SI

SOCIAL
INNOVATION
CANADA

Findings from the Field
September 2017 – June 2018

# Engaging the Social Innovation Ecosystem

**"It is time to build a more connected network of people, knowledge, and infrastructure to support the breadth of change we all seek. It is time for Canada's social innovation ecosystem to work together so we can get to impact sooner."**

— Feasibility Study Participant

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# Acknowledgements

The document you are reading reflects the insights, time, and energy of well over 750 people from across Canada. Participants came via regional and communities of practice workshops, the Spark conference, reflection/strategy development retreats, and surveys and interviews. We are so thankful they all took the time to talk to us.

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The Feasibility Study Team included: Tonya Surman and Saralyn Hodgkin (Centre for Social Innovation), Geraldine Cahill and Kelsey Spitz (formerly Social Innovation Generation), Darcy Riddell (McConnell Foundation) and Allyson Hewitt (Social Innovation @MaRS).

**Publishing Note**

*This document shares the findings and insights gained through the engagement process. The voices heard throughout the process were many and varied. We hope their representation in this report has done them justice.*

*The engagement process culminated in a six day retreat in September 2018, attended by a pan-Canadian circle of practitioners who committed to collaborate on the future development of Social Innovation Canada together.*

*It is important to note that this document is a snapshot in time. Many things here are subjects of ongoing discussion, and as such, words, descriptions, and strategies may change over time.*

# Executive Summary

Social innovation is needed to tackle the complex social and environmental challenges of our time. Luckily, the field of social innovation is growing rapidly across Canada bringing new energy, ideas and solutions.

In September 2017, a group of practitioners came together to determine how social innovators across the country can better harness that momentum.

The “Feasibility Study Team” asked if a network could strengthen the social innovation ecosystem, and brought this question to over 750 practitioners across Canada. We asked them if a national network is feasible. And, if so, what should be its vision, values, design principles, key functions, governance and business model?

We heard that the social innovation ecosystem is growing across the country, but that it’s struggling to realize its full potential. The community does not see itself as having a shared vision or purpose. We heard that there is a desire for social innovators to better connect, to learn from each other, and to align data and stories that can get us to impact, sooner. Yet, we also heard that the collaborative infrastructure necessary for sustaining and strengthening this ecosystem is weak and fragmented.

This feedback helped the study team develop this findings report and recommendations for a new national initiative, Social Innovation Canada (SI Canada). SI Canada will build a unique, inclusive and open movement for people and planet first by empowering people, organizations and systems with the tools, knowledge, skills and connections they need to solve real and complex problems.

To create the collaborative infrastructure to unlock the potential for social innovation through SI Canada, the Study Team is proposing a constellation governance model, grounded in regional priorities and action. The collaborative infrastructure also includes a digital shared or “common” platform, designed to build community, capacity and support collaboration. By aggregating our collective data and stories of impact, ultimately aligning them around the Sustainable Development Goals, SI Canada will leverage assets that allow social innovators to get to impact sooner.

Four key pillars are recommended to underlie the SI Canada strategy, that when combined, will bring together the fractured ecosystem, help social innovators to transcend barriers and let them focus on the task of changing the world. These four key pillars and their planned actions are:

### Navigation, Wayfinding & Connection

- Public Website
- Online Community
- Matchmaking Platform
- Searchable Profiles

### Capacity Building

- Regional Hubs
- Events, Training, Conferences
- Communities of Practice

### Knowledge Sharing

- Publishing Tools
- Data & Impact Tracking
- Aggregated Story-telling
- Public Awareness
- Use SDGs to Organize

### Aligning for Action

- Regional Action & Collaboration
- Intentional Economies
- Acceleration, Labs and Social R&D

As we work together we will learn by doing. This document identifies the first steps to get started, with a call to action for others to join. There is much more to be done to connect with those doing social and environmental work but not necessarily self-identifying as social innovators, to listen and engage with regional and BIPOC perspectives, and to those of different communities of interest such as government and corporate social innovation. This is the work ahead for SI Canada.

Over the next year, we will focus on creating the collaborative infrastructure and support experiments, prototypes and learning. As we support the actions of social innovators across the country, we'll keep adapting to create an innovation ecosystem with local legitimacy, thriving connections, and real impacts across Canada.

Section 1

# Where are we now?

## Canada is regarded as a leader in social innovation globally. We are seen as being a country that cares.

And over the last 10+ years, a sub-sector of social innovation practitioners has emerged to respond to the pressing needs in our communities, in government, and in the corporate sector. We have a history of being social innovators (even if many of us do not use that term). We are proud of our ability to integrate diverse communities, of our healthcare system and our reputation as a peace builder internationally. But we also know that there is much work to do to address increasingly complex issues. We need to make changes that go beyond traditional approaches to solving problems.

There are presently three significant shifts affecting the social innovation field happening in this country:

## Shift One – Government Alignment

**What is happening:** A growing number of local and provincial governments are working on social innovation and enterprise.
**What it means:** Federal Ministries collaborated on a Social Innovation/Social Finance Strategy for Canada (**sisfs.ca**). SISF recommendations were released in September 2018 and include, among other recommendations, that government needs to invest in social innovation the same way it does in business, technology, and science.

## Shift Two – The Sunset of SiG

**What is happening:** As planned, Social Innovation Generation (SiG) recently wrapped up after completing its decade-long mandate.
**What it means:** SiG was a consortium comprised of the McConnell Foundation, the University of Waterloo, PLAN Institute, and MaRS Discovery District. It did a lot to foster the social innovation ecosystem and catalyze a culture of social innovation in Canada. For Canada to continue to boast a dynamic and high impact social innovation ecosystem, we need to continue to build the momentum SiG helped to build. Fortunately, SiG left a wealth of content and relationships to empower more social innovation torch bearers.

## Shift Three – Breadth and Scope

**What is happening:** Cross-sectoral conversations merging profit and social purpose are opening up, as are the tools and practices to make them better.
**What it means:** There are new communities of practice and collective impact strategies offering unique approaches to problem-solving. Labs, accelerators, and participatory design are developing and have much to offer. Technology has provided countless opportunities for us to communicate and connect. Intermediaries and capacity-builders are emerging to play necessary new roles in supporting social change. Each of these have needs for infrastructure, knowledge development, and funding support.

Section 2

# Where are we going?

## Social innovation makes a big promise: if we are willing to do things differently, then we can solve complex and deeply rooted problems facing society.

The shifts outlined above put us in a great position to keep this promise, if we work together. We can create a world that addresses climate change. A world that adheres to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A world without poverty and inequality. A world that puts people and planet first.

To make these big changes, we need collaboration between people and organizations, across sectors and systems. Collectively, we have the opportunity to facilitate transformational impact in our communities. But how to do this?

On the heels of SiG sunsetting, a group of leaders in the social innovation space gathered in early fall 2017 to determine how to continue to support social innovators across the country. Out of this retreat came a “Guardians Group” who would support the feasibility team as well as some funding to begin the engagement process. To help map next steps that would guide the engagement process, the group needed three key pieces of information.

1. How do we navigate the sunsetting of Social Innovation Generation (SiG) while the field of social innovation gains traction?

2. How do we support and scale the impact of social innovators across the country?

3. Is there a need and strong desire for a national social innovation network?

# Assembling an Advance Party

Enter the Centre for Social Innovation, in affiliation with the Social Innovation Charitable Foundation (SICF). With a proven track record of convening and a membership of over 3000 social innovators spanning for-profits, nonprofits, artists and activists, CSI led the formation of a feasibility team that would undertake a national research and engagement process involving Canada's existing social innovation community.

This document details our journey from reflection on the state of social innovation in Canada, through engagement with stakeholders across the country. It documents the process, what we heard, how that challenged our assumptions and fundamentally changed the question we began with. This report reflects the proposed vision, values, design principles, key functions and governance model to enable this collaboration. Foremost, it builds on the input and guidance the team received throughout the engagement process.

Between September 2017 and June 2018, our process engaged over 750 social innovators across Canada through:

- **One national conference** – Spark! A Canadian Social Innovation Exchange
- **Six regional community consultations** engaged over 250 participants: Vancouver, Toronto, Hamilton, London, Calgary, Winnipeg and Edmonton
- **Six community of practice consultations** engaged over 160 participants, focusing on Social R&D, Community Labs, Social Innovation, and involved LabWise, Ashoka, Innoweave
- **One research study** on corporate social innovation
- **Three reflection/strategy development retreats** hosted in Ontario, Quebec and Alberta
- **60 one-on-one interviews**
- **64 survey respondents**
- **45 strategic conversations** with subject and network thought leaders

The engagement process was based on social innovation principles. We aimed to be transparent and inclusive, to draw on talent and resources across Canada, and to build on existing relationships and networks. Our process was responsive; we experimented and adapted to feedback. At the same time, we did our best to balance the practical constraints of limited resources, a tight timeline and Canada's vast geography.

# Refining our Focus

Early into the engagement process, the need and strong desire for an inclusive, diverse national network for social innovation became clear, and an evolution of that question emerged which was much more interesting:

## "How might a national network foster transparency, connections, and collaborations to help people, organizations and systems problem-solve better?"

The conversations we had across the country surfaced key challenges the social innovation ecosystem is facing. We share these issues below, and outline how Social Innovation Canada is being developed to address them.

# What we Heard: Revealing the Tensions, Identifying the Assets

There is considerable social innovation-related work already happening across Canada. This work is regionally distinct in its approaches and diverse in its sectoral and issue-areas of focus. There is growing energy for better and more diverse collaborations, for shared learning, and for more effective ways of aligning and leveraging efforts, at the individual, organizational and systems level. According to one participant, *"I wish there was something that could bring all the emerging conversations and communities together. There's lots of stars around, but no way to connect them into a constellation."*

What emerged through our conversations is the core insight that the Canadian social innovation ecosystem is fragmented, marked by regional isolation and weak connections nationally and internationally. Social innovators have difficulty finding each other, and there is no readily accessible way into the field. Participants rely on supports and working relationships constrained by location, language, sector or issue domain. A sense that networks are too narrow and resources are inaccessible emerged as a powerful pattern. Silos have become more visible over the last decade, as more organizations and people take up the practices of social innovation, yet the supports for sharing knowledge, insights, strategies and resources across various practitioner communities has not kept pace.

Compounding these challenges is a lack of common focus and unity of purpose. This diversity can be a strength, yet it makes it difficult for the social innovation field to have the legitimacy and authority to act.

The following summarizes key opportunities and barriers facing social innovators. In the next section, we identify how SI Canada is being developed to address these barriers and unlock the power of social innovation in Canada.

1. **Collaboration is the essence of social innovation, but there is lack of coherence in the field:** Awareness about and access to potential collaborators was deemed essential for social innovation to occur – for individuals and organizations. According to one interviewee, *"It is the only way to make the impact we want. [Change] has to be done with everyone."* Collaboration facilitates getting at the causes of complex issues by identifying key leverage points for the system as a whole, aligning efforts that reduce duplication, and creating synergies. Collaboration builds the knowledge vital to finding solutions that organizations or sectors acting alone cannot. *"We need opportunities to collaborate on things we can't do alone (e.g. province-wide things),"* one participant said, *"not reinventing experiences, to establishing joint credibility and setting standards among ourselves."* Participants agreed that focusing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals could provide a unified way to align strategies in common purpose.

2. **Clear purpose and investment fuel the work, but people feel isolated and inefficient:** Social innovators are often isolated in their work and/or may not feel a sense of belonging to a social innovation community. The social innovation ecosystem lacks an understanding that we are *"all on the same team"*. Networks enable access to capital and capacity-building and they build deeper alignment that helps *"pool and allocate proper resources and deliver more impactful (effective/efficient) services"*. The desire to *"coordinate efforts rather than have our field chipping away all over the place,"* contributes to a sense of fragmentation. Further, participants want to know how to connect their individual actions into wider strategies in the social innovation ecosystem, to understand better how their initiatives can make the most effective contribution at a systems level. There is frustration at the challenge of getting to impact.

3. **Peer connections are critical, but people hunger for greater mentorship and visible networks to connect to:** The desire for stronger connections extends to peer-to-peer engagement. Peers create opportunities for coaching and mentorship, for learning from each other's successes and failures about new methods or approaches to the work. Peer-to-peer connections are largely happening informally. The network offers the opportunity to grow and expand peer connections across geographies and sectors.

4. **Relationships generate power and impact, but people feel their access to influencers and new relationships is weak:** There is strong interest in creating greater inclusion through more entry points into the field and practices of social innovation. Additionally, there is real or perceived difficulty regarding access to funders and decision makers in government. Many effective social innovations at both the community and national levels struggle to attract funding or other support needed to scale or even simply sustain the

work because of prevailing social service delivery models and lack of access to different forms of funding and support. Practitioners across the country named the importance of building recognition of the field and having champions across sectors to advance the work. To expand recognition and credibility of social innovation approaches, new and broader relationships are needed, as is greater access to resources and influential communications platforms. Effective storytelling and greater visibility of the cases of social innovation can help make the impacts more tangible. A step to addressing this gulf is to build relationships with broader constituencies and provide more ways people can learn about and implement social innovation.

5. **Social innovation can bridge grassroots and institutional power, but significant issues of inclusion and privilege remain unresolved:** Concerns about inclusion and values alignment, especially with regard to social justice movements, came through every engagement channel. Working across sectors and communities with common purpose is challenging when people bring vastly diverse lived experience, analysis and perspectives of the solution. One participant said they were *"worried that the network will be occupied with big picture, macro concepts and ignore the on-the-ground supports needed... Diversity and inclusivity for vulnerable people should be top priorities."* The study team was reminded to pay attention to our own power, and to ensure that privilege is considered before any action is taken. Make the "tent bigger," said one participant, avoid engaging only the "usual suspects", and ensure the network is not animated from the "top-down." One community envisioned the network *"bridging relationships between those with system influence and those most impacted by systems."*

6. **Adaptation and learning is essential for social innovation, but practitioner-focused and academic knowledge is lacking:** Thousands of social innovation experiments are underway in Canada, and the field has the potential to redefine what 21st century purpose-driven leadership looks like. However, to do this, comprehensive knowledge development, capacity-building, and learning activities need to be supported inside institutions and across sectors. New talent needs to be effectively trained and integrated into multiple sectors. People asked for roadmaps of capacity-building and learning opportunities, and greater access to basic "101" social innovation training. We also heard strongly that capacity-building must be practical and serve social innovators at different points of their journey, from curiosity through to successful innovation at scale, with clear 'on-ramps' and 'entry-points' as well as spaces for ongoing professional development, reflection, and higher level strategic conversations. Offerings need to be informed by best practices in adult learning – serving people 'just in time' and available both in-person and virtually in a variety of forms. The alumni of capacity-building programs such as the Graduate Diploma in Social Innovation at the University of Waterloo, Studio Y at MaRS, and various social innovation certificates are a demographic cited as under-utilized in knowledge development and mobilization strategies. These cohorts could contribute meaningfully to a national conversation of social innovation, and serve

as conduits to employers and partners. Some participants also felt that there is a need for more practical and applied research on emerging social innovation practices by Canadian academic institutions to help grow the knowledge base.

7. **New capacities and networking are needed, but a network must ultimately emphasize and enable shared action:** The network must help social innovators take action and have a tangible impact. This is vital to SI Canada realizing its potential. *"The network needs to do something. It has to show that it's making a difference, a standard accomplishment."* We heard strongly that practitioners are focused on results, and a network needs to help them do that work better. Innovators want to be better connected to people working on similar issues in different regions and sectors to advance and scale the impact of their work. This point was also connected to better tracking and communication of results, and the need to scale and implement proven social innovations through improved access to government, funders and influencers.

8. **Inspiring and important impacts are happening, but the stories need to be told:** Amplifying and making diverse stories of impact visible that *"build confidence in our individual and collective work"* was repeatedly identified as a core network function. Accessible stories of social innovation projects and their innovators help legitimize the field. Definitional issues continue to plague access and comprehension in the social innovation community, although this appears to be less of a barrier as the field grows. We need to find ways to build a movement of 'social solutions creators' and make social innovation visible in Canada. Shared messaging makes the growing ecosystem visible, motivating investment and generating momentum for collaborative action. Recognized metrics and shared frameworks for measuring impact were also viewed as a network function, although participants cautioned against shared metrics leading to standardizations or expectations of scalability without considering context or adaptability.

# Here are ten things we learned

1. The field of social innovation in Canada is evolving and maturing.

2. Social innovation is finding its path to creating greater value for our communities.

3. Social innovators know that existing approaches aren't creating the world we want.

4. Social innovators are motivated by deep passion and commitment to implementing their own solutions, but they are working in silos. This prevents them from amplifying their own, and each other's efforts.

5. The social innovation ecosystem is struggling to realize its full potential as a field working together with a shared vision. The existing infrastructure is weak and fragmented. This burns through energy that could otherwise create fresh, novel and much-needed solutions.

6. The ecosystem requires stronger connections and greater collaboration. Its members are eager to access training, peer groups, and other forms of professional development. There is also interest in efficient, technology-enabled ways to pool and share data and stories that provide clear evidence of impact.

7. Aligning data and stories around the UN Global Goals (also known as Sustainable Development Goals), has the potential to demonstrate our collective impact and help drive more energy and resources for the work.

8. A stronger foundation of connections between members of the ecosystem would create opportunities for both collaboration and sharing of resources.

9. There was some resistance to the term "network" but there was broad enthusiasm for connecting the social innovation ecosystem with collaborative infrastructure and shared platforms for knowledge exchange and learning.

10. A common thread was the message that inclusion and access are key to creating this network and platform. Marginalized communities, people of colour and indigenous leadership and many others told us that they tend to be left out of these conversations. The voices and perspectives from this diverse ecosystem must be embedded in the very DNA of this platform.

## Voices from Across the Country

### "I wish there was something that could bring all the emerging conversations and communities together. There's lots of stars around, but no way to connect them into a constellation."

"[Collaboration] is the only way to make the impact we want. [Change] has to be done with everyone."

"We need opportunities to collaborate on things we can't do alone (e.g.province-wide things)."

"We are all on the same team."

"[We need to] coordinate efforts rather than have our field chipping away all over the place."

"[I am] worried that the network will be occupied with big picture, macro concepts and ignore the on-the-ground supports needed. Diversity and inclusivity for vulnerable people should be top priorities."

"[We need to] build confidence in our individual and collective work."

"[This network could be] bridging relationships between those with system influence and those most impacted by systems."

"The network needs to do something. It has to show that it's making a difference, a standard accomplishment."

Section 3

# How do we get there?

## Introducing Social Innovation Canada

A robust, connected, social innovation ecosystem will inspire new efforts to illuminate relationships between social innovators, bringing together key parts so they can combine to create a much greater whole.

This could be powerful tipping point for the social innovation ecosystem that can lead to widespread social and environmental change. To make this possible, we need to pay greater attention to both the whole and to the parts. We need to create the collaborative infrastructure to connect, support and enable social innovators to maximize the potential for change.

Social Innovation Canada will create a unique, inclusive and open movement to put people and planet first. It will provide the collaborative infrastructure to strengthen Canada's social innovation ecosystem, empowering people, organizations and systems with the tools, knowledge, skills and connections that they need to solve real and complex problems.

To address the current state of the fragmented ecosystem and build the collaborative infrastructure, Social Innovation Canada is built on four key pillars:

1. **Navigation, wayfinding, connections and community.** Create pathways into the social innovation field that make it easier for social innovators to find each other and build connections.

2. **Capacity-building and convening.** Strengthen capacity by facilitating access to training, peer groups, learning and professional development.

3. **Knowledge sharing, stories and data.** Build a platform to aggregate data and stories that help social innovators demonstrate evidence of their impact. Once a solid collaborative infrastructure is in place, SI Canada will experiment with the UN Global Goals as an organizing framework to help align these stories.
4. **Aligning for action, experiments and acceleration.** Create the conditions for social innovators to: build multi-sectoral collaborations, test and experiment with new ideas, pool resources, and attract new donors and investors.

Each one of these pillars responds to key issues that emerged through the feasibility study, and we've identified specific actions to develop each pillar.

**Issue 1: Communication**

People feel a strong purpose and investment in their work, but feel isolated and inefficient. Peer connections are critical, but people hunger for greater mentorship and visible networks to connect to. There is a desire for collaboration, but no obvious platform to make that happen.

## Pillar #1: Navigation, Wayfinding, Connections and Community

With strong curation, SI Canada will help people find pathways into the field. The Social Innovation Canada website will clearly outline the role and purpose of SI Canada, while driving attention to activities across the country. The common platform will function as a web-based, digital knowledge-sharing platform for building community connections across regions, sectors and systems. Most importantly, this platform will let SI Canada members connect with each other and collaborate. To get started, a combination of CSI's existing online tools and complementary third party integrations will meet these identified needs. At the same time, we will work with partners within SI Canada to surface requirements to develop a common platform that will promote and connect all of our work.

**Issue 2: Knowledge**

Adaptation and learning is essential for social innovation, but practitioner-focused and academic knowledge is lacking. Comprehensive knowledge development, capacity-building, and learning activities need to be supported inside institutions and across sectors.

## Pillar #2: Capacity-Building and Convening

Incredible resources already exist and Social Innovation Canada will curate and grow this knowledge base. To start, SI Canada will develop and deliver "Social Innovation 101 and 201" training and train-the-trainer programs. This will help grow the capacity of trainers across Canada to build long-term capacity. We also have strong communities of practice (CoPs). SI Canada will partner and invest in animating several CoPs that are applying innovation methods in key impact areas. This will support practitioners and mobilize new knowledge back to the field.

### Issue 3: Narrative

Inspiring and important impacts are happening, but the stories need to be told. We need to find ways to build a movement of 'social solutions creators' and make social innovation visible in Canada.

## Pillar #3: Knowledge Sharing, Stories and Data

Social innovators can use data and stories to demonstrate evidence of their impact for themselves and the world. Shared messaging makes the growing ecosystem visible, motivating investment and generating momentum for collaborative action. Aggregating data, evidence and stories will be key to tracking the impact of the sector. Working with others, we will evolve existing tools and build an interoperable data standard. Aligning around the UN Global Goals offers a framework for mobilizing action and sharing powerful stories of change.

### Issue 4: Impact

Social innovation can bridge grassroots and institutional power, but significant issues of inclusion and privilege remain unresolved. Relationships generate power and impact, but people feel their access to influencers and new relationships is weak. New capacities and networking are needed, but a network must ultimately emphasize and enable shared action.

## Pillar #4: Aligning for Action, Experiments and Acceleration

Aligning for Action will be the most experiential learning area of Social Innovation Canada's work, providing the prototypes grounded in practice that better inform the field about the most effective ways to scale the impact of social innovation. We need to build recognition of the field, and identify champions across sectors to advance the work. Social innovators across Canada will lead their projects, with SI Canada in a support role to help create conditions for their success. SI Canada will create opportunities for social innovators to collaborate, test new ideas, and pool their resources. This will help them drive towards achieving greater social, economic and environmental impact. We know we need more entry points into the field and practices of social innovation; this is crucial to creating greater inclusion.

By building the collaborative infrastructure that fosters capacity and connections across sectors, Social Innovation Canada will weave together existing assets to unlock and enable people, organizations, and systems to work together to put people and planet first.

# Values and Design Principles

Values emerged through the engagement process that inform the SI Canada design principles. Both are vital to how the network will structure itself, establish its governance model and prioritize its first steps.

| Values Into | Design Principles |
|---|---|
| Open and transparent | Enabling and unlocking |
| Weave together existing assets | Align self-interest for collective impact |
| Lightweight governance | Bias for action & energy |
| Power to the periphery | Hold the tensions |
| Financially resilient | Practitioners at the centre |
| Inclusion at the core | Accessible |

# Governance

Governance is essentially about how we make decisions together.

During the engagement process we explored: How do we make the fewest number of decisions together while still building the collaborative infrastructure that enables us to achieve the scale we need to succeed? Where do decisions need to be made and who needs to make them? How might we use the power of the periphery to unlock and enable everyone in the ecosystem to be able to do and bring their best? How do we govern an ecosystem?

We agreed that:

1. Knowledge flows globally and knows no boundaries.
2. Learning happens everywhere but is intensified locally.
3. Social capital is built and change happens in place (locally, on the ground).
4. To mature as a field, we need national and even international scale and recognition.
5. We need decision making that moves to action quickly.

Building from our values and design principles, the governance model for SI Canada must function more like an ecosystem with less control and more decentralized leadership. At the

same time, we are seeking a model that is financially resilient, meaning that we must leverage economies of scale and weave existing assets into a coherent system.

We have landed on a pan-Canadian constellation governance model, one that allows for light touch governance with as few decisions as possible being made nationally, while still ensuring clear navigation with shared knowledge, data, community and recognition. The following describes the 'collaborative infrastructure' that will be put into place to bring this social innovation ecosystem to life, recognizing that this thinking continues to evolve and awaits more refinement over the coming months.

1. **Constellation Governance:** The Constellation Governance Model biases for action, leverages self-interest, moves power to the periphery, addresses power differentials, responds to emergence and still moves collective strategies forward. Constellations are action teams of partners coming together to align their interests for collective impact. The Constellations are all responding to a 'magnetic attractor' – a threat or opportunity – in an ecosystem. A Stewardship Group is formed to provide ecosystem oversight and strategic clarity in the field.

2. **Regional Hubs:** Local organizations are best positioned to make pathways to the social innovation community more approachable and accessible for local practitioners and new learners. Regional hubs are the front line, providing entry points into the field. They are essential to ensuring a locally legitimate and inclusive network that is responsive to distinct regional assets, barriers, needs, and energy. Regional leadership will serve as the primary governance mechanism for the network, contributing wisdom, stories and expertise, and catalyzing new relationships and action that advance regional partnerships and national priorities. Importantly, several regions have existing formal and informal regional networks that can be woven together and reinforced.

3. **Stewardship Group:** A Stewardship Group is composed of the interested parties and thought leaders in a field with the purpose of serving the group's broader vision for collective impact. Whereas constellations leverage self-interest, the Stewardship Group focuses on aligning those self-interests for collective impact. In this case, the Stewardship Group would be composed of 1 participant from each region and 5–7 sense-makers and thought leaders in the field. The group of 12–15 people would oversee the goals and objectives of the ecosystem. They ensure that work is coordinated, efficient and responding to threats and opportunities in the ecosystem.

4. **Secretariat:** A Secretariat will support the constellation governance model and ensure that the collaborative infrastructure operates smoothly. The Secretariat is responsible for supporting the constellation strategic collaborations. A small staff will provide administrative functions that help support project planning, budgeting, convening and act as an intermediary. The Secretariat will connect players at key moments, work with

partners to move power to the periphery and build international connections. It will also play a role coordinating national fundraising and communication efforts and aim for the most efficient approach to resource development.

5. **Advisory Council:** In order to ensure legitimacy across sectors, an Advisory Council of Leaders will also be formed to advise, support and act as ambassadors for the work of the ecosystem. Vitally, we will be looking to balance the Council with elders, emerging leaders and BIPOC participation.

Together, this constellation governance model, whereby decisions are driven by regional needs and priorities, combined with the national platform for knowledge exchange, will ensure that the supports are in place that allow for a flourishing and inclusive social innovation ecosystem.

Bringing together all the pieces, this diagram overviews SI Canada's proposed structure and function:

# First Steps to Realizing Social Innovation Canada

Our approach to building the foundation for SI Canada is shaped by the insights of those engaged through the feasibility study. Achieving the vision for SI Canada will require taking the long view. Launching SI Canada will require a balancing act:

**"Balancing acts require constant readjustment. The balance is almost never right, but it can be moving in the right direction. The network has to start somewhere. Think of this as a long game. Be frank about the challenges of striking these balances correctly. Convey an on-going work-in-progress rather than something that gets it right or gets it wrong."**

— Feasibility Study Participant

Starting in September 2018, SI Canada will be launched as a collaboration of regional, knowledge, and sectoral partners. The Centre for Social Innovation, in affiliation with the Social Innovation Charitable Foundation, will provide the backbone support. Our first steps include two key priorities:

1. **Build the Foundation for the Collaborative Infrastructure**
   We will build the constellation governance model and assess the needs and opportunities for the regional hubs to emerge. Significant progress on the common platform will be advanced. Together, these three areas of focus will help us to align for action, with the supports in place that allow for a flourishing and inclusive social innovation ecosystem driven by regional priorities and woven together into a national platform for exchange.

2. **Prototype Select Capacity-Building**
   This includes an initial focus on select community of practice areas including community labs, social R&D, and corporate social innovation, as well as launching social innovation 101 training and train-the-trainer programs, tailored to regional audiences.

Initial funds have been secured from The McConnell Foundation to support these efforts. Additional sources of financial support continue to be sought in order to enable a broad base of support. As we build the foundation for SI Canada, the team will identify sources of energy and momentum to make SI Canada most effective at enabling and strengthening the social innovation ecosystem.

## Stay Informed

This work is emergent. We encourage you to visit **sicanada.org** for updates, and to subscribe to our mailing list. We're also on Twitter as **@SICanadaTeam**