



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA

**The Learning
Institute**

Foundation Essentials Outline



2026/2027



Foundation Essentials 101

An Online Learning Cohort for New Community Foundation Leaders

What It Is

Foundation Essentials 101 is a six-session online learning cohort designed for Executive Directors and leaders who are new to leading a Community Foundation. This interactive cohort-based program is designed to help leaders learn how to effectively run their community foundation, through a curriculum focused on foundational knowledge, strategic skills, and peer learning.

Each 60-minute session provides insights into core areas of community foundation leadership from financial operations and governance to communications and community engagement.

Key Outcomes:

Participants will:

- Explore the purpose and work of a **community foundation**
- Learn key concepts in **financial management, governance, and grantmaking**
- Build **effective communication** strategies
- Understand the importance of **community leadership and shifting power in philanthropy**
- Connect and collaborate with **peers** in similar leadership roles
- Leave with actionable tools & resources to lead with confidence and impact

Program Timeline

- **Session Length:** Six 60-minute sessions
- **Schedule:** Weekly sessions from **1:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET**
- **Start Date:** Fall 2026/Spring 2027
 - Session 1- Oct 23rd, 1pm EST- Introductory Session
 - Session 2- Nov 27th, 1pm EST- Foundation Governance



- Session 3- Jan 29th, 1pm EST- Financial Management and Operations
- Session 4- Feb 26th, 1pm EST- Leadership
- Session 5- March 26th, 1pm EST- Fundamentals of Grantmaking
- Session 6- April 30th, 1pm EST- Partnership & Communications

Note: Participants are expected to attend all six sessions

Topics Covered

- So, You're Working for a Foundation...
- Financial Management and Operations
- Foundation Governance and Legal Issues
- Effective Communications
- Fundamentals of Grantmaking
- Community Leadership and Partnerships
- Shifting the Power

Who's Welcome and What to Expect

- **Executive Directors or leadership staff** who've started within the **last 36 months**
- Must be part of a **CFC member foundation**
- **A collaborative cohort** space for peer learning, discussion, and resource sharing

How Many CFs Are Involved?

The cohort will be open to *Executive Directors or leaders* within the community foundation network.

Importance of Peer Learning

Peer learning is an important component of the *Foundation Essentials 101* cohort, enhancing the learning experience for new Executive Directors and leaders. By engaging an interactive cohort of peers who are navigating similar challenges and opportunities, participants gain valuable insights and build a trusted network of support. Sharing experiences, lessons learned, and strategies allows participants to learn not only from the course content but also from each other, fostering an environment of mutual growth. This collaborative learning approach encourages dialogue, fosters innovation, and



supports leaders to apply practical solutions within their unique community contexts. Peer learning ensures that new Executive Directors and leaders don't just leave the cohort with knowledge, they leave with relationships, resources, and renewed confidence to lead with impact.

Testimonial

“ Participating in the Foundations Essentials was an incredibly valuable experience. Each session provided thoughtful insight into key areas of nonprofit board governance - topics that are often overlooked by are critically important. The course offered practical tools and frameworks that I can immediately apply to support more effective board leadership and decision-making. I would highly recommend this series to anyone looking to strengthen their knowledge. “- **Melissa Grindheim** (Executive Director, *Beautiful Plains Community Foundation*)