide jobs and inclusive prosperity for all. In Canada, action on SDG 9 requires closing the infrastructure gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, inclusive innovation and a shift to green industries.

Economic growth, social development and climate action are heavily dependent on investments in infrastructure, sustainable industrial development and technological progress. In the face of a rapidly changing global economic landscape and increasing inequalities, sustained growth must include industrialization that, first of all, makes opportunities accessible to all people, and second, is supported by innovation and resilient infrastructure.

— [INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE: WHY IT MATTERS](#)



Canada's national approach to SDG 9 brings together investments in green infrastructure with innovation and skills development to drive economic prosperity. The national co-leads for SDG 9 are [Infrastructure Canada](#) and [Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada](#).

Services that Canadians take for granted, such as clean water, sewage treatment, clean power and broadband communications, are still lacking in many First Nations communities. To move the entire country forward equitably, business and government will need to engage Indigenous people meaningfully in the investments that will form the foundation of our future standard of living.

— [THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIGENOUS INFRASTRUCTURE](#)



The national approach to SDG 9 emphasizes:

- Developing green infrastructure, including water and wastewater systems, clean energy and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Working with Indigenous governments and communities to address gaps in basic infrastructure services and support for renewable energy projects.
- Innovating in skills development and retraining.
- Ensuring equitable access to high-speed internet.
- Investing in science and technological development, including information and communications technology.
- Fostering sustainable industries, including sustainable tourism, clean technology and digital industries.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has emphasized the need to close the economic gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians ([Call to Action 7](#)). [Bill C-15](#), legislating the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), received Royal Assent in Canada on June 21, 2021. [UNDRIP requires “equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities,” “free, prior, and informed consent”](#) as it relates to economic development projects, both essential to a national, sustainable strategy to implement SDG 9.

Sustainable infrastructure will also be key to realizing many of the TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP, including improving Indigenous health outcomes and creating spaces for Indigenous cultures to thrive.

Approaches to SDG 9 at the local scale reflect the diversity of Canada's communities, including their local industries, infrastructure needs and unique ways of innovating.

Local action on SDG 9 can include:

- Community innovation hubs and labs that are springing up to support local entrepreneurs and problem-solving initiatives.
- More support for women, gender-diverse people and racial diversity in entrepreneurial ventures and in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).
- Training for workers in fossil fuel industries to move into green jobs, such as the renewable energy sector.
- Local green infrastructure solutions, such as solar or geothermal energy systems in homes and businesses.
- The work of Indigenous communities in developing their own infrastructure solutions, including water, energy, roads and housing.
- Sustainable tourism projects that support the local economy through well-paying jobs that promote environmental protection and conservation.

Canadian industry has always been strengthened by Canada's rich natural resources, as well as its diverse, creative, hard-working and well-educated population. Canadian workers, however, face a rapidly changing economy that will have a profound impact on the nature of work and jobs of the future. To be equipped for this change, there is a critical need for Canada to rethink its approach to learning, work and training.

— CANADA VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2018



Why is it important for grantmakers?

SDG 9 represents three ways that grantmakers can support inclusive and sustainable economic development in their communities: sustainable industry, local innovation and community infrastructure. Innovation involves supporting community entrepreneurship and the problem-solving needed for transitioning to a green economy. New ideas need new kinds of physical and social infrastructure, including places to meet and create, digital infrastructure, climate-resilient communities, sustainable energy systems and public policy that enables innovation and supports action. Despite the importance of these issues, SDG 9 remains one of the most underfunded goals in Canada, with grantmakers only dedicating \$59 million to these three areas in 2016/2017 ([source](#)).

There is clearly a bigger role for grantmakers to play especially as Canada faces a number of SDG 9-related challenges:

- **Aging infrastructure:** Community water infrastructure is often 50 to 100 years old ([source](#)), and only 53% of Canadians think their arts facilities are in good condition, with a pressing lack of spaces for Indigenous cultural works ([source](#)).
- **Just transition:** Up to 450,000 jobs will need to be created as we transition away from fossil fuels ([source](#)), and more needs to be done to create these employment opportunities and provide skills for future jobs.
- **Indigenous infrastructure gap:** Many Indigenous nations lack access to the basic infrastructure otherwise available to Canadians, including water, sanitation, power and roads. Recent estimates indicate that it will take up to \$30 billion to close the Indigenous infrastructure gap ([source](#)).
- **Diversity for innovation:** Studies show that diversity increases innovation by bringing in different perspectives, voices and life experiences. At the same time, women and gender-diverse people, people of colour, Black Canadians and Indigenous peoples are often left out of innovation opportunities ([source](#)), with Black entrepreneurs highlighting the lack of access to capital as a serious barrier to business success ([source](#)).

- **Inequalities in STEM:** Men make up 70% of STEM graduates ([source](#)), who traditionally drive research and development, while large pay gaps exist for technology workers from racialized and Indigenous communities ([source](#)).

At the national scale, community foundations have partnered with the Government of Canada to take action on these important SDG 9 issues through the **Investment Readiness Program** (IRP) and the **Healthy Communities Initiative**. The IRP provides funds for “local innovation, social enterprise and social financing to tackle some of our most pressing issues like climate change and affordable housing” ([source](#)). The Healthy Communities Initiative is a partnership with Infrastructure Canada that provides funding to create safe and vibrant public spaces, improve mobility options and develop digital solutions ([source](#)).

To date, these two programs have funded 1,032 projects totaling \$43.9 million through local community foundations.

Investment Readiness Program	Healthy Communities Initiative
↓	↓
512 projects funded	520 projects funded
\$18 million+ granted \$26 million+ requested	\$25 million+ granted \$672 million+ requested

Individual community foundations also see the importance of action on SDG 9, including:

- The work of Hamilton Community Foundation and their support for “**neighbourhood hubs**,” which encourage community leadership and bring together a range of services identified by community members.
- The **Social Enterprise Platform** supported by the Ottawa Community Foundation, which connects social entrepreneurs with knowledge, capability and resources to drive their innovations.

- The **Shift Lab**, supported by the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), which explores the problems of racism and poverty in the city and prototypes innovative solutions.
- The **Eenou-Eeyou Community Foundation’s** support for Cree language and culture through a world-class museum, library, performance space and teaching centre in Ouje-Bougoumou, Quebec.
- The many innovation funds established by community foundations, including the **Alphonsine Lafond Fund for Innovation** hosted by the Saskatoon Community Foundation, which invests in young Indigenous women.
- The work of **Unflood Ontario**, which brings together 12 community foundations to address climate change through green infrastructure that reduces flooding.

Community foundations also have a unique role in supporting SDG 9 through the social infrastructure that they provide. Social infrastructure includes physical spaces for community members to meet, plan and take action, as well as the invisible infrastructure of community belonging, public awareness and supportive public policies. Recent changes to CRA tax rules have removed advocacy restrictions for charities, and community foundations are already taking a more active role in advocating for public policies that will benefit their communities. **Toronto Foundation has brought an advocacy focus to its Vital Signs reporting** that includes policy recommendations, while **The County Foundation is collaborating to push for changes in municipal public policy** that will enhance food security and transportation in the community.

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure includes policies, practices and relationships that enable us to create a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable society, from the grassroots to the global, and spanning healthcare, education, culture and our democratic processes.

— **INVESTING IN SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Common principles to get started

SDG 9 encourages an integrated approach to supporting community prosperity by bringing together funding for community innovation, sustainable industries and requisite infrastructure. Explore how your programming connects to the different aspects of SDG 9 as well as opportunities to bring these approaches together in your work.

01 Learn and understand

- Use Vital Signs to identify community infrastructure needs and innovation opportunities in your community.
- Consider holding an impact or innovation lab to bring together multiple community perspectives, identify problems and prototype solutions. See the [Skookum Lab](#) supported by Vancouver Foundation and the [cross-generational lab](#) supported by the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta.
- Learn how different grantmakers are supporting community innovation in this report on the [Social Innovation Strategies of Canadian Foundations](#).
- Review the impact of community infrastructure projects by reading this report on [The Role of Community Infrastructure in Building Strong Neighbourhoods](#).

02 Strategic grantmaking

- Develop targeted funds to support BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of colour) entrepreneurship including impact investing and access to start-up capital. See the work of [Inspire Nunavut](#) and the [Black Entrepreneurship Program](#).
- Support women in innovation through targeted STEM scholarships and programs for women entrepreneurs, such as the [Women of Ontario Social Enterprise Network](#) (WOSEN).
- Provide funding for the social and physical infrastructure that your community needs. Draw on insights from Vital Signs reporting, and experiment with innovative approaches such as [neighbourhood hubs](#) or the [Shift Lab](#).
- Create an innovation fund to support community members to develop creative solutions to local challenges. See the innovation funds of the [Innisfil](#) and [Saskatoon](#) community foundations.

03 Foster innovation in your organization

- Explore innovative ways to use foundation assets, including impact investing and providing loans and lines of credit. See [this report](#) for social innovation examples.
- Explore innovative grantmaking processes, including bringing recipients into funding decisions, adopting [trust-based philanthropy](#) and shifting power dynamics. See the principles in CFC's [Commitment to Anti-Racism](#) for ideas.
- Consider increasing your organization's diversity to drive innovation. Explore how you can bring in diverse perspectives from youth, BIPOC folks, women and gender-diverse community members in your staff, board and grantee partnerships.

WORDS YOU SHOULD KNOW

**Trust-Based Philanthropy**

Trust-based philanthropy is driven by the central philosophy that funders should approach grantee relationships as learning partnerships. A trust-based approach encourages multi-year unrestricted funding, streamlined reporting, and transparent and responsive communication.

— [EXPLORING TRUST-BASED PHILANTHROPY](#)

04 Lead and collaborate

- Engage in advocacy and public policy work to help build the [social infrastructure](#) needed to support innovation and develop sustainable industry. See the toolkits in the resource section as well as these examples of [community foundations engaging in public policy and advocacy work](#).
- Pool your funding to support community innovation and infrastructure. See [Niagara Community Foundation's partnership in the Community Forward Fund](#) as well as the [collaboration between the Prince George and Shuswap community foundations](#) in delivering infrastructure funding.
- Consider partnering with municipal governments to develop and scale community infrastructure. See the work of Hamilton Community Foundation, which [scaled their neighbourhood hub model into their city's poverty reduction approach](#).

Resource list

The Role of Community Infrastructure in Building Strong Neighbourhoods

- Pages 3–9 look at different types of community infrastructure and their roles.
- Pages 9–13 provide case studies of community infrastructure development.
- Pages 19–21 look at the factors that make community infrastructure successful.

The Social Innovation Strategies of Canadian Foundations

- Pages 10–14 introduce the concept and practice of social innovation.
- Pages 15–37 provide an overview of social innovation tactics.
- Pages 39–42 present common social innovation strategies.

Social Innovation Lab Field Guide

- Pages 6–16 introduce the innovation lab approach and key concepts.
- Pages 17–25 cover preparations for an innovation lab.
- Pages 26–63 cover the main phases of an innovation lab process.

Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network: Social Innovation & Reconciliation

- Pages 4–6 present examples of Indigenous social innovation projects.
- Pages 6–13 present key insights and themes gathered from these projects.
- Pages 13–14 provide recommendations and wise practices for supporting Indigenous social innovation.

Building Stronger Communities: Non-Profit Sector Participation in Infrastructure Planning and Development

- Pages 4–6 look at the role of nonprofits in public infrastructure projects.
- Pages 8–21 look at the benefits of, and barriers to, nonprofit participation.
- Pages 30–31 present opportunities for further nonprofit involvement.

Intentional Innovation: How Getting More Systematic about Innovation Could Improve Philanthropy and Increase Social Impact

- Pages 11–33 look at ways of understanding and working with innovation.
- Pages 34–56 present opportunities for developing innovation within philanthropy.
- Pages 57–64 look at different roles for philanthropy in the innovation process.

Public Policy: An Important Tool in the Community Foundation Toolkit

- A short article introducing the value of public policy advocacy for community foundations in Canada.
- Provides examples of community foundations engaging in advocacy work.
- Includes links to other advocacy resources for foundations.

Advocacy Funding: The Philanthropy of Changing Minds

- Pages 2–8 look at why foundations engage in advocacy work and different roles.
- Pages 14–21 provide tools and techniques for advocacy work.
- Pages 25–27 look at defining and measuring success.

The Power of Board Advocacy: A Discussion Guide for Foundation Boards

- A guide for smaller community foundations that are getting started with advocacy.
- Pages 3–4 provide an example of board advocacy and look at advocacy roles for foundations.
- Pages 5–7 look at the kind of conversation to have with board members before stepping into advocacy work.