



MONTREAL RESEARCH LABORATORY ON CANADIAN PHILANTHROPY

May 2015

Case Study on the Collaborations between the Various Foundations of the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network

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The authors gratefully acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funding under the Partnership Development Grant "Philanthropic action of Canadian grantmaking foundations: Investigating their social innovation and catalytic role in social change".



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Methodology

We had to start by identifying the main actors to contact. To do this, an initial phone interview was held with Mrs. Pegi Dover, Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network. This helped to identify the four main intervention groups and their representatives. Various foundations belonging to these groups were contacted as well as other foundations that took time to complete the interview.

Sources and respondents

- 5 semi-structured phone interviews of approximately 30 minutes with the foundations;
- 1 semi-structured Skype interview with the Executive Director of the CEGN
- 1 semi-structured phone interview of approximately 60 minutes with the Executive Director of the CEGN and Professor Jean-Marc Fontan;
- Reports produced by the CEGN with the help of various collaborators (different foundations);
- Literature on philanthropy in general, new pathways used in the field, etc.

Analysis method

Analyses of the semi-structured interviews with the various respondents and production of a literature review.

Summary of the case study

Reading the various archives helps to better understand the grounds for creating the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network, a network that groups together different actors in Canadian philanthropy. The CEGN has been in operation for more than 10 years. Its mandate is to promote learning through the exchange of information among its various members. It also offers them networking opportunities and helps to implement best practices. A large conference and webinars are organized annually. The CEGN is composed of four large groups: Water Funders, Energy Funders, Sustainable Cities Funders, Kinds and Nature Funders. These groups are mandated to work on different environmental themes. They include different foundations with common interests. The semi-structured interviews conducted with them helped to shed light on the collaborations of the foundations through these foundation groups. It now has more than fifty members. Networking with the various foundations seemed inevitable to set up the group at first. Major issues were then identified. These issues seemed too great to be dealt with by a single foundation. This is why the foundations came together and formalized the CEGN's project. Over the last few years, the CEGN has been supporting the foundations as part of annual conferences and webinars, some of which are open to the public. The themes are varied and can deal with topics such as the collaboration between the foundations or touch on topics that are more oriented toward the environment. The CEGN has allowed for the creation of a foundation network. The foundations are becoming more and more affiliated with one another according to their common interests through four different themed intervention groups.

Research issues and difficulties encountered during the research

- Collaborations in environmental philanthropy always raise several research issues.
- According to the interviews we conducted, it is obvious to us that there is still a lack of structure in the collaborations. They are often informal;

- There is a shortfall in terms of the communication between the CEGN and the different groups of collaborators;
- There is a lack of accessible literature on the projects of the different groups of collaborators; The collaborations are still recent, and there is a lot of missing information and methods to re-examine among the foundations.
- A certain retention of information can help the researcher come to conclusions;

Future research

- What is the context of the collaborations, their nature and the reasons behind them?
- What is the catalytic role and influential measure of these collaborations?
- How do the collaborations impact the various government levels (provincial and federal)?
- How do the foundations decide to pool their money?
- How do the collaborations impact the local communities?

Practical issues and avenues

- There are communication gaps between the various organizations. It is important to identify a key person who will be able to communicate with the CEGN and represent the various projects.
- The collaborations are often informal. It would be interesting to develop more structured collaborations.
- The action of pooling money into one “pot” remains unclear. It seems wise to think of a way to propose a contribution that would suit all members;
- Foundation employees are motivated people, but sometimes they lack time to develop their strategies and follow up on projects;
- It is essential to interview the organizations targeted by financial assistance from philanthropy. This would help to see if one of the objectives of the CEGN is met, in other words, if the foundations that are collaborating succeed in making a real impact on the ground.

Diagram of Collaborations among CEGN Foundations

