



# *STRATEGIC PLAN*

*2018-2023*

CDF Strategic Plan Working Group

5/25/2018



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## *Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Goals for this Plan*

### **Vision**

The Catherine Donnelly Foundation's vision is to collaborate with others to create a world that respects and reverences creation; a world where all have a voice and can live with dignity to realize their full potential, a world that is open to transformation and one that seeks justice, peace and respect for all.

### **Mission**

Committed to gospel values, the Foundation strives to transform the lives of those most in need by proactively supporting creative initiatives in the areas of housing, adult education and the environment.

### **The mission of the Foundation is rooted in the following values:**

- Dignity of the Person
- Spirituality of Service
- Innovative and Creative Ideas
- Partnership
- Synergy/Integration
- Ecological Integrity & Environmental Sustainability

### ***Strategic Goals:***

***Goal 1: Integrate an Indigenous influenced perspective/lens into our work***

***Goal 2: Advance and resource Impact Investing***

***Goal 3: Broaden our Impact through increased public presence***

***Goal 4: Strengthen our Organization through governance & staff***

***Goal 5: Use Adult Education Processes as appropriate in our work***

## *Introduction*

Established in 2003, the Catherine Donnelly Foundation is the financial legacy of a remarkable group of women religious, the Sisters of Service. The Foundation is a living testament to the Sisters' tradition of response to the greatest needs in communities across Canada. As originally constituted, the Foundation provided grants to worthy projects in each of its program areas.

At its first strategic planning session (2008), the Foundation experimented with a more ambitious program strategy to allocate a significant portion (i.e. 50%) of its grant monies to more focused and longer term work in order to address the root causes of many of the key issues in each of its program areas.

The second strategic planning session, held in the spring of 2013, reaffirmed this orientation and suggested that where possible the Foundation pay attention to the needs of women, Indigenous peoples, immigrants and the faith community in its project funding and program development.

The next five years will see the Catherine Donnelly Foundation consciously integrating an Indigenous lens into our work by engaging in an educational process that would foster a deeper understanding of Indigenous issues as well as sharing and using the learning from the Adult Education's Righting Relations program. A commitment to meet the 10% Impact investing goal was reaffirmed with the understanding that additional resources (staff) **may** be required. The Board affirms and carries forward the Sisters' values and legacy while implementing programs that are responsive to the ever-changing needs of society/environment.



## *Development of the Plan*

At the November 2016 board meeting, the CDF Board agreed to incorporate a two-day strategic planning session into the spring 2017 board meeting. A working group was appointed to guide the development of the strategic planning session. This group included two board members (Darcy Riddell & Mary Corkery), a past board member (Mike Flynn), the General Director (Valerie Lemieux) and a consultant (Lisa Watson).

The Executive Committee approved a framework outlining the goal, objectives and approach at the end of January 2017.

The following objectives guided the process:

- Grow the sense of connection to the mission and the team relationships among the board and staff
- Name and adopt our emerging practices since the last retreat, including the strategy and practice of committees, governance and related staffing implications
- Consolidate our key choices and options in relation to mission, policies, structures and strategies
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of the staff and board related to our mission and our current priorities
- Identify strategies to address challenges, opportunities and barriers CDF might face in the next 5-year period

In order to ensure that the Strategic Planning Session met the needs of the board, staff and Foundation as a whole, a consultative process including surveys and interviews were undertaken with a number of stakeholders including the CDF board, CDF members, staff and grantees. Questions focused on key challenges, opportunities and barriers that CDF needs to prepare for in the coming 5 years, and the strengths that it can leverage to succeed. This material was synthesized and grouped into themes and questions that were considered by the CDF Board at its June 2017 strategic planning retreat meeting.

Following the June retreat, a **Strategic Plan Working Group**, consisting of members of the Executive Committee the Chief Financial Officer and the General Director were tasked with preparing a Draft Strategic Plan 2018-2023 for review and approval by the CDF Board at the November 2017 meeting. Additional working groups followed up on issues requiring additional clarification in order to prepare the Strategic Plan for approval in May 2018.

## *Our Strategy for 2018-2023*

### External Goals:

- 1) Philanthropic Approach:** The Catherine Donnelly Foundation is committed to promoting positive social change by allocating our required funding allotment to a combination of programs and projects in our priority areas of Environment, Housing, Adult Education and Impact Investing. Our efforts in this respect are intended to promote joint action and networking by enabling key institutional actors to combine their efforts, to build on one another's strengths, constituencies and common experiences in pursuit of social change objectives.

The Foundation recognizes that our granting and investing process is influenced by a Western colonial approach and is committed to integrating an Indigenous-influenced perspective with an intention of moving towards a decolonized<sup>1</sup> approach to philanthropy (as grantmakers, communicators and investors) to enhance CDF's overall effectiveness in the philanthropic sector.

In moving towards a decolonized approach to philanthropy the Foundation seeks to promote a power dynamic different from the standard grantor-recipient relationship. We will seek initiatives that promote community decision-making and control over community resources. In integrating an Indigenous-influenced perspective, we recognize the need for flexible program areas that show fluidity and appreciation for Indigenous worldviews that all life – human and nonhuman – is interrelated. This flexibility will encourage the exploration of more crosscutting work between housing, environment and adult education including investment opportunities in housing, Indigenous-led initiatives and green / sustainable energy.

- 2) Broaden Our Impact:** Make our mission, mandate and activities known to the broader public, as we continue to situate CDF as a participating and collaborating institution within the broader community of progressive social forces in Canada.
- 3) Advance Impact Investment:** Continue to move towards our goal of 10% of assets in impact investments, which while profitable, will also improve the social

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/2013/05/08/decolonizing-our-minds-and-actions/>

and economic circumstances of the most marginalized in our society and further ecological justice.

## Internal Goals:

### 4) Strengthen Our Organization:

- **Finance and Investment:** Ensure the capacity of the Foundation to function at current funding levels through to 2044 through prudent investing.
- **Governance:** Work towards a more diverse board membership; promote teamwork between staff and board members; recruit as needed additional voluntary expertise to assist the Board and Foundation in implementing its various mandates.
- **Staffing:** Build and support a staff structure capable of effectively implementing CDF's evolving program and project work, including its networking, public presence and communications.

### 5) Use Adult Education Processes in Our Work: The Board expressed a desire to incorporate adult education process and practices into board meetings and into cross-committee learning days.

## 1) Philanthropic Approach

As originally constituted, the Foundation provides grants in response to requests from projects in each of its funding areas. Since 2008, the Foundation has been utilizing an ambitious program strategy that allocates a significant portion of its grant monies to more focused and long-term work intended to address the root causes of many of the key issues in each of its program areas.

In the spring of 2013, the CDF's Strategic Session reaffirmed this orientation and suggested that where possible the Foundation pay particular attention to the needs of women, indigenous, immigrants and the faith community in its project funding and program development. The Foundation will continue to prioritize these constituencies.

In this context, the Foundation has:

- Increased the portion of its resources (financial and human) in long-term program work with stated social change objectives in collaboration with a select group of partners, with the intention of promoting alliances with social movements and like-minded foundations.

- Enhanced its program strategy in all three of our funding areas, including second-generation<sup>2</sup> support in environment and housing and launched a new program in adult education.
- Reduced the portion of our resources available to the project (short-term) component of our funding mandate for our environment and housing areas of focus in favour of new long-term funding strategies.

## 1.1 Objectives

Our funding objectives for the next five years include:

1.1.1 Integrate indigenous-led initiatives and perspectives in our work in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations (Calls to Action). We recognize that we are well situated to integrate Indigenous-influenced perspectives<sup>3</sup> but have not yet maximized the learning from our work with Indigenous-led and/or Indigenous focused initiatives. We also acknowledge the role of the Christian churches in the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Our intention is to:

- Foster a deeper understanding of Indigenous issues and perspectives. Implement CDF's commitment to the Philanthropic Declaration of Action through an engaged educational process (i.e. experiential learning, sensitivity and cultural competency training).
- Engage with and learn from Indigenous communities to strengthen existing relationships and to build new ones (i.e. Righting Relations).
- Explore the concept and process of decolonizing CDF's work. (I.e. assess our application process to ensure that it is accessible to Indigenous-led initiatives. Consider a combination of written, oral, video applications.)
- Increase the presence of Indigenous people on our board, committees and funding partnerships.
- Develop a public acknowledgement and/or statement regarding our focus on integrating indigenous-led initiatives and perspectives in our work.

<sup>2</sup> Second-generation refers to the decision by the board to renew our commitment to youth homelessness and to the right to a healthy environment programs for another 5-year term.

<sup>3</sup> We look to Righting Relations and to Eastern Hub participant Sherry Mitchell's description of an indigenous perspective encompassing a deep understanding that we must live in harmony with one another and the rest of creation recognizing that we cannot live separately from each other and the planet and survive. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chHb2oyxouc>



“The Catherine Donnelly Foundation is the legacy of a progressive community of Catholic women religious. We acknowledge the histories between the Christian churches and Indigenous peoples in Canada, and the impacts of colonialism that continue to this day. The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have created an historic opportunity for a growing movement of people of faith and civil society to work toward reconciliation.

As a signatory to the Philanthropic Declaration of Action, and in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Recommendations, the Foundation acknowledges the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation in Canada.

The Foundation is committed to right relations by actively seeking to build mutually respectful relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples through proactively supporting creative initiatives in the area of Adult Education, Housing, the Environment and Impact Investing.”

- 1.1.2 Facilitate further development of CDF’s program strategy for a second generation of the adult education program (2020) and the future of the environment (2021) and housing (2022) programs as they come to the end of second-generation funding support.

## **Funding Areas of Focus:**

### **1.1.3 Adult Education**

The Adult Education Committee’s work and priorities reflect a number of years of developmental effort with key stakeholders. In the fall of 2015, the Committee launched the Righting Relations program that has a foundational vision of critical adult education and empowering grassroots, bottom-up social change. Righting Relations focuses on serving Indigenous peoples, women, newcomers and those at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid. This work is deeply connected to CDF’s vision, mission and values. It is a journey that CDF is a part of, though not really leading. The long-term sustainability and leadership of this network will be a focus of discussion over the next couple of years. Righting Relations is considered a learning lab<sup>4</sup> that could be a rich resource to the other granting committees.

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<sup>4</sup> A learning lab is an opportunity for diverse groups of people who are searching for breakthrough solutions to serious societal challenges to meet and collaborate. <http://www.sigeneration.ca/home/labs/>



**Objectives:**

- Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Righting Relations program in order to consider longer term funding (second generation) of the Righting Relations program and inform our project granting cycle.
- Support Righting Relations to become self-sustaining by convening a “Funders Table” to broaden financial support beyond the CDF.
- Integrate a learning & reflection process into Adult Education proposal/application questions.
- Encourage board members to attend Righting Relations gatherings to further increase board member learning.
- Review our project granting process in light of decolonization, Righting Relations program and our constituencies (low-income, women, newcomers, migrants, refugees & indigenous).

**1.1.4 Environment**

The Environment Committee launched a new funding strategy in the spring of 2016 (Appendix A). The Committee reaffirms the principle of gradually moving from a responsive to a more proactive funding strategy. They recognize the current need to prioritize and support integrated strategies, which will result in climate change solutions.

The Committee is actively looking for ways to insert themselves meaningfully into environmental advocacy, by learning who the players are and where the CDF can be most useful in supporting them to change the way Canadians think about the environment.

However, the Committee also understands that it will take time and resources to build relationships. As a result, it expects to engage in responsive grant making during the first two years of the new program. At the same time, the Committee will develop new strategic alliances by convening various actors at round tables, direct consultations, “test” projects, gradually shaping the environment program to situate it in the wider climate change field of action. The Committee is making strategic choices about where to focus, including an intentional focus on Indigenous issues.

**Objectives:**

- The Environment Committee will proactively work across committees to respond to Indigenous groups’ issues in creative ways.
- Act on TRC commitments: the Environment Committee is seeking to explore and understand the best role that it can play in addressing holistic capacity needs faced by Indigenous communities that fit within the climate change/climate

justice framework. The Committee recognizes that this approach should include integrative and transformative processes, which may involve addressing land-based initiatives, culture, language, housing and decolonization. Specific initiatives that fall within this framework may also include clean energy projects as a climate justice and economic/social development solution.

- Seek out partnerships with actors/allies/funders currently engaged with/within Indigenous communities in order to encourage a collaborative funding approach to maximize impact.
- Convene partners and grantees and listen to what they think needs to be done.
- Develop more specific granting criteria in the next five years that reflects the CDF's learning from its responsive grant making process.
- Recruit an Indigenous resource person(s) and other advisors as needed with a view to also recruit an Indigenous person to the board to support the environment committee.
- Review and adjust our granting process and procedures to make them more open and responsive to land-based initiatives.

### 1.1.5 Housing

The Housing Committee has been proactive in selecting streams that will make a real difference in informing policy, advocating for safe & affordable housing, mentoring the next generation of sector champions and integrating Indigenous issues that could influence how other committees work (Appendix B). Projects (both current & past) have informed the federal government's emerging housing strategy. The Housing Committee is currently focused on youth homelessness through A Way Home Canada. It will be important to be flexible and responsive to other issues/populations that emerge, such as women, immigrants, refugees and elders/seniors.

#### **Objectives:**

- Learn from, build relationships with and provide support to Indigenous and non-Indigenous housing organizations and/or initiatives.
- Consider whether there will be a continued focus on youth homelessness as the second generation of support to A Way Home concludes.
- Continue to develop standing partnerships between the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, other foundations and Canadian civil society organizations committed to ending homelessness (i.e. Funders Table).
- Facilitate networking and support capacity building within civil society organizations concerned about housing in order to increase their effectiveness and to enhance their leadership capacity to take advantage of emerging opportunities and contribute to the development of housing policy.
- Respond to emerging issues in the Housing sector as per the Housing Project Funding Strategy, November 2016.

## 2) Broaden Our Impact:

The CDF is committed to working with others to bring about the social changes it desires and as a result maintains membership or formal affiliations with a number of networks (i.e. Philanthropic Foundations Canada, Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network, The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginals in Canada, Responsible Investment Association). On the principle that one can do more together than alone, the CDF is open to building relationships with allies and collaborators within the social and philanthropic sectors. A recent, tangible example of how this can enhance and build support for our program partners is the A Way Home Funders Table.

### **Objectives:**

- Increase the profile of the CDF in the public arena so we can further our mission by amplifying grantee voices, and share our progressive practices to influence the public and philanthropic space.

## 3) Advance Impact Investment:

In recent years, CDF has come to identify the investment of its capital resources as the fourth pillar in its strategy for promoting positive social change in its specific mandate areas, and with society more broadly. Present policy calls for CDF to invest up to 10% (approximately \$4M) of its capital in impact investments. CDF made its first official impact investment in 2014. Since then, CDF has made six additional impact investments bringing us to roughly 1/3 of our impact investment target.

### **Objectives:**

- To develop a comprehensive action plan to achieve the CDF's commitment of deploying 10% of its Capital in Impact Investments.
- To integrate impact investments more closely with granting.

## 4) Strengthen Our Organization:

### **4.1.1 Finance and Investment**

The CDF adopted a policy in 2014 to ensure the capacity of the Foundation to function at current funding levels through to 2044 through prudent management and targeted investment of its capital. The CDF grants at the required disbursement level of 3.5% of investment assets or \$1,350,000, whichever is the greater.

**Objectives:**

- Policy to be revisited within the next three to five years.

**4.1.2 Governance**

The board has a fiscal stewardship role and a responsibility to protect the current and future fiscal health of the Foundation. The board must also ensure the accountability of funding recipients (as outlined in Guiding Principles- Board Manual). Prior strategic sessions have affirmed that:

- Board members commit to 10 days per year and sit on two committees.
- The focus is on governance (policy development and oversight) but members are implicated and engaged in the work of the Foundation via the committees on which they serve.
- Board members also serve as a resource to staff as needed.
- Board members are not required to sit on grant review committees.

The board is committed to engaging in a board recruitment process that would see, over the next five years, a greater representation of the constituencies that the CDF supports recruited on the board.

**Objectives:**

- Affirm the principle of an engaged, diverse and committed board, of teamwork between staff and board members and the need to recruit additional voluntary expertise (resource persons) to assist the Board and Foundation in implementing its various mandates.
- Embark upon a board recruitment process that will lead to more diversity (i.e. ethnicity, youth, Indigenous).

**4.1.2.1 Further Our Cross-Committee Alignment & Board Learning**

Currently, in an effort to break down silos between the various committees, the CDF incorporates a “cross-committee learning session” on a rotational basis as part of its spring Board meeting. Sessions to date have included an overview presentation on issues and challenges in one of the CDF’s mandate areas, a discussion of our own work in a mandate area with the participation of our program partners(s) and addressing a formal evaluation of our work in the given area.

**Objectives:**

Affirm the value of engaging in cross-committee learning and deepen this learning:

- Explore more crosscutting work between housing, environment and adult education including investment opportunities in housing, Indigenous-led initiatives and green / sustainable energy.
- Identify, at committee meetings, what needs to be shared with and/or requested from other committees to deepen learning.
- Use cross-committee learning days for strategic inquiry<sup>5</sup> and to share insights.
- Incorporate an adult education process for cross-committee learning days.
- Consider testing adult education meeting & decision-making models (i.e. use adult education practices at board meetings - pilot a portion of meetings using these approaches).

**4.1.3 Staffing**

Since the last Strategic Planning session, we have moved from contract employees to permanent employees with a fixed set of working conditions, salaries and benefits. At present, the CDF employs a full-time General Director and Program Officer, a part-time Administrative Assistant and a part-time (seconded) Chief Financial Officer. The board heard the need for increased staff capacity in order to meet the strategic objectives of the Foundation, such as impact investment, program development, networking and public relations and referred it to the Human Resources Committee.

**Objective:**

- Build and support a staff structure capable of efficiently administering the Foundation's operations, and of monitoring and implementing program and project work.

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<sup>5</sup> Strategic Inquiry (or SI) is a process to gauge and assess as quickly and efficiently as possible the essentials of the political and public policy environment surrounding an issue of concern. However, more importantly, it is to gain an understanding of where others are coming from; what their goals or aspirations are; what relevant challenges and opportunities they see; what language and constructs they use. <http://plan.ca/2016/03/24/strategic-inquiry-a-wise-starting-point-starts-with-listening/>