



Research Portfolio

Montreal research laboratory on Canadian grantmaking philanthropy (PhiLab)

Montreal / October 2016

Project Summary

The research project “Social innovation, social change and Canadian foundations: A research, networking and knowledge mobilization program,” spanning from April, 2014 to April 2017, is the first partnership-based grantmaking foundation focused research program in Canada. Co-funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada together with organizations from the philanthropic community, and led by Jean-Marc Fontan (Université du Québec à Montréal) and Peter R. Elson (Mount Royal University), this project brought together a network of North American researchers, foundations and intermediary organizations (Philanthropic Foundations Canada, Community Foundations of Canada, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Institute for Community Prosperity) to examine core areas of Canada’s grantmaking field. The project is organized around four areas of research: 1. Portrait of and data on Canadian philanthropy; 2. Governance and philanthropy in Canada; 3. Case studies on collaborations taking place between Canadian granting foundations; and 4. International comparison. It includes researchers from sociology, economics, law, social work, political science as well as actors from the philanthropic community, who together defined the issues, lead inquiries and ensure the dissemination of results through conferences and webinars as well as the creation of the Montreal research laboratory on Canadian grantmaking philanthropy (PhiLab). PhiLab is currently engaged in three additional research partnerships with Quebec philanthropic actors (Collectif des fondations contre les inégalités, Projet Impact Collectif, Fondation Béati).

Given the success of this first project, we are now preparing to submit a funding request to the Partnership Development Grants division of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) to support a second phase of explorations. We proposed a six year (2018–2024) research endeavour entitled “Assessment of the individual, collective and territorial impacts of projects led by Canadian grantmaking foundations in response to current and future socio-economic issues and environmental challenges.” Our aim is to understand how foundations, and more generally speaking the philanthropic ecosystem in which they operate, are addressing the main challenges facing a society in transition. These challenges include poverty and inequality reduction, building relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit, sustainable cities, food security, and the reception of refugees. Our project seeks to strengthen and deepen the partnership approach that we initiated and that has been proven to enhance the network of researchers, foundations and organizations as well as the dynamics of knowledge sharing and the co-construction of knowledge between these actors. While considering and tending to regional specificities, the project will nevertheless maintain an overview of the broader pan-Canadian context.

We invite actors from the Canadian philanthropic sector to join our project in building a partnership-based research initiative. As “partners,” or collaborators, these actors can then participate in network exchanges, which take place through telephone conferences or roundtables, and in the elaboration of the research program. They will also contribute to the data analysis, surfacing of findings, including its dissemination with appropriate means (reports, roundtables, web video clips, webinars).

The status of partner also assumes a commitment on the part of participants to the development and implementation of the jointly developed research plan and asks for a minimum financial contribution.

**Social innovation, social change and Canadian foundations:
A research, networking and knowledge mobilization program**

A partnership-based research project funded by the
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Partnership Development Grant (April, 2014–April, 2017)

Current partnership-based research program (2014–2017)

“Social innovation, social change and Canadian foundations” is a partnership-based research program on enhancing the social impact of Canadian private, public and community foundations. The project, spreading over three years and under the joint supervision of Jean-Marc Fontan (Université du Québec à Montréal) and Peter R. Elson (Mount Royal University), is managed by a steering committee composed of the following partners:

- Philanthropic Foundations Canada (PFC): Hilary Pearson
- Community Foundations of Canada (CFC): Lee Rose
- Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF): Marianna Katz
- Institute for Community Prosperity (ICP): James Stauch

The research activities are funded equally by the SSHRC (\$200,000) and the partners (\$200,000).

So far, the project has allowed to:

- Develop research on Canadian philanthropy starting from four angles of inquiry and the creation of a new research unit: the *Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie subventionnaire* (PhiLab)¹;
- Facilitate networking between French-Canada (6), English-Canada (6), U.S.-American (2) and European (2) researchers and representatives (4) of key players from Canadian grantmaking philanthropy;
- Apply the knowledge generated for different audiences using different tools.

The project presently underway has allowed to, for the first time ever, bring together representatives of the Canadian public, private and community foundations sector as well as francophone and anglophone university researchers around a joint work program.

Partnership-based research activities performed jointly by the project partners

The SSHRC partnership project realized as part of *Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie canadienne* (PhiLab) focused on four areas of knowledge development.

1. *Portrait of and data on Canadian philanthropy*
 - A theoretical, conceptual and empirical (analysis of quantitative data) summary of Canadian grantmaking philanthropy.
 - Optimization and exploitation of databases on Canadian grantmaking philanthropy.
2. *Governance and philanthropy in Canada*

¹ PhiLab is, in turn, engaged in three additional research activities: the follow-up/monitoring of the activities of the *Collectif des fondations québécoises*; participation in the evaluation of the Montreal initiative *Projet impact collectif* (PIC); and a mapping of the Montreal philanthropic ecosystem.

- Research on the legal aspects of philanthropy that have allowed to identify the specifics of the Canadian model.
 - Study of the relationship between grantmaking philanthropy and government.
3. *Case studies on collaborations that take place between Canadian grantmaking foundations*
 - A summary of knowledge on the concept of collaboration applied to the grantmaking foundations sector. A mapping of the collaboration experiences.
 - A case study of six experiences with collaborations
 4. *International comparison*
 - Production of a comparative benchmark between the Canadian philanthropic funding model and other national models.
 - The comparison allowed to establish a basis for comparison between Canadian and U.S.-American grantmaking philanthropy.
 - It also allowed to describe the main philanthropic models present in Europe.

Results

In each of the three years of the project, activities took place (and are taking place) that acknowledged and utilized the knowledge produced, namely through discussion groups, large work seminars (2014 and 2015) and conferences (2016 and 2017). Research results were disseminated by means of a bilingual² website, a newsletter with a targeted mailing list, webinars, a Facebook page and a Twitter account. The research currently underway in the four working groups will lead to research reports (15), articles (10) and books (2).

Over the two and half years of work, we enlisted new researchers and initiated fifteen students into partnership-based research about grantmaking philanthropy.

Finally, we developed, in a partnership-based research approach, the research capacity on Canadian philanthropy at different universities, learned valuable lessons and identified a set of essential conditions for facilitating the renewal, with the SSHRC, of our partnership research program and the mobilization of knowledge.

² www.philab.uqam.ca

Assessment of the individual, collective and territorial impacts of projects led by Canadian foundations in response to current and future socio-economic issues and environmental challenges

SSHRC / Partnership Grants / Project (May, 2018–April, 2024)

We now wish to build on this partnership and extend it to other organizations and researchers—which comprises our application for a six-year grant (2018–2024) with the Partnership Development Grants division of the SSHRC.

The role of public, private and community foundations is little known and above all misunderstood by the major constituent sectors of civil society. Starting from research, knowledge mobilization and networking activities, the current research program is working towards a better understanding of the place and role of Canadian public, private and community foundations in regulating social issues or societal challenges.

A favourable context

- The social and environmental challenges call for a broader mobilization of the social actors operating within the philanthropic sector.
- Many grantmaking foundations are supportive of and interested in developing researcher-foundation collaborations in order to support research and development activities in the sector.
- More and more foundations are currently developing such collaborations with each other.
- A new generation of progressive foundation managers is emerging.
- The need to raise awareness of the place and role of grantmaking philanthropy is seen as significant by key players in the Canadian philanthropic sector.
- The current federal government favours greater openness to establishing a dialogue with foundations.

Benefits: What are the benefits for my organization and for the philanthropic sector?

Concretely

- In 2024, at the end of the project, this research partnership will have allowed for:
 - Systematic codification of knowledge in terms of: improved understanding of the roles and functions, strengths and weaknesses, progress and limitations of the stakeholders involved in Canadian grantmaking philanthropy; status reports on specific dimensions; rigorous and critical analysis of new emerging trends (e.g., impact assessments, strategic collaborations, management of heritage funds);
 - Identification of the major impacts of grantmaking philanthropy on current and future social and environmental issues;
 - Strengthening the level of dialogue within the Canadian foundations sector and with research intermediaries through the questions and issues raised;
 - Identification of adapted and tested methods for collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative impact data.
 - Implication of more than 100 students, mainly from post-graduated studies and a variety of disciplines, in partnership research and activities of knowledge valorisation.
 - Implications of a little less than 40 faculties from a variety of universities, disciplines, geographic areas (Canada, USA and Europe) and more than 20 partners organizations from the philanthropic ecosystem (grant-making foundations and related organizations).
- Between 2018 and 2024, this partnership will have enabled:

- A continuous, learning-oriented collaboration with respect to the analyses of the impacts of actions of grantmaking foundations and the prioritized areas of research (co-development groups, laboratory-type workshops);
- The development of a dialogue with representatives from the public sector (federal, provincial and municipal) on the role and place of grantmaking philanthropy;
- The strengthening of relationships between stakeholders of the Canadian philanthropic sector, including those between the funders and the funded organizations.

Financial resource request:

- \$4 million over 6 years
 - SSHRC: \$2.5 million over 6 years (2018–2024)
 - Partners: required minimum of 35% (\$875,000 over 6 years). We aim to mobilize \$1.5 million over 6 years in actual contributions from the project partners who are grantmaking foundations.

Lessons learned and conditions for the renewal of the last research program (2014–2017)

From the partnership experience presently underway we have:

- Validated the importance of and interest in developing new scientific knowledge on the Canadian and Quebec ecosystem of grantmaking philanthropy;
- Promoted an understanding of the added value of partnership-based research for the grantmaking philanthropy sector and Canadian grantmaking foundations;
- Developed a better understanding of the diversity and complexity of the needs of the stakeholders of the Canadian grantmaking philanthropy sector;
- Achieved a clear consensus on the importance of involving representatives from the diversity of grantmaking foundations and of adapting the partnership-based research program to their needs;
- Confirmed the relevance of a knowledge dissemination strategy that is inclusive of and concurrent to the process of coproducing new knowledge.

Essential conditions emerge from the current partnership:

- The grantmaking foundations are those stakeholders who are the best placed to define the objectives and accompany the research process on grantmaking philanthropy. However, the intermediary organizations involved in the philanthropic sector are nevertheless essential to the work of disseminating the knowledge produced.
- The partnership-based research work must recognize the scientific need of advancing critical knowledge about philanthropy.
- The roles of each stakeholder must be well defined and accepted. On the one hand, the researchers are not to play the role of think-tank, lobbyist or representative of the foundations, and on the other hand, the foundations are not only donors but also partners in the development of research problems, in the collection of data and in the dissemination of research findings.
- The partnership therefore relies on significant financial contributions from all stakeholders as well as on their involvement in the monitoring of research activities.
- The dissemination of knowledge must be pluralist, accessible and performed relatively concurrently to the co-production of new knowledge.

Objectives of the new partnership-based research project (2018–2024)

The partnership-based research approach will allow to:

- Mobilize actors from grantmaking philanthropy, including intermediary organizations; small, medium and large private, public or community foundations; and specialized academic researchers in this field of study;
- Measure the social and environmental impacts of programs either carried or supported by Canadian and Quebec grantmaking foundations;
- Draw benefits from advantageous conditions while recognizing obstacles or constraints;
- Identify practical ways of mainstreaming good practices and of bypassing identified obstacles or constraints;
- Model, systematize and theorize co-produced knowledge;
- Train graduate students about grantmaking philanthropy and partnership-based research;
- Integrate new researchers within the research team;
- Consolidate the partnership-based research system set up in 2014 (PhiLab) in order to study the grantmaking philanthropy sector;
- Disseminate the knowledge produced among the various audiences concerned;
- Facilitate a rapprochement between the Canadian academic community and the grantmaking philanthropy sector.

Partnership and governance

The research partnership will involve:

1. Stakeholders from the Quebec and Canadian ecosystem of grantmaking foundations; and from within this ecosystem, grantmaking foundations representatives will form the core of the partnership governance. We will focus on mobilizing the representatives of large and medium-sized grantmaking foundations;
2. Canadian, U.S.-American and European researchers belonging to different disciplines from within social sciences and humanities, business and law.

In line with experience from previous studies conducted with a collaborative and partnership-based approach, which involved the community services unit of UQAM (Service aux collectivités), the proposed project will be managed by a partnership management committee composed in equal parts of philanthropic funding partners and representatives from academia.

Each of the clusters, units or activities of research or knowledge dissemination will establish a direct link between representatives from grantmaking philanthropy and the research team in charge of said tasks or mechanisms.

Research program

The proposed research program will provide answers to three major questions.

1. In a context of societal transition, where the terms of the development of the Canadian and Quebec societies must take account of the treaties and arrangements related to COP21 (Paris Climate Treaty, 2015) as well as the increasing concerns regarding social inequalities, what contribution and what impacts may large private, public or community grantmaking foundations have on the responses to the major challenges and societal issues?
2. Based on these societal issues, which relational terms should be envisaged between the interventions of foundations and the actions led by other social actors, such as the government, civil society and private corporations?

3. Within the ecosystem of grantmaking philanthropy there is a disparity between the capacity of action of the large, medium and small foundations. How might we support, through research, the small and medium-sized grantmaking foundations, be they private, public or community that have limited resources to carry out their philanthropic objectives?

This questioning responds to needs that have been stated and validated with representatives from the grantmaking philanthropy sector and from the academic sectors specialized in this field. Specifically, the responses to these needs will allow to:

1. Define a flexible and adapted partnership-based research agenda that takes account of the identities and realities unique to:
 - small, medium and large grantmaking foundations;
 - foundation that have an endowment, versus those relying on the annual raising of capital or those combining various fundraising strategies;
 - public, private and community foundations.
2. Understand the advantages and limits of the action of grantmaking foundations in terms of influences and impacts on the major socio-economic issues and environmental challenges;
3. Situate the actions of grantmaking foundations within the ecosystem of public, private and social interventions;
4. Make co-produced knowledge available to various publics (e.g., population, civil society, public sector, business community, media) in order to highlight:
 - the strengths and weaknesses of the actions of the philanthropic sector;
 - the progress and limits of philanthropy;
5. Generate a debate on the place, roles and responsibilities of grantmaking foundations with regard to the place, roles and responsibilities of major public, private or social actors;
6. Develop the capacity for training and research on grantmaking philanthropy in small, medium and large Canadian universities.

Research areas (for information only)

Literature review, status reports:

- Summary of the knowledge on theories of change in the context of a societal transition;
- Summary of the knowledge on the new modalities for managing family foundations inherited funds or trust monies with a social purpose (solidarity- or environment-based financing);
- Mapping of the terms of the monitoring and transfer of knowledge and best practices between Canadian and U.S.-American and European foundations;
- Status report of the new assessment approaches and theories of collective impacts.

Assessment studies:

- Case studies allowing to assess the learning modalities and impacts of philanthropic action based on projects run by small, medium and large funding grants;
 - Development of assessment tools, and application thereof, on current projects that address the:
 - environment
 - poverty
 - alterity

- integration and social cohesion
 - Identification of innovations implemented;
 - Systematization, consolidation and enhancement of co-produced knowledge on the action of large grantmaking foundations.
- Case studies to assess the individual and territorial impacts resulting from the philanthropic action of small- and medium-sized grantmaking foundations
 - Development of assessment tools, and application thereof, on current projects:
 - Seniors
 - Itinerancy
 - People with physical or mental disabilities
 - First Nations
 - ...other
 - Identification of innovations implemented;
 - Systematization and enhancement of coproduced knowledge on the intervention of small and medium grantmaking foundations.

Activities concerning the systematization of knowledge:

- Impact of philanthropic actors—funders and funded—on the development of social innovation and the role of philanthropy in the development of social innovations;
- Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of actions taken by the studied initiatives and projects;
- Identification of the conditions for mainstreaming these actions: what to do to facilitate the transformation of existing systems: families/households, state, market, civil society.

Example of the sectoral fields to be studied

We will work starting from and on the basis of the actions taken by the grantmaking foundations of the project partners. The base population will be composed of current projects carried by foundations and projects realized in the last ten years by civil society organizations. The aim is to address a variety of topics, including: poverty, relations with First Nations, peace and public safety, social housing, urban renewal in the context of sustainable cities; the environment; food safety; vulnerable populations (young people, women, mentally ill, elderly, homeless, and refugees).

Methodologies mobilized

- Literature review, status reports
- Case studies
- Analysis of the databases on grantmaking philanthropy

Outputs

- Classical products for disseminating knowledge among the scientific community: books, articles, conferences, seminars, etc.
- Critical balance sheets popularized as well as adapted products for the transfer and dissemination of knowledge (e.g., bulletins, webinars, videos, documents, blogs, targeted presentations) for the various non-academic audiences of the ecosystem of the partner foundations.
- Avenues of action with regard to measures, mechanisms, public policy, etc.
- Modeling of a theory for changing systems of action from a perspective of transitioning away from the developmental model.
- Systematization and theorization of knowledge on grantmaking philanthropy at the scientific level.