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Evaluation of Vancouver Foundation's **Systems Change Grantmaking**

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01

Executive Summary

A bird's eye view of Vancouver Foundation Systems Change grantmaking and key evaluation findings.

13

Introduction & Background

The evolution of Systems Change grantmaking at the Foundation. The purpose of the evaluation. How to read this report. Definition of key terms.

22

Methodology

The sources of evaluation data and how data was collected.

24

Findings

The Big Picture | 25

CREATING THE CONDITIONS

An overview of how the grants program has contributed to the conditions for social innovation and systems change.

EXTERNAL CONTEXT AND INTERNAL ALIGNMENT

Vancouver Foundation's internal values and external positioning that provide context for its Systems Change grantmaking.

Outcomes | 41

PROGRESS TOWARDS SYSTEMS CHANGE

Systems change outcomes to date for projects funded 2015–17. Presentation of a conceptual model for assessing systems change outcomes.

80

98

SYSTEMS CHANGE GRANTMAKING IN DIVERSE FIELDS AND COMMUNITIES

What Systems Change grantmaking means for organizations working in the arts, environment, education, health and social development, and rural and Indigenous communities.

Granting practice | 68

Applicants' and grantees' experience with the grants process and relations with Vancouver Foundation staff.

Recommendations

Key opportunities for Vancouver Foundation to improve and leverage Systems Change grantmaking.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Evaluation objectives and questions

APPENDIX 2

Methodology and timeline

APPENDIX 3

Evaluation tools

APPENDIX 4

Key informants



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Executive Summary

The Grants Program

VANCOUVER FOUNDATION REDESIGNED its Field-of-Interest Grants program to focus on social innovation in 2014. Through this new grants program, the Foundation set out **to create the conditions for social innovation projects to develop, test and scale**, through **responsive granting across British Columbia**. From 2015 to 2017, over \$27,100,000 was allocated through 366 grants to **support “projects that take action to address the root causes of pressing social, environmental or cultural issues** by influencing the behaviours of populations, organizations, and institutions.”

From 2015–2017, the program provided grants of three types: **1) Develop Grants:** up to one year, \$10,000, to help grantees develop their ideas, collaborations and a project plan. **2) Test Grants:** up to three years, \$75,000 per year, to test new approaches and learn what works. **3) Grow Grants:** up to three years, \$50,000 per year, **to scale up successful approaches and interventions and extend influence in a system.**

In addition, to support the grantmaking process, the Foundation occasionally engaged applicants and grantees in other activities, including grant program information sessions, Social Innovation 101 workshops, Develop Cohorts that provided structured guidance to a group of applicants, and Learn Cohorts that supported the exchange of strategies and insights among grantees working on a similar issue.

A note on terms: In this report, “Systems Change grantmaking” and “the grants program” refer to Vancouver Foundation’s practice of responsive granting to support projects that address root causes of social, cultural and environmental challenges, from 2015 to the present day. Although the name of the program changed from Social Innovation to Systems Change in 2018, the key objectives and granting practices have remained consistent.

The Evaluation Initiative

THIS EVALUATION SET OUT to determine **the extent to which Vancouver Foundation contributed to creating the conditions for social innovation and systems change projects across British Columbia to develop, test and scale.** The evaluation examines the first three years of the program, called Social Innovation Grants (2015–2017), as well as stakeholder perspectives on the 2018 iteration of the program, renamed Systems Change Grants.

Evaluation objectives:

1. Understand the impact of Systems Change grantmaking since 2015: on grantees' activities, perceptions and relationship with Vancouver Foundation, on communities through grantees' work, and on the conditions for social innovation in BC
2. Generate the knowledge and insights needed for Vancouver Foundation to improve its Systems Change grantmaking approach and process
3. Contribute to Vancouver Foundation's understanding of its recently developed Theory of Philanthropy as it relates to the Systems Change grantmaking program

Data collection methods:

- Review of key program documents
- Review of literature on grantmaking for social innovation and systems change
- Survey of 671 individuals from 568 grantee and applicant organizations (35% response rate)
- Detailed review of 26% of progress and final reports from 366 grantee projects
- 24 key informant interviews with grantees, partners, volunteer advisors, other BC funders, other responsive social innovation grantmakers, community foundation experts and systems change experts
- 3 focus groups with a total of 15 participants (grantees, partners, volunteer advisors, other BC funders)
- 3 strategic reflection sessions with 12 staff

Findings

Responsive systems change grantmaking is well aligned with Vancouver Foundation’s mission to “make meaningful and lasting impacts in communities.”

The Big Picture

1. *Social Innovation (now called Systems Change) grantmaking is aligned with the purpose and values of Vancouver Foundation*

- Responsive grantmaking in support of systems change initiatives led by BC communities is **well aligned with the Foundation’s mission** to “make meaningful and lasting impacts in communities.”
- Systems Change grantmaking **relates directly to** a number of the methods of influence set out in the **Vancouver Foundation Theory of Philanthropy**.
- Through responsive systems change granting, Vancouver Foundation appears to be able to maintain its reputation as a **respected and neutral BC institution** while contributing to innovation and remaining relevant to diverse BC communities.
- There may be opportunities to further employ the Foundation’s influence to expand the impact of Systems Change grantmaking. Many stakeholders, including grantees, other funders and volunteer advisors, called for Vancouver Foundation to make **a more committed and strategic use of its influence and leadership to increase the effectiveness and impact of systems change initiatives** funded under the program.

2. *Vancouver Foundation is unique as a responsive funder in the emerging field of grantmaking for social innovation and systems change*

- Most other funders take a “strategic philanthropy” approach, which focuses on a limited range of issues and can be more directive, with the funder taking leadership and closely collaborating with grantees. Vancouver Foundation has explored **relatively new territory** by using responsive grantmaking to support social innovation and systems change initiatives to develop, test and grow, and this across an entire region. In addition, Vancouver Foundation Systems Change grantmaking supports a wide range of initiatives designed by grantees based on community needs that address diverse social, environmental and cultural challenges in BC.
- **87% of applicants and grantees believe** that Vancouver Foundation’s Systems Change grantmaking is a **useful addition to the BC funding ecosystem**.
- Stakeholders particularly appreciated **specific aspects of Vancouver Foundation’s grantmaking approach** (multi-year grants; potential for

83% —————

of grantees and applicants agree that the grants program helps create the conditions for social innovation and systems change work in BC.

multiple phases of an initiative to be funded in sequence; accepting policy advocacy projects; flexibility to adapt projects once they are underway).

- While Vancouver Foundation is one grantmaker among many in the BC funding ecosystem, **the Foundation is a highly prominent funder** due to its reputation and the amount invested in BC communities each year. Other BC funders indicated that they generally appreciate the contribution of the Systems Change grants program to the field and are following with interest to learn about the medium- and long-term impacts of this program.

3. Vancouver Foundation has made a meaningful, though uneven, contribution to the conditions for social innovation and systems change in BC

The literature review revealed that robust conditions are required to foster systems-level and innovative initiatives addressing social, environmental and cultural challenges in a region. This evaluation applied a framework of four main conditions from the UK-based Young Foundation to assess how well the grants program supported the conditions for social innovation as well as to consider how Vancouver Foundation could increase its impact. The four conditions are:

1. a strong **culture** of innovation and systems thinking;
2. strong **demand** for new and better solutions from both funders and communities;
3. a **supply** of quality social innovation and systems change initiatives;
4. and the **exchange** of knowledge and networks within and across systems.¹

Vancouver Foundation Systems Change grantmaking has made a **significant contribution to increasing the supply and demand** of new and expanded social innovation and systems change initiatives. The grants program has also made a **moderate** contribution to the **culture of innovation and systems thinking** among BC communities and organizations that apply for and receive grants. The grants program has **not yet made a notable contribution towards the exchange of**

1. Adapted from: *Fertile Ground: Creating the conditions for social innovation to flourish in Northern Ireland*. 2016. The Young Foundation. <https://www.siceurope.eu/sites/default/files/field/attachment/fertile-ground.pdf>

knowledge and networks in support of social innovation and systems change efforts. Key findings on each of the four conditions is summarized below.

CULTURE: Organizations applying for grants increasingly demonstrate an ability to use social innovation and systems change frameworks and present quality proposals.

- **More grantees are proposing projects that address the root causes of issues.** While only 66% of grants reviewed from earlier years were well-aligned with the criteria for social innovation and systems change, nearly all 2017 approved project descriptions indicated a good fit with social innovation and systems change. During the 2018 evaluation, 94% of survey respondents understood how their project would make a change in the routines, resource flows, authority flows, or beliefs in their system, and 87% of survey respondents generally understood what Vancouver Foundation meant when using the term Social Innovation.
- **Staff coaching and Develop Cohorts have supported diverse teams to frame their projects to articulate their systems change approach, and applicants desire more capacity building opportunities.** Key informants indicated that the vocabulary, concepts and application process of the grants program were still very challenging for many, especially in smaller organizations and those working in Indigenous, rural and other economically and socially marginalized communities. Often such organizations are doing work that fits with Vancouver Foundation’s definition of systems change, but may not recognize it as such. Expanding coaching in systems change framing and language could help to ensure that marginalized communities are active and included in the evolving “culture of innovation and systems change” in BC.

DEMAND: Systems Change grantmaking has strengthened the demand for more innovative and systemic approaches to the social, cultural and environmental challenges faced by BC communities.

- The Systems Change grantmaking program has **signalled to communities and the nonprofit sector that there is a need for more initiatives that address root causes and build systemic solutions.**
- A majority of applicants and grantees agreed that the grants program **allowed them to take risks** and to **generate new project ideas beyond their usual activities.**
- There was interest on the part of grantees, applicants, and other funders that **the funding community in BC learn from Vancouver Foundation about the importance of supporting systems change work, funding**

During 2015–17, \$27,100,000 was disbursed through Social Innovation Grants, representing a province-wide take-up of funding for projects that address root causes of social, cultural and environmental challenges.

advocacy projects, providing multi-year grants, and taking a flexible approach.

SUPPLY: A significant financial investment was made in a wide variety of social innovation and systems change initiatives, many of which may not have advanced without Foundation support.

- \$27,100,000 was disbursed through 366 grants **across BC in a wide variety of fields**, during 2015–17. This represents a province-wide take-up of systems change funding which has encouraged organizations to expand or add systems change activities to complement their existing work.
- Grantees stated that Vancouver Foundation grants **provided funds for activities that would be difficult to get supported elsewhere**.
- Vancouver Foundation provided **three grant types** to support social innovation and systems change: Develop, Test and Grow. Organizations have been able to access more than one grant in succession to advance effective projects. Key informants indicated that this phased and multi-year approach is important for the success of systems change projects, which often take years to implement.
- Grantees **achieved outcomes** that demonstrate progress towards system change in one or more areas (see below).

EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE AND NETWORKS: Knowledge exchange, convening and learning are areas that require further attention by Vancouver Foundation.

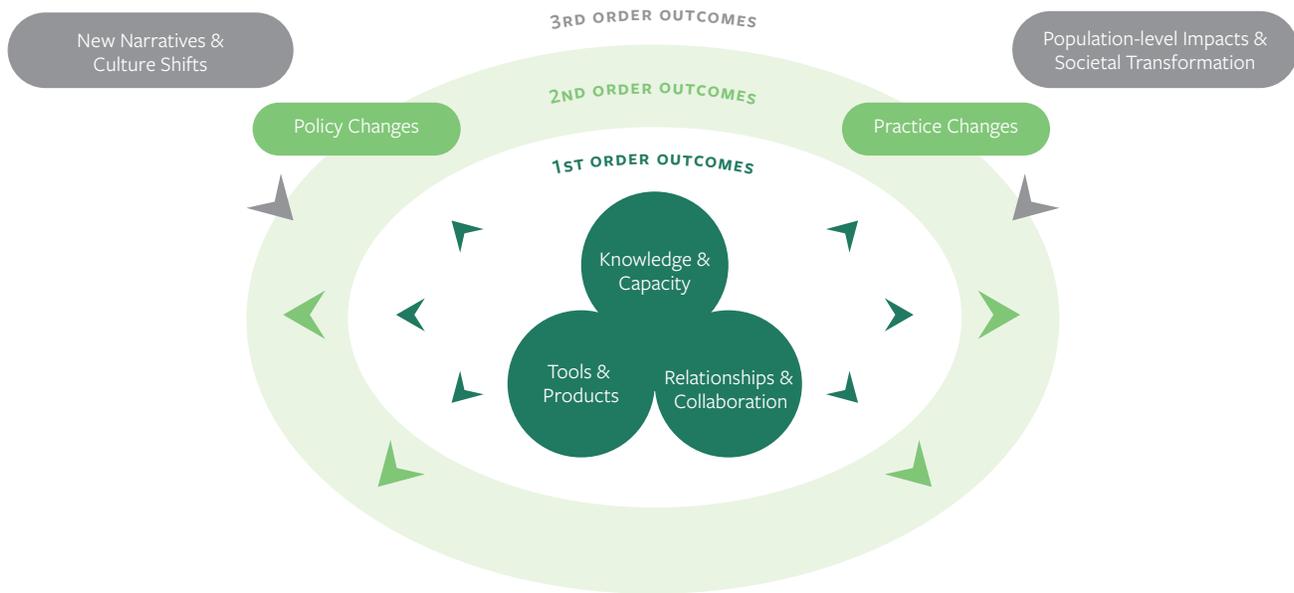
- Less progress on this condition for systems change was to be expected, because during 2015–17, the grants program prioritized project grants rather than funding networking, knowledge exchange, or intermediary organizations that specialize in social innovation or systems change practice. **The activities offered by the Foundation for networking and sharing ideas received mixed reviews** from stakeholders indicating that it is important to be selective and to work closely with organizations from the field to develop such activities.
- **Stakeholders were eager to know more about the projects being funded, their actions and impact**, indicating that Vancouver Foundation could do more to collect and disseminate this knowledge. This interest in better understanding systems change granting ranged across all actors: volunteer advisors involved in approving projects to be funded, applicants wishing to improve the fit of their work with a systems change approach, grantees wishing to learn and collaborate, board and committee members, and other funders wishing to improve their policies and practices.

Outcomes

4. Funded projects are making progress towards systems change outcomes

Systems Change grantmaking has supported a wide variety of projects that addressed issues as varied as education, health, the environment and culture. To evaluate results of such a wide range of funded projects, a random sample of 26% of project reports from 2015–2017 were assessed against a results model, the Systems Change Outcomes Framework.

DIAGRAM. Systems Change Outcomes Framework



This framework identifies seven archetypal outcomes that are common in systems change processes, and divides them by order. **First order outcomes** are considered building blocks towards more profound systems change, are generally easier to achieve in a shorter time frame and can be more directly influenced by an organization or project. **Second order outcomes** occur when system actors make significant changes in their behaviour, such as shifts in practices or policies. Such changes usually take a longer time frame to occur and an organization or project has less control over results, because many other actors are also trying to change or keep the system in place. **Third order outcomes** represent systemic shifts that are both deep and wide. New narratives and culture shifts refer to how society views an issue or population group, how the problem is defined and what solutions are imagined. Population-level impacts, such as improving education outcomes for a community, take a long time to achieve, often a decade or a generation.

The analysis of grantee reports from 2015–17 found that projects were making a difference in the following areas.

TABLE. Progress on Systems Change Outcomes Made by Funded Projects, 2015–2017

Order of outcome	Outcome	% of projects making progress
1st order outcomes	Increased knowledge & capacity of system actors	81%
	Improved relationships & collaboration among system actors	69%
	Improved tools & resources available	53%
2nd order outcomes	Improved practices in the system (and incremental progress towards)	52%
	Improved policies in the system (and incremental progress towards)	28%
3rd order outcomes	New narratives and culture shifts	52%
	Population-level impacts	12%

5. Offering different grant types supported a progression of work towards systems change

- **Offering three different grant types (Develop, Test, Grow/Scale) was important for grantees to access support** for the specific stage of their work. Grantees and other key informants agreed that offering grants for different phases of work in the social innovation process is effective for supporting systems change initiatives.
- Each grant type appears to fill **a particular need in systems change work**.
- Because systems change work takes time, grantees appreciated that they could continue **to access additional grants as their work progressed** over the years, which supports continuity and effectiveness.

6. Certain fields and populations face challenges accessing Systems Change grants and require adaptations in the Foundation's approach to granting

Vancouver Foundation grants to a wide variety of projects, issues and fields. Three of these emerged in the evaluation with distinct contexts and needs related to Systems Change grantmaking that suggest adaptations within the grants program could help to increase access and equity.

- **Indigenous-led organizations and initiatives** support the purpose of systems change grants, as these organizations understand the importance of addressing root causes. However, they seek more relevant language and culturally safe supports to be able to understand grant program requirements and prepare strong proposals. Adapting the program to better meet the needs of Indigenous-led projects would build on the commitment to reconciliation already made by Vancouver Foundation.
- **Rural organizations and initiatives** often face human and financial resource constraints. While rural organizations are supportive of systems change approaches to address community challenges, they often find it difficult to find the time, the capacity or both to produce strong grant proposals. In addition, rural organizations want the Foundation to better understand their contexts, including the unique funding, human resources, collaboration, competition, leadership and transportation issues that provide both opportunities and hurdles for their communities and for systems change projects.

Indigenous-led initiatives understand the importance of addressing root causes, but seek more relevant language and culturally safe supports to be able to access the grants program.

2018 applicants indicated they had the least challenges with the application process, indicating that the clarity of the guidelines and application form is improving.

- **Arts and culture** grants are providing much-needed funding to community-based and less traditional arts and culture initiatives, but the sector overall struggles to demonstrate how their work contributes to systems change and wants clearer direction on how arts and culture initiatives can fit the grants criteria. The Foundation's recently launched arts-focused Develop Cohort is an example of an adaptation by the grants program to meet this need.

Granting practice

7. Granting practice is generally good in terms of quality of staff interaction, but the application process should be streamlined

- Applicants and grantees are **highly satisfied with the level of knowledge, understanding, respect and technical and strategic support provided by grants staff**. Often staff support was cited as key to an applicant's success, however staff time to offer such coaching is limited.
- The systems change and social innovation **terms used in the grant guidelines and application form take applicants time** to learn, understand and apply to organizations' work.
- **Applicants from smaller organizations and from marginalized communities** indicated they generally have less capacity for learning the systems change vocabulary used by Vancouver Foundation and developing the detailed, two-stage proposal. They requested that Vancouver Foundation provide more coaching support (such as grants staff time, Develop Cohorts, or externally engaged coaches) to increase equity and access to the grants program.
- Applicants and grantees would like to see the **administrative burden of the application process reduced**, such as reducing the number of questions and level of detail required in the Letter of Intent and Full Proposal forms.
- 2018 applicants indicated they had the least challenges with the application process, indicating that the **clarity of the guidelines and application form is improving**. Staff have updated these each year since launching the program.

Recommendations

THE FOLLOWING TWELVE high-level recommendations emerged through the evaluation as promising avenues for the Foundation to improve the impact of the grants program on the conditions for systems change and better serve communities across BC. Further detail is provided in the *Recommendations* section of the main report.

Expand strategic influence

1. Continue to deliver Systems Change Grants, maintaining key program features and maintaining or increasing total amount invested in grants and related program supports
2. Mobilize resources within the Foundation to support value-added activities
3. Continue to build internal knowledge on systems change and apply throughout the grants program
4. Influence other funders to support systems change work and to improve their granting practices to better meet the needs of community organizations
5. Leverage the connections and influence of the Foundation to make connections between power holders and grantees working on systems change

Increase access and equity

6. Increase access for promising initiatives led by underrepresented communities, regardless of proposal development capacity
7. Make Systems Change Grants accessible and meaningful for Indigenous communities and initiatives
8. Streamline the application process to simplify and emphasize the most important function at each stage

Add value

9. Provide grantees with mentorship and skill-building on systems change
10. Support grantees through relationship brokering and convening in a limited number of fields based on need and momentum

Share learning and results

11. Develop and implement a Systems Change Grants monitoring and evaluation strategy
12. Share achievements and big-picture learning through external communications and engagement

Conclusion

VANCOUVER FOUNDATION'S responsive grantmaking approach to supporting the conditions for social innovation and systems change is relatively new among funders in general and in the BC region. The Foundation's Systems Change grantmaking is appreciated by stakeholders, including grantees and partners, because it supports projects that address root causes and that would have difficulty receiving funding elsewhere. Projects funded during 2015-17 have demonstrated results, particularly in first order outcomes of improved relationships and knowledge among actors in their respective systems. Many grantees are also making progress towards influencing higher-order outcomes such as improved practices, policies and societal narratives related to the social, cultural or environmental issue they address. Systems change takes place over the medium- to long-term, however, and it will take time to achieve and measure the full results of funded projects. Stakeholders, including grantees, volunteer advisors, partners and other funders, have expressed a willingness to allow time for results to emerge. Stakeholders in a number of different roles would like to see Vancouver Foundation gathering meaningful information from grantees so that high-level findings can be shared and learning can occur collaboratively over time as the field of systems change practice evolves.

Vancouver Foundation's position as a responsive grantmaker demonstrates the Foundation's support for community-identified priorities and leadership. At the same time, stakeholders are calling on the Foundation to use its influence to add value to increase the impact of grantees' work and to support capacity in systems change practice in the province.

Overall, the findings of this evaluation show that the Foundation and BC communities would benefit from staying the course by continuing to fund systems change projects at different stages of development across the province. Furthermore, implementing the recommendations of this report would improve the strategic influence of the Foundation and the equity and effectiveness of Systems Change grantmaking.

Introduction

Overview of Report

THIS EVALUATION REPORT describes the *Background* of Systems Change grantmaking as well as the origins and purpose of this evaluation. A brief overview of the *Methodology* is provided in the body of the report, as well as in greater detail in the Appendix.

Evaluation *Findings* are presented in three sections:

1. **The Big Picture** explores how the grants program has contributed to the conditions for social innovation and systems change overall, as well as Vancouver Foundation's positioning as a responsive systems change grantmaker. We provide a model to understand the major conditions for systems change in a region and present a typical grantmaking cycle to demonstrate how Vancouver Foundation can leverage different phases in this cycle to further contribute to these conditions.
2. **Outcomes** presents findings on progress made by projects funded in 2015–17 towards systems change outcomes, as well as an examination of the meaning of Systems Change grantmaking for diverse fields and communities. An outcomes model, the Systems Change Outcomes Framework, is presented as a tool to analyse results of a large and diverse cohort of funded projects.
3. **Granting Practice** explores feedback from grantees and applicants on the process of Systems Change grantmaking at the Foundation.

In the final section, the evaluators provide *Recommendations* in four major areas that represent opportunities for the Foundation to improve and leverage its Systems Change grantmaking for greater equity and impact.

Terms Used in This Report

SOCIAL INNOVATION AND SYSTEMS CHANGE are evolving terms and practices. The grants program has also evolved over the years. Vancouver Foundation’s stakeholders, however, view the grants program since 2015 as a contiguous, ongoing program. In addition, although the program name changed from Social Innovation to Systems Change Grants in 2018, the program objectives, eligibility, type of grants and granting practices have remained consistent. For the most part, the evaluators have treated the grants program as an ongoing program, but have indicated clearly in the report when we are referring to grants from the period 2015–17 only. Below are definitions for key concepts used in this report.

Term	Definition in this report
Systems Change grantmaking	<p>Vancouver Foundation’s practice of responsive granting to support projects that address root causes of social, culture and environmental challenges</p> <hr/> <p>From 2015 to present day</p> <hr/> <p>Program objectives and granting practices remained consistent, although program name changed</p> <hr/> <p>Called “Social Innovation Grants” from 2015–17</p> <hr/> <p>Called “Systems Change Grants” from 2018 to the time of writing this report</p>
the grants program	Same definition as “Systems Change grantmaking”
Social Innovation Grants	The grants program and/or grants allocated during the period 2015–17
social innovation	An initiative, product, process or program that changes any social system through basic routines (how we act, what we do), resource flows (money, knowledge, power), authority flows (laws, policies, rules), or beliefs (what we believe is true, right/wrong).
systems change	The process of taking action to address the root causes of pressing social, environmental or cultural issues by influencing the behaviours of populations, organizations, and institutions in a system.
responsive grantmaking	An approach to granting in which a funder accepts unsolicited applications or makes calls for proposals based on broad criteria. Eligible organizations are free to propose any project that meets the funder’s basic criteria as well as their and communities’ needs. The funder selects projects for funding from among a pool of applications.

Responsibility and Acknowledgements

THE AUTHORS OF THIS REPORT, Sarah Farina and Juniper Glass, take responsibility for its contents, including any errors we may have made. The views presented in this report are not those of Vancouver Foundation but are provided to assist the Foundation in its reflection, learning and continuous improvement of the grants program. Research assistance was provided by David Ham and Nida Iqbal.

Several staff at Vancouver Foundation supported the evaluation process and participated in strategic reflection sessions, which nourished the evaluation team's knowledge and analysis. We are grateful for their technical assistance as well as their caring and commitment to their work.

Many thanks to the 199 survey respondents (all applicants or grantees of the Foundation) and the 39 key informants that participated in interviews or focus groups. The list of individuals and organizations who contributed as key informants are listed in the Appendix. Quotes presented in the report are either attributed to Vancouver Foundation where applicable or kept anonymous if the source was an evaluation respondent.

Background

Systems Change Grantmaking at Vancouver Foundation

“

We support projects that address the root causes of complex social, health, environmental and cultural issues in ways that lead to systemic change by creating the conditions for these projects to develop, test, and scale.

VANCOUVER FOUNDATION

VANCOUVER FOUNDATION REDESIGNED the Field-of-Interest grants program to focus on social innovation in 2014, and made the first grants under the new program in 2015. As of 2018, the program was renamed Systems Change Grants.

During 2015–17, over \$27,100,000 was disbursed to 366 projects across British Columbia. This evaluation covers the results of the last three years of grantmaking (2015–17) as well as stakeholder perspectives on the 2018 iteration of Systems Change Grants.

Vancouver Foundation’s objective for the grants program is to **create the conditions for social innovations throughout BC to develop, test and scale.** Grants are intended to support “projects that take action to address the root causes of pressing social, environmental or cultural issues by influencing the behaviours of populations, organizations, and institutions.” A systems change project is one that aims to influence or change the systemic beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, resource flows, and/or policies that have contributed to the pressing issue.²

From 2015–17, the program provided grants of three types: Develop, Test and Grow, as described in the table below.

2. Vancouver Foundation. 2018. *Systems Change Grants Guidelines, May 2018*. <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/sites/default/files/documents/Systems-Change-Grants-Guidelines-14-May-2018-2.pdf>

TABLE. Vancouver Foundation Social Innovation Grant Types

Grant type	Maximum length	Maximum amount per year	Purpose	New maximum amount as of 2018
Develop	1 year	\$10,000	Assist groups to develop their ideas, collaborations and project plans	\$20,000
Test	3 years	\$75,000	Test new approaches and learn what works	\$100,000
Grow (renamed “Scale Grants” in 2018)	3 years	\$50,000	Scale up successful approaches and interventions and extend influence in a system	\$100,000

TABLE. Vancouver Foundation Social Innovation Grants Disbursed 2015–2017

Region	Grant Type					Total
	Develop	Develop-Research	Grow	Test	Test-Research	
BC-wide projects	31	2	13	49	11	106
Coastal	5			8	1	14
North	4		1	11		16
Southeast	16	3	4	10	1	34
Southwest	61	5	11	77	5	159
Vancouver Island	14	1	3	18	1	37
Grand Total	131	11	32	173	19	366

Evolution of the Grants Program

IN 2014, AT THE DIRECTION of new leadership and informed by stakeholder consultations, Vancouver Foundation redesigned its Field-of Interest (FOI) granting program to focus upon social innovation. **The Foundation's intention in shifting towards social innovation and systems change grants in 2015 was to add greater value to BC communities.** Past FOI granting tended to support communities' ongoing programs and services, which were valuable but did not necessarily address root causes and conditions. The grants program redesign was also done to better align it with the Foundation's purpose as expressed in its Core Beliefs, particularly to strengthen the Impact, Innovation, and Systemic Approach of funded projects, all while ensuring Community Self Direction to define priority challenges and how to address them. (See The Big Picture below for analysis of alignment of the grants program with the Core Beliefs.)

Key changes to the grants program over time include:

- **Field of Interest Grants | Prior to 2014**

Prior to 2014, the FOI program funded a broad range of charitable projects including direct programs and services. Grants were provided across nine fields, each with its own set of priorities and requirements. These fields were: Children, Youth and Families; Youth Philanthropy; Health and Social Development; Health and Medical Education Research; Education; Disability Supports for Employment; Environment; Animal Welfare; and Arts and Culture.

- **Social Innovation Grants | 2015–17**

From 2015–17, the nine fields were rolled into four broader fields: Health and Social Development, Environment and Animal Welfare, Education and Training, and Arts and Culture. Unlike earlier FOI grants, Social Innovation Grants only funded direct services if they were part of a larger project to address systemic root causes of social, cultural or environmental challenges. A few broad outcomes were prioritized for each field, however these eleven outcomes were eventually abandoned, because they were found to constrain applicants' ability to propose relevant and potentially impactful projects.

- **Shift to Systems Change Grants | 2018 Onward**

To improve clarity and understanding, the program was further refined in 2018 to just two grants streams: Systems Change and Participatory Action Research. Both grant streams allow applicants to present multi-disciplinary projects rather than focus on one field only.

Since the launch of the grants program in 2015, Vancouver Foundation has consistently applied the same definition of social innovation, and this applied across all fields. The definition specifically emphasizes systemic change as the goal of social innovation. It is adapted from the work of Francis Westley and Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience.³

“ *Social innovation is: An initiative, product, process or program that changes any social system through basic routines (how we act, what we do), resource flows (money, knowledge, power), authority flows (laws, policies, rules), or beliefs (what we believe is true, right/wrong).* ”

Not just any “new” or “innovative” initiative would qualify, therefore, as social innovation. Nevertheless, Vancouver Foundation’s consultation with communities revealed a persistent confusion among applicants and grantees about the term ‘social innovation.’ In 2018, the name of the grants program was changed to Systems Change Grants and references to social innovation were substantially lessened in grant guidelines and the application forms. The term ‘systems change’ was selected because its intent was better understood by most stakeholders.

Granting Process

THE PROGRAM FOCUSES ON responsive grantmaking in which organizations (qualified donees or registered charities) present projects in response to an open call for proposals. Each year, Vancouver Foundation releases calls for proposals for Develop, Test and Grow (now Scale) grants. Staff provide technical and coaching support to applicants when requested prior to the application deadline, as staff time permits. Staff conduct an initial assessment, working with small groups of volunteer advisors, to identify eligible projects to move forward in the review and selection process. Volunteer advisors with diverse knowledge and experience are drawn from a large pool to review certain proposals. Their role is to provide an external perspective and share knowledge about the various fields and sectors in which they have experience. Volunteer advisors and staff are guided by a set of decision-making criteria during their individual review and group discussion. Based on advisors’ recommendations, staff prepare a list of projects for the Vancouver Foundation Grants and Community Initiatives Committee, which in turn makes recommendations for final approval to the Vancouver Foundation Board.

3. Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience. <https://uwaterloo.ca/waterloo-institute-for-social-innovation-and-resilience/>

Community and Grantee Engagement Activities

IN ADDITION, to support the grantmaking process, the Foundation has from time to time engaged applicants and grantees in other activities. During 2014-18, the Foundation has offered:

- Grant Program information sessions
- Social Innovation 101 workshops
- Develop Cohorts which provide structured guidance to a group of applicants
- Learn Cohorts, to support the exchange of strategies and insights among grantees working on a similar issue
- One to one consultation and coaching by grants program staff to applicants and grantees

This Evaluation Initiative

SINCE 2014, the Foundation's grants staff has held annual consultations to get input from stakeholders regarding its ongoing revisions to the grants program. Each year, Vancouver Foundation has made changes to the grants program in response to what was learned. Thus, since the beginning, listening, learning and reflection has supported the evolution of the program.

For this evaluation, Vancouver Foundation requested a third-party, formal and more in-depth assessment of what has worked—and what has not—as the Foundation tries to contribute to the conditions for social innovation and systems change through responsive grantmaking.

Our evaluation covers the last three years of Social Innovation Grants (2015–17) although given the evolving and consistent nature of the grants program objectives and practices, we also gathered responses from stakeholders involved with the 2018 Systems Change Grants program as applicants, partners and volunteer advisors. Data was collected between May and November 2018. The methodology is described in the next section.

Overall evaluation question:

- To what extent has Vancouver Foundation created the conditions for social innovations (systems change initiatives) to develop, test and scale, through responsive grantmaking?

Objectives of the evaluation:

- Understand the impact of social innovation grantmaking 2015–17: on grantees’ activities, perceptions and relationship with Vancouver Foundation, on communities through grantees’ work, and on the conditions for social innovation in BC
- Generate the knowledge and insights needed for the Foundation to improve its grantmaking approach and process
- Contribute to Vancouver Foundation’s understanding of its recently developed Theory of Philanthropy as it relates to the grants program

Methodology

THE INFORMATION BELOW provides key information about each of the methods used for the evaluation. A detailed methodology is included in the Appendix. The evaluation initiative took place from April to December 2018, with data collected from key informants between May and November 2018.

There were some limitations to the grant report data. Grant reports were available primarily for projects funded early on during the grant program (in 2015 and 2016), and many were progress reports, submitted part-way through a project, which did not include full information regarding project activities or outcomes. Our review of grant reports, therefore, provided relevant data concerning early work in the grants program. Other data sources allowed us to explore later activities and outcomes, particularly the review of 2017 grant project descriptions, key informant interviews, focus groups, and the survey which included many respondents who received grants in 2017.

Method	Detail
Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grant program documents dated 2014–2018 2. Literature review of research and reports on social innovation and systems change grantmaking
Survey	<p>Survey sent to 671 individuals from 568 organizations (all grantees and applicants from 2015–2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 199 people responded. Response rate: 35% (assuming each respondent represented a different organization) • 77% of respondents had at least one grant accepted. 23% of respondents had applied but been declined
Key informant interviews	<p>24 key informants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 grantees, partners, volunteer advisors and other funders in BC • 7 responsive social innovation grantmakers, community foundation experts, and systems change experts in Canada and UK
Grant report review	<p>95 (26%) reports out of a total of 366 projects funded during 2015–17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random selection of grants, with proportional representation from the Fields of Interest and from Develop, Test and Grow grants • Included 53 grants awarded in 2015, 39 in 2016, 3 in 2017 • 150 project descriptions for grants awarded in 2017
Focus groups	<p>3 focus groups with 15 participants total, made up of grantees and partners. Focus groups dealt with the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big picture/equity (2 groups) • Small cities and rural areas (1 group)
Strategic reflection sessions	<p>3 strategic reflections with 12 Vancouver Foundation staff from executive, grants, and evaluation teams, on the following themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Big Picture: Theory and strategy, conditions and framing for social innovation/systems change 2. Initial findings: effects of the shift to social innovation/systems change and contribution of Vancouver Foundation to the conditions for systems change 3. Granting practice: opportunities to increase impact, recommendations

Findings

THE FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION are presented in three sections:

1. **The Big Picture**

Explores how the grants program has contributed to the conditions for social innovation and systems change overall, as well as Vancouver Foundation's positioning as a responsive systems change grantmaker.

2. **Outcomes**

Presents findings on progress made by projects funded in 2015-17 towards systems change outcomes, as well as an examination of the meaning of Systems Change grantmaking for diverse fields and communities.

3. **Granting Practice**

Provides feedback from grantees and applicants on the process of Systems Change grantmaking at the Foundation.

Section 1. The Big Picture

IN THIS SECTION, we present strategic considerations stemming from the internal and external context for Vancouver Foundation's Systems Change grantmaking. We set out to gather information and perspectives that would help the Foundation answer the following questions:

- Is Vancouver Foundation right for social innovation/systems change grantmaking?
 - What are the conditions for social innovation and systems change, and to what extent has the Foundation contributed to them through responsive grantmaking?
- Is social innovation/systems change grantmaking right for Vancouver Foundation?
 - How is the Foundation positioned, in the systems change granting field and the BC funding ecosystem?
 - Does the grants program fit with the Foundation's values, goals and approach?

A. Creating the conditions

What are the conditions for social innovation and systems change?

The intention of the grants program is to create the conditions for social innovation and systems change initiatives to develop, test and scale out and up. However, at the start of the evaluation process, Vancouver Foundation had not yet defined what those conditions were. The evaluators propose the following framework, adapted from The Young Foundation, a social innovation thought leader in the UK, as a simple yet comprehensive set of four main conditions. We found this framework useful for assessing how Vancouver Foundation is advancing towards the goals of supporting the conditions for social innovation and systems change as well as for reflecting on how the Foundation could increase its impact through the grants program.

FRAMEWORK. Conditions for Social Innovation and Systems Change

1	Culture of systems thinking & innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion and visibility of social innovation • Engagement of historically excluded groups, as key actors in innovation • Collaboration within and across fields
2	Demand for systems change & innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By those who can benefit from new solutions (users, communities) • By those with resources to pay for social innovation initiatives (funders, governments)
3	Supply of systems change and social innovation initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and number of new and expanded initiatives • Initiatives receive both financial and non-financial support, at all stages of growth
4	Exchange of knowledge & networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediaries and venues for networking, sharing of ideas, insights and expertise

@2019 Juniper Glass and Sarah Farina. Framework adapted by Juniper Glass and Sarah Farina from *Fertile Ground: Creating the conditions for social innovation to flourish in Northern Ireland*. 2016. The Young Foundation. <https://www.siceurope.eu/sites/default/files/field/attachment/fertile-ground.pdf>

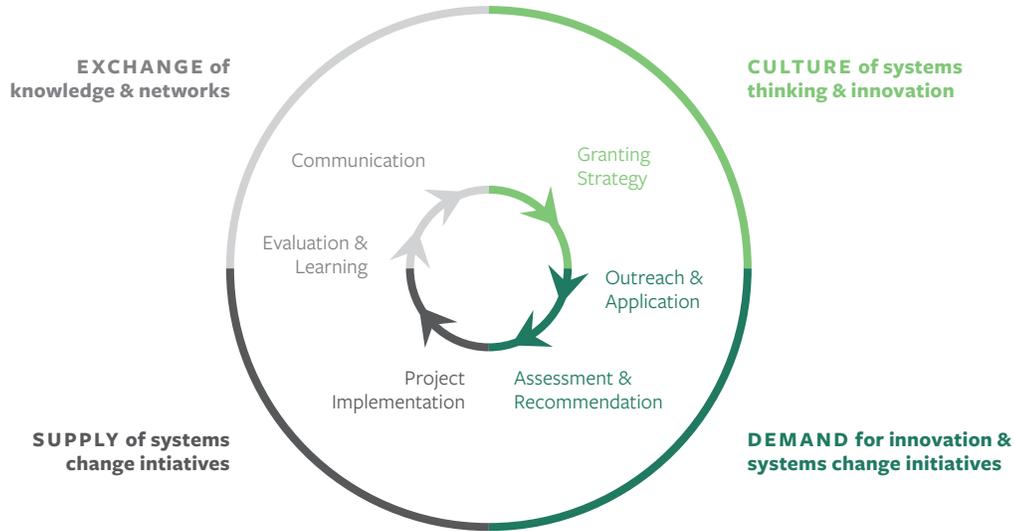
How can grantmaking influence these conditions?

Many different actors influence the conditions for social innovation and systems change in a region, including various levels of government, private sector companies, nonprofits and civil society organizations, and educational institutions. Each type of actor has different tools at its disposal.

To better understand how Vancouver Foundation's Systems Change grantmaking enables and supports the conditions for social innovation and systems change, we used a typical granting cycle in our analysis (see diagram). Most grantmakers follow these phases in their work, although often some phases are more emphasized than others depending on a specific funder's approach.

We mapped the four conditions for fostering systems change onto the granting cycle (see diagram). Each phase of the granting cycle corresponds strongly with one of the four conditions. Reflecting on this model, it became clear that Vancouver Foundation's granting process can be seen as a system itself. There are levers, or opportunities to increase or decrease influence on the four conditions, at each phase of the granting cycle. We engaged

DIAGRAM. Levers for Influence in the Granting Cycle



@2019 Juniper Glass and Sarah Farina. The phases of a typical granting cycle (strategy, outreach & application, assessment & recommendation, implementation, evaluation & learning, communication) are mapped onto the four conditions for systems change and social innovation (culture, demand, supply, exchange of knowledge & networks). Each phase of the granting cycle represents an opportunity to increase the influence of a grants program on one of the conditions for systems change.

83% _____

of grantees and applicants agree that the grants program helps create the conditions for social innovation and systems change work in BC.

Foundation staff to reflect with this conceptual tool during the evaluation process. We believe continued use of the model as a reflection tool would support the Foundation to identify opportunities to increase the influence of the grants program to strengthen the culture of innovation, the demand and supply of new systems change initiatives, the exchange of knowledge and relationship building in support of systems change in BC.

To what extent has Systems Change grantmaking influenced these conditions?

In general, Vancouver Foundation’s Systems Change grantmaking has had a positive influence on most of these conditions. A large majority of applicants and grantees (83%) said that they agree that the grant program helps create the conditions for social innovation and systems change work in BC. The grants program has made a significant contribution to increasing both the demand the supply of new and expanded social innovation and

systems change initiatives. Systems Change grantmaking has made a moderate contribution to the culture of innovation, particularly among BC communities and organizations that apply for and receive grants. The grants program has not yet made a notable contribution towards the exchange of knowledge and networks in support of social innovation and systems change efforts. Each of the four conditions is assessed briefly in the table and discussion below.

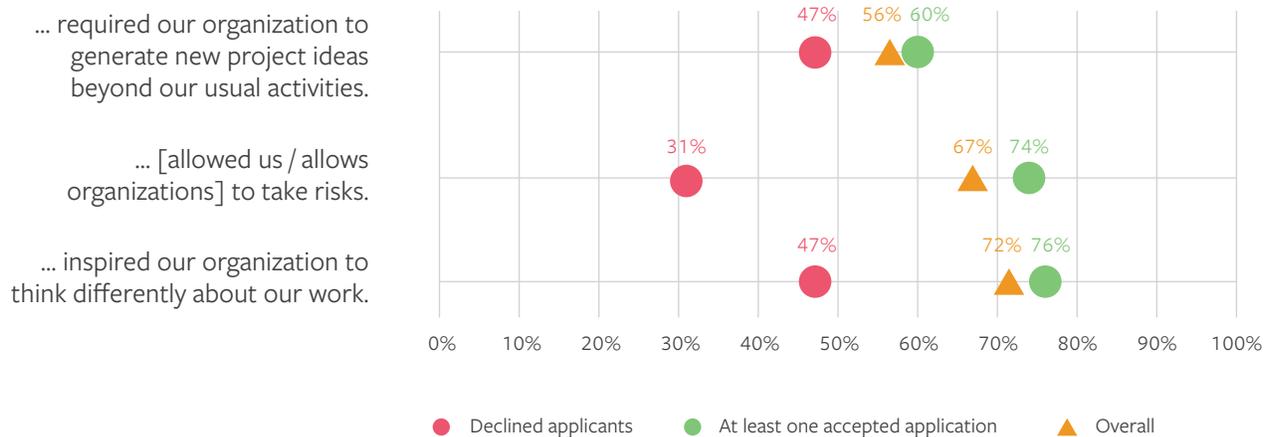
Conditions for Social Innovation & Systems Change	How Systems Change grantmaking has influenced these conditions
1 DEMAND for systems change & innovation initiatives	<p>Offering Systems Change Grants increased demand for new and expanded systems change initiatives.</p> <hr/> <p>Grantees report being able to take more risks and generate new ideas to influence systemic change.</p> <hr/> <p>Collaboration with other funders may have encouraged other funders to shift their practices to better support systems change initiatives.</p>
2 CULTURE of systems thinking and innovation	<p>Framing grants around social innovation and systems change encouraged organizations to prioritize systems change work, and to think about and address root causes.</p> <hr/> <p>Coaching by staff to applicants increased communities' ability to see their work through a systems change lens and to articulate this in proposals.</p> <hr/> <p>Develop Cohorts built capacity for applicants to create and refine their project ideas.</p> <hr/> <p>Grantees generally understand what Vancouver Foundation means when using terms like social innovation and systems change.</p>
3 SUPPLY of systems change and social innovation initiatives	<p>Grants supported a wide range of social innovation initiatives in BC.</p> <hr/> <p>Funding supported different stages of social innovation (Develop, Test and Grow).</p> <hr/> <p>Grant program characteristics (relative flexibility once funded, multi-year grants, eligibility of policy advocacy projects) are appreciated by grantees and reflect promising practices in effective systems change funding.</p>
4 EXCHANGE of knowledge & networks	<p>Learn Cohorts: exchange of strategies and insights among grantees working on a similar issue.</p>

1. Demand for systems change and social innovation initiatives

Systems Change grantmaking has strengthened the demand for more innovative and systemic approaches to the social, cultural and environmental challenges faced by BC communities. By focusing the grants program in this way, Vancouver Foundation has signalled to communities and the nonprofit sector that there is a need for more initiatives that address root causes and build systemic solutions. A majority of grantees agreed that the grant program allowed them to take risks and to generate new project ideas beyond their usual activities (see figure below). Among declined applicants, however, the majority disagreed with these statements.

Funding bodies are one of the main sources for increased or decreased demand for social innovation and systems change work, because they can deploy the resources needed to pay for such initiatives. Vancouver Foundation has collaborated with other governmental and philanthropic funders on certain social innovation granting initiatives. Although the evaluation did not examine the impact of these collaborations, we heard from many respondents that they hoped Vancouver Foundation would have an influence on other funders. In particular, respondents hoped that other funders would learn from Vancouver Foundation about the importance of accepting advocacy projects, providing multi-year grants, and taking a flexible approach, as stakeholders appreciated about Systems Change grantmaking.

FIGURE 1. Proportion of applicants and grantees who agree that Vancouver Foundation’s Systems Change grantmaking program...



Nearly all 2017 approved project descriptions indicated a good fit with social innovation and systems change, an improvement over earlier years when only two thirds (66%) of grants reviewed were well aligned with the criteria.

2. Culture of systems thinking and innovation

Systems Change grantmaking is contributing to a stronger culture of innovation among BC communities and the nonprofit sector. Several respondents observed that the grants program was “getting more people thinking and learning about the language of social innovation.” One key informant reflected that Vancouver Foundation plays “an important role in fostering a culture of innovation, especially when the government is not supporting systems change.”

Over the course of the period 2015 to 2017, communities’ understanding improved regarding the grant program and how they can use social innovation and systems change concepts and approaches in their work. Nearly all 2017 approved project descriptions indicated a good fit with social innovation and systems change, an improvement over earlier years when only two thirds (66%) of grants reviewed were well aligned with the criteria. Most applicants and grantees responded that they had a good grasp of Vancouver Foundation’s definition and approach to social innovation and systems change:

- 87% of survey respondents generally understood what Vancouver Foundation meant when using the term Social Innovation (40% very much; 47% somewhat)
- 94% understood how their project would make a change in the routines, resource flows, authority flows, or beliefs in their system (57% very much; 37% somewhat). *This is a key aspect of how Vancouver Foundation has defined systems change.*

At the same time, challenges and barriers remain for some communities to understand or demonstrate how their work aligns with Vancouver Foundation’s systems change framework.

- 28% of survey respondents said that it was difficult to describe their work in terms of Social Innovation.

Key informants indicated that the vocabulary and concepts of the grants program were still very challenging for many, especially in smaller organizations and those working in Indigenous, rural and economically marginalized communities. Often these communities find the vocabulary unfamiliar as they have had less access to social innovation and systems change experts and supports. Several respondents observed that organizations already doing work that fits with Vancouver Foundation’s definition of systems change, often do not recognize it as such. Assistance

from people who can ask the right questions, and help organizations to understand the practical meaning of the grants criteria, was cited by many respondents as the best way to fill this gap. Respondents appreciated when they received coaching from Vancouver Foundation staff or other intermediaries (e.g. umbrella organizations in their field), because it helped them to view their work through a systems change lens and become familiar with the concepts to be able to express this in their applications.

3. Supply of systems change and social innovation initiatives

Through Systems Change grantmaking, Vancouver Foundation has greatly influenced the supply of social innovation and systems change initiatives. During the period 2015–2017, 366 grants have been made that supported a wide range of systems change work throughout BC. Over \$27,100,000 in grants have been approved during this period, including multi-year grants.

While this financial investment is significant in itself, how the investment takes place also has an influence on systems change initiatives. Certain features of this grants program reflect best practices in systems change and social innovation funding and are important to its effectiveness and influence, including:

- The grants program is relatively flexible, allowing for course corrections (changes to project plans) in response to changing conditions.
- Policy advocacy projects are accepted, unlike many philanthropic grants programs.
- Develop, Test and Grow (now Scale) grants support different stages of social innovation initiatives. A number of grantees have made the most of these by applying for and undertaking projects at multiple stages in succession.
- The 3-year project time frame allows for significant work to be done in a project. When there is additional work to be done, grantees can apply for follow up grants, for example, a 3-year Test grant followed by a second 3-year Test or 3-year Scale grant. As of 2018, the Foundation may also provide extension grants in certain cases to extend projects in progress.
- As of 2018, the grants program allows projects that cross fields and disciplines (e.g. a project that addresses an environmental issue in a way that also reduces social exclusion).

“

The areas we address require comprehensive policy change or new ways of thinking. Without this kind of funding and commitment from the Vancouver Foundations of the world, it would be hard for us to achieve systemic change.

KEY INFORMANT

Key informants were clear that these features were very important to fostering meaningful systems change initiatives in their respective fields.

Increasing the supply of innovations can also involve non-financial supports to increase the effectiveness of funded initiatives. Vancouver Foundation has undertaken some capacity building activities during this period, such as Develop Cohorts that provided structured support to applicants to improve and refine their ideas for solutions, before making a project proposal. Key informants agreed that more opportunities were needed to build the skills of organizations and communities leading systems change initiatives. Skills included design thinking, strategies for scaling, public policy advocacy and user-centred design. Suggestions for how to deliver such training ranged from hiring external systems change coaches, organizing training workshops, granting to intermediaries who would deliver training, and increasing Foundation staff time devoted to capacity building for applicants and grantees. Respondents were also supportive of Vancouver Foundation using its reputational and social capital by fostering linkages between grantees and other system actors to help advance their projects, such as introductions to policy makers and other funders.

A number of respondents noted that they support the systems change granting approach. At the same time, a significant proportion of applicants and grantees stated that they were still unsure about the impacts of social innovation/systems change granting, responding “I don’t know” about whether the shift to this type of granting was positive or negative for their field (32% “I don’t know”), their community (38% “I don’t know”), and the non profit sector in BC (42% “I don’t know”).

4. Exchange of knowledge and networks

For the most part, the Systems Change grantmaking program has focused on providing grants with much less emphasis on creating spaces for networking and sharing ideas, insights and expertise. The grants program has experimented with facilitating Learn Cohorts, intended to foster the exchange of strategies and insights among grantees working on a similar issue. Two Learn Cohorts were hosted, one focused on the Environmental field in 2017 and a second on Poverty Reduction in 2018.

Respondents had mixed reviews of the usefulness of Vancouver Foundation’s past attempts at convening grantees. Nearly one-third (31%) of grantees would like to see Vancouver Foundation support convening

activities related to their work. Sometimes these convenings resulted in new learning and connections but other times participants did not think that the objective or purpose was clear. Grantees are interested in purposeful, action-oriented learning and collaboration opportunities rather than “convening for convening’s sake”.

Stakeholders were eager to know more about the projects being funded, their actions and impact, indicating that Vancouver Foundation could do more to collect and disseminate this knowledge. Vancouver Foundation has included profiles of some grantee success stories in its external communications (website, newsletters) and a list of all funded projects is available and searchable by key word on the website. However, reporting templates do not currently ask for information related to the process and outcomes of systems change projects. There is currently no consistent, evaluative review of grantees’ progress and final reports by Grants or Evaluation staff at the Foundation. Furthermore, information captured in reports is not made available outside of the Foundation. 42% of grantees expressed a desire for Vancouver Foundation to support information sharing. In addition, key informants and focus group participants were interested in accessing information on systems change strategies employed in other projects, how grantees are addressing challenges they encounter in their work, and results achieved.

B. External context and internal alignment

How is Vancouver Foundation positioned?

The field of grantmaking for social innovation and systems change

It is clear that Vancouver Foundation is exploring relatively new territory by aiming to support the conditions for systems change in an entire region through responsive grantmaking. There are very few community foundations in Canada that orient their granting towards social innovation or systems change. In addition, most social innovation grantmakers, for example members of the international Social Innovation Exchange (SIX) Funders Node, take a strategic grantmaking approach focused on taking leadership in a small number of issue areas.

However, Vancouver Foundation is not alone. Looking further afield to other jurisdictions and types of philanthropic organizations, we identified some responsive grantmakers that have developed an approach similar to that of the Foundation, with open calls for applications and grants that respond

to sequential phases of the systems change process. Interestingly, most of the funders identified in the table below are also in a process of review and ongoing adjustment to their grants programs. Clearly, this is a field in flux. Vancouver Foundation’s learning about responsive grantmaking for systems change would likely be of great interest to these and other funders.

TABLE. Responsive Grantmakers funding Social Innovation and Systems Change

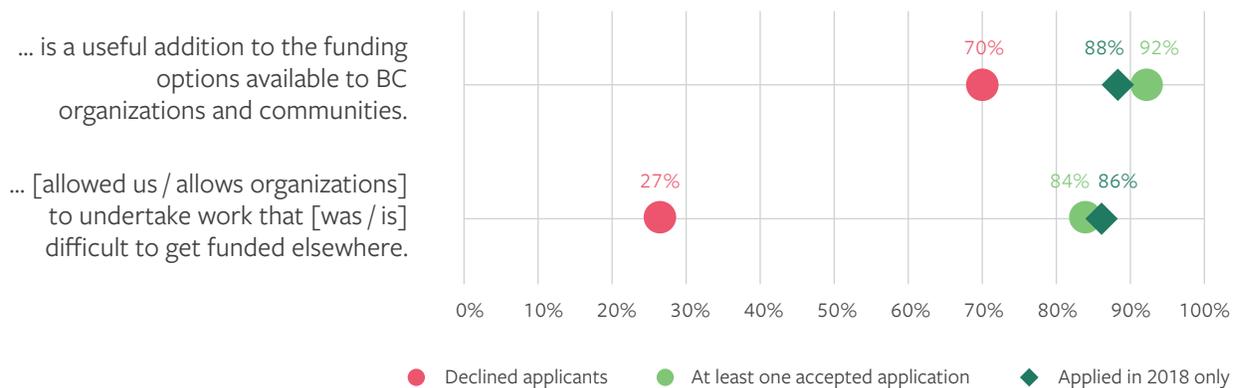
	Grant types	Key criteria	Application process
Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seed 2. Grow 3. Transform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to one of priority outcomes • Tackle complex community issues • Evidence based solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional workshops for applicants • Staff available to discuss • Written application • Agree to use OTF-defined metrics and evaluation tools
Big Lottery Fund, UK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop Ideas 2. Long Term Funding 3. Partnership Project Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership of people with lived experience • Address root causes & structural barriers • Collaboration • Learning & adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Series of conversations (no application form) • Work plan & documentation (applicant) • Desk research (staff) • External review by frontline practitioners • Decision-making committee
Paul Hamlyn Foundation, UK	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ideas & Pioneers 2. Explore & Test 3. More & Better <p><i>Issue focus: migration & inclusion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand lived experience perspective • Proactively seek to impact system • Willing to collaborate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore & Test: written application only • More & Better: 2 stages: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) written b) discussion & full proposal • Decision-making panel

Note: this information was collected in June 2018. Granting organizations may have made changes to their granting programs since then.

The funding ecosystem in BC

Over and over during the evaluation process, we heard from respondents that this grant program was one of few sources of funding in BC for systems change work. Many respondents gave examples of initiatives that could not be easily funded by other means. The great majority (87%) of applicants and grantees believe that the Systems Change Grants are a useful addition to the BC funding ecosystem.

FIGURE 2. Grantee and applicant perspectives: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Vancouver Foundation’s Social Innovation grant program...



Note: The graph above shows the percentage of respondents in each group selecting “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”.

Vancouver Foundation is one funder among many in the BC funding ecosystem that supports communities to improve social, cultural and environmental well being. However, the Foundation is a highly prominent funder due to its reputation and the amount invested in BC communities each year.

Although we did not conduct a complete funding ecosystem analysis, several key informants came from other organizations that grant and invest in BC communities. We learned that there is a range or spectrum of approaches to what to fund and the funders’ role in change initiatives. On one end of the spectrum are funders that take a highly engaged and active role in systems change initiatives and fund riskier or more long-term initiatives. On the other end of the spectrum are funders that prioritize investment in direct service and program provision and may be more risk

Systems Change grantmaking appears to align well with the overall positioning of Vancouver Foundation as an institution that must maintain a reputation for stability as well as innovative leadership and responsiveness to BC communities.

averse, for example avoiding projects involving policy advocacy. Ultimately, the Systems Change Grants program seems to place Vancouver Foundation as a “middle path” funder, somewhere between the end points on this spectrum. The approach of the grants program appears to fit with the overall positioning of Vancouver Foundation as an organization that must maintain a reputation for stability as well as innovative leadership and responsiveness to BC communities.

Other funders, no matter where they are on the spectrum of approaches, seem to appreciate the Systems Change Grants program, and are as curious about the impacts of the program as Foundation staff. They understand that the majority of impacts will not be seen for some time, given that systemic change usually occurs over the medium to long term.

Some respondents from community organizations observed that many of their funders were currently reviewing their grants programs, looking to be more strategic and create more impact. This may be a trend in the funding landscape affecting BC organizations and initiatives. If several grantmakers change their funding programs during the same period it could disrupt sources of funding that BC organizations have relied upon. To mitigate this, Vancouver Foundation could continue to monitor the overall funding ecosystem, including by asking grantees and other funders about their observations. This will help grants staff to better understand the dynamics that grantees and applicants are facing. In addition, knowing where Systems Change Grants fit in the shifting ecosystem will help inform future adjustments to the program.

Does Systems Change grantmaking move Vancouver Foundation towards its goals?

Alignment with purpose and values

Responsive grantmaking in support of systems change initiatives led by BC communities is well aligned with the Foundation’s mission to “make meaningful and lasting impacts in communities.”⁴ The Foundation’s Core Beliefs outline the approach and values of the organization. Certain Core Beliefs relate particularly directly to responsive systems change granting as a tool to help fulfill the Foundation’s purpose.

4. Vancouver Foundation. N.d. Vision and Values. <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/our-work/about-us/vision-values>

Below these Core Beliefs are presented with the evaluators' brief analysis of how they relate to key features of the grants program as well as present challenges for the program.

“Community Self Direction: *Communities have the right and responsibility to identify and address their priority needs.”*

- Responsive grantmaking sees community organizations as the leaders in advancing progress on their priority issues, rather than the foundation as the leader.
- Responsive grantmaking supports projects that nonprofit organizations develop and propose based on their community priorities.

“Innovation: *Our core role is a funder; however, we will incubate programs/ services when appropriate.”*

- As a responsive grantmaker, the Foundation refrains from taking an operational role except in specific circumstances.
- When the Foundation incubates programs and services, this activity is distinct from its responsive grants program.

“Impact: *Our work needs to make measurable and sustainable impacts in the communities we serve.”*

- The size and length of Systems Change Grants are significant, increasing the likelihood of meaningful impacts.
- The sequencing of the grant types means that an initiative can seek funding for additional phases of work after a grant has been completed, further increasing sustainability of the initiative and its impact.
- Systems change impacts are challenging to measure, particularly across the wide range of fields and initiatives that the grants program supports. Some impacts may take years to measure and understand.

“Systemic Approach: *We address root causes of issues, focusing both on issues today and prevention of issues in the future.”*

- The grants program is framed around the objective of supporting grantees to address the root causes of pressing issues in BC.
- Grant selection is based on criteria related to the potential of proposed projects to influence systems.

Theory of Philanthropy

In its Theory of Philanthropy, Vancouver Foundation puts a great deal of emphasis on using its influence to inspire change in BC. The Theory of Philanthropy identifies a number of ways in which the Foundation influences social change, including:

- Raising money
- Granting money
- Individual relationships
- Convening people for formal and informal conversations
- Capacity building
- Protecting and using the Foundation's solid professional reputation
- Flexible application of rules
- Being knowledge brokers
- Effective and efficient financial practices
- Helping donors strategically support change
- Providing sectoral leadership

The Systems Change Grants program relates directly to a number of these methods of influence, particularly granting money. Some activities led by the grants team have related to other methods of influence identified in the Theory of Philanthropy, including:

- **Individual relationships.** Grantees and applicants appreciate the communication and helpful relationship with grants staff, which facilitates their access to Vancouver Foundation's grants and other resources. Due to their wide network of relationships, the grants team is able to make introductions and referrals to applicants and grantees as well as potential partners and funders. The staff's bird's eye view of who is doing what across BC is a valuable resource.
- **Being knowledge brokers.** Through their exposure to systems change projects across BC, the grants team learns on an ongoing basis about the issues BC organizations are working on and the challenges they face. The team can perceive trends in the field and observe what works and what doesn't as community organizations test different approaches to influencing change. This knowledge is also a valuable resource. There is an

increasing demand for this knowledge to be shared more formally and with a wider audience. (See *Recommendations*.)

- **Flexible application of rules.** The grants staff understand that systems change work is iterative and complex, and therefore allow a measure of flexibility for grantees, for example, when changes need to be made to a funded project.
- **Convening people.** The grants team has tested different ways to convene grantees, applicants and advisors. In general, the experience led to an understanding that convening should be intentional and focused on specific, timely and meaningful objectives. (See *Recommendations*.)
- **Capacity building.** The grants team has offered introductory training and coaching on systems change and social innovation to applicants and learning opportunities for grantees. Further work may need to be done to ensure that information about the availability of coaching is widely shared, while the purpose remains focused and coaching is only applied where needed. (See *Recommendations*.)

The Systems Change Grants program therefore fits well with the Theory of Philanthropy. At the same time, there may be opportunities to better employ the Foundation's influence to expand the impact of systems change granting. Key informants frequently pointed out the importance and value of the Foundation's influence in BC. Many of them called for Vancouver Foundation to make a more committed and strategic use of its influence and leadership to increase the effectiveness and impact of systems change initiatives funded under the program. Ways to achieve this are described in Recommendations later in this report.

Systems Change Grants: A significant part of the Foundation's public image.

Systems Change Grants are one of the most visible and prominent activities of Vancouver Foundation for many stakeholders, particularly communities and nonprofit organizations. These grants are the predominant way that community organizations can access financial support from the Foundation, by far the largest responsive granting fund at Vancouver Foundation. Other grants programs, such as LEVEL, Neighbourhood Small Grants, DTES Small Arts Grants, and BC Community Foundation grants, have much more specific criteria and much smaller financial allocations.

Community organizations are often surprised when they learn the actual size of the Systems Change grantmaking staff team, as they had assumed that it was bigger.

Although Systems Change Grants are only one part of Foundation’s work, what happens through this program affects how stakeholders perceive the Foundation as a whole. There may be less public understanding of the other activities of the Foundation, which can lead to a skewed view of the Foundation’s resources, priorities, and functioning. For example, community organizations are often surprised when they learn the actual size of the Systems Change Grants staff team, as they had assumed that it was bigger.

We perceive two implications of the public visibility of the Systems Change Grants versus its internal resourcing and functioning. First, there is a significant weight of expectation on the Systems Change Grants program and its staff, because “grantmaker” is often the primary way stakeholders and community members identify the Foundation. There may be opportunities for Vancouver Foundation to better balance internal or external resourcing for the program, as well as to leverage the knowledge and networks developed in other departments to strengthen the Foundation’s support for Systems Change grantees (see *Recommendations*). Second, the Foundation could consider how to ensure communication conveys the range of the Foundation’s work to stakeholders. Stakeholders are often missing a picture of the Foundation’s work overall, and do not have an accurate sense of the relative size and purpose of the Systems Change Grants program. External communications could help respond, for example, to stakeholders who would prefer that the grants program support direct service organizations rather than systems change initiatives; communication could emphasize that this is still being done, but through donor advised and designated funds.

Section 2. Outcomes

Progress towards systems change

Outcomes framework

MEASURING SYSTEMS CHANGE impacts for a large cohort of projects is challenging. Vancouver Foundation has granted to projects working on many different issues and in many different systems. After reviewing existing systems change evaluation models, we decided to apply an outcomes framework that would help understand how grantees' projects have advanced towards "archetypical" outcomes commonly seen in systems change initiatives.⁵ This is one way to describe the types of changes being achieved through a cohort of diverse projects. Clearly, much more detail would be achieved by evaluating each project funded. Vancouver Foundation could conduct periodic evaluations of systems change impacts for a cohort of funded projects to identify more detailed results. For example, projects addressing improvements in education for Indigenous youth or projects that deal with improving the health system for people with addictions could be evaluated together in the future.

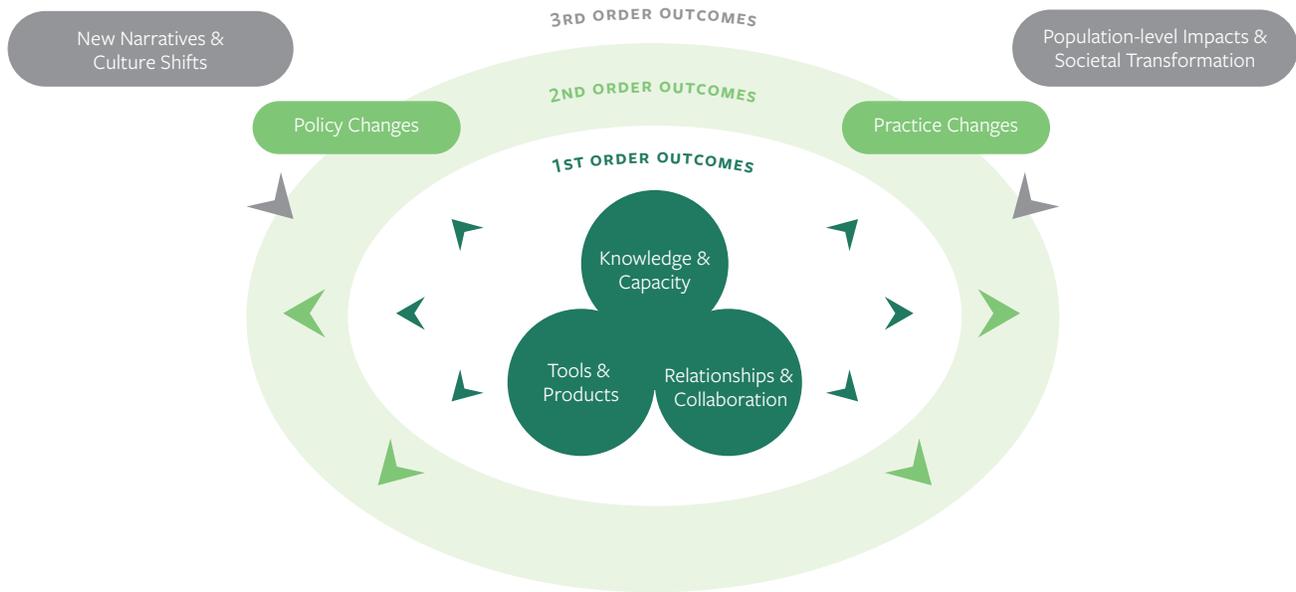
We used the Systems Change Outcomes Framework developed by MetaLab, Tatiana Fraser and Juniper Glass (2018) who adapted the framework from Steve Williams' Societal Effects Framework⁶. This comprehensive change model shows the relationship between shorter term, easier-to-achieve results and broader, lasting impacts. In this framework, "first order" outcomes are related to improved awareness, knowledge, capacity, tools, relationships, collaboration and networks among system actors. First order outcomes interact and can lead to "second order" outcomes: change in system actors' practices and policies. The "third order" outcomes in this framework are "new narratives and culture shifts" and "societal transformation and population level impacts," reflecting profound or wide-reaching societal shifts which usually take a longer time to achieve and are influenced by multiple factors in addition to any particular project trying to influence systems change. Furthermore, shifts in narratives and culture can also influence lower level outcomes such as policies as societal views shift on an issue.

5. Cabaj, M. 2018. *Evaluation + Design: Evaluating Systems Change*. Workshop Nov 13-14, 2018. Calgary, AB.

6. Williams, S. 2017. *Evaluating Sustainability Transition Experiments in Times of Rapid Change*. International Sustainability Transitions 2017. Gothenburg, Sweden.

In systems change evaluation, emphasis is placed on incremental outcomes, as policies, practices and whole systems usually take a long time to change. In the future, this framework, or one similar to it, could serve as a common systems change outcome framework among grantees and within the Foundation.

DIAGRAM. Systems Change Outcomes Framework



© 2018 by MetaLab, Tatiana Fraser and Juniper Glass. Adapted from Williams, S. (2017) *Evaluating Sustainability Transition Experiments in Times of Rapid Change*. International Sustainability Transitions 2017. Gothenburg, Sweden.

Nearly all grants reviewed demonstrated progress on more than one systems change outcome.

Grant review methodology and considerations

We reviewed a representative sample of progress and final reports provided by grantees from 2015–17 to better understand the outcomes they were achieving through their projects. It is important to note that grant report questionnaires were not based on the outcomes framework we applied in this evaluation, and grantees were not informed of the framework when they were proposing, implementing or reporting on their projects. The evaluation team applied this framework as a way to organize and analyze the data provided by grantees in their reports.

In addition, because of grantee reporting timelines, most of the projects reviewed had only completed 1 or 2 years of activity. Richer data would be gathered through a regular systematic review of all final reports, particularly 3-year projects of which there were very few in our sample. That said, the data shows trends that are useful for understanding the types of influence the grantees are having in their respective systems. Monitoring Systems Change Grant reports using this outcomes framework or a similar framework could assist the Foundation to observe the types of results generated by grantees' projects over time. In addition, the questions asked in progress and final report forms should be updated to better reflect the Systems Change framing and which monitoring and evaluation information the Foundation would like to track.

Progress towards systems change outcomes

Nearly all grant reports reviewed showed evidence of some progress on more than one systems change outcome. It is not to be expected that all projects would show results in all outcome areas. For example, in the 2015–17 cohort, some projects focused on creating new tools and resources while others emphasized communications, engagement and promoting a new understanding of the focal issue among system actors, therefore progress would be expected mainly on those respective outcomes. In the following sections, we present overall outcomes, as well as compare the outcomes in Develop, Test and Grow grants, and compare the outcomes between the Fields of Interest.

69% —————

of funded projects led to improved relationships, collaboration and networks among actors (in their respective systems).

First order outcomes

“First order” outcomes are those which are generally easier to achieve in a shorter time frame and over which a project can have greater direct influence. Creating *new and improved tools* and products is often useful for explaining, promoting and sharing alternative ways of solving a community issue. Increasing the *knowledge and capacity of system actors* on the focal issue is essential for future practice or policy changes to come about. Strengthening *relationships and collaboration in a system* helps to facilitate communication, cohesion, exchange and influence among system actors. Thus, these three outcome areas are considered building blocks towards systems change.

The majority of funded projects made advances on each of the following first order outcomes:

- Increased awareness, knowledge and capacity of system actors (81% of projects made advances in this area)
- Improved relationships, collaboration and networks among system actors (69%)
- New and improved tools, products, resources (53%)

Examples of first order outcomes include:

Increased awareness, knowledge and capacity of system actors

- Increased knowledge/skills related to issue
- Increased understanding of need for/role of coordination/network support for system actors through needs assessment; consultation with people with lived experience
- Increased understanding of how initiative/program supports community

Improved relationships, collaboration and networks among system actors

- Local community engagement in activities/events
- New/improved relationships/connections between key system actors; institutional partners
- Stronger linkages with community program(s); involving users in developing/leading initiative

New and improved tools, products, resources

- Information about product/process/issue available to consumer/user/target pop through public awareness campaign; interactive map; curriculum

52% —————
of funded projects made progress towards new and improved practices in their respective systems.

Second order outcomes

“Second order” outcomes are those when system actors make significant changes in their behaviour in the form of *shifts in policies and practices*. Such shifts can be seen not only in governments and public policies, but also practices and policies of private businesses, associations, multi-sector organizations and charities and nonprofits. Second order outcomes usually take a longer time frame to come about, and there are many external factors that can support or block the efforts of grantees. A grantees is often one system actor among many attempting to influence the focal issue. In evaluating these outcomes, we look for incremental changes, smaller steps towards a policy or practice change rather than only measuring the ultimate goal.

Just over half of all projects made progress towards practice changes while just over a quarter advanced towards policy changes:

- New and improved practices (52%)
- New and improved policies (including incremental progress) (28%)

Examples of second order outcomes include:

Improved practices (& incremental progress towards improved practices)

- Partner(s) support program/initiative/approach through informal advocacy/ support with key system actors including outreach to system actors, public campaign and development of governance model
- Testing approach of working with very marginalized groups to test lawsuits to leverage change in system

New and improved policies (including incremental progress)

- Contribution to/participation in policy development through exchange of information between First Nations who have used policy to protect and promote cultural knowledge
- Identification of system leverage points including knowledge of the system, actors, barriers and opportunities.
- Identification of key barriers/individuals/orgs within system

Third order outcomes

“Third order” outcomes are both deep and wide. *Population-level impacts* usually take a long time to achieve, often a decade or a generation, and certainly longer than a typical 3-year grant timeframe. It takes time, for example, for a policy change to result in concrete changes in people’s daily lives. *New narratives and culture shifts* represent deep changes in the beliefs of system actors and the general public. It appears that many grantees understand that influencing stakeholders’ beliefs and worldviews related to their focal issue is an important element in bringing about the changes they want to see in their communities. Just over half of grant reports demonstrated incremental progress towards such shifts in narratives. Often grantees were bringing their alternative vision and framing of an issue to other system actors, and having their framing taken up by media or other system actors.

Just over half of all projects made progress towards new narratives and culture shifts while only about one in ten advanced towards population-level impacts:

- New narratives and culture shifts (52%)
- Population-level impacts & social transformation (12%).

Examples of third order outcomes include:

New narratives and culture shifts

- Fostering of culture shift between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities
- Shift in public perception/opinion through engagement of large number of volunteers, workshops and peer ambassadors; communication plan and video production;
- Increased public dialogue on issue through expanded project locations, increased programming including training

Population-level impacts & social transformation

- Increased awareness of how to access mental health services through network development, alignment of resources and programming based on partner priorities
- Increased access to opportunities for higher paid jobs, stable employment, stable housing

Amount and length of grant in relation to outcomes

The highest grant amounts did appear to result in progress on higher order outcomes such as influencing policies and practices in the system. However, as discussed above, all grant types appear to be valuable for producing incremental systems change outcomes. The range of grant amounts currently used by Vancouver Foundation appears to be effective and contributes to achieving the purpose of the Systems Change Grant program.

The length of grant did not appear to correlate with the type of outcomes achieved. Interestingly, medium-length projects (12–23 months) had highest prevalence of many outcomes. However, this may simply be due to data insufficiency, as longer projects were not complete at the time of the evaluation and Vancouver Foundation’s Progress Report forms require very little reporting on the outcomes of projects.

TABLE. Outcomes by Grant Amount

First Order Outcomes			
Grant amount (\$ and # of grants that fall in that range); n=95	1.a. New and improved tools, products, resources	1.b. Increased awareness, knowledge, capacity, understanding (among system actors)	1.c. Improved relationships, collaboration, networks, engagement (among system actors)
10,000 or less (40 grants)	20 (50%)	33 (83%)	31 (78%)
10,001–39,999 (5 grants)	4 (80%)	4 (80%)	4 (80%)
40,000–79,999 (16 grants)	10 (63%)	13 (81%)	9 (56%)
80,000–119,999 (11 grants)	8 (73%)	9 (82%)	8 (73%)
120,000–150,000 (15 grants)	3 (20%)	11 (73%)	11 (73%)
150,001–199,999 (0 grants)	N/A	N/A	N/A
200,000 + (8 grants)	6 (75%)	8 (100%)	4 (50%)

Note: This analysis is based on review of 95 grant reports, randomly selected. Almost all reports were from projects approved for grants in 2015 and 2016.

Second & Third Order Outcomes				
Grant amount (\$ and # of grants that fall in that range); n=95	2.a. New & improved practices (& incremental progress towards improved practices)	2.b. New & improved policies (& incremental progress towards improved policies)	3.a. New narratives & culture shifts	3.b. Population level impacts & social transformation
10,000 or less (40 grants)	20 (50%)	8 (20%)	21 (53%)	1 (3%)
10,001–39,999 (5 grants)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	4 (80%)	1 (20%)
40,000–79,999 (16 grants)	9 (56%)	6 (38%)	8 (50%)	3 (19%)
80,000–119,999 (11 grants)	6 (55%)	6 (55%)	5 (46%)	2 (18%)
120,000–150,000 (15 grants)	5 (33%)	3 (20%)	7 (47%)	1 (7%)
150,001–199,999 (0 grants)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
200,000 + (8 grants)	6 (75%)	2 (25%)	3 (38%)	3 (38%)

Note: This table is based on review of 95 grant reports, randomly selected. Almost all reports were from projects approved for grants in 2015 and 2016.

*Each grant type—
Develop, Test
and Scale—fills a
particular need in
systems change work.*

Develop, Test and Grow grants

Alignment between projects and grant type

There is a generally good understanding among grantees and applicants of the purpose and criteria for Develop, Test and Grow (now Scale) Grants. The grant report review found that all Grow projects and just over three-quarters of Develop and Test projects in 2015–2017 were well-aligned with the objectives of their respective grant types. 70% of applicants and grantees responded in the survey that it was easy for them to understand how their work fit with the various grant types offered, while 28% stated that it was difficult for them.

Grantees and other key informants generally agreed that offering grants for different phases of work in the social innovation process is effective for supporting systems change initiatives. Each grant type appears to fill a particular need in systems change work. Develop Grants, in particular for smaller organizations, were valued by respondents because they support relationship-building that would enable effective collaboration during project implementation in future stages. Respondents who were currently completing projects funded by a Test Grant were encouraged by the fact that they could go on to apply for a Grow Grant in the future, giving a sense of continuity and future direction to their work.

While the analysis of grant report data was constrained by the fact that grant reports were still being produced and were not all available at the time of this evaluation, it did appear that alignment between funded projects and their respective grant types is improving over time. At the same time, there may be ways to clarify further the intention and opportunities presented by each grant type, as explored below.

Develop Grants

Three quarters (76%) of Develop Grant reports reviewed from 2015–17 demonstrated a good fit with the objectives of this grant type. Develop Grants are mostly being used to conduct studies and host meetings with potential collaborators. Key informants indicated that Develop Grants were a wonderful opportunity for exploratory and developmental work that was not easy to get funded elsewhere. To maximize the opportunity that Develop Grants offer, applicants could be encouraged to use the tools of systems change practice, such as user-centred systems design, systems mapping, and the identification of levers. Applicants could also

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Not many funders will support the community development part, before launching a service, but that’s what makes the service more relevant, viable and sustainable. The groundwork that Vancouver Foundation supported was essential to our success.

KEY INFORMANT

be encouraged to consider using Develop Grants to engage system actors beyond the “usual suspects,” for example from other sectors or parts of the system, in dialogue about how to improve the system.

Test Grants

Three quarters (77%) of Test Grant reports reviewed from 2015–17 demonstrated that these projects aligned very well with the objectives of this grant type. Where Test Grants did not show outcomes related to systems change, these were generally more focused on service delivery. Some Test Grants, particularly for social development, education and training-related projects, seem to be traditional pilot programs of a new service to be provided to a given population. There is a risk that such Test Grants will support services that do not have the potential to address root causes. The Foundation could consider if there is a need and a method to distinguish projects that test a new direct service approach from those that have potential to impact the system.

Grow Grants

Projects funded by Grow Grants (now called Scale Grants) have the strongest fit with their respective grant type. Every Grow Grant report reviewed (100%) demonstrated a clear fit with the criteria and objective of this grant type. In addition, scaling activities were identified in about 90% of Grow Grants reviewed. At the same time, it was not always easy to discern from grant reports what type of scaling the project was aiming to achieve (scaling out, scaling up, or in what way). Applicants’ and grantees understanding of the objectives for Grow Grants might be further strengthened through clear guidance on scaling types and exchange with peers about scaling strategies.

Outcomes of Develop, Test and Grow Grants

We compared the results of Develop, Test and Grow Grants. The order from the most prevalent to the least prevalent outcomes was the same across all three grant types. For Develop, Test and Grow Grants, they were each most likely to result in *increased knowledge and capacity among system actors* and least likely to have an influence on *population-level impacts*. The latter is the most long-term and challenging outcome for any single system actor to influence, therefore this finding was not surprising.

The prevalence of outcomes followed the same order whether we examined Develop, Test or Grow Grants:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. Increased knowledge & capacity | (1st order outcome) |
| 2. Improved relationships & collaboration | (1st order outcome) |
| 3. Improved tools & resources | (1st order outcome) |
| 4. Improved practices | (2nd order outcome) |
| 5. New narratives and culture shifts | (3rd order outcome) |
| 6. Improved policies | (2nd order outcome) |
| 7. Population-level impacts | (3rd order outcome) |

In general, the likelihood of progress on outcomes increased at a later stage of grant type. Grow Grants were generally more likely to make progress in each outcome area than the other two grant types. Test Grants were generally more likely to make advances on each outcome than Develop Grants. However, there were some exceptions. The exceptions help to shed light on the function of each of the three grant types.

First, Develop Grants were more likely than Test Grants to “increase knowledge and capacity” (85% vs. 77%) and more likely than either Test or Grow Grants to “improve relationships and collaboration” (79%, 63% and 70% respectively). Develop Grants are small, short-term grants to assist an organization to develop an idea and partnerships for a social innovation project. The activities of Develop Grants often involve meetings, dialogue and relationship building with other system actors as well as exploration of an issue. The fact that these are often the sole purposes of these projects likely accounts for the high prevalence of outcomes related to building knowledge and collaborations. Test Grants are meant to assist an organization to test a promising approach to a social or environmental challenge. At the point of being ready to test an approach, it may be that system actors’ relationships and knowledge have already been developed adequately or that the testing is ‘in-house’ at the grantee organization and does not require as much involvement or education of other system actors. Similarly, at the point of being ready to “grow” a proven approach, scaling it up or out to a new level or population, collaboration with systems actors may already be mature.

Another exception was that Test Grants were more likely to indicate progress towards “population level impacts” than Grow Grants (17% vs. 10%). This could indicate that the type of programs and initiatives being experimented in Test projects, such as those in education, employment or health fields, had more potential to reach a large number of individuals

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The model of offering grants for different phases provides some assurances that future funding will be available and recognizes that this work happens over a longer-term period. This is a very important component of these grants.

KEY INFORMANT

when successful. Grow projects were often related to policy or shifting public discourse and narratives in which the impacts would be less direct on individuals.

Systems Change grantmaking in diverse fields and communities

Although the 2018 edition of Systems Change grantmaking does not require applicants to categorize their work by field, previous years of the grants program identified projects by “field of interest.” We and several of the respondents recognize that systems change projects often defy such categorization and appreciate Vancouver Foundation’s willingness to support projects that cross over disciplines and fields. Our analysis by field is meant to assist Vancouver Foundation to better understand and address the needs of organizations and communities working in different fields.

The evaluation reveals that approved projects in different fields: a) tend to impact different systems changes outcomes (see table below: *Outcomes by field*) and b) are more or less able to align their projects with Vancouver Foundation’s framework of social innovation or systems change (see table below: *Fit with social innovation by field*). We also learned that different fields faced different opportunities and challenges as a consequence of Vancouver Foundation’s shift from Field-of-Interest Grants, which supported a wide variety of projects including direct service and program delivery, to Social Innovation Grants and, later, Systems Change Grants. Each of the major fields is discussed in turn below: Arts and Culture, Education and Training, Environment and Animal Welfare, and Health and Social Development.

Throughout the evaluation, the unique experiences and needs of Indigenous-led organizations and those in rural communities also emerged. We provide some analysis later in this section of how these groups relate to Systems Change grantmaking.

Organizations who identified with particular fields had different perceptions about the effect of the shift towards social innovation and systems change on their community, as well as on their field.

In general, organizations working in health and social development (66%) perceived a more positive experience overall on their community as a result of the shift, while arts and culture organizations (18%) perceived a negative impact.

In terms of perceptions of the effects of the shift on the field, those working in the areas of health and social development (68%) and environment and animal welfare (72%) felt there was a positive shift. The number of people responding “I don’t know” tended to be higher than any other response category, demonstrating, as with other findings, that understanding the effects of the shift to social innovation and systems change grantmaking may take time. These perceptions are discussed in detail in the following sections examining the specific outcomes of Systems Change grantmaking within different fields.

FIGURE 3. Grantee and applicant perceptions of the effect of Vancouver Foundation’s shift towards systems change grantmaking on the community

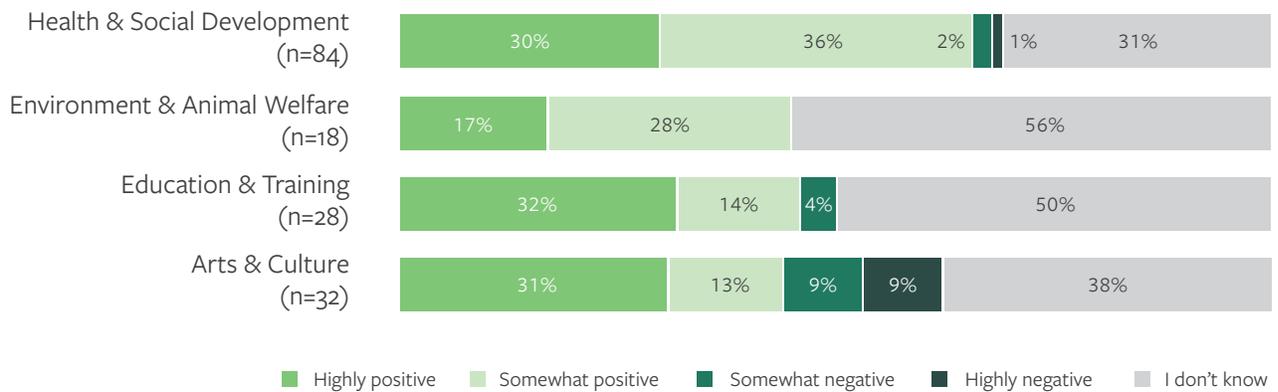


FIGURE 4. Grantee and applicant perceptions of the effect of Vancouver Foundation’s shift towards systems change grantmaking on the field in which the respondent’s organization works

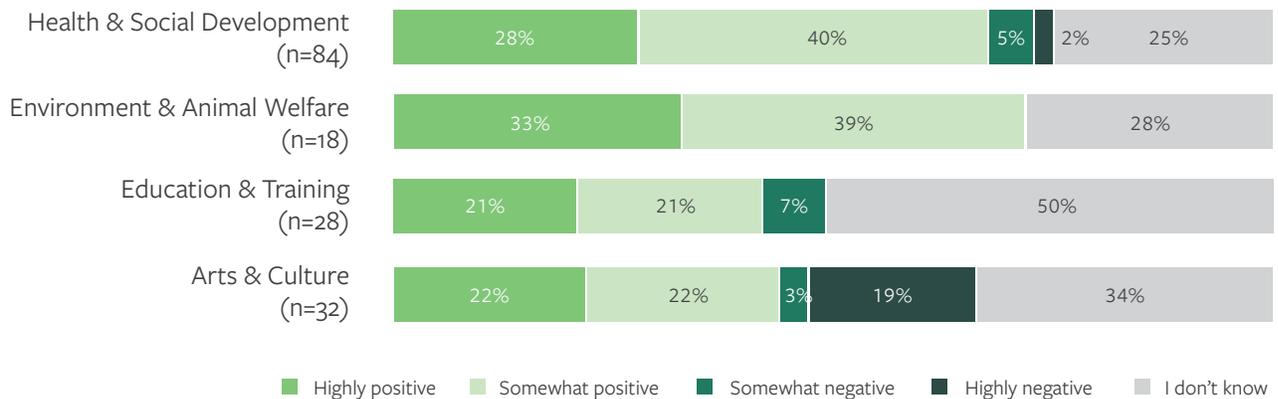


TABLE. Outcomes by Field

	Arts & Culture	Education & Training	Environment & Animal welfare	Health & Social Development [†]
1.a. New & improved tools and products	7 (29%)	13 (68%)	17 (89%)	14 (44%)
1.b. Increased knowledge & capacity (among system actors)	15 (63%)	17 (89%)	16 (84%)	29 (91%)
1.c. Improved relationships, collaboration, networks (among system actors)	18 (75%)	14 (74%)	11 (58%)	24 (57%)
2.a. New & improved practices (& incremental progress)	8 (33%)	8 (42%)	13 (68%)	19 (59%)
2.b. New & improved policies (& incremental progress)	1 (4%)	5 (26%)	9 (47%)	12 (38%)
3.a. New narratives & culture shifts (& incremental progress)	14 (58%)	7 (37%)	13 (68%)	15 (47%)
3.b. Population level impacts & social transformation (& incremental progress)	0 (0%)	5 (26%)	1 (5%)	5 (16%)

† Includes Children, Youth & Family; Health & Medical Education

Note: This analysis is based on review of 95 grant reports, randomly selected. Almost all reports were from projects approved in 2015 and 2016.

TABLE. Funded Projects: Fit with Social Innovation by Field

Grant Field	# that fit well with social innovation / Total #	%
Arts and Culture	8 / 24	33
Environment and Animal Welfare	13 / 19	68
Education and Training	15 / 19	79
Health and Social Development (including Children, Youth & Family; Health & Medical Education/Research)	26 / 33	79

Note: This analysis is based on review of 95 grant reports, randomly selected. Almost all reports were from projects approved in 2015 and 2016.

Arts and Culture

Key informants indicated that the effects of Vancouver Foundation's shift towards Social Innovation Grants in 2015, and later Systems Change Grants in 2018, have been complex. From one perspective, the shift seems to give more access and support to those organizations that already had a community engagement approach to arts and culture initiatives. One key informant with a broad perspective on the sector believed that smaller arts organizations and those in rural and small communities have a tendency to create community-engaged cultural projects anyway, and therefore Vancouver Foundation's grants may now be more accessible to them. Traditional and more well-established arts organizations that are used to receiving funding on the basis of artistic excellence and audience size, and are more often found in the larger urban centres, may find it more difficult to access grants under the current program. This hypothesis could be investigated further by seeking more input from smaller and rural and larger and urban arts organizations that interact with Vancouver Foundation, for example during the activities of the new Arts and Social Innovation Program to be implemented in 2019.

The arts and culture initiatives funded under Systems Change Grants often include the following elements:

- increasing underrepresented groups' access to, participation in, and expression through the arts
- art and culture projects that engage audiences to reflect on and gain a new perspective on community and societal issues

At the same time, several key informants in the arts and culture sector found it very challenging to fit their work into Vancouver Foundation's systems change framework. Even those who had successfully undertaken projects under the grant programs found it difficult to articulate the purpose and the impact of arts initiatives in terms of social innovation or systems change.

The survey echoed this mixed reception of Vancouver Foundation's shift towards systems change grantmaking. Less than half of Arts and Culture respondents thought the effect of the shift was positive (44%), about 1 in 5 thought the shift was negative (22% for their field; 18% for communities in general), and a significant proportion stated that they did not know (34% for their field; 38% for communities).

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Arts organizations don't have an easy time framing work in systems change terms. We need a translator.

KEY INFORMANT

In the first two years of the grants program, only about one-third of approved arts and culture projects (33%) had features that fit well with social innovation and systems change, much less than that of projects in other fields. A review of arts and culture project descriptions from 2017, however, indicates that the fit is improving. There are several reasons why this might be occurring: arts and culture organizations whose work aligns with the purpose of systems change are becoming more aware of the grants program or arts and culture organizations in general may be increasing their understanding of how to articulate their work in terms of systems change. Likely as time goes on, Systems Change Grants are being taken up gradually by the arts and culture sector.

That said, key informants suggested that Vancouver Foundation could improve its communication with the arts and culture sector about what types of projects were acceptable and how the systems change criteria applied to them, for example by making this more explicit in the grant guidelines. They also suggested adapting the criteria and application form for arts and culture related projects so that these organizations did not have to perform mental acrobatics to fit their proposed initiatives into terms that seem less applicable to them (for example, scaling). In the

period since this data was collected, Vancouver Foundation and the BC Arts Council have launched the Arts and Social Innovation Program. This new capacity building program will support arts and culture not-for-profit organizations interested in developing social innovation projects, through Develop Cohorts made up of 12 teams that wish to create or expand innovative projects addressing barriers to equity, diversity, and access to arts and culture. In addition, information sessions focused on discussing the Systems Change Grants with arts organizations will be held across the province. It would be useful to evaluate the impact of this approach to measure to what extent these activities alleviate the challenges arts and culture organizations raised during the present evaluation.

The outcomes most advanced by Arts and Culture projects were “Improved relationships and collaboration” (75% of projects making progress), “Increased knowledge and capacity” (63%), and “New narratives and culture shifts” (58%). While the first two outcome areas were strong across all fields, the ability of Arts and Culture initiatives to influence “new narratives and culture shifts” is distinctive and worth noting. Arts and Culture initiatives have a unique role to play in addressing root issues of social and environmental challenges by affecting the perceptions of audiences towards a new understanding of those issues. At the same time, in-person arts audiences are often relatively small and are made up of those that attend voluntarily, which may already have a deeper understanding of the focal issue than the general public.

Some key informants could point to specific arts projects that had received grants and were having a meaningful impact. One was very optimistic about positive impacts of the grants program for arts in marginalized and smaller communities across BC. One key informant felt that the grants were helping to “move the needle” on equity and inclusion:

“Marginalized groups have more opportunities to access funds. The arts scene tends to be very WASP. Women of colour, youth, First Nations don’t generally get represented. Now we are seeing more productions done and performed by First Nations groups, for example. This is moving the needle in terms of societal non-reflection of community in the area of arts and culture, changing the cultural norm.”

Key informants from the education and employment fields believe Systems Change Grants allow communities to convene system actors and take a long view of how deeper change could be influenced.

Education and Training

Key informants familiar with the education and employment fields were enthusiastic about the increased opportunities offered by the grants program. They believed that Systems Change grantmaking would allow communities to convene actors in the system and take a long view of how deeper change could be influenced, rather than just offering their usual services.

The survey also showed that, in general, Education and Training-related organizations tended to favour Vancouver Foundation's shift towards systems change granting. About half of survey respondents working in this field believed the change was having a positive effect on their field and communities. However, the other half stated they did not know if the effect was positive or negative.

A majority of Education and Training projects (79%) that received funding in the first two years of the program were a good fit with the criteria of social innovation and systems change. This indicates that, in general, it has not been a stretch for organizations working in education and employment sectors to identify systems change projects and to articulate them within Vancouver Foundation's criteria.

Education and Training projects were more likely than the other fields to make progress towards "population-level impacts" (26% of projects making progress), perhaps because initiatives focused on improving the education system or employment opportunities have the potential to directly reach a large number of people.

The main challenge that key informants raised regarding the grants program was that education, employment and economic security exist in complex systems, therefore project proposals can be difficult to assess. Some key informants and focus group participants questioned how staff and volunteer advisors could properly assess a project's value due to the complexity and context of some applications as well as the wide variety of proposals being assessed. For example, even if a volunteer advisor has experience in one level of education or in one region, the issues and features of the system elsewhere may be beyond her knowledge. Several key informants and focus group participants noted the importance of continuing to build systems change knowledge and sector-specific knowledge among staff and advisors.

72% —————
of environmental and animal welfare respondents believe Vancouver Foundation's shift towards systems change grantmaking is positive for their field.

This likely reflects the existing orientation towards systems change in the sustainability field, such as the use of policy advocacy and public engagement campaigns.

Environment and Animal Welfare

Environmental organizations are facing challenges at this current point in history. They know that deep shifts in systems are necessary to mitigate climate change and other pressing sustainability issues. Many environmental organizations were already working to change policies and systems, and therefore welcomed Vancouver Foundation's shift to Systems Change grantmaking as it represented new financial resources for these initiatives. At the same time, environmental groups have expressed concern that, in the face of increasingly urgent environmental challenges, they do not have adequate strategies and capacities to influence the scale of change required. Some environmental groups are also concerned about the tendency of organizations in the field to work in isolation. This may be an area where Vancouver Foundation could add value to the field by fostering greater connections and sharing of strategies among groups.

In addition, some respondents were pleased with the change in the 2018 grants program away from having to define a project by "field of interest." Many environmental organizations and initiatives are becoming more holistic in their approach, no longer simply concerned with the environment, but also with social and economic interests of communities that intersect with sustainability, particularly Indigenous communities.

Of survey respondents working in this field, 72% believed Vancouver Foundation's shift towards systems change granting was having a positive effect on their field, and the rest stated that they "did not know." None of these respondents believed the change in the grants program was having a negative effect on communities in general, however they were much less sure about positive impacts, with over half saying they did not know.

A majority of Environment and Animal Welfare projects (68%) that received funding in the first two years of the program were a good fit with the criteria of social innovation and systems change. A review of project descriptions of the 2017 approved grants revealed a much higher proportion that had clear alignment with systems change. Although there was some concern from a key informant that animal welfare in particular would always be primarily service provision, a number of innovative animal welfare-related projects have been funded and have clear systems change goals.

Environment and Animal Welfare projects were more likely than other fields to make progress towards several outcomes, including "new and improved tools" (89% of projects making progress), "new and improved practices"

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Up until receiving the grant, we had only focused on service delivery, because advocacy requires resources. We felt we had a unique approach to delivering health services in [communities with specific needs]. The grant from Vancouver Foundation was the first opportunity for us to get resourced to take what we had been doing in a relatively small way and be able to share it. We have made tremendous progress and impact in just the first year. The impact has far exceeded our expectations, being heard and having an effect on provincial policies.

KEY INFORMANT

(68%), “new and improved policies” (48%) and “new narratives and culture shifts” (68%). These results seem to be indicative of the existing orientation towards systems change in the sustainability field, particularly the use of policy advocacy and public engagement campaigns.

Health and Social Development

Health and social development projects are often seen as direct services to respond to the needs of the population. Some key informants indicated that the shift towards social innovation and systems change granting had encouraged groups working in these fields to pursue initiatives that addressed root causes in addition to alleviating symptoms. There was a sense among key informants that, as a result of Systems Change grantmaking, organizations were “finally” able to undertake advocacy in addition to providing direct services to community members. One key informant suggested that, in fact, the best outcomes are achieved when systems change work and community services speak to each other.

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“Direct service is the heart of who we are, we affect lives on the ground. It also informs any systems change work that we do. So, how can service delivery be fit into the advocacy and systems change? They need to inform each other. It is really critical to have representation by advocates that understand and speak for the people on the ground. A lot of academics and policy people are working on a theoretical level. People who are resourced for advocating can miss the link about practical daily implications. How it plays out on the ground is important so important to keep.”

There was general approval among survey respondents from Health and Social Development fields for the shift towards systems change granting. The majority (68%) thought the effect of the shift was positive for their field and communities; 7% believed it was negative for their field and, as with other fields, a significant proportion stated that they did not know (25% for their field; 31% for communities).

Most health and social development-related projects funded in 2015 and 2016 (79%) aligned well with the social innovation and systems change objectives of the grants program. The review of 2017 approved project descriptions demonstrates this fit even more strongly.

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So often the systems that are supposed to support us and improve our lives often work against us. I am hoping this approach [funding systems change initiatives] will really make a difference for Aboriginal families.

KEY INFORMANT

Health and Social Development projects were more likely than other fields to make progress towards “increased knowledge and capacity” of system actors (91% of projects making progress). A majority also made advances towards “new and improved practices” (59%) and about one in six projects made progress towards “population-level impacts” (16%). Often health and social development projects relate to improving practices in their respective systems for better outcomes of community members who use the systems or who are selected for prevention. Other outcome areas also showed strong results, indicative of the comprehensive and diverse types of projects often undertaken in the health and social development fields.

Indigenous-led organizations and initiatives

There was widespread support for Vancouver Foundation’s systems change granting among Indigenous key informants and those working in allyship with Indigenous organizations. They observed that “downstream supports” usually get the most funding and “upstream supports” such as prevention, policy advocacy and systems change are less likely to get funded, making funding from Vancouver Foundation very useful for Indigenous-led initiatives.

Respondents strongly agreed that there is a need to change systems in order to support well being and justice for Indigenous people and communities. Systems change is needed in many areas, including education, entrepreneurship, mental and physical health services, cultural reclamation, decision-making and power over land and water stewardship, laws and policing, and racism and negative societal views of Indigenous people, particularly women. Colonial systems have created the challenges faced by Indigenous communities today and systems change is needed to rectify this.

Although projects were not asked to identify as Indigenous-led, out of the 95 grant reports randomly selected for review, 20 of the projects (21%) incorporated Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. These projects were distributed evenly across the different grant types:

- 18% of Develop Grants;
- 21% of Test Grants; and
- 20% of Grow Grants incorporated Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

This indicates that Indigenous-focused projects are seeking support from Vancouver Foundation and that the Foundation is responding to a certain

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The language of ‘systems change’ was not familiar to us, but the meaning was, to address root causes.

KEY INFORMANT

extent. This reflects the Foundation’s stated commitment to act on the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission⁷.

Several respondents appreciated Vancouver Foundation’s commitment to reconciliation and the learning stance that the Foundation has taken with regards to decolonization and improving its relationships and access to grants for Indigenous communities. At the same time, key informants raised challenges that face Indigenous initiatives as they seek grants and partnership with Vancouver Foundation.

First, the vocabulary and concepts used in the grants program are often quite different from those used in Indigenous communities. One respondent observed that social innovation and systems change concepts “resonated less with the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and Indigenous communities we are serving... These communities may have started with a different lens about relationship-building... We don’t use that language even though systems change is what we are trying to do.”

Not all organizations leading Indigenous initiatives will want to seek funding via a Systems Change Grant, but for those that do, Vancouver Foundation’s commitment to reconciliation⁸ would suggest the need to ensure the process is accessible. Key informants indicated that often Indigenous organizations take a systems change approach in at least part of their work, but they are not accustomed to delineate and identify it as such. Several key informants observed that an understanding of the eligibility of Indigenous-led initiatives was only realized only after in-depth conversations with people with significant skills in grant application processes who could help interpret the language in the application. Sometimes consultants or other third parties played this bridge-building role for Indigenous applicants, but it was also often provided by Vancouver Foundation staff.

One respondent was concerned that grants could only be made to qualified donees and registered charities and observed that sometimes significant administration fees were being charged by charities acting as fiscal agents for Indigenous initiatives without that qualified donee status. This may be a barrier for the many BC First Nations that have not registered as qualified donees with the Canada Revenue Agency and for Indigenous initiatives that

7. Vancouver Foundation. About Us. <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/our-work/about-us>

8. Vancouver Foundation is a signatory to The Philanthropic Community’s Declaration of Action and states its commitment to reconciliation publicly. <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/our-work/about-us>

are not registered charities. For example, a survey respondent stated: “We needed to establish a partnership agreement with a registered charity to submit the application and they required a 10% administration fee for this which eroded some of the funds that could have come to run the program/project.”

Finally, there is a lack of Indigenous representation in the Foundation. As one key informant stated, “there is simply a lack of an Indigenous world view. This needs to be applied early on in the grant process. What opportunities were missed early on because of a lack of understanding? The staff are good people, but it’s a daily learning. We can’t expect settlers to always get it.” There have been some missteps in which the Foundation included Indigenous organizations in social innovation workshops, granting opportunities, and partnership opportunities, but these organizations had a negative experience with the Foundation, generating confusion and mistrust. Respondents believe that increasing inclusion of Indigenous people in paid and decision-making roles at different the levels of Vancouver Foundation would help reduce barriers to access for Indigenous communities. They believe that this would help to weave Indigenous world views into the policies and activities of the Foundation, for example, improving outreach, training and granting processes related to Systems Change Grants.

One respondent referred to best practice in diversity, equity and inclusion practice which is to ensure that multiple levels and roles within an organization have representation of minority voices: “Don’t just stick in one token Indigenous person and expect them to change the system themselves.” Vancouver Foundation states that it will “continue to seek Indigenous participation in our volunteer Advisory Committees,”⁹ however some respondents experienced in decolonization processes suggested that deeper change would not come about until there was Indigenous representation in those positions with more power and decision-making ability, namely paid staff and board.

One-to-one contact and conversation were cited as important ways to build the capacity of Indigenous organizations to present viable grant proposals. Many respondents were appreciative of the efforts the grants staff have made to listen, learn and adapt their practices from their commitment to reconciliation. However, this is an ongoing process.

9. Vancouver Foundation. About Us. <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/our-work/about-us>

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The need is great in rural communities but the capacity to apply and effectively convey project concepts may be less.

KEY INFORMANT

There can be greater manoeuvrability in small communities: the ability to make decisions quickly and get other system actors on board because of closer relationships.

Rural organizations and initiatives

Vancouver Foundation is committed to granting to initiatives across BC, including in rural communities and smaller cities. While key informants working in rural regions believed that a systems change lens was highly relevant for these communities, they also cited contextual factors that impact their approach.

Key informants identified the following factors as having an influence over the ability of rural grantees working on systems change to achieve their objectives, including:

- There can be greater manoeuvrability in small communities; they may have the ability to make decisions quickly and get other system actors on board because of proximity and closer relationships.
- Doing new things and shifting the ways of addressing community issues can be seen as a threat by long-standing organizations and leaders. Less turnover of leadership in organizations can result in challenges when leaders do not have a collaborative or innovative spirit.
- Organizations in rural areas and small cities may be addressing issues where they may not have control over significant factors that influence their communities. Global forces such as business markets and climate change impact local communities.
- The language of social innovation and systems change is often unfamiliar.
- There is usually limited capacity within smaller communities with respect to human resources, other organizations with which to collaborate and partner. The knowledge of non-profit management functions and systems change approaches can be limited.
- It is “a different funding world,” as one key informant stated. The funds available, the size and length of grants are smaller, although the application processes can take just much effort. Lack of access to funding may show up as part-time staff, organizations with smaller overall budgets. This can reinforce the lack of skill and capacity mentioned above, as there are insufficient overhead funds to support unfunded work such as applying for grants, collaboration with other organizations and evaluation.
- There are often transportation constraints, including the need to travel long distances between towns by road, exacerbated by Greyhound shutting down bus services.

Survey respondents working outside of the Lower Mainland agreed less strongly than Lower Mainland respondents that they clearly understood how their project would help to bring about a change to the four aspects of a system, as identified by the Vancouver Foundation in its definition of systems change.

FIGURE 5. The Foundation defined social innovation as leading to a change in one or more aspects of a broader system. Did you clearly understand how your project would make a change?

	“Mainland/Southwest” and/or “BC-wide”		Neither “Mainland/Southwest” nor “BC-wide”	
	#	%	#	%
Very much so	75	61%	28	47%
Somewhat	40	33%	28	47%
Not really	5	4%	3	5%
Not at all	1	1%	1	2%
I don’t know	1	1%	0	0%
Total responses	122	100%	60	100%
Missing responses	13		4	

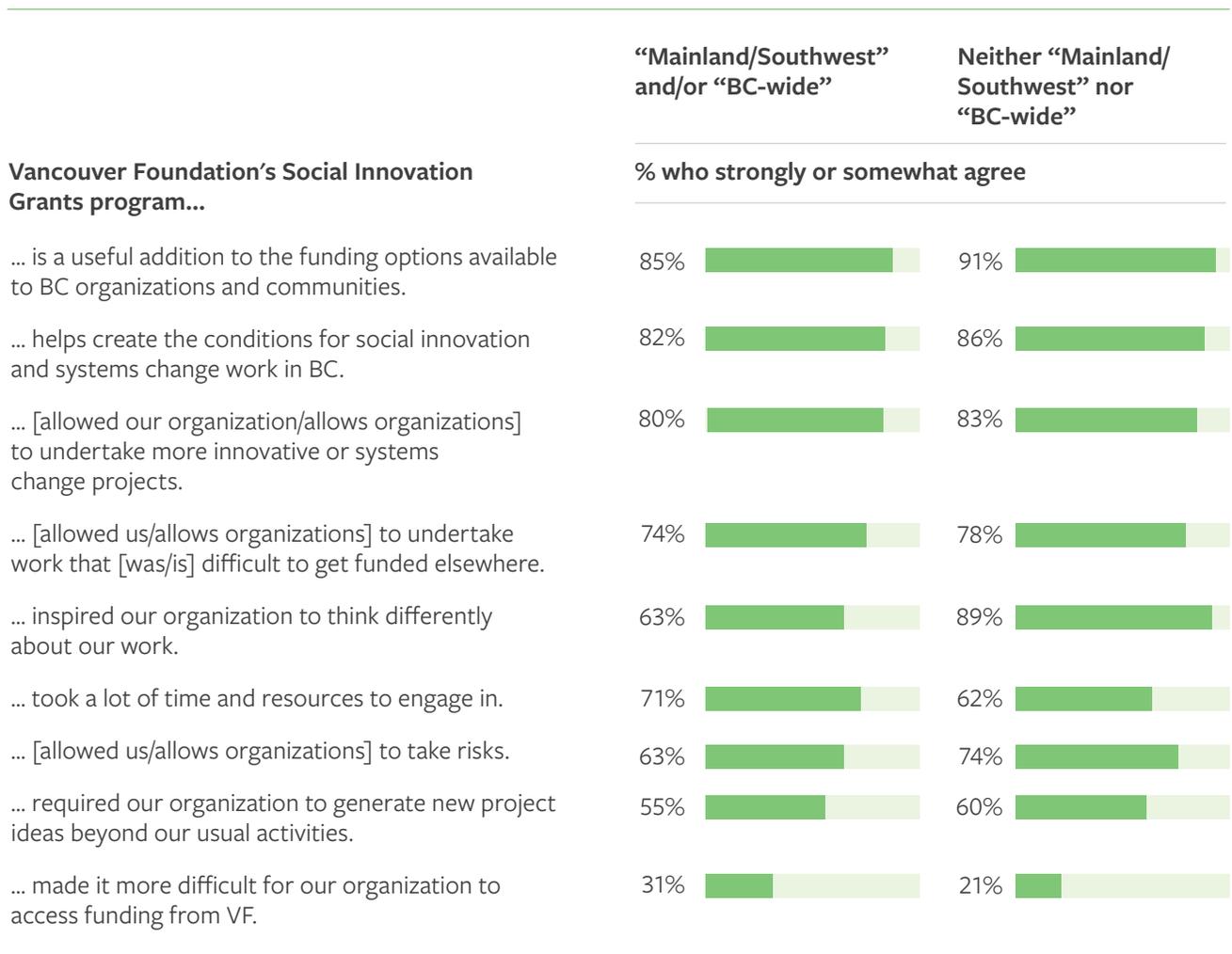
Full Question (Q14):

The Foundation defined social innovation as leading to a change in one or more aspects of a broader system. Did you clearly understand how your project would make a change in one or more of the following areas?

1. How we act, what we do (the basic routines of a system)
2. Money, knowledge, people (the resource flows of a system)
3. Laws, policies, rules (the authority flows of a system)
4. What we believe is true, right/wrong (the beliefs of a system)

Despite the particularities of the rural context that pose unique challenges, there is real interest and enthusiasm among rural communities and organizations working in rural communities for a systems change approach. As shown in the table on the following page, respondents working outside of the Lower Mainland considered that the Foundation’s Systems Change grantmaking inspired them to think differently about their work (89%, versus 63% of Lower Mainland respondents) and allowed them to take organizational risks (74%, versus 63% of urban respondents). These respondents were also less likely than respondents working in provincial-scope or Lower Mainland organizations to say that the grants program took a lot of time and resources to engage in (62% versus 71%).

FIGURE 6. Grantee and applicant perspectives from within and outside the Lower Mainland



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Small communities and groups wanted to engage in advocacy but were so overwhelmed. Advocacy and systems change were being done off the side of their desks, in their volunteer time, underfunded. What they wanted was to staff those functions.

KEY INFORMANT

Issues specific to rural communities emerged through the data collection process, but data on “rural” versus “urban” communities was not collected in the survey; instead respondents identified their geographic location by region. To better understand how respondents might differ by region type, the analysis therefore created the closest approximation of “rural” and “urban” by grouping organizations based in the Lower Mainland/Southwest (urban or suburban) and organizations working BC-wide (largely assumed to be based in urban areas) as “urban”, and respondents from other areas as “rural”. It is possible that some respondents in the “neither Mainland/Southwest or BC-wide” category could have been located in Victoria or other medium sized cities and are not in fact “rural.”

In the future, the Foundation could apply categories in their grants management database to classify grantees in relation to the size of community, for example rural, small town and urban context. This could be used to classify both the main region of scope for the organization and the sometimes more targeted region of focus for each funded project. Analysing grant report data by region and type of community would assist the grants team to better understand the systems change context, challenges and opportunities in different types of communities.

Section 3. Granting practice

A NUMBER OF INSIGHTS and suggestions about the grant process emerged from the evaluation. We present the findings here generally following the granting cycle: outreach, application, assessment and selection, project implementation, and evaluation and learning. We have also added a section related to staff relations with applicants and grantees.

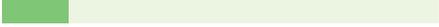
Staff-grantee relations

There was generally a high level of contact between grantees and the Foundation staff during the application process. 88% of grantees said that they or someone from their organization communicated with Vancouver Foundation staff during the application process. Of those:

- 98% said they felt listened to (82% very much so and 15% somewhat)
- 97% believed that staff understood their ideas correctly (73% very much so, 24% somewhat)
- 99% of believed that they received useful information and guidance (73% very much so, 26% somewhat).

Grantees' goals during their conversation with Foundation staff are described in the table below. Almost all grantees (98%) felt that their goals were met during the conversation with staff (77% very much so, 21% somewhat).

FIGURE 7. Grantees' goals for conversations with Vancouver Foundation staff

	Frequency	Percentage	
Understand if our planned project fit with the social innovation criteria	62	70%	
Get information about the application process or materials	48	54%	
Get information about basic eligibility for a grant	16	18%	
Understand what social innovation means	13	15%	
Get to know the Foundation	9	10%	
Other	6	7%	
Total respondents	89		
Missing responses	3		

“

The staff at Vancouver Foundation is wonderful; very thoughtful and professional. They understand clearly what social innovation is.

KEY INFORMANT

Grant program staff take an engaged approach to communicating with applicants and grantees, to the best of their ability within limited time available. The time that staff devote to outreach, responding to queries about project fit and the application process, and interacting with grantees once projects are underway seem to be a key factor of success of the grants program. From an equity lens, in particular, being able to have conversations with Vancouver Foundation staff helps to reduce barriers faced by organizations in rural, Indigenous, and racialized communities. One to one and verbal communication are often better for these communities to express themselves and gain a deeper understanding of the grants program.

Grantees generally expressed gratitude for their experience with Vancouver Foundation staff. For example, one key informant stated:

“

I appreciated Vancouver Foundation's level of support from staff. It's not, if we misinterpret something, too bad, our proposal is not eligible. That is not their approach. Staff are good at clarifying, throughout the entire process, from pitching ideas to the day before the deadline.

Outreach and application phase

Outreach

“

Sometimes I feel clearer about what Vancouver Foundation wants when I talk to staff instead of read the forms and guidelines. The values, knowledge, understanding comes through more in conversation with staff.

KEY INFORMANT

Outreach to potential applicants, communication about the grants program and accessibility of the application process all influence which organizations apply and the quality of their proposals. From an equity perspective, time and resources invested early in the granting cycle can pay off through more diverse organizations and communities presenting strong project proposals.

During the period 2015-18, Vancouver Foundation has invested some time into outreach such as social innovation 101 workshops and presentations in communities across BC on the grants program. To ensure that the best projects are coming forward, these efforts need to continue. In addition, finding ways to communicate the granting staff's “open door policy” to community organizations would help reduce the intimidation factor that some smaller organizations and applicants from marginalized communities described feeling when approaching Vancouver Foundation. One to one contact, networking and relationship building by staff with community organizations across the province supports the inclusion and engagement of applicants from underrepresented communities.

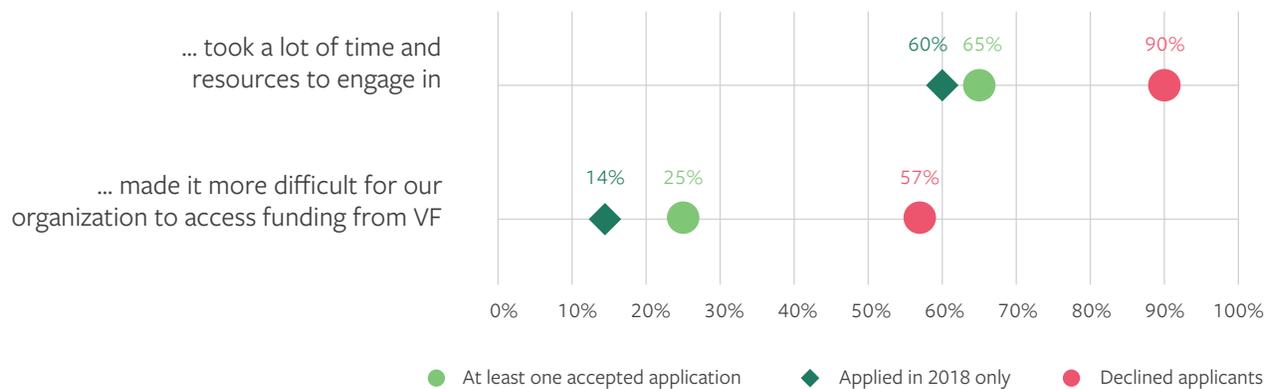
Application process

Vancouver Foundation has reviewed and updated its grant guidelines and application forms each year since Social Innovation and Systems Change Grants were launched. Several points from the survey data indicate that 2018 applicants experienced fewer challenges with the application process, indicating that it is becoming more clear and accessible.

At the same time, 65% of applicants who received funding said that the grants program took a lot of time and resources to engage in. Declined applicants almost universally felt that the program took a lot of their time and resources (90%).

2018 applicants experienced fewer challenges with the application process than those from earlier years, indicating that the process is becoming more accessible.

FIGURE 8. Grantee and applicant perspectives: To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Vancouver Foundation's Social Innovation grant program...



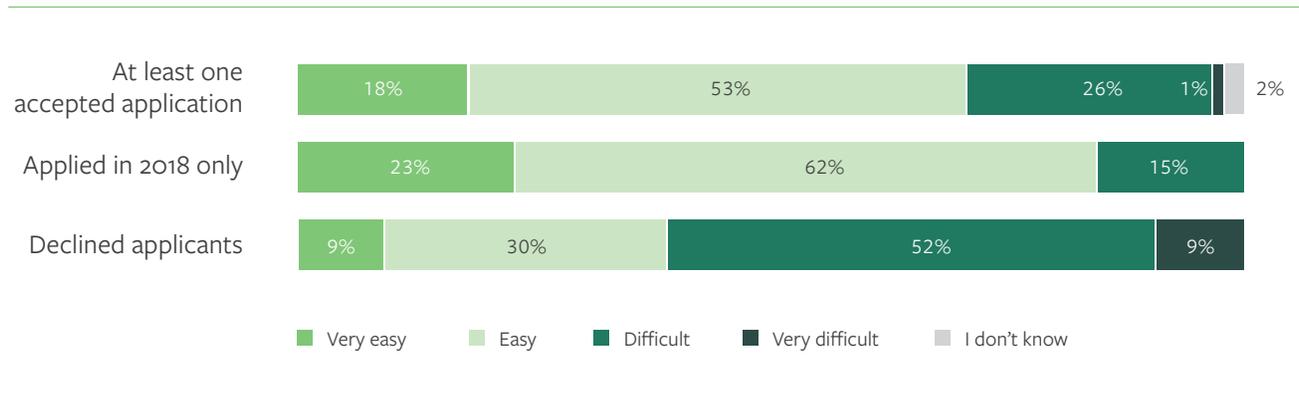


The application process is onerous enough that it decreases the diversity of applicants. People may be self-selecting out and we may be losing interesting grassroots groups.

KEY INFORMANT

An applicant’s ability to describe their work in terms of social innovation or systems change has a significant impact on their success in getting their project funded. Declined applicants stated that it was much more difficult for them to describe their work in terms of social innovation. While one reason could be that their project was simply not a fit with the grants program criteria, it may also be that the project was a fit, but the applicant was either unfamiliar with the language of social innovation and systems change, or did not receive adequate support to frame and describe their project appropriately. Several key informants believed that organizations with more resources already were in a better position to prepare successful applications, putting smaller organizations and those in marginalized communities at a disadvantage. Survey respondents and key informants emphasized the importance of using accessible language in application forms and guidelines that clearly conveys Vancouver Foundation’s approach to social innovation and systems change. Some key informants mentioned that they appreciated the 2018 revision of the Systems Change Grant guidelines as being clearer than previous years.

FIGURE 9. Grantee and applicant perspectives: How easy was it for you to describe your work in terms of social innovation?



Note: This question was only asked if the respondent selected “Very much so” or “Somewhat” in question 12: Did you understand what Vancouver Foundation meant when it used the term “Social Innovation”?

The grants program requires applicants to delineate a time-bound, budget-bound project with identified objectives, rather than offering open-ended or core funding. Applicants who received funding were much more likely to say that it was easy to describe their proposed initiative as a project. Nearly one half of declined applicants found it difficult to do so. Interestingly, organizations that applied in 2018 only, and therefore did not yet know if

their proposal was funded, were the most likely to say that it was easy to delineate and describe their systems change initiative as a project. This is another indicator that the process is improving over the years.

Different eligibility requirements for proposed projects were perceived differently depending on whether respondents were successful in receiving funding or not. About half of all 2018 applicants (47%) stated that none of the eligibility requirements posed challenges for their organization.

FIGURE 10. Grantee and applicant perspectives: How easy was it to describe your proposed initiative as a project? (within a specific timeframe and budget, with pre-planned activities, etc.)

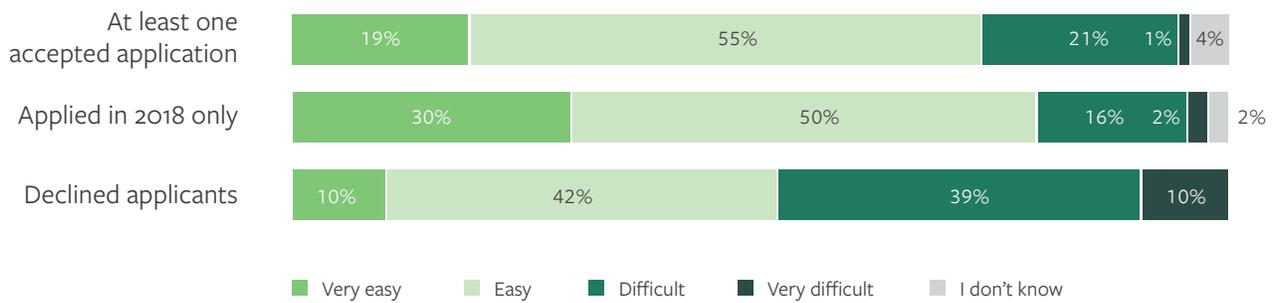
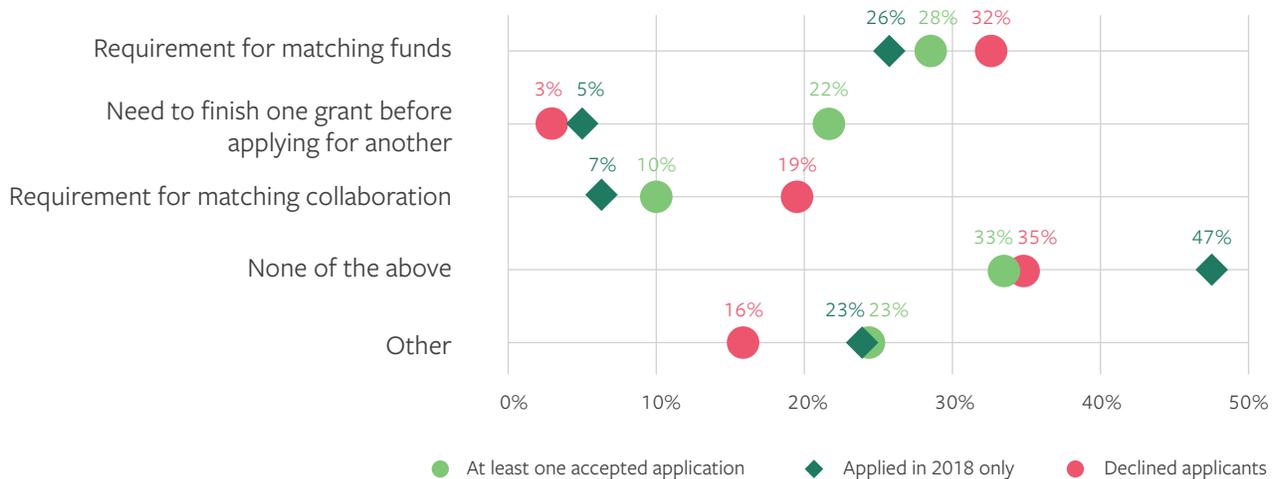


FIGURE 11. Grantee and applicant perspectives: Which requirements in the application process were particularly challenging for you, if any?





The application process is biased towards people with a high level of formal education and bigger organizations who have more resources.

SURVEY RESPONDENT

2018 applicants were less concerned about matching funds (26% compared to 28% of past year grantees and 32% of declined applicants) and less concerned about collaboration requirements (7% versus 10% of past year grantees and 19% of declined applicants). Among those who received funds, there was a higher concern about the requirement to finish one grant before applying for another as a challenge; however, this may simply be due to the fact that this is the only group currently impacted by the requirement.

The greatest concern regarding grant requirements had to do with finding matching funding from sources other than Vancouver Foundation, which needed to account for 50% of the project budget for Test and Grow grants during 2015–17. That said, nearly three quarters of survey respondents did not identify matching funds as a challenge, and some grantees appreciated the opportunity to leverage Vancouver Foundation funds. Key informants and survey respondents indicated specific barriers related to matching fund requirements as follows.

Challenges with matching funds	Detail
Requesting less from Vancouver Foundation than is needed	Some respondents observed smaller organizations requesting less funding from Vancouver Foundation than needed for the project because they did not have the certainty or capacity to secure the full matching amount. One respondent observed that this “constrains their vision and impact.” Another stated that their organization “applied for only a third of what is really required for substantive and permanent change because we were limited in what we could raise in matched funding.”
Diverting of core funds	Some respondents were concerned that smaller organizations might dedicate program/direct service funds or core budget towards the systems change project just to meet the matching requirement.
Smaller and rural organizations face greater barriers to access funds	A number of participants in the Rural Focus Group explained that the “funding world is different here”: there are smaller pots of money and smaller grants available than in large urban centres, however it takes the same amount of effort to apply for those funds. One respondent stated that matching funding requirements have “been a source of stress for our partners in small communities.”
More funders means more administration for the grantee	Some respondents pointed out that each additional source of funding requires additional time to apply for and administer it. Smaller organizations especially may be “limited in capacity to seek, apply for, evaluate, and report on each of those grants.”
Waiting on other funders affects project implementation	Some respondents said the main reason they had to adapt their project once it got underway was because of their “search for matching funding” or because expected matching funding did not come through.

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Pare down the application process—a simpler application process could be an equalizer.

KEY INFORMANT

At the time of writing this report, Vancouver Foundation had recently announced changes to matching requirements. In response to community feedback, Test Grants for the 2019 iteration of the grants program need to demonstrate only 25% of the project budget from other sources (up to 75% can come from Vancouver Foundation).¹⁰

Other challenges mentioned regarding the application process related to the application form, that some applicants had difficulty with the order of questions, and the use of unfamiliar systems change terms instead of plain language. In addition, some technical difficulties with the online form were mentioned.

Key informants felt that there were too many questions asked in the Letter of Intent stage, which they said was nearly as involved as the full proposal. They also observed applicants being confused by the term “Letter of Intent”, thinking that it involved simply writing a letter describing their general project idea, when in fact it is relatively long and formal, like a first stage application.

Develop cohorts

Some key informants had participated in or observed other organizations taking part in Develop Cohorts offered by the Foundation. Develop Cohorts assist organizations to walk through reflection questions that lead to greater clarity on their systems change initiative as well as training in certain social innovation and systems change concepts and models. Some key informants stated that the intensive support provided by the facilitators of these cohorts was essential to building their understanding of the systems change and social innovation terms and frameworks used by the Foundation. The Develop Cohorts are time intensive for participants and Foundation staff but are likely a valuable method to assist applicants to develop the knowledge and skills to prepare an effective proposal. Hiring facilitators who have an understanding of particular fields and communities likely contributes to the success of a Develop Cohort because facilitators can better bridge the language and concepts of the respective field with those of Systems Change Grants (for example, facilitators with experience in Indigenous innovation or arts and culture).

10. <https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/whats-new/2019-test-grant-applicants>

Grant assessment and selection phase

In general, key informants did not raise questions about how proposals are assessed and selected for funding, except regarding the process of engaging volunteer advisors and what feedback is given to declined applicants.

Volunteer advisory process

Volunteer advisors have been a key part of Vancouver Foundation's responsive grantmaking for many years. In the past, committees of volunteer advisors with experience in a particular field would review eligible grant applications for their respective Field of Interest. Recently Vancouver Foundation changed the process when it removed the requirement for grant proposals to fit into one Field of Interest. Now that cross-field project proposals are accepted under the Systems Change Grant program, staff draw from a large pool of volunteer advisors tailored for each proposal based on advisors' areas of knowledge rather than rely on standing committees. The role of volunteer advisors is to provide an external perspective on proposals and use a set of decision-making criteria to make recommendations on which projects should be funded.

There were differing experiences of the volunteer advisory review process. Some respondents noted that the process was a positive experience based on the opportunity to have diverse perspectives involved in reviewing proposals. One key informant who had been an Advisor noted that the staff did a good job of filtering so that the most appropriate applications came forward for review by volunteer advisors. However, some respondents brought up the question of how volunteer advisors are identified and selected. In particular, more diverse perspectives were requested, including from Indigenous people, people with lived experience, and people familiar with systems change and the specific context for a given application. Some grantees, applicants and volunteer advisors themselves were concerned that conversations during the review process by volunteer advisors may not have been consistent with final decisions of which projects were funded. Based on these comments, it may be that greater clarity is needed about how the final list of recommended projects gets produced and forwarded to the Committee of the Board of Directors for final approval. At the time of writing this report, Vancouver Foundation informed the evaluators that staff had been working to increase transparency regarding advisor recommendations and how advisor ratings related to the proposals that are eventually approved for funding.

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The transparency Vancouver Foundation is trying to achieve through the volunteer advisors requires multiple perspectives. At the same time, how do you actually review proposals in a way that brings depth to the process? Committee members need more systems change knowledge and more sector-specific knowledge.

KEY INFORMANT

Several key informants observed that there was unequal understanding among advisors of systems change and social innovation processes. Some suggested further training to equip advisors with more knowledge about how to assess whether projects address roots causes and use systems change approaches.

Another concern raised was that some volunteer advisors may not have fully understood the complexity and nuances of challenges being addressed within a given project. Applicants generally interact with Foundation staff as they are preparing their proposals and were satisfied that staff understood their projects well, however they wondered if this understanding was being passed on adequately to volunteer advisors. Several key informants noted the importance of onboarding and orienting advisors, to ensure that they are aware of the context of what they are reviewing, and to understand the complexities that grantees may be navigating.

Some key informants noted that the Foundation’s new process of gathering input from advisors now starts with individual online review of applications. The new process appears to reduce advisors’ time in discussion with each other; however group conversation between advisors was considered a vital part of the process where important knowledge about the fields, applicant organizations and proposed projects is circulated.

As with grantees, volunteer advisors were interested to see grant reports and evaluation reports. They believe this information would be helpful for volunteer advisors to better understand the range of projects being approved and the nature of systems change work. More information about approved projects and their results could be helpful for both orientation of new advisors and for closing the loop by sharing results with advisors about projects that they recommended for funding.

Declined applicants

Some declined applicants believed that they did not receive sufficient or helpful feedback to understand how and/or why they might not be a fit with the grants program criteria and what they could do to strengthen their application. Informative and clear feedback for declined applicants was reported as key to improving the overall understanding of systems change, and to supporting organizations with less capacity to frame their proposals appropriately.

“

When applying for funding, we are sometimes expected to make up an idea then try to make it work no matter what. But that's not how systems change really works! We have to learn from people what is needed as we go. We have to pivot and adjust, be responsive to needs that emerge. Vancouver Foundation understands this and this is a very welcome approach.

KEY INFORMANT

Project implementation phase

The survey found that once projects were underway, 61% of grantees needed to adapt or change the project based on new learning or new opportunities. 81% said they were able to have an open, honest conversation with Foundation staff about the adaptation or changes needed¹¹.

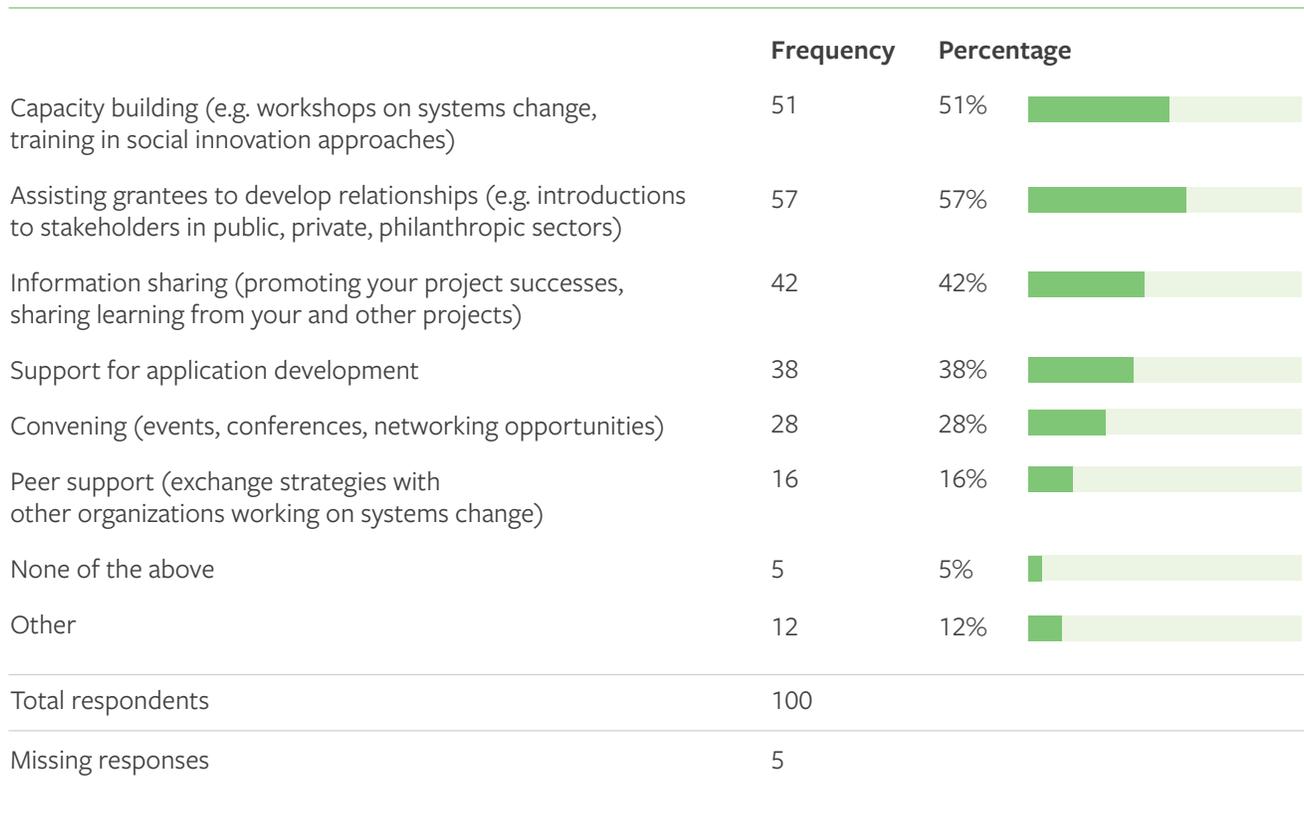
Key informants noted that the staff does a good job of embracing change and applying a learning approach to their and grantees' work. Stakeholders in general appreciated the professionalism of staff, and their willingness to listen and support grantees during the project implementation phase.

The flexibility of a funder during project implementation has been identified as a best practice in social innovation and systems change funding. Key informants were highly appreciative that Vancouver Foundation grants staff allowed grantees to “shift and pivot and be responsive.”

At the same time, many key informants had suggestions for additional supports that Vancouver Foundation could offer to increase the impact of initiatives funded by Systems Change Grants. The figure below shows how grantees responded when asked what activities and supports they would recommend that the Foundation offer to achieve the objective of supporting organizations and communities across BC to address the root causes of the pressing challenges facing their communities.

These and other type of project supports for grantees are discussed in greater detail in the *Recommendations* section later in this report.

11. 5% responded that they were “not really” able to have an open, honest conversation, while 14% said “I don't know”.

FIGURE 12. Grantee perspectives: What activities and supports would you recommend the Foundation offer, in addition to grants?

Full survey question:

Q45: By focusing on social innovation/systems change, Vancouver Foundation's objective is to support organizations and communities across BC to address the root causes of the pressing challenges facing our communities. In addition to grants, what activities and supports would you recommend that the Foundation offer to achieve this objective?

Evaluation and learning

Although key informants were eager to learn more about what funded projects were achieving, the grants program has not put a great deal of emphasis on evaluation and sharing learning. Currently, while there is monitoring and evaluation of projects based on progress reports and final reports, there is no consistent, evaluative review of the systems change results of projects. This is possibly due to the lack of systems change focus and framing in earlier report templates and staff time being dedicated to other priorities. Grantee reporting forms had not been updated to ask questions about systems change outcomes and results until very recently.

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What does Vancouver Foundation do with grant reports?

KEY INFORMANT

Vancouver Foundation is willing to walk along those systems changes with the various organizations that they fund. The Foundation provides a lot of opportunity to support those changes.

This is different from other funders, and refreshing.

KEY INFORMANT

The 2018 iteration of the grants program now has updated reporting forms in line with the systems change framework. Staff indicated an interest to improve the report review process within the Foundation, which could assist with providing the information stakeholders are seeking. In part, comments about a lack of evaluation coming from external stakeholders may have been more about a lack of communication about evaluation results, rather than a lack of evaluation and learning activities taking place within the Foundation.

A number of respondents noted that there is a two-fold challenge with reporting on systems change work:

1. It is hard to measure something that is new, often adapting, and complex, and
2. It may take time before enough information is available to report meaningfully.

Despite these challenges, it is clear that grantees and partners generally want to see evaluation results to inform their own thinking and learn from the process. Evaluation and learning are areas where grantees sought further support, both to guide what should be measured, and to tell stories and share their results and learning in a meaningful way.

One key informant noted that during interactions with the Foundation, grants program staff often say, “we are a learning organization” and they would appreciate hearing more about the Foundation’s learning from implementing Systems Change grantmaking. The key informant noted that grantees and partners do not need to just hear Vancouver Foundation’s successes they also want to know about the challenges that the grants program is having and the questions it is struggling with. Likewise, the Foundation could make it clear to grantees that they can share their challenges honestly.

Another area where some respondents wanted to see the Foundation take a lead was in sharing reports on key issues with influencers and organizations that could act as levers to support systems change in a particular issue area. Such reports could be created by grantees or the Foundation.

Recommendations

Context for Recommendations

THE FINDINGS OF THIS EVALUATION show that the Vancouver Foundation approach of responsive grantmaking for systems change initiatives is generally effective in creating the conditions for social innovation and systems change. Systems Change grantmaking is appreciated by a wide cross section of stakeholders, including applicants, grantees, partners and other funders. This responsive grantmaking approach allows communities to identify and address systemic issues in a way that they define and direct.

This section lays out recommendations to support the continued development of Vancouver Foundation's Systems Change Grant program, and to address challenge areas identified through the evaluation process. The recommendations are intended to strengthen Vancouver Foundation's approach of responsive grantmaking in creating the conditions to address the root cause of social and environmental challenges, within current constraints and in light of strategic factors, or drivers, that create the context for the grants program.

Key considerations: Maintaining a balance

Improving Systems Change Grants involves balancing many needs. We observed the following drivers, or factors that influence the Foundation's priorities related to this grants program. These were taken into consideration in prioritizing recommendations.

1. Financial resources to support Systems Change grantmaking must be allocated in a balanced manner, and there is a need for efficiency in delivering the program. Human resources are limited and staff is already at capacity with the current volume. In general, the priority has been on maximizing the amount of grants disbursed versus investing in additional supports for applicants and grantees.
2. Systems Change grantmaking will remain as a responsive grantmaking program, rather than directing communities to address certain issues in a certain manner.
3. Vancouver Foundation seeks to ensure Systems Change grantmaking is accessible and to build relationships with diverse communities and organizations throughout the province to address barriers to access.
4. Vancouver Foundation is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous communities.
5. Communities have made ongoing calls for Vancouver Foundation to increase its efforts towards equity for marginalized communities and to decolonization. Staff at the Foundation hear these calls and incorporate them into their work to a certain extent although there has not been formal commitment by the Foundation to these goals.
6. Key stakeholders—donors, board members, partners, other funders, staff at the Foundation as well as grantees—want to be better informed about what the program is achieving.

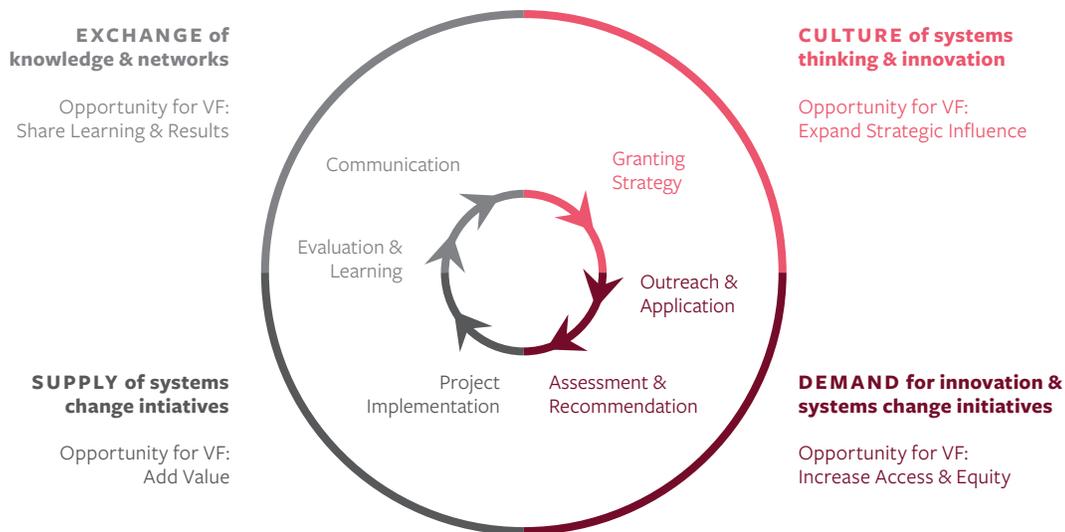
Granting cycle: Levers for influence on the conditions for systems change

The *Recommendations* are organized according to four key *opportunities for Vancouver Foundation* to increase the impact of the grants program:

1. Expand strategic influence
2. Increase access and equity
3. Add value to grantees’ work
4. Share learning and results

In order to assist consideration and implementation by the Foundation, the recommendations also indicate which phase of the granting cycle to which they most correspond. Each of the phases of the granting cycle can be seen as a lever for increasing the contribution of the grants program to creating the conditions for systems change.

DIAGRAM. Opportunities for Vancouver Foundation to increase its influence on the conditions for systems change throughout the granting cycle



The phases of a typical granting cycle are mapped onto the four conditions for systems change. There are opportunities for Vancouver Foundation to make a greater impact on each the four conditions by leveraging the phases of the granting cycle.

Summary of Recommendations

FOUR MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES emerged from the evaluation data for Vancouver Foundation to increase the impact of its Systems Change grantmaking: to expand strategic influence, increase access and equity, add value to grantees' work, and to share learning and results. The following summary and the detailed recommendations that follow are organized by these four opportunities, each of which corresponds to a phase of the granting cycle and one of the four conditions for systems change.

Opportunity for VF	Phase of Grant Cycle	Strengthened Condition	Key Recommendations
Expand Strategic Influence	Granting Strategy	Culture of systems thinking & innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to deliver Systems Change Grants, maintaining key program features and maintaining or increasing total amount invested 2. Connect other parts of the Foundation to Systems Change grants 3. Continue to build internal knowledge on systems change and apply throughout the grants program 4. Influence other funders to support systems change work and to improve their granting practices to better meet the needs of community organizers 5. Leverage the connections and influence of the Foundation to make connections between power holders working on systems change
Increase Access & Equity	Outreach & Application	Demand for systems change initiatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Increase access to promising initiatives led by underrepresented communities regardless of proposal development capacity 7. Make Systems Change Grants accessible and meaningful for indigenous communities and initiatives 8. Streamline the application process to emphasize the most important function at each stage
Add Value	Implementation	Supply of systems change initiatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Provide mentorship and skill building on systems change 10. Support relationship brokering and convening in a limited number of fields based on need and momentum
Share Learning & Results	Evaluation, Learning, & Communication	Exchange of knowledge & networks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Develop and improve a Systems Change Grant monitoring and evaluation strategy 12. Share achievement and big-picture learning through external communications and engagement

A. Expand Strategic Influence

GRANT CYCLE PHASE:

Granting strategy

STRENGTHENED CONDITION FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:

Culture of systems thinking & innovation

MAIN AUDIENCE:

Executive, Grants and Community Initiatives Committee of the Board, other funders, partners, governments

KEY INFORMANTS FREQUENTLY pointed out the importance and value of the Foundation's influence in BC. Many stakeholders called for Vancouver Foundation to make a more committed and strategic use of its influence and leadership to increase the effectiveness and impact of systems change initiatives funded under the program as well as improve overall conditions for systems change in BC. The following are recommendations to further employ the Foundation's influence to expand the impact of Systems Change grantmaking.

1. *Continue to deliver Systems Change Grants, maintain key features and maintain or increase total amount invested in grants and related program supports*
 - Stay the course: allow the Systems Change Grant program and the multi-year funded projects to mature.
 - Maintain features of the grants program that were identified through evaluation as keys to success:
 - Offer Develop, Test and Scale grants to support initiatives at different phases
 - Provide multi-year grants
 - Provide extension grants for highly successful projects
 - Fund public policy and advocacy projects
 - Respond with flexibility to grantees needing to adapt their projects underway
 - As the Foundation's endowment and other resources grow, consider directing additional funds towards Systems Change Grants. Given the niche that this grants program fills in the BC funding ecosystem, increased funds would likely be a worthwhile investment. Increasing the budget for non-granting, capacity building activities appears most important in the short term. Over time, the program would benefit from both an increased amount granted directly to BC communities and increased investment in the value-added activities recommended in this report, such as funding for systems change intermediary organizations or increased Foundation staff resources.

2. Mobilize resources within the Foundation to support value-added activities

Many of the recommendations for increasing the impact of the Systems Change Grants program involves allocating resources to new or expanded activities. We recommend that an increased, but judicious, amount of financial resources from the Systems Change Grants budget be dedicated to improving supports for applicants and grantees at various stages of the grantmaking cycle. In addition, the Foundation may have internal human resources in other units that could help to boost the impact and influence of the grants program.

- Dedicate a modest amount from the Systems Change Grant budget to value-added activities that will increase the impact of the program. For example, an amount equivalent to one or two Test Grants annually (\$100,000 to \$200,000) would be well put to use to provide meaningful, targeted capacity building, outreach, coaching and convening activities, as described later in *Recommendations*.
- Annually assess resources and staffing dedicated to supporting the Systems Change Grants program, including external and internal human resources and staff from the grants program and other units in the Foundation.
- Assess how other Foundation departments and the Executive relate to and support the Systems Change Grants program and understand systems change concepts, to reduce any silos and make the most of internal expertise and influence.
- Review how external communications convey the broad range of the Foundation's work to stakeholders to increase understanding of the wide range of the Foundation's work and how Systems Change Grants fit within that range. For example, to respond to stakeholders who would prefer that Vancouver Foundation grant to direct services rather than systems change initiatives, it could help to draw attention to the many service organizations supported through donor advised and designated funds.

3. Continue to build internal knowledge on systems change and apply throughout the grants program

Systems Change Grants staff have been undertaking professional development and learning on social innovation and systems change before and since the launch of the program. We recommend that the approaches and tools of social innovation and systems change be incorporated into the development and adaptation of the program whenever possible.

- Continue staff professional development and learning on social innovation and systems change. Consider inviting staff from other units of the Foundation.
- Undertake staff professional development and learning related to equity lens grantmaking. Consider inviting members of the Executive. Could also be undertaken in collaboration with other units of the Foundation.
- Grant and Evaluation team: periodic meetings for strategic reflection on the program. Use the Grant Cycle mapped on to the Conditions for Systems Change as a conceptual tool to review opportunities to increase the impact of the grants program and assess progress.
- Use the principles and processes of social innovation, particularly user-centred design and rapid prototyping, when developing new activities within the program.
 - For example, to respond to recommendations regarding providing external coaching for applicants and grantees: start small, select a particular user group such as Indigenous-led organizations, consult on what kind of coaching would be most useful, test an Indigenous-focused coaching service for a period of time, evaluate and improve for a second iteration.

4. Influence other funders

Vancouver Foundation must continue to play an active role in the funding ecosystem in BC, knowing that funders are one of the main drivers of demand for systems change work, because they can provide the resources needed to pay for such initiatives.

- Continue to explore opportunities and undertake partnerships on specific topics or in certain regions with other funders.
- Actively share Vancouver Foundation's approach to systems change granting with other funders, formally and informally. Stakeholders hope that other funders will learn from Vancouver Foundation's approach, particularly about the importance of funding systems change work and public policy advocacy projects, providing multi-year grants, and taking a responsive, flexible approach with grantees.
- For both learning and influence, consider becoming a member of Social Innovation Exchange Funders Node¹², and/or EDGE Funders Alliance¹³, both international networks of funders that support systems change work.

12. <https://www.socialinnovationexchange.org/our-work/programmes/leaders-networks/funders-node>

13. EDGE Funders Alliance. <https://edgefunders.org/>

- Monitor the overall funding ecosystem for BC organizations by asking grantees and other funders about their observations. There appears to be a trend in which many funders are reviewing and changing their grants programs, looking to be more strategic and create more impact, however this may cause disruption for grantees. Grants staff will better understand the dynamics that grantees and applicants are facing if they have a finger on this pulse. In addition, knowing where Systems Change Grants fit in the shifting ecosystem will help inform future adjustments to the program.

5. Leverage the connections and influence of the Foundation

Stakeholders in all roles expressed a desire that the Foundation further support systems change by making wider use of its influence in different spheres, including:

- Advocate for a systemic change approach to addressing persistent and important social and environmental challenges in BC. When the Foundation, including the Board, Executive and staff, has a presence in venues where community issues are being discussed, it can lend its voice to calls for a systemic view that addresses root causes and engages communities most affected.
- Share tools created by grantees, such as research reports and policy briefs, with powerholders and influencers in the respective systems.
- Broker relationships within particular systems. The Foundation's relationships are an important resource, and held throughout the organization not just by the Systems Change Grants team. The Foundation could reflect on ways to identify a few issue areas each year led by grantees (for example, giving priority to provincial scale or urgent issues) where the Foundation might hold relationships with actors at different levels of the system. The Foundation could foster relationships between elected officials, policy makers, researchers, experts, donors, companies and community organizations, for example, that are already in its networks. This could be done one to one or in a convening setting. Another model suggested was for the Foundation to invite "change champions" to act as ambassadors in key issue areas and work in collaboration to guide one or more grantee organizations to build their networks.
- Support initiatives that build the systems change and social innovation capacity of the BC nonprofit sector in general.

B. Increase Access and Equity

GRANT CYCLE PHASE(S):

Outreach and Application & Assessment and Recommendation

STRENGTHENED CONDITION FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:

Demand for systems change initiatives

MAIN AUDIENCE:

Applicants

THE FOUNDATION'S RESPONSIVE grantmaking approach recognizes the need for community-led processes, and recognizes that marginalized communities are working towards systems change. The Foundation has made an organizational commitment to reconciliation and understands the importance as a community foundation of making its programs accessible to diverse groups across BC. These factors all demonstrate the Foundation's readiness to support and improve access and equity.

Organizations led by marginalized communities and their allies identified outreach and communication during the application phase as crucial to accessing the grants program. The 2018 grant guidelines are clearer than previous years, but many organizations led by racialized, newcomer, Indigenous, queer and trans, remote and rural communities, for example, still face challenges when faced with the Foundation's definitions and process for Systems Change Grants. In addition, due to systemic marginalization, these groups often have fewer resources to develop successful proposals.

In order to ensure that grant funds are being directed to the most effective organizations to address systems change issues, it is recommended that Vancouver Foundation work to ensure equitable access for all kinds of organizations.

6. *Increase access for promising initiatives led by underrepresented communities, regardless of proposal development capacity*

One of the mostly commonly noted outcomes of Systems Change grantmaking was an impact for marginalized communities. To ensure that these groups are well-served, it is important that organizations led by and working effectively in allyship with these populations are able to access funds, even though they often have fewer resources to develop successful proposals due to systemic marginalization.

- Refer applicant organizations that appears to have limited project development capacity, but strong capacity to actively engage marginalized populations and potential to effect change at a systems level, to internal or external support for proposal development.
- Continue to build relationships with organizations in underrepresented fields and populations. Organizations working in marginalized communities indicated that they benefit most from in person and phone interactions with staff. Staff already have an open door policy and respond to requests

to discuss project ideas. Targeted outreach could help facilitate stronger relationships, such as:

- Host open houses in regions outside of Metro Vancouver that allow organizations to interact face to face with staff
- Maintain relationships with umbrella organizations and associations and engage them to spread the word about Systems Change Grants to their members
- Promote staff availability during the application phase to priority or marginalized groups
- Continue to adapt the grants program to the contexts of underrepresented fields and populations. For example, arts and culture organizations expressed a need for more clarity about how Systems Change grantmaking was aligned with their sector. In 2019, the Foundation launched a Develop Cohort to support arts organizations to develop their proposals. Other such adaptations of the grants program could also be undertaken for other underrepresented fields and populations, such as rural organizations.
- Continue to offer Develop Cohorts, preferably reducing competitiveness by doing an initial screening to accept organizations with promising project ideas. Cohorts could be co-facilitated by people with cultural knowledge and experience in the respective field or issue.
- In addition to staff communication with applicants, provide external coaches to assist priority groups to explore their project idea and develop proposals.
 - Provided in partnership with umbrella organizations and alliances when such a partner exists
 - Engage coaches to work with priority groups, for example refugee and immigrant organizations, Indigenous organizations, queer and trans organizations
 - Engage culturally safe coaches, including those that have lived experience

7. Make Systems Change Grants accessible and meaningful for Indigenous communities and initiatives

Key informants had several suggestions to reduce barriers to accessing the grants program for Indigenous communities. Overall, key informants expressed a desire for greater infusion of Indigenous world views into the Foundation, which would in turn improve Systems Change grantmaking.

There are four principal recommendations:

i. Increase the number of Indigenous people at all levels of the organization, particularly in paid and decision making roles.

To address the lack of an Indigenous worldview within the Foundation, key informants recommended hiring and appointing Indigenous people throughout the Foundation, including in positions with more power and decision-making ability such as paid staff and board.

ii. Increase staff outreach to Indigenous communities and internal or external support to Indigenous applicants.

One-to-one contact and conversation were cited as important ways to build the capacity of Indigenous organizations to present viable grant proposals. Discussions and tailored support can assist organizations to see how their work fits (or not) within Vancouver Foundation's systems change framework.

iii. Make it clear that Indigenous-led projects are encouraged, in granting applications and processes.

Several suggestions were made, including: accepting oral presentations instead of a written proposal; making certain details that apply to Indigenous Initiatives more explicit, for example if adapting current programs through the inclusion of cultural knowledge was eligible; bringing together a group of Indigenous applicants with systems change project ideas as a cohort, but not as competitors which is antithetical to a cooperative and relationship-based worldview; work with Indigenous grantees to highlight their work and share with other Indigenous communities as inspiration.

iv. Continue board, executive and staff learning about colonization, decolonization, and Indigenous communities' experiences and perspectives.

The commitment to reconciliation is an ongoing process that will be supported by Vancouver Foundation continuing its path of self-education, again, at all levels of the organization including the board and executive.

8. Streamline the application process to emphasize the most important objectives at each stage

There were a number of suggestions from the survey, key informant interviews and focus groups around how to reduce the burden on applicants and to make the application process more meaningful. We recommend considering the objectives of each phase and emphasizing that function through the process at that stage¹⁴. Specific recommendations are as follows:

Stage: Initial screening

FOUNDATION OBJECTIVES:

Support applicants to determine fit and generate strong proposals

- a. Consult a small group of stakeholders annually to review the grant guidelines and suggest changes (e.g. increase clarity, improve use of plain language for systems change concepts, offer useful project examples)
- b. Publish the proposal assessment grid on the website and in the grant guidelines
- c. Provide sample projects in diverse areas to show how projects might fit (e.g. Indigenous-led projects, arts and culture projects, etc.)
- d. Offer opportunities to attend local meetings with Systems Change Grant staff to discuss project ideas, such as open house-style sessions in different regions of BC
- e. For priority regions and communities where the foundation would like to receive more applications, promote the opportunity to speak with Systems Change Grants staff by phone about their project ideas

Stage: Letter of Intent

FOUNDATION OBJECTIVES:

Limit time required by applicants to submit, support strengthened Letter of Intent, allow VF to determine fit and viability to go to final application stage

14. One survey respondent suggested the following resource as a checklist for improving the application process: <http://nonprofitwithballs.com/2017/01/foundations-how-aggravating-is-your-grantmaking-process-use-this-checklist-to-find-out/>

- a. Rename Letter of Intent to “First Stage Application” to avoid confusion about what it entails (e.g. it is a robust questionnaire, not a letter to describe a broad project idea)
- b. Reduce the number of questions asked in the First Stage Application. Focus on key questions: community context/target issue and population, readiness of organization to undertake this project, key project ideas, expected systems change (use systems change concepts in plain language, for example, where are your best opportunities to create change in the system—“levers”, who is affected and who needs to be involved—“stakeholders”, what would the experience of someone look like if this change happened—“user experience”)
- c. Ask for summary-level budget information only. Could ask for a general description of how each budget line would be used towards project objectives (e.g. 100k total budget, 20k to pay part-time staff to do outreach). A complete budget could be presented as part of the application stage.
- d. Prioritize providing in-depth feedback to organizations that demonstrate high capacity for effective systems change work (such as active participation of people with lived experience) but show low proposal development capacity
- e. Provide feedback to declined Letter of Intent applicants to help them determine whether to reapply and if so, how to improve their application. This information could be standardized to reduce staff time. E.g. a checklist of key criteria from the assessment grid, such as: Did the project clearly explain how it would address systems change? (if possible, information should be provided about whether/how the project fits/does not fit with the systems change criteria). Did the organization demonstrate the necessary relationships, experience and approach to be effective? Is the budget realistic?

Stage: Application

FOUNDATION OBJECTIVE: Elicit strong proposals

- a. Reduce the volume of questions and focus on systems change concepts using plain language. Consider hosting a focus group of stakeholders, possibly every 2 years, to review the application and reporting forms field by field.
- b. Consider alternatives to written submissions where culturally appropriate (e.g. oral applications/presentations)

C. Add Value

GRANT CYCLE PHASE:

Implementation

STRENGTHENED CONDITION FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:

Supply of systems
change initiatives

MAIN AUDIENCE:

Grantees, partners,
other system actors

WHILE FINANCIAL SUPPORT is the main way that Systems Change Grants increase the supply of systems change initiatives in BC, additional non-financial supports would increase the effectiveness of funded projects. Key informants agreed that more opportunities were needed to build the skills of organizations and communities to lead systems change initiatives as well as to help them engage with and influence powerholders and decision makers in various systems.

It is important to note that it is not necessary nor feasible for Vancouver Foundation to provide these supports to all funded projects. Instead, we recommend that grants staff identify those projects or fields that would particularly benefit and where the Foundation has the resources to support greater impact, on a time-limited basis.

The Foundation could provide support at key stages during the implementation process, on an as-needed basis, to strengthen the capacity of grantees to be effective in their systems change work, as follows.

9. *Provide mentorship and skill building on systems change*

- Provide external coaches to assist priority groups to strengthen their projects
 - Could be provided in partnership with umbrella organizations and alliances when such a partner exists
 - Engage culturally safe coaches and those who have lived experience to work with priority groups, for example refugee and immigrant organizations, Indigenous organizations, queer and trans organizations
- Coaching and mentorship could take the form of:
 - project mentors or “social-innovators-in-residence” available for grantees seeking support; these could be freelance consultants or housed at a partner organization
 - specific skill-based coaching, such as communications specialists that can assist organizations to articulate their systems change story.
- Staff facilitate connections between grantees to enable peer support.
- When there is a strategic benefit and interest, grantees using a similar systems change approach (e.g. scaling out; policy influence; user-centred design) could also be convened.

- Provide skills training workshops on systems change approaches and tools
 - Workshops and webinars could be coordinated directly by Vancouver Foundation, or grants could be awarded to organizations to deliver capacity building programs
 - Provide funding for grantees to attend external workshops
 - Systems change skills include design thinking, emergent strategy, systems mapping, approaches to scaling, public policy advocacy, working with “unusual suspects” (collaborating with system actors out of an organization’s usual sphere), influencing the narrative, and user-centred design.

10. Support relationship brokering and convening in a limited number of fields based on need and momentum

- Foundation staff observes in which fields and sub fields (issues) there is momentum to be supported or a gap needing to be filled (for example, organizations working in silos but wanting to be more connected and cohesive). Consider if these fields could benefit from convening and relationship brokering.
- Work with community organizations in the field to determine the best approach and co-design. Grants could also be provided to organizations to design and host convening events.
- Based on relationships built up in different areas of the Foundation, provide informal introductions and foster linkages between grantees and other system actors for potential exchange and collaboration.
- Offer introductions and networking opportunities to connect organizations doing complementary work.
- When the need is strong, the Foundation can support strategic convening of grantees and other stakeholders working on specific issues.

D. Share Learning and Results

GRANT CYCLE PHASE(S):

Evaluation, Learning and Communication

STRENGTHENED CONDITION FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE:

Exchange of knowledge & networks

MAIN AUDIENCES:

Grantees, advisors, partners, donors, Foundation staff, nonprofit sector, public sector, other funders

VANCOUVER FOUNDATION HAS a broad audience and credibility in BC and beyond, and a new Grants Management System provides a platform for gathering and organizing project-related data. It is clear that systems change is well-regarded as a concept, but stakeholders at all levels seek to understand processes and outcomes better, particularly as new learning emerges. Stakeholders repeatedly expressed a desire to know more about Systems Change Grants, including key activities, common challenges and how they are being addressed, short and longer-term impacts, and implications for communities and broader systems.

We recommend a role for the Vancouver Foundation in sensemaking related to systems change work in BC. Several key steps could enhance the kind of information being collected, and dissemination of bigger-picture learning could serve grantees, partners and a wide audience of stakeholders and others interested in systems change.

11. Develop and implement a Systems Change Grants monitoring and evaluation strategy

Systems change work is complex, evolving and an area of interest for learning. What Vancouver Foundation does internally with its evaluation and reporting data and how it supports grantees' evaluation could have a significant impact on the field. The information and analysis held by the Foundation can create a base of information that can support learning about systems change as a field and key systems change issues in BC.

- Create a monitoring and evaluation strategy for Systems Change Grants:
 - Systematically assess grantee progress and final reports.
 - Revise progress and final report forms to ask more pertinent questions for monitoring and evaluating systems change using the Systems Change Outcomes Framework presented in this report and the indicators for Progress on Systems Change Outcomes in the table on p. 8.
 - Consider how to compile and share grantee information about lessons learned at various stages of implementation.
 - Include length of project and grant types in the grants management database and as a variable for analysis.
 - Add community size as a variable in the grants management database and analysis, to better understand what rural and urban grantees are doing and achieving.

- Provide guidance and support to grantees. Offering evaluation assistance can improve the ability of the Foundation to understand the work being undertaken, and encouraging and supporting grantees to use systems change concepts may also support more overall learning that benefits grantees.
 - Support grantees to frame their process and outcomes.
 - Provide systems change concepts and language including specific guidance on the kind of information to report, such as the Systems Change Outcomes Framework presented in this evaluation report, or a similar outcomes framework.
 - Provide guidance on how to measure short-term (first order) outcomes in early phases, and longer-term outcomes over time.
- Conduct periodic evaluations of systems change impacts for a cohort of funded projects to seek more comprehensive information about a given systems challenge. Determining impacts for the entire slate of Systems Change Grants is challenging because they are addressing many different issues and scales. Instead, it could satisfy the needs of stakeholders for impact evaluation as well as make a contribution to specific fields by conducting issue-focused evaluation of a group of grantees. For example, projects addressing improvements in education for Indigenous youth or projects that deal with improving the health system for people with addictions could be evaluated together in the future.

12. Share achievements and big-picture learning through external communications and engagement

- To meet the strong desire by stakeholders across roles and organizations to learn more about systems change work in BC, the Foundation could share the achievements resulting from Systems Change grantmaking and big-picture learning with several purposes in mind:
 - Support applicants and grantees to better understand what systems change does and can look like
 - Share lessons learned at all stages of implementation
 - Influence policy-makers and powerholders

- Given the complexity of the challenges being faced, the Foundation could play an important role in communicating and celebrating systems change successes. This could help to encourage and recognize grantees, and provide a platform for increasing their exposure to key audiences that could support their systems change work. Some ideas include:
 - Host webinars and events for donors, partners and grantees to highlight grantee achievements.
 - Develop an annual or biennial award to recognize systems change and social innovation excellence in BC.
 - Produce and disseminate more stories of specific projects, or several projects in a field.
 - Create opportunities to incorporate lessons learned into new and ongoing projects.
 - Disseminate successful models through knowledge products shared on the Foundation website, social media and formal publications.

Appendix 1

Evaluation Objectives and Questions

Overall evaluation question

To what extent has Vancouver Foundation created the conditions for social innovations (systems change initiatives) to develop, test and scale in BC, through responsive grantmaking?

Objectives of the evaluation

- Understand the impact of social innovation grantmaking 2015–2017: on grantees’ activities, perceptions and relationship with Vancouver Foundation, on communities through grantees’ work, and on the conditions for social innovation in BC
- Generate the knowledge and insights needed for the Foundation to improve its grantmaking approach and process
- Contribute to Vancouver Foundation’s understanding of its recently developed Theory of Philanthropy as it relates to the grants program

Evaluation questions

A. The Big Picture

OBJECTIVE: Develop strategic clarity about VF’s approach to social innovation granting

QUESTIONS:

1. How do staff and grantees understand SI, scaling, and systems change?
2. How has VF communicated “social innovation” (SI)?
3. What concepts and frameworks help to clarify SI and systems change for VF staff, grantees and stakeholders?
4. Does SI granting reflect the Theory of Philanthropy? In what ways? How is it not aligned?
5. What are key considerations to determine if SI granting is right for VF?

B. Outcomes

OBJECTIVE: Understand the social innovation impacts of the grantmaking program 2015-17

QUESTIONS:

1. What is VF's overall influence in fostering social innovation in BC?
2. What progress towards social innovation and systems change took place? (What incremental outcomes achieved by grantees, e.g.: improved collaboration, knowledge, understanding, tools, policies, practices, narratives, beliefs)
3. What are differences between outcomes of the Develop, Test and Grow grants? Between the fields that VF has funded?

C. Granting Practice

OBJECTIVE: Generate knowledge and insights for VF to improve its grants program

QUESTIONS:

1. What have been the effects of SI granting on grantees?
2. And on applicant organizations that did not receive grants?
3. Have there been any consequences for certain fields of VF's shift towards SI granting?
4. What are the effects of VF's approach on relationships with grantees?
5. What unique supports do grantees express a need for in order to support social innovation?
6. How could SI granting be improved?

Appendix 2

Methodology and Timeline

Methodology

The evaluation included a series of methods designed to gather process and outcome data from a wide range of respondents and administrative sources. Key informant interviews were conducted with stakeholders, partners, other funders, advisors, and grantees. A survey was conducted with grantees and applicants. The evaluation methods also included examining information from applications and grant reports to determine the ways in which social innovation, systems change and the related work were defined by those engaging with Vancouver Foundation. The methods included opportunities for reflection and a deeper exploration of the issues raised in earlier stages; these included ongoing strategic reflection sessions with staff, as well as focus groups with stakeholders invited to support a more in-depth interpretation of findings in certain areas.

Research on social innovation and systems change grantmaking

Key reports and articles on social innovation and systems change funding practice and evaluation were reviewed at the inception of the evaluation. These helped ground the evaluation in the wider field and identify concepts, models and frameworks to help clarify social innovation and systems change in the context of responsive grantmaking. A short bibliography of key documents is included in an Appendix.

Review of Vancouver Foundation documents

We examined documents from the Field of Interest Grants department dated 2014–2018, including memos to the Board and Grants and Community Initiatives Committee, presentations to stakeholders, results of stakeholder review, grant application forms, communications to the public about the grants program, and grant guidelines for applicants.

Review of grant reports 2015–17

Vancouver Foundation has funded 366 projects under its Social Innovation Grants (2015–17). A sample of 95 reports (26%) collected from 2015 to 2017 were analyzed for the evaluation. The sample ensured the coverage of the three different types of grants (Develop, Test, Grow), the different Fields of Interest as well as the geographic regions of BC. The reports were coded and analyzed according to the concept map to help illustrate the types of social innovation and systems change outcomes generated by the funded projects. Definitions of social innovation/ systems change, and different orders of outcomes were coded as part of the analysis. This was done to help answer the question of how community organizations understand social innovation and systems change and to ground the evaluation in emerging trends.

The reports reviewed represented a proportionate mix of grant types, as follows:

Grant Type	Progress Reports Reviewed	Final Reports Reviewed	Total Reports Reviewed
Develop	0	30	30
Develop Research	0	3	3
Test	27	19	46
Test Research	5	1	6
Grow	6	4	10

In addition, the project descriptions of all 150 projects funded in 2017 were reviewed.

There were some limitations to the grant report data. Grant reports were available primarily for projects funded early on during the grant program (in 2015 and 2016). In addition, many of the grant reports provided by Vancouver Foundation staff for review were progress reports, submitted part way through a project, which did not include full information regarding project activities or outcomes. The grant report review, therefore, provided relevant data concerning early work in the grants program. Other data sources allowed us to explore later activities and outcomes as well as adaptations and learning, particularly the review of 2017 grant project descriptions, key informant interviews, focus groups, and the survey which included many respondents who received grants in 2017.

Grantee and applicant survey

A survey was conducted with grantees and applicants from 2015-2018. The survey was administered by email to grantees as well as applicants that did not receive grants. The survey was sent to 671 individuals from 568 organizations. 199 people responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 35% of organizations (199/568, assuming each respondent represented a different organization) or 30% of individuals (199/671). The confidence rating of survey data is 95% with a margin of error of 6%. Of those who responded, 77% had at least one grant application accepted, and 23% had made applications but had been declined. The inclusion of unsuccessful applicants was intended to help explore the question of the impact of the shift towards social innovation granting and gain perspectives of those who were left out of the new approach. The survey gathered data on how respondents understand social innovation, their experience of the Social Innovation Grants program, and what they seek from the Foundation to support systems change across BC.

Key informant interviews

24 interviews were conducted with stakeholders including grantees, partners, experts on the nonprofit sector in BC, other social innovation-oriented funders, and volunteer advisory members. Some key informants were identified directly by the evaluators; for the others, Vancouver Foundation staff were asked to produce a list of potential key informants based on criteria and objectives from the evaluation team.

Of the 24 interviews conducted, 17 interviews were with Vancouver Foundation grantees, partners, and volunteer advisors as well as other important funders in BC, and 7 interviews were conducted with responsive social innovation grantmakers, community foundation experts, and social innovation/systems change experts in Canada and UK.

Stakeholder focus groups by videoconference

Three focus groups of stakeholders from across BC were conducted by videoconference. A total of 15 grantees, nonprofit sector leaders, volunteer advisors and other funders took part in the focus groups. Potential participants were identified by Vancouver Foundation based on areas where evaluation data indicated a need for further inquiry: 1. the big picture for systems change from the margins, with a focus on equity, and 2. understanding the context for systems change in small cities and rural communities. Focus group participants were invited to share feedback on findings within the two areas identified. The aim was to better understand the Foundation's influence and role in creating the conditions for systems change in BC and to gather diverse perspectives on how the grants program could be improved within key areas that indicated particularities or challenges with respect to influencing systems change.

Concept map

A concept map was created to support sensemaking related to the evaluation data and reflective conversations that took place during strategic reflection sessions with staff. The concept map incorporates two key models: the grantmaking cycle commonly followed by grantmakers; and the four conditions to foster social innovation in a region as identified by The Young Foundation (see bibliography for reference). By combining these two, Vancouver Foundation can see how improvements to various stages of the granting process could increase their impact on the conditions that support systems change across BC.

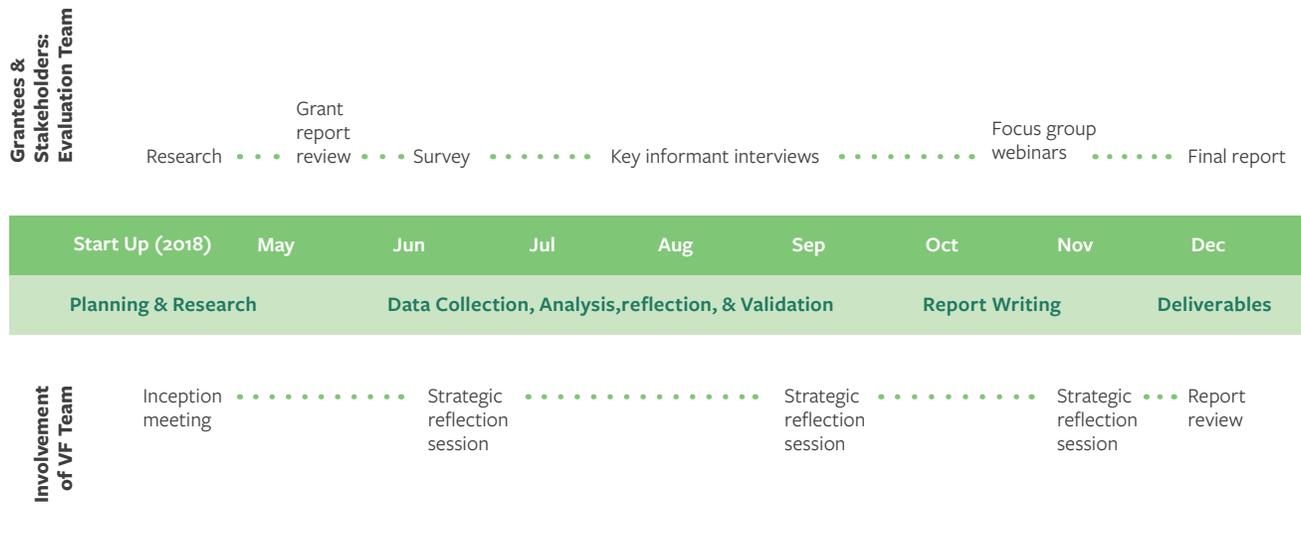
Strategic reflection sessions with Foundation staff

Facilitated strategic reflection sessions with Vancouver Foundation grant and evaluation staff were conducted to advance thinking on grantmaking strategy throughout the project. Three sessions of two hours each were held at the beginning, middle and end of the evaluation process. Prior to each session, an initial analysis was conducted of the most recent wave of data collected and this was presented during the session. Staff were invited to make sense of emerging data, find patterns, clarify assumptions, explore application of the Theory of Philanthropy, document

insights and surface additional questions to be investigated in the next phase of data collection. The strategic reflection sessions focused on the following themes:

1. The Big Picture:
Theory and strategy, conditions and framing for social innovation/systems change
2. Initial findings:
Effects of the shift to social innovation/systems change and contribution of Vancouver Foundation to social innovation/systems change
3. Granting practice

DIAGRAM. Timeline



Appendix 3

Evaluation Tools

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thanks so much for your time. The interview will take 30-45 minutes

Vancouver Foundation redesigned the field-of-interest grants program to focus on social innovation in 2014, now called Systems Change Grants as of 2018.

We are evaluating the last three years of grantmaking (2015-2017). VF has held annual stakeholder consultations to see how things are going, which you may have been a part of. That feedback was really helpful for the program's ongoing evolution. For this evaluation, VF wanted a more formal and in-depth look at what's worked—and what hasn't—as the Foundations tries to create the conditions for social innovation and systems change across BC.

I'll give you a refresher about the grant program. This is from VF's website:

“Systems Change Grants support projects that take action to address the root causes of pressing social, environmental or cultural issues by influencing the behaviours of populations, organizations, and institutions.” There are three types of grants:

- Develop (1 year; smaller amount; to help groups develop their ideas and a project plan)
- Test (3-years; try things out; see what works)
- Grow—now called Scale grants: (3 years; scale up, extend influence in the system)

Interview Questions

Tell me about your role and relationship with Vancouver Foundation.

- In particular what has been your relationship to the Social Innovation (now called Systems Change) grants?

In your field and/or across the BC nonprofit sector, *[ask one or more]*

- Have you heard any currents or echoes about Vancouver Foundation's grantmaking?
- What is the impression of VFs shift to social innovation/systems change granting?
- What are folks saying about it?

What social and environment impacts do you think Vancouver Foundation has had, through its granting over the last three years?

- in your field?
- across BC nonprofit/change sector?

PROMPT: Do you think that VF's grants are helping social innovations to develop, test and scale?

PROMPT: What do you think is VF's overall influence in fostering social innovation in BC?

Do you know of any examples where a social innovation grant from VF has been particularly helpful?

What do you think are the benefits of VF focusing on social innovation and systems change for its grants and calls for proposals?

- Why?

What do you think are the challenges of VF focusing on social innovation and systems change grants?

- Why?
- What do you think could help address these challenges?

Do you think that the Foundation has the internal resources needed to support social innovation and systems change through its granting? (e.g. internal knowledge, HR, or skills)

- What is your perspective on the grant staff team at the Foundation?
- Is there any knowledge, resources or skills you think would assist the staff in better supporting social innovation and systems change? Is there anything missing?
- What are your suggestions?

Have you had any involvement with the volunteer advisory committees that review the grants and give recommendations?

- (*Explanation if needed:* They are generally people who work in and with the nonprofit sector with expertise in certain issues and areas; they make grant recommendations to the staff and Board)
- Is there anything that you think could improve how grants get reviewed?

- Anything to improve the way the volunteer advisory committees work?
 - › Do you have suggestions for VF's grants program?
 - › What role would you like to see VF playing in supporting systems change?
 - › How could VF improve its supports to organizations that are seeking to address root causes of social and environmental challenges?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Focus Group Protocol

Rural and small cities focus group

- Introduction to the evaluation
- Present VF definition of systems change
- Go around:
 - How does Vancouver Foundation's definition align with or diverge from your communities' work to shift systems?
 - What does systems change look like in a small city/rural area?
 - › Tell us about what systems change looks like the communities you work in.
 - How do you see VF's Systems Change Grants in relation to your work or the field you work in?
- Present key findings from evaluation
 - How do you relate to these findings?
 - What suggestions do you have for improving Systems Change Grants so that you can better influence change in your communities?
- Is there any thing else you would like to add?

Equity focus groups

- Introduction to the evaluation
- Present VF definition of systems change
- Go around:
 - Tell us about what systems change looks like in the communities you work in?
 - > How does Vancouver Foundation’s definition align with or diverge from your communities’ work to shift systems?
 - > What may be some of the barriers that you encounter when attempting to create systemic change within your community?
- Present key findings from evaluation
 - How do you relate to these findings?
 - What suggestions do you have for improving Systems Change Grants so that you can better influence change in your communities?
- Is there any thing else you would like to add?

Appendix 4

Key Informants

Focus Group Participants

Barbara Lawson	Aboriginal Mother Centre
Charles Barber	City Opera Vancouver
Corrine Younie	Nelson Cares
David Hendrickson	Real Estate Foundation of BC
Gary Smith	Phoenix Foundation of the Boundary Communities
Gord Tulloch	PosAbilities Association of BC
Hannah Holden	Columbia Basin Trust
Kiri Bird	Radius SFU
Maurita Prato	LUSH Valley Food Action Society
Natalie Bourbonnais-Spear	Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative
Prairie Chiu	Community Action Initiative
Rachel Iwaasa	Artist
Susi Porter-Bopp	First Nations Fisheries Council of BC
Trish Garner	BC Poverty Reduction Coalition
Zita Botelho	Zita Botelho Consulting

Interview Participants

Andrea Dicks	Community Foundations of Canada
Anna Fung	Past Vancouver Foundation board member and Advisory Chair
Annie Burkes	City of Vancouver
Blair Dimock	Ontario Trillium Foundation
Brenda Leadlay	BC Alliance for the Arts + Culture
Cheryl Rose	Senior Fellow, McConnell Foundation
David Young	Sources Community Resource Centre
Donna Tenant	The Native Courtworker & Counselling Association
Elizabeth Lougheed Green	Vancity
Eric Kowalski	City of Vancouver
Esther Hsieh	Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op
Gemma Bull	Big Lottery Fund UK
Jeff Calbick	United Way

Jo Chrona	First Nations Education Steering Committee
Johanna Li	Embers
Jordan Junge	Funders Node - Social Innovation Exchange
Leslie Varley	BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
Lyn Daniels	Aboriginal Learning, Surrey Schools
Lynell Anderson	Public policy researcher and community engagement specialist
Natalie Cushing	Tides Canada
Pegi Dover	Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network
Sara Lyons	Community Foundations of Canada
Scott W. Graham	Volunteer advisor
Tim Draimin	Senior Fellow, McConnell Foundation



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