



IMPACT 2020

What We've Learned So Far

REFBC Impact Report
February 2021





IMPACT 2020: What We've Learned So Far

Real Estate Foundation of BC
February 2021

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Ramona Faust, REFBC
Sara Hsiao, Sara Hsiao Consulting

Susi Porter-Bopp, First Nations Fisheries Council
Tara Marsden, Hlimoo Sustainable Solutions

With gratitude to
The non-profits, institutions, and local governments that
have generously shared their insights, feedback, and
photographs for inclusion in this report.

For a full list of participating organizations and projects,
see Appendix 3 ([page 32](#)).

Top: Dunsmuir Street. *Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh territory*
(Vancouver, BC). Photo: Paul Krueger / Flickr.

Cover: Wildsight's Columbia River Field School. *Ktunaxa territory*.
Photo: Bailey Repp.

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Impact Assessment at REFBC

As individuals and as an organization, we aspire to make a difference. We come together with our peers and partners to create positive changes in land use and real estate practices that get us closer to our vision of a healthy environment and thriving, resilient, livable communities. But in what ways? With whom? For whom? And how do we do this? It is critical that we think deeply about these questions and hold ourselves accountable for how we address them.

There is no simple formula for making change and achieving impact, particularly when working in complex social, environmental, and economic systems, with many players, dynamics, inequities, and imbalances. Transformative change is hard and unwieldy. There are many contributors, links, and influences.

**Transformative change
is hard and unwieldy.**

But by actively listening, learning, sharing, and responding to the needs and ideas of the communities we serve, we can better understand the changes needed, implement practices and actions that support them, and honestly and openly assess progress and shortcomings. Our impact assessment initiative, and this resulting impact report, are part of that process of inquiry and response.

This learning process goes beyond the bounds of this report. REFBC's exploration of impact and the release of this report take place in the context of a global pandemic, urgent calls to advance racial equity and

justice, and more widespread efforts to make meaningful progress towards reconciliation, reciprocity, and decolonization. As we consider what we've learned so far, we are also asking: What new questions need to be part of this work moving forward? What changes will we need to consider in our goals, desired impacts, and project strategies? How can we apply what we've learned to better support grantees in creating and contributing to positive impacts?

No organization can tackle change alone. We are fortunate to work with many community partners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments, academics, non-profits, and other funders who share our commitment to building strong communities and protecting our land and water. Their work brings us closer to the sustainable future we envision. They are at the heart of what we do, and we are incredibly thankful for their shared insights and contributions.



Leanne Sexsmith
Director, Strategic Programs and Partnerships

Download a copy of REFBC's Impact Guide to learn more about our model and approach.

[refbc.com/
theory-of-
change](https://refbc.com/theory-of-change)



Our Approach

This report uses impact assessment (evaluation) to help REFBC and its grantees and partners understand the ways grant-supported projects are creating change.

Impact assessment also helps us describe the work we fund – strategies used, outcomes achieved, partners involved, and dollars leveraged – so we can reflect on our grant program, and think about areas to emphasize, adapt, or change.

Principles and considerations

In 2018, we began piloting an impact assessment and evaluation process to help support our strategic objective to assess and maximize our impact.

There are a number of ways to assess impact, and it is challenging. Our approach was designed to be doable, useful, qualitative, shareable, and adaptive. Our impact model, interest areas framework, impact guide, and impact report are some of the tools we have developed to help us understand and explain our impact, in a way that is transparent and shareable – for our staff, Board of Governors, and the many organizations and people we work with.

The outcomes documented in this impact report reflect the collective input and insights of dedicated and innovative community partners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments, educational leaders, NGOs, and other funders. These partner have helped us understand what is possible, improve our materials and processes, and find ways forward. We are immensely grateful for their work and deeply appreciative of their shared feedback and insights.

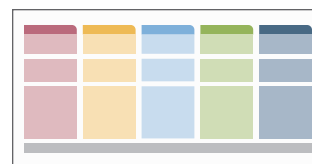
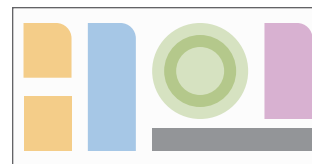
Our impact assessment approach is not a perfect science, nor is it the only way to explore and assess our impact. It is a best guess and current effort based on

internal and external research, consultation, and testing. By collecting and analyzing stories, learnings, and data from completed grant projects, the goal was to better understand what makes them successful and impactful, and then share and learn from the findings.

We will continue to learn, adapt, and respond as we go – with the promise of new learnings, relationships, leadership, and challenges along the way.

Our theory of change

The questions we ask and the findings we share are framed using REFBC’s theory of change, which includes our impact model and interest areas framework:



Our **impact model** describes how we use resources (grants) to support activities (projects) that have short-term outcomes and contribute to long-term impacts.

Our **interest areas framework** describes our goals, the impacts we look for, and the project strategies we prioritize in our grantmaking.

REFBC’s theory of change describes the goals, priorities, and strategies we believe are key to making positive changes in land use attitudes and practices. We use this framework to explain our funding priorities and approach, and guide the questions we ask ourselves and grantees. This allows us to share, test, and adapt our approach and understanding with our grant-funded

partners, based on actual collective experiences in 'close' to real time.

To learn more about our theory of change, please download a copy of our Impact Guide (refbc.com/theory-of-change).

Impact model

Our impact model is an illustration of the ways our team works to support positive, sustainable change.

There are four sections in our impact model:

- **Assets** – People, budgets, experience, and resources REFBC and grantees can draw on to fuel change.
- **Activities** – Actions that can spark change. For REFBC, this includes giving grants, convening partners, and making impact investments. For grantees, this includes applied research, public and professional education, policy analysis, and other projects in the public interest. Because there are many possible actions we can take and support, REFBC uses its interest areas framework to guide decisions.
- **Outcomes** – Observable results of the work we've supported. Through our activities, we aim to build knowledge and increase capacity to advance sustainable land use and real estate practices in three outcome areas: (1) engagement and collaboration, (2) innovation and implementation, and (3) leadership and good governance.
- **Impacts** – Over time, outcomes contribute to lasting impacts on communities and natural environments.

Interest areas framework

For each of our five interest areas, REFBC's grants team has stated a goal, described desired impacts, and listed project strategies that can influence change.

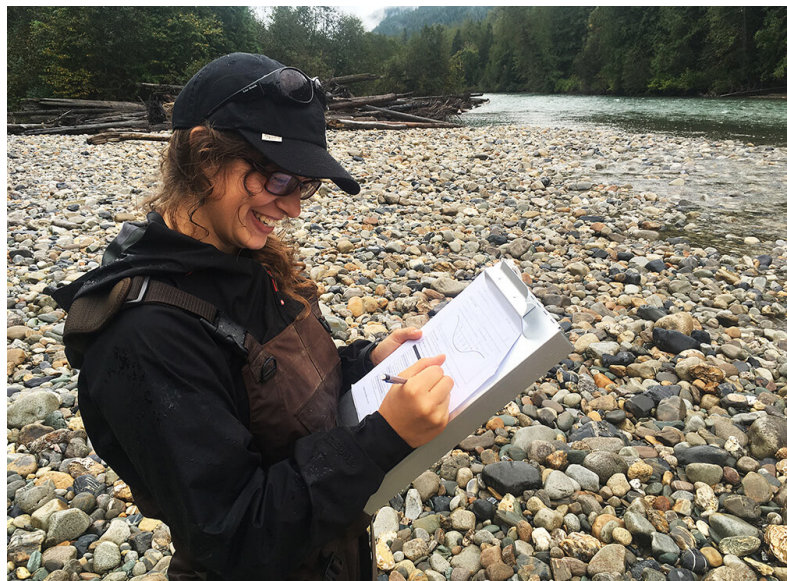
We've also identified a set of broad qualities (effectiveness criteria) that we believe increase a project's chance for success: need, innovation, collaboration, longevity, and scalability. When deciding how to allocate grants, REFBC looks for projects that employ these strategies, work towards these impacts, and demonstrate these qualities.

Methods and Current Sample

The projects and organizations we fund are highly varied – working at different scales within complex systems of policy, governance, education, and practice. At the end of a grant-supported project, when teams complete a final report and share insights, we use the theory of change structure to help us organize and make meaning of the results. As grantees share reflections on their project activities, learnings, and outcomes, we look for themes and patterns that shed light on the nature of their impact and the processes of change.

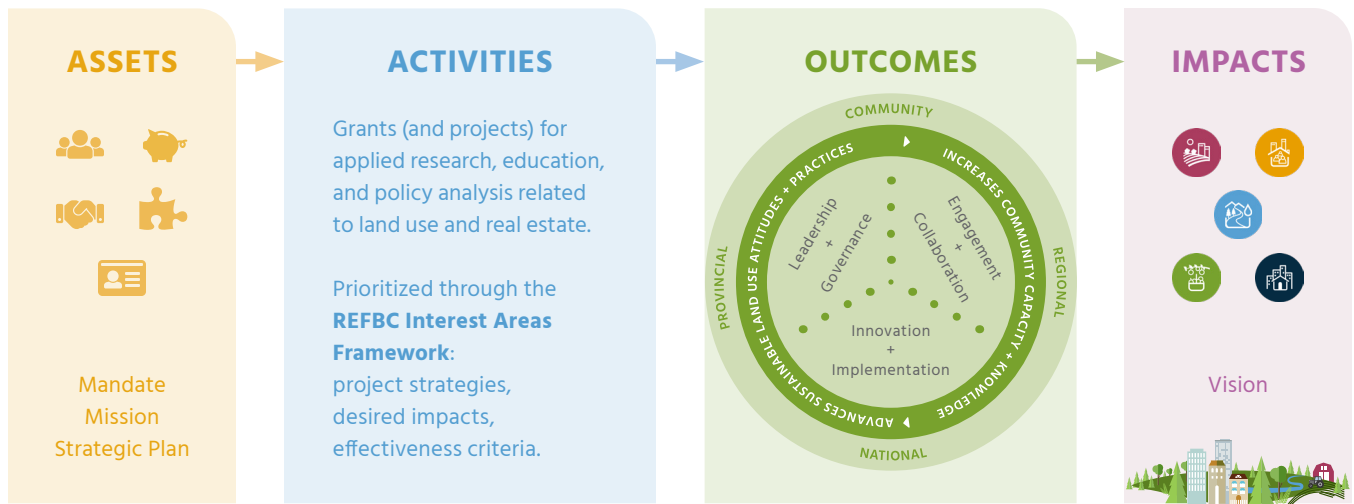
Our current assessment is based on data from final project reports of 21 grantees across BC, which were submitted in the latter half of 2019. Our team reviewed, coded, and analyzed report narratives about project strategies, outcomes, and impacts. Findings are based on quantitative and qualitative data.

While we're confident in these findings, we acknowledge that this is a modest sample. For more on our process and methods, see Appendix 4 ([page 34](#)).



Community-based water monitoring. Photo: Living Lakes Canada.

REFBC Impact Model (simplified)



Full version available in Appendix 1 ([page 28](#)).

REFBC Interest Areas Framework (simplified)



Full version available in Appendix 2 ([page 30](#)).

HIGHLIGHTS

What We Learned

This assessment helps us understand project challenges and successes, so we can learn, share, and adapt our theory of change and grantmaking practices based on grantees' experiences and insights.

The findings also identify opportunities for future learning and investment, and help partners understand the work we do.

Here's what we've learned so far:

Partnerships are critical to creating change.

Every project we fund includes partnerships of some kind, and the theme of partnership as a critical change factor came up repeatedly in grantee reporting. Relationship building, trust, convening, and connections are key to effective partnerships.

Meaningful relationships and opportunities to collaborate among project leaders, organizations, and communities within and across sectors and cultures was shown to boost a project's chance for success, build capacity within and between organizations, improve community engagement, and broaden project reach.

Strong partnerships take time and resources.

Collaboration can be challenging work. We heard from grantees that to build trusting relationships between people, organizations, and communities, teams need to invest time in understanding different perspectives, identifying shared interests and priorities, and capturing and reflecting community feedback.

We also heard about the logistics of partnerships, and how relationships and collaboration mean navigating conflicting schedules and dedicating resources to coordinating and supporting the process.



Kitson Island Marine Provincial Park, at the mouth of the Skeena River.
Tsimshian territory (Kitson Island, BC). Photo: Leanne Sexsmith.

Good things happen when diverse groups come together.

The most frequently used project strategies by grantees brought people together across roles, sectors, and lived experiences, to test new ideas and approaches. In more than half of the projects, grantees indicated that bringing together diverse groups, interests, and ways of knowing helped a project achieve its goals.

Critical learning happens in-person and on the land.

Several organizations shared stories and examples of how being together in-person and on the land was key for building relationships and understanding.

The immersive nature of place-based learning may help people more deeply and personally internalize learning and connections. Place-based and experiential learning is a critical tool for promoting land and water stewardship.

Grantees strategies to influence change cut across many interest areas.

REFBC has five interest areas with priority strategies identified for each; however, findings show that many strategies are relevant across more than one interest area.

For example, strategies that used land-based experiential learning, those that brought diverse people together to test new ideas and approaches, those that supported Indigenous leadership, and those that improved understanding of nature-based solutions (or natural assets) figured prominently across many projects.

Engagement, innovation, and leadership are key to change.

When asked about their “most important project outcomes”, grantee identified all three outcome areas we believe create lasting change:

- Engagement and collaboration
- Innovation and implementation
- Governance, decision-making, and leadership

These project outcomes create enabling conditions and capacity for downstream impacts. Analysis of grantee narratives suggests these outcomes are important and relevant elements of change that we should continue to support.

Impacts focused on shared stewardship of healthy lands and water.

Most projects in our sample contributed to protecting and conserving biodiversity and sensitive natural areas, and promoting shared stewardship of healthy lands and water. Other key impacts of grantee projects related to increasing green infrastructure, improving freshwater health, and promoting Indigenous engagement, co-governance, and community leadership.

This work is not easy, and project teams need room to learn and adjust.

Project teams are operating in complex and challenging circumstances. Working with entrenched bureaucracy, individuals, and systems means that relationships and progress may unfold more slowly than desired, or take much more effort than planned.

All projects had learning curves and unanticipated challenges. Grantees indicated they need flexibility to adapt their plans and strategies to meet dynamic circumstances.

Funders like REFBC can support grantees by encouraging open lines of communication, enabling project adaptations, and allowing for flexibility in project timelines.

HIGHLIGHTS

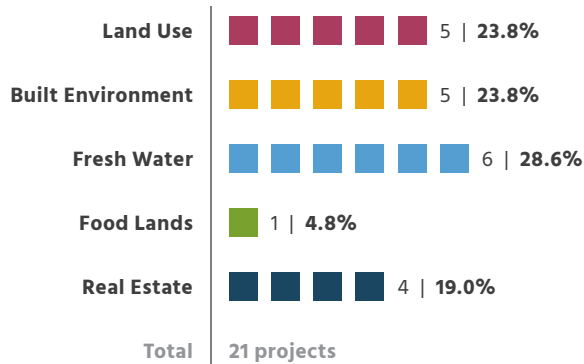
Current Sample

This 2020 impact report draws on information and stories shared by REFBC grantees through 21 final reports. This sample includes projects completed in the second half of 2019. Here's how those projects break down.

By primary interest area

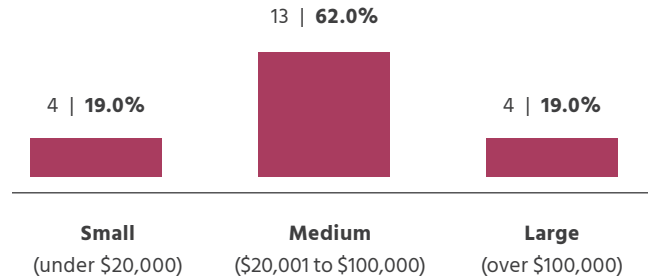
The projects are fairly evenly spread out across our land use, built environment, fresh water, and real estate interests. Many projects addressed more than one interest area. Only one project addressing food lands was completed during the reporting period.

In the future, we would be collecting a full year's worth (or more) of data, so a more representative spread of projects could be expected.

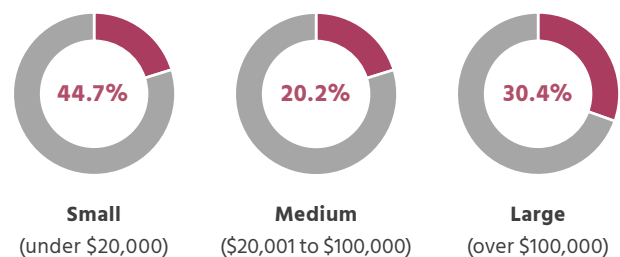


By grant size

REFBC contributed \$1.2 million in grants towards \$5.1 million in (total) costs for 21 projects. Grant sizes have been categorized into small, medium, and large – based on the amount of the grant. The individual projects were varied in terms of their scale and budgets, with the smallest having total costs of around \$21,600 (REFBC contribution around \$13,000) and the largest around \$560,000 (REFBC contribution around \$136,000).

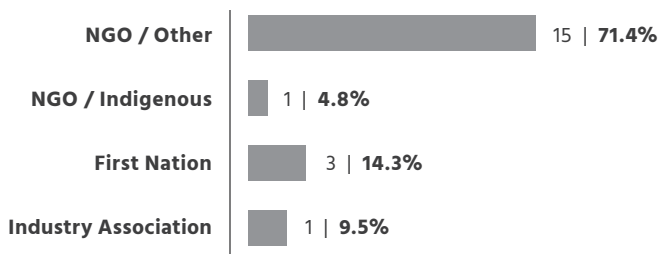


Projects at the smaller and higher ends of the granting scale had a higher proportion of REFBC funding in their budgets, compared to projects in the mid-range.



This suggests REFBC funding may be pivotal for smaller and larger projects.

By lead organization sector



By geographic scale and location

The following charts show the geographic scale and locations in BC where grantee project activities and outcomes took place. Projects were implemented in communities and regions all across BC, and had, local, regional, provincial, and national reach.

Most project activities and outcomes happened at community and regional scales, while some projects had broader provincial or national outcomes, even if activities were at a more local scale.

Project activities (where the work took place)

Scale	#	%
Community / Local	19	90%
Regional / Watershed	16	76%
Provincial	11	52%
National	4	19%
Cross-border / Transboundary	3	14%

Region	#	%
Cariboo and Northern BC	5	24%
Fraser Valley	4	19%
Kootenays	4	19%
Metro Vancouver and Howe Sound	11	52%
Okanagan	8	38%
Vancouver Island	11	52%
Victoria and Gulf Islands	8	38%
Province-wide	4	19%

Project outcomes (where the change took place)

Scale	#	%
Community / Local	18	86%
Regional / Watershed	16	76%
Provincial	13	62%
National	7	33%
Cross-border / Transboundary	3	14%

Region	#	%
Cariboo and Northern BC	4	19%
Fraser Valley	3	14%
Kootenays	3	14%
Metro Vancouver and Howe Sound	10	48%
Okanagan	6	29%
Vancouver Island	8	38%
Victoria and Gulf Islands	6	29%
Province-wide	8	38%

Note: Depending on the project, activities and outcomes may occur across various scales and locations, so counts do not add to 21 projects, and percentages do not add to 100%

FINDINGS

Partnerships

Across all projects, partnerships are critical

Partnerships came up repeatedly in grantee responses on strategies, successes, challenges, and lessons. We've recognized partnerships as a key criterion in our grantmaking for years, and we're hearing that it's an aspect we should continue to emphasize, learn about, nurture, and support in our funded work.

In particular, strategies that bring together diverse interests and knowledge, and build partners' capacity for change and action across people, communities, and cultures, are key to project success.



The BC Water Funders brings grantmaking organizations together to learn and coordinate. *Syilx territory (Lake Nicola, BC)*. Photo: Noémi Pomerleau.

Partnerships require time, sensitivity, and opportunities for in-person experiences to meaningfully capture different ways of knowing and world views. Building trust with partners and sharing knowledge in a culturally safe way are key enablers of the outcomes and impacts we want to see.

“It’s just as much about the people and their concerns as it is about the information.”

SKEENA KNOWLEDGE TRUST

As we continue to collect project data and insights, it's apparent that – in addition to the number and type of partners – the depth of partnerships is an important factor worth exploring (and documenting) further. Given the many demands among Indigenous-led organizations to partner on projects, the quality and meaningfulness of those partnerships may be more relevant, respectful, and important than the sheer number of partners.

Trusting relationships require time, sensitivity, and opportunities for connecting.

Several grantees told us that in-person experiences are particularly valuable for exploring different ways of knowing. This was identified in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous-led projects, including the Tahltan's land use planning work, Wildsight's Columbia River Field School, Skeena Knowledge Trust's data collection, Pollution Probe's Smart Energy Communities Scorecard, and the Okanagan Nation Alliance's watershed projects.

In their report, the Skeena Knowledge Trust noted that, “It is important to maintain the connection to the people advocating for sound land use decisions, as well as the technical aspects of building knowledge management tools. It's just as much about the people and their concerns as it is about the information.”



IMPACT STORY

BC CYCLING COALITION:

Moving Active Transportation Forward in BC

Convening and connections — fundamental foundations for achieving influential project outcomes and impacts.

To “fundamentally change the conversation around active transportation across BC”, the BC Cycling Coalition (BCCC) spent two years researching and consulting with a broad coalition of stakeholders across the province about the needs, opportunities and best practices related to active transportation, including representatives from community groups, advocacy organizations, businesses, local and regional governments, planning and engineering firms, provincial officials, and the public.

“ We ultimately learned that relationship-building and trust are advocacy fundamentals, and were key to the partnerships that resulted in the Active Transportation Summit. BC CYCLING COALITION

This project culminated in BCCC hosting the highly influential Active Transportation Summit in 2019, where the Government of BC released “Move Commute Connect”, its first-ever active transportation strategy.

Both the strategy and the groundwork to implement that strategy were made possible by the same approach the BCCC used to encourage support for active transportation — bringing together diverse groups of people and ideas to meet our collective challenges around mobility in BC.



Top, above: Some of the 300 attendees of the Active Transportation Summit, hosted by the BC Cycling Coalition in June 2019. Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Musqueam, Stó:lō, Tsawwassen, and Tsleil-Waututh territory (New Westminster, BC). Photo: BC Cycling Coalition.

And through their work on the Smart Communities Benchmark, Pollution Probe and QUEST described the value of in-person engagement:

“We traveled to each community to conduct in-person meetings with municipal staff, utility staff, and in some cases, elected officials and other community stakeholders. Travelling to communities in-person enabled us to test the suitability of our benchmark framework, fill in the gaps of our desktop research, and ensure that the information we were collecting was accurate and up to date. These meetings also helped to build relationships between the different municipal departments involved in community energy planning, and strengthen partnerships between municipal and utility staff.”

Partnerships and collaboration are not without challenges

Meaningful partnerships require clear intention, constant attention, patience, and resources. The type, mix, and depth of partnership matters in collaborative projects. We need to further communicate this importance, recognize the challenges, and resource solutions.

For the Okanagan Nation Alliance, collaboration and co-developing a flood and debris flow risk assessment between key stakeholder groups and the Syilx Okanagan

“It is always a burden on our community members to try to teach or communicate with non-Syilx on who we are and our knowledge systems... Having resources, webinars, and information to share with contractors or partners we work with would be useful for cultural awareness tools.

OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

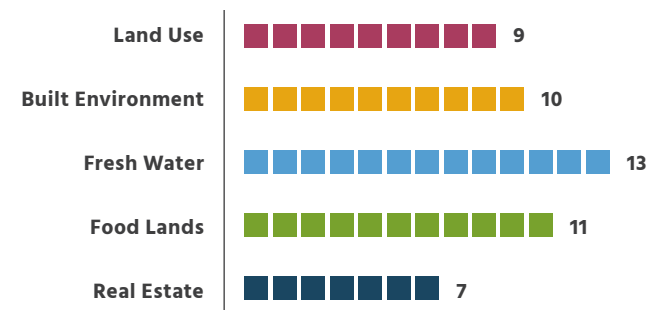
Nation was essential to their project. However, a lot of extra time was required to ensure the perspectives of Elders and community members were appropriately conveyed in consultant reports.

Similarly, in describing their experiences with land use planning, the Tahltan Central Government found that “First Nation led projects, specifically Tahltan projects, need to have support from consultants with a ‘lens’ or way of knowing the world similar to their own (First Nation), otherwise the process and outcomes become bogged down in trying to understand and communicate a worldview that isn’t your own.”

Partnerships by sector

The number of partners a project has depends on the complexity of the work and the number of communities, governments, NGOs, and industries that may be impacted. For example, freshwater projects, which can involve complex decision-making across jurisdictional, cultural, and industry boundaries, had an average of 13 partners per project. On the other hand, real estate projects, which often focus on the needs of a specific group of professionals, had an average of seven partners per project.

Average number of partners for projects by primary interest area:



Tahltan Nation members and staffers at a land use planning session. Nuu-chah-nulth territory (Tofino, BC). Photo: Alanna Quock.

Partnerships by sector

Sector	Projects with each type of partnership (#)			Total partnerships across projects (#)
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Total	
Local / Regional Government	0	15	15	42
First Nations Government	11	0	11	24
Provincial / Federal Governments	0	10	10	14
NGO	3	14	17	50
Consultants / Private Sector	0	14	14	39
Academic	1	9	10	21
Funders	0	10	10	32
Industry Groups	4	4	8	18
Media / Communications	1	1	2	2
Other	0	7	7	15

There was a total of 213 partners reported in the 21 projects overall, with partners coming from a range of sectors. Most were NGOs, local or regional governments, and private sector professionals. Over half the projects involved Indigenous partners: 12 projects (57%) had partnered with one or more First Nation or Indigenous-led organization. But Indigenous-led organizations represent a comparatively small portion of the partners overall (16%). Of the 34 Indigenous partners reported by grantees, most (24) were First Nation governments.

Indigenous interests have been a priority in REFBC grant funding, but the findings suggest we could do more to support Indigenous-led organizations and projects.

Given the frequent time and resource demands on Indigenous leaders and organizations to engage on projects, focusing on the quality, depth, and meaningfulness of partnerships with Indigenous-led organizations may be more relevant and important than higher numbers.

We also need to look at resources and supports for enabling culturally-appropriate collaboration, and facilitating knowledge sharing in ways that don't exacerbate the burdens and labour of Indigenous collaborators.

Most of the Indigenous partners were from First Nation governments, and there may be an opportunity to engage more non-governmental Indigenous partners as well, including NGOs, media, and academia. To better understand how partners are involved in projects, we need to look at tracking more detail around depth or level of partnerships, from informing, to consulting, to collaborating on shared goals.

FINDINGS

Project Strategies

Project strategies are the key ‘ways’ that organizations achieve their intended outcomes or results. They are the timely, relevant, and influential approaches used to create outcomes that enable the desired impacts that achieve our goals for healthy communities and natural environments.

REFBC’s interest areas framework identifies 20 project strategies that we believe are particularly influential in achieving outcomes and desired impacts that support our big goals in each of our interest areas. These strategies are based on our ongoing research, collaboration, engagement, and grant funded work, and we align and prioritize our work and grantmaking around them.

REFBC’s impact assessment work is an important way for us to assess the relevance and applicability of our project strategies based on grantee experiences. This helps test our assumptions against actual funded work, based on the experiences of the people directly involved. By seeing which strategies are effectively used (or not), and identifying new ones, we can improve our approach.

Findings indicate that the strategies in our interest areas framework are capturing key strategies used by our grantees. However, some are used more than others, and some key strategies used by grantees are missing from our framework.

During the data assessment, we found that almost all our interest area strategies (19 of 20) were used by at least one grantee project. However, experiential, land-based education is an important cross-cutting strategy that is missing in our framework. Also, a number of our interest area-specific strategies are relevant across many types of projects.

“Bringing diverse people together” and “testing new approaches” were strong strategies across most of

the projects. “Fostering innovative approaches” came through in fresh water, land use, and built environment projects. Those projects that “supported Indigenous communities’ work”, and those that “improved understanding of nature-based solutions (or natural assets)” - also figured prominently across many projects.

The five most frequently used project strategies were:

Land Use: Foster innovative models and approaches to land use planning, policy, practices, and governance that reflect diverse interests and knowledge.



13 projects | 62% of sample

Land Use: Improve understanding of natural capital and how it can support community amenities, infrastructure, ecosystem services, climate action, and values through research, education, policy, and planning initiatives.



11 projects | 52% of sample

Fresh Water: Build the freshwater movement through education and public engagement.



8 projects | 38% of sample

Fresh Water: Support Indigenous communities’ capacity for freshwater management, planning, and governance.



8 projects | 38% of sample

Built Environment: Make a clear case for government funding and other investments in sustainable development (e.g. transit and active transportation, green buildings and infrastructure, affordable housing, climate action).



8 projects | 38% of sample



IMPACT STORY

WEST COAST ENVIRONMENTAL LAW:

Coastal Resilience in the Salish Sea

Effective strategies bring together diverse actors and knowledge, and build partners' capacity for change and action.

Successful grantee strategies bring together the right people and the right information at the right time. Sometimes this involves working with one influential partner to bring others to the table. For example, West Coast Environmental Law (WCEL), partnered with the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance (LFFA) to support technical dialogue among policymakers and rights-holders in a complex multi-jurisdictional environment.

This partner engagement, together with targeted legal research and analysis and technical work, created support and buy-in which resulted in \$4 million in funding commitments to design and implement two major on-the-ground demonstrations of nature-based flood control infrastructure – 'living dikes'.

"Our partnership with the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance was key to getting the work in Boundary Bay off the ground." Because of this relationship building and trust, and our background work to identify jurisdictional issues, "WCEL were well positioned to quickly convene a series of meetings with representatives from multiple jurisdictions to discuss pilot project options."

Identification and development, of proposals for two pilot projects was supported by a series of roundtable meetings and liaison by WCEL and LFFA (LFFA's role has now passed to the recently established Emergency Planning Secretariat), with multi-jurisdictional engagement from policy and decision makers.

WCEL also commissioned the coastal engineering work that provided the required detailed cost estimates. Government representatives provided letters of support, and federal infrastructure funding for the two pilots was approved for a partnership of the City of Surrey, Semiahmoo First Nation, and the City of Delta.

Given lack of experience and even some skepticism regionally about nature-based or living dikes (with few local examples for governments' staff/decision makers to see) in the coastal context, having two pilots implemented will remove a major barrier to broader uptake.

Top: Announcement of federal infrastructure funding for coastal adaptation projects in the region. *Stz'uminus, WSÁNEĆ, Stó:lō, Tsawwassen, Semiahmoo, Tseil-Waututh territory (Delta, BC).* Photo: Tracy Holmes.



IMPACT STORY

OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE:

Flood Risk Assessment

Land-based education is an important cross-cutting strategy that is missing in our framework.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance led a flood and debris flow risk assessment in the Okanagan Basin and Similkameen River Watershed with their member communities and stakeholders representing key government bodies.

“ Spending time together on the land and in workshops is an important step to strengthen relationships and achieve flood management-related objectives. ”
OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

The risk assessment was co-developed from Syilx and western science perspectives. This project had to navigate challenges in integrating traditional knowledge with conventional western science. Spending time together on the land was a core strategy that built shared understanding and strengthened relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners.

“One lesson that was re-affirmed was the importance of getting decision-makers and leadership out on the land

with Syilx Okanagan Knowledge Keepers and Elders. In place-based settings, the non-Syilx members learned more about the connections of the Syilx Okanagan people to natural resources, lands, and water.”

“Participatory approaches to engagement and generating data is important to achieve a sense of commonality and shared understanding between Syilx and non-Syilx participants.”



Top, above: Group photo of flood risk participants on Similkameen watershed tour. Syilx territory (Princeton, BC). Photo: Okanagan Nation Alliance.

Other key themes we saw in the top strategies included communications and engagement activities (building movements, generating public support) and capacity building.

REFBC's grants program and funding criteria puts heavy emphasis on partnerships, innovation, and community engagement – so it's natural (and encouraging) to see these themes come through so strongly in the strategies grantees use to advance change.

In our current sample, we also noticed that strategies focused on Indigenous peoples' interests and leadership, integrating land use and transportation planning (smart growth), and supporting NGOs to collaborate on shared goals were identified less often. This was surprising, as these are known, identified priorities emphasized in our research, through experts and advisors, and in our theory of change. Although our small sample size may be a factor, we need to pay attention to these trends and potential gaps, and center our work in ways that address them.

Multiple projects emphasized the fundamental importance of using experiential, on the land (or on the water) education to increase knowledge, build skills, and spark meaningful connections. This is an important insight, which may be connected to and supported through greater emphasis on Indigenous leadership and ways of knowing and working.

Grantees repeatedly identified land-based learning and experiences as uniquely powerful and influential. Telling examples were offered through Wildsight's Columbia River Field School, as well as the Okanagan Nation Alliance's Flood Risk Assessment project, where participatory approaches helped people find common ground, and spending time together on the land strengthened relationships for moving forward.

For the team at REFBC, these findings around project strategies help us understand where more investment or support may be needed, and whether we need to adapt our interest areas framework to add new strategies.

The number of cross-cutting strategies has also prompted us to rethink the way we structure our framework. In the future, we may want to consider two layers of strategies – those that apply across all interests, and those that are specific to one interest area.

Adaptive strategies to navigate challenges

Successful projects included strategies for navigating and overcoming challenges. Project teams experienced multiple challenges – some expected and some unexpected.

While there is much to learn from project challenges, our analysis showed that projects tended to have quite unique challenges, as compared to the more consistent success factors that we saw across many projects.

Challenges encountered by grantees included:

- Navigating complex multi-jurisdictional schedules and processes
- Managing changes in leadership in government and community
- Mismatched timelines with key partners, or overly optimistic work plans
- Trying to support long-term work with short-term funding
- Negotiating data access
- Learning curves for using local government regulator tools
- Bringing Vancouver-based experts to remote Northern communities
- Representing Traditional Ecological Knowledge in technical documents and reports
- Engaging in a way that is not excluding certain communities or increasing polarizations

The takeaway is that whatever the challenges, adaptability, negotiation, coordination, and flexibility are key to addressing them.

Successful strategies are responsive and adapt to emerging issues and stakeholder needs.

Grantees need to be able to adapt plans and strategies as they implement their projects, and build in time and resources for this.


Funders like REFBC can support this by encouraging open lines of communication, enabling project adaptations, and allowing for flexibility in project timelines.


FINDINGS


Project Deliverables

When we asked grantees about which project deliverables were most influential to their work, grantees were most likely to identify deliverables that involved meeting, creating, and knowledge sharing.

The five most influential project deliverables were:


Convening: Events, conferences, networking, community engagement, roundtables, forums.

Picked in 'top 3' for 21 projects | 100% of sample

Training: Trainings, educational workshops, webinars.

Picked in 'top 3' for 21 projects | 100% of sample

Reports and publications: Studies, reports, data and mapping, publications, policy, planning documents.

Picked in 'top 3' for 18 projects | 86% of sample

Government relations: Outreach or engagement with government.

Picked in 'top 3' for 15 projects | 71% of sample

Tools and models: Knowledge-building or decision-making tools, toolkits, portals, modelling, analysis or assessment tools.

Picked in 'top 3' for 11 projects | 52% of sample

Given the results, convening and training are critical elements of change work. Notably, building connection and understanding across people, communities, and cultures came out as a strong theme in the project strategies, and grantees showed that there are important ways to do that through convening and shared learning opportunities.

A solid majority of grantees (86%) also cited “reports and publications” in their top three influential project deliverables. Government outreach (71% of projects) and development of new tools and models (52%) were also important.

We were surprised to see that reports and publications ranked so highly as an influential deliverable; it can be tempting to dismiss reports as make-work projects with limited impact. Digging into the examples, we found that, when produced for a specific audience and combined with outreach and education, reports can have real value for organizations and communities.

Communications and planning are part of the bigger picture of making impact. None of the grantees in this sample counted communications or collaborative planning as deliverables that created impact, but instead talked about them as enabling strategies.

This suggests that communications and engaged planning work is embedded within the projects REFBC supports, rather than considered as a deliverable on its own. Ensuring that resources are included to support these enabling strategies is important.



IMPACT STORY

TAHLTAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT:

Tahltan Land Use Planning

When collectively created and actively used, reports and publications can provide a “living” record of shared goals and understanding.

The Tahltan Stewardship Initiative was created by convening Tahltan Government decision-makers, industry representatives, Elders, youth, and other community members to guide resource development and land management. The plan is not sitting on a shelf – it will be used to support referrals processes and negotiate business in their territory.

“Having the Tahltan community lead this project and provide direction will ensure community support and long-term buy in.”

“ The Tahltan Land Stewardship Plan is a living breathing document; it is a tool that we will use every day to help us ensure resource development in our Territory is done right, so that the things that are important to us will always be here.

TALHTAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Top: Tahltan Nation members and staffers at a land use planning session.
Nuu-chah-nulth territory (Tofino, BC). Photo: Alanna Quock.



IMPACT STORY

COMMUNITY ENERGY ASSOCIATION:

Community Energy Leadership Program Phase 2

Bringing together the diverse perspectives and knowledge of locally elected officials requires creativity, clear intention, and collaboration.

For the Community Energy Association (CEA) and the BC Municipal Climate Leadership Council (BCMCLC), the Climate Leadership Institute (CLI) conference, regional workshops, and breakfasts with Provincial Ministers were the most influential project deliverables.

This project provided extensive training, networking, and capacity building for locally elected officials, who can influence decisions and policy around climate action.

Since the first CLI, CEA has tracked six climate-related initiatives completed or underway and 19 additional actions planned in the near future. This shows how CEA

and BCMCLC learning events are catalyzing climate action implementation.

Targeted deliverables also need to be tailored to particular audiences. CEA notes that different kinds of outreach are needed to engage all BC communities on climate action. Currently, the next iteration of this project, BC Climate Leaders, is underway and expanding on the successes and learnings of the Community Energy Leadership Program.

“ The BC Municipal Climate Leadership Council has the opportunity to continue engaging all BC communities on climate action, and navigating in a way that is inclusive and addresses polarization related to climate action.

COMMUNITY ENERGY ASSOCIATION

Top: Engaging stakeholders in intensive break out discussions at CLI.

Photo: Community Energy Association.

FINDINGS

Outcomes

Overall, projects are creating outcomes in all three areas we believe lead to lasting change: engagement and collaboration; innovation and implementation; and governance, decision-making, and leadership.

Engagement and collaboration:

All projects in the sample are building knowledge and capacity (21; 100%), making this the strongest outcome area in the sample. Collaboration (17; 81%) and co-creating a shared vision (16; 76%) were also important elements in the projects REFBC has supported.

Innovation and implementation: Most projects are using applied research to develop new tools and approaches (17; 81%). Fewer are reporting work around on the ground testing or implementation of tools (7; 33%) or training (3; 14%) that supports implementation.

Governance, decision-making, and leadership: Community engagement (18; 86%) and improved decision processes (14; 67%) were outcomes of the majority of projects, while only a few projects reported achieving policy change (4; 19%).

Almost all the projects in this sample support these outcomes, suggesting they are relevant and important elements of change that we should continue to support.

Some specific outcomes within the three overall categories were less frequently reported – such as policy change – however, policy change can take many years to realize, and is often preceded by other outcomes that ultimately enable it.

REFBC's outcomes wheel





IMPACT STORY

FRESH ROOTS URBAN FARM SOCIETY:

Cultivating the School Food System

A combination of engagement, innovation, and leadership scaled up change in school districts' land use to support sustainable food systems in BC communities.

The Fresh Roots project is an example of a single project creating outcomes across all three outcome areas (engagement and collaboration; innovation and implementation; and leadership and decision-making).

Fresh Roots worked with school districts across BC to develop a model of environmental stewardship through food, to help school districts use their land to enable learning, food access, and sustainability.

Their innovative strategy engages youth in experiential learning around food lands and land use for youth, while improving environmental stewardship of school board land.

“As a result of this work, we have now partnered with over 110 organizations nationally to develop a fulsome national effort to help all schools have access to healthy local food.

FRESH ROOTS URBAN FARM SOCIETY

“As a result of this project, as of 2019 Fresh Roots is now stewarding more than 10 acres of land, working with 6,300 youth annually, working with youth to cook 17,928 meals, and hiring 75 high school aged youth to grow, cook, and share healthy food. REFBC has helped schools transform their under-utilized lands into food lands, and laid the groundwork for more to come.”

Top: Maria, SOYL crew sells schoolyard grown produce at Fresh Roots weekly market. Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territory (Vancouver, BC).

Photo: Fresh Roots.

FINDINGS

Impacts

Impacts are the long-term results of project outcomes, emerging from the combined efforts of people, organizations, and natural forces. While it's very difficult to measure the exact impact of a particular project, we can identify potential project impacts through qualitative analysis and stories.

To complement our qualitative insights, we can also count the number of projects contributing to a set of desired impacts on land use and real estate practices.

Our interest areas framework lists 17 desired impacts across our five interest areas. When analyzing grantee project reports, we found evidence of all of these impacts in our current sample. This suggests that projects are contributing to all our desired impacts. There were no impacts identified that did not relate to our impact model.

Most projects contributed to several different impacts within and across interest areas, showing the cross-cutting nature of grantee projects.

Less frequent impacts are still important, but may have been targeted by a smaller group of projects. One thing we noticed is that very specific impacts (for example: housing meets a full spectrum of needs; freshwater protection supported through strong legislation) weren't counted as often in our current sample of reports. These types of impacts may represent specialized efforts and/or take years to realize. They may be pursued by only a few project leaders at a given time or through broader efforts and impacts that lay the groundwork for them in the future.

It's also important to remember that impacts evolve over time. For many of the projects we fund, the impacts won't be clear until long after a project completes. REFBC's main data source for impact assessment is grant final reports, and we are therefore often looking at impacts in terms of progress or anticipated 'contributions' towards future desired changes or impacts.

The six most frequently observed impacts were:

Land Use: Sensitive natural areas, biodiversity, and natural capital are valued, protected, and conserved.



13 projects | 62% of sample

Fresh Water: Diverse people, organizations, and communities act with a shared stewardship ethic to ensure the health of fresh water and land.



11 projects | 52% of sample

Built Environment: Buildings, energy systems, and infrastructure that are green, efficient, healthy, and renewable.



9 projects | 43% of sample

Fresh Water: All freshwaters in BC are in good health.



9 projects | 43% of sample

Land Use: Community-to-community engagement and collaboration, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, supports well-informed and appropriate governance and use of lands.



8 projects | 38% of sample

Fresh Water: Freshwater protection, governance, and management are driven by progressive community leadership.



8 projects | 38% of sample



IMPACT STORY



CANADA GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL:

The Race to Reveal: Industry Leadership Towards Disclosure and Labelling

Project impacts are helping to transform the real estate sector and the built environment.

Impacts from the Canada Green Building Council (CGBC) project include cross sector-collaboration and professional knowledge building that are driving progress towards greener, more efficient buildings.

Specifically, their project created publicly available building performance data that is advancing energy efficiency improvements and retrofits in the real estate industry.

The CGBC's Disclosure Challenge initiative resulted in five real estate leaders sharing portfolio-wide building performance data, and an industry-backed call to government for consistent disclosure regulations.

"The Challenge marked the first time Canadian real estate owners have voluntarily disclosed their Canada-wide portfolio data." – Canada Green Building Council

“ Ultimately the Disclosure Challenge has created a mechanism to unleash energy benchmarking regulations across the country - a foundation that will be critical if we are to drive emission reductions from the built environment.

CANADA GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

Top left: 88 Scott Street (Toronto, ON).

Photo: Concert Properties.

Top right: Mockup of the Disclosure Challenge interface.

Photo: Canada Green Building Council.



IMPACT STORY

WILDSIGHT:

Columbia River Field School

Experiential learning and youth education enable future freshwater health.

Wildsight's Columbia River Field School is engaged in work with a future focus - contributing to impacts around freshwater health, shared stewardship of freshwater and land, community leadership, and protecting and conserving sensitive natural areas.

This project uses land-based experiential strategies for youth training, as well as strong partnerships with First Nations, community organizations, and the education sector.

As one participant reported, "This experience has been life-changing for me. It has helped me to understand the land around me, people and their differences, the ways of river travel, how I am as a person, and how I can be my best self."

"Based on feedback collected from participants, educators, and guest speakers, the program met our goals of educating the leaders of tomorrow with a holistic understanding of the Columbia River watershed and some of its key issues and complex challenges."

“ In the long-term, youth participants will grow into citizens who actively engage in land use and water management. They will bring a holistic understanding to policy discussions... and carry their learnings into whatever field they pursue.

WILDSIGHT

Top: Akisqnuq Chief Alfred Joseph of the Ktunaxa Nation shares the origin story of the Columbia River with CRFS participants. *Ktunaxa territory*. Photo: Bailey Repp.

CONCLUSION

Learnings

Findings from our first impact report and feedback from participants involved in the process have confirmed and reinforced many of our ideas about how change happens. We've also identified some gaps in our thinking, like the importance of emphasizing land-based experiential learning.

We are reflecting on ways to adapt our framework to identify 'cross cutting' strategies and impacts relevant across our interest areas, and we are thinking about the language we use – as we understand that 'theory of change' can be alienating to some groups. The main thing to keep in mind is that our thinking, approach, and the words we choose are always evolving.

Key learnings to enhance project impacts:

- Relationship building and partnerships are critical.
- Understanding diverse perspectives requires time, coordination, and the right people.
- Navigating complex contexts with multiple jurisdictions is difficult and time consuming, especially if there are changes in leadership.
- Projects are operating in complex and challenging circumstances - expect and resource the 'unexpected'.
- Influential deliverables involve meeting, creating, and teaching, supported by timely evidence captured in reports and publications.
- Trust, personal connections, and culturally-safe knowledge-sharing are key.
- Engagement, innovation, and leadership are important elements of change.



SOYL youth helping with LunchLAB: Chefs For Families emergency food support. *Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territory (Vancouver, BC).*

Photo: Fresh Roots.

Key learnings for REFBC:

- We can do more to support Indigenous-led projects, and to support partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, with a focus on the quality, depth, and meaningfulness of partnerships (rather than the 'number' of partners).
- We need to adapt our interest area framework to capture the many cross-cutting strategies that have emerged.
- We will add experiential land-based learning into our model and promote its effectiveness.
- We will encourage project communications during and post projects, and seek ways to support our grantees in these efforts.
- We will continue to support adaptive responses to project challenges through open lines of communication and flexibility.

CONCLUSION

Next Steps

A benefit of our impact assessment work to date, is that we have built adaptive processes into our grantmaking, systems, and ways of thinking. We have created tools for sharing and communicating what we are doing, how, and why.

This work has brought us closer to our goal of being able to describe how we're contributing to our desired impacts, and how we can improve how we're doing that work.

Going forward, we'll be reviewing our impact assessment framework and language, adding missing pieces, and simplifying where possible. As we reflect on the insights from this work and consider how we may adapt and learn as a result, we also recognize that impact assessment is not the only tool or direction we'll be using to improve our grantmaking.

We want to centre equity and social justice considerations in our work, and so we need to ensure our data, approach, and funding priorities reflect that goal. We want to continue strengthening and building on our work with Indigenous communities. We are thinking about how COVID-19 has impacted our work, and that of our project partners.

Our takeaways around supporting adaptive responses, open communication, and flexibility are being put to practice, and are critical to the ongoing work and success of our grantees.

We are fortunate to work with many dedicated and innovative community partners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments, academics, non-profits, and other funders who share our vision for a healthy environment that supports thriving, resilient, livable communities across BC. We are deeply appreciative and thankful for their work, and willingness to share their insights and learnings.

We look forward to the next steps in our learning journey and continued progress together!



Collecting water samples in the Skeena watershed. Tsimshian territory (Terrace, BC). Photo: Skeena Knowledge Trust.

REFBC Impact Model

Assets support  **Activities** which generate 

REFBC has:

-  Staff and Board
-  Financial Resources
-  Knowledge
-  Partnerships
-  Networks and Relationships

REFBC's Legislated Mandate

To undertake and carry out real estate public and professional education, real estate law reform, real estate research, and other projects intended for the public or professional good in relation to real estate activities.
(Real Estate Services Act)

REFBC's Mission

We fund projects, connect people, and share knowledge to advance sustainable land use and real estate practices in BC.

REFBC's Strategic Plan

1. Assess and maximize impact.
2. Build organizational resilience.
3. Strengthen relationships and advance understanding.

REFBC can:


-  Give Grants
-  Make Investments
-  Initiate Projects
-  Convene Partners
-  Share Stories
-  Celebrate Successes


For:

-  Research
-  Policy Analysis
-  Public Education
-  Other Public Good
-  Professional Education



RELATED TO LAND USE / REAL ESTATE

Prioritized By:

INTEREST AREA     

-  Project Strategies
-  Effectiveness Criteria
-  Desired Impacts

DETAILS IN INTEREST AREAS FRAMEWORK

 FOLLOWING PAGE 

Outcomes (project results) that contribute to →

Impacts in our five interest areas



-  **Land Use**
-  **Built Environment**
-  **Fresh Water**
-  **Food Lands**
-  **Real Estate Profession**

REFBC aims to increase community capacity and knowledge in ways that advance land use attitudes and practices across BC.

Project outcomes in engagement and collaboration, innovation and implementation, and leadership and good governance at community, regional, provincial, and national scales lead to positive change towards desired impacts.


REFBC's Vision

A healthy environment supports thriving, resilient, livable communities across BC.



April 3, 2019.

REFBC Interest Areas Framework

Land Use 

BIG GOAL
Land use decisions and practices promote thriving, resilient communities and natural environments for current and future generations.

DESIRED IMPACTS • change we want to see


- Sensitive natural areas, biodiversity, and natural capital are valued, protected, and conserved.
- Ecosystem and environmental resiliency are at the forefront of land use planning and practices, natural resource activities, and climate action.
- Community-to-community engagement and collaboration, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, supports well-informed and appropriate governance and use of lands.



PROJECT STRATEGIES • how we get there

1. Inform land use decision-making with assessments and benchmarking of ecosystems and environmental health, including evaluation of natural capital assets.
2. Improve understanding of natural capital and how it can support community amenities, infrastructure, ecosystem services, climate action, and values through research, education, policy, and planning initiatives.
3. Foster innovative models and approaches to land use planning, policy, practices and governance that reflect diverse interests and knowledge (e.g. Indigenous-protected areas, community land trusts, conservation strategies and other land codes, designations and programs).
4. Build understanding of Indigenous peoples' interests. Support Indigenous leadership in land use planning, governance, and management.



Built Environments 

BIG GOAL
Built environments support a high quality of life without undermining natural systems.


DESIRED IMPACTS • change we want to see

- Mixed-use, smart growth communities are compact, complete, green, and livable.
- Housing meets the full spectrum of needs related to age, access, affordability, and livability.
- Buildings, energy systems, and infrastructure are green, efficient, healthy, and renewable.
- Transportation systems move people and goods within communities and regions in ways that are healthy, efficient, and fair. Public transit, active transportation (walking, cycling), and road networks support equitable mobility, reduced emissions, and better health outcomes.



PROJECT STRATEGIES • how we get there

1. Build public awareness and support for sustainable built environments.
2. Build understanding of Indigenous peoples' interests.
3. Integrate land use and transportation planning and practices to reflect smart growth principles and achieve social, economic, and environmental benefits.
4. Support NGOs and other change agents through funding, shared research, monitoring, education, and collaboration.
5. Make a clear case for government funding and other investments in sustainable development (e.g. transit and active transportation, green buildings and infrastructure, affordable housing, climate action).
6. Align financial tools (fees, pricing, taxes, accounting, asset management) with sustainability objectives to reflect long-term costs and benefits.



Fresh Water

BIG GOAL
Freshwater ecosystems in BC are i sustainable, and valued.

DESIRED IMPACTS • chang

- All fresh waters in BC are i
- Freshwater sustainability i strong legislation, policies implemented, financed, an
- Diverse people, organizati with a shared stewardship of fresh water and land.
- Communities engage in ef making and exercise autho freshwater protection.
- Freshwater protection, go are driven by progressive

PROJECT STRATEGIES • ho

1. Revitalize freshwater polic financial tools, and build c watershed management, p
2. Pool and expand freshwat coordinated, robust, and c monitoring and reporting.
3. Build the freshwater move and public engagement.
4. Support Indigenous comm freshwater management, p

Effectiveness Criteria cut across interest areas and help us prioritize our funding decisions. We've found that projects with these qualities have a gr

Need... significance of the issue or gap being addressed

Leadership & innovation ... shows leadership in a field and/or is an innovative approach

Partnership & collaboration... range of non-profit, government, business, individuals are participating/ partnering

Sustainability & longevity... outcomes that can be sustained and which have an ongoing legacy

Scalability & potential to replicate... project can be modeled, replicated, or scaled up by other communities, audiences, or practitioner groups.



Food Lands



BIG GOAL

Land is protected and enhanced to support thriving, local, sustainable food systems now and in the future.

DESIRED IMPACTS • change we want to see

- Land is protected and accessible for increasing food production.
- Decision makers, practitioners, and the public have the knowledge and capacity to support local, sustainable food lands.

PROJECT STRATEGIES • how we get there

1. Increase land access and tenure options through tools, research, and innovative models coordinated and implemented at local and regional levels.
2. Work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments and groups to inform and enhance land use policies, planning, and decision-making in ways that integrate sustainable, local food systems.
3. Conduct research, economic analysis, and modelling to inform decision-making on agricultural and food lands planning.



Real Estate Profession

BIG GOAL

Real estate professionals, industry groups and partners demonstrate leadership and innovation in sustainable land use and real estate practices that improve quality of life for BC residents.

DESIRED IMPACTS • change we want to see

- Highly knowledgeable real estate professionals are equipped to serve the public interest and advise on real estate, land use, and built environment trends, laws, and standards.
- Industry leaders collaborate with researchers, planners, and policy makers to support sustainable land use and real estate practices.
- Professionals contribute to real estate and land use practices that enable resilient, healthy communities and natural environments.

PROJECT STRATEGIES • how we get there

1. Build real estate professionals' knowledge of sustainable land use and real estate practices.
2. Connect real estate industry organizations with other partners to collaborate and build support for sustainable land use practices amongst real estate professionals, the public, and policy makers.
3. Support real estate professionals in their role as advisors on real estate, land use, and built environment trends, laws, and standards that help foster a high quality of life and/or serve the public interest in other ways.

British Columbia are healthy,

we want to see
in good health.
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APPENDIX 3

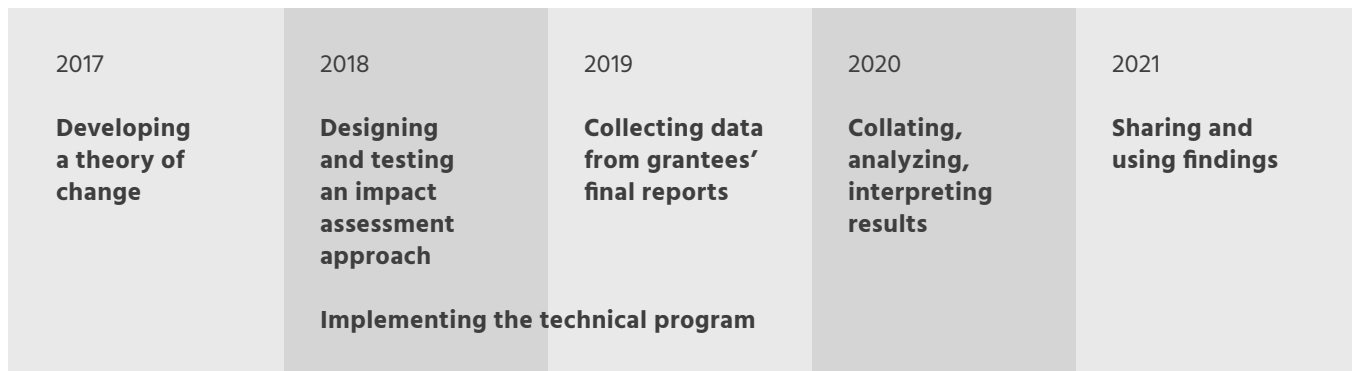
Sample: Grantees and Projects

Grantee: Project	Indigenous-led?	Interest Area	Grant Size
Gathering Voices Society: Best Practices in First Nations Ecosystems Management	Yes	Land Use	Medium
Nature Trust of British Columbia: Growing Conservation Tools in the Kootenays		Land Use	Medium
Sierra Club of BC Foundation: Rainforest Conservation Planning on South Vancouver Island		Land Use	Medium
Tahltan Central Government: Tahltan Land Use Planning	Yes	Land Use	Medium
West Coast Environmental Law Association: Coastal Resilience in the Salish Sea		Land Use	Medium
BC Cycling Coalition: Moving Active Transportation Forward in BC		Built Environment	Large
Community Energy Association: Community Energy Leadership Program Phase 2		Built Environment	Small
Okanagan Nation Alliance: Flood Risk Assessment - Community Engagement	Yes	Built Environment	Small
Pollution Probe: Smart Energy Communities Scorecard		Built Environment	Medium
Stewardship Centre for BC: Improving Shoreline Resilience in BC: Green Shores 2016-2019		Built Environment	Large
Cowichan Station Area Association: Local Watershed Management Through Ecosystem-Based Planning		Fresh Water	Medium
Green Bricks Education Society: Green Bricks Water Workshop H24 (for Grade 4 students)		Fresh Water	Medium

Note: In this report, ‘small’ grants are \$19,999 or less; ‘medium’ grants are between \$20,000 and \$99,999; and ‘large’ grants are \$100,000 or more.

Grantee: Project	Indigenous-led?	Interest Area	Grant Size
Okanagan Nation Alliance: Developing Water Responsibilities Plans Using the Syilx Methodology	Yes	Fresh Water	Medium
Skeena Knowledge Trust: Knowledge Management in the Skeena Watershed		Fresh Water	Small
Watershed Watch Salmon Society: Building Resilience and Capacity in the Coquitlam Watershed		Fresh Water	Medium
Wildsight: Columbia River Field School		Fresh Water	Small
Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society: Cultivating the School Food System		Food Lands	Large
Canada Green Building Council: The Race to Reveal: Industry Leadership Towards Disclosure and Labeling		Real Estate Profession	Medium
Canada Green Building Council: The Transition to Zero: Improving BC's Building Stock		Real Estate Profession	Large
LandlordBC: The Landlord Registry™		Real Estate Profession	Medium
Victoria Real Estate Board: Everything You Need to Know About Suites		Real Estate Profession	Small

Methodology



Process

2017: Developing REFBC theory of change and impact model

The theory of change and impact model are the foundation of REFBC’s impact assessment work, explaining what change REFBC wants to see, and how to get there. The model was developed by REFBC’s grants team, with input from grantees, our board and staff, and other sector stakeholders and advisors.

2018: Designing and testing the impact assessment approach

REFBC’s impact assessment approach was designed to be doable, useful, qualitative, shareable, and adaptive. We took the following steps to design and test various models and tools.

Streamlining data collection from grantee reporting

The grantee reporting form was aligned with REFBC’s theory of change and impact model to support ongoing (annual) impact assessment and reporting. The form yields data on strategies, outcomes, and impacts, and also partners, deliverables, barriers, and enabling factors.

User testing of theory of change/impact model and new grantee report forms

Grantees provided feedback on the new report form and theory of change. This user testing helped REFBC ensure the new report format was easy to use and understandable, and that the underlying theory of change was relevant and clear to grantees.

Pilot testing of qualitative coding of grantee reports

Grants managers pilot tested qualitatively coding the new reports in line with the REFBC theory of change and impact model. This coding also illuminated other needed data elements for impact assessment and reporting (e.g. partner sector, influential deliverables, good examples).

Prototyping analysis and impact report

A prototype impact report was created, based on data from the pilot test with staff and grantees. This allowed the grants team to refine the format and scope of the impact reporting. It also provided a sense of the anticipated outcomes, in terms of the nature and type of insights that could result from the impact assessment process.

2018/2019: Implementing the technical program

The team implemented a new online grant application and reporting process (via SurveyMonkey Apply) and integrated it with Salesforce in order to collect, aggregate, and store the impact data.

2019: Collecting data from grantee final reports

The new grantee report form was launched in July 2019, setting off six months of data collection as grantees completed their projects and reporting. At the end of 2019, 21 grantees provided data (mostly qualitative) through their final reports for the July-December 2019 period.

2020: Collating, analyzing and interpreting results

Coding and sorting data – the ‘Coding Panel’

A small panel of external reviewers was convened to help qualitatively code and analyze final reports for insights and examples relevant to REFBC’s impact model. This included two external coders with knowledge and expertise in REFBC interest areas, and a consultant familiar with the REFBC impact model and process¹.

Coders rated the projects individually, then came to consensus on the strategies, outcomes, and impacts after discussion as a group. This process created robust data for analysis and reporting. This first coding panel also gathered feedback on how to improve the impact assessment process in the future.

Analyzing and presenting data

The coding panel data was reviewed and analyzed. The impact assessment “dashboard”, which provides an overview of results, was updated along with data visualizations for the eventual impact report.

Making meaning of the results

Initial impact findings were shared with REFBC’s grants team. The team discussed and identified key findings and strong examples of project strategies, outcomes, and impacts to include in the impact report, based on impact assessment findings and their own project experience.

Creating the impact report

The impact report was drafted and finalized over the fall 2020. The draft report was reviewed by a group of four “beta testers” who provided high level feedback and insights on the content; this group included grantees and a REFBC Board member. The report was then further edited by an external consultant.

Limitations

Lag time – this impact assessment includes projects that completed between July and December 2019. Thus, some of the projects in the sample were started several years ago, while others started more recently. However, they all were completed with final reports between July and December of 2019.

REFBC interests – obviously, our findings are limited by our model and the types of projects we fund; other possible combinations of interests, project strategies, and outcomes may show different findings.

Longevity – while grantees complete reports at the end of a project, the impacts they contribute to may continue to evolve over years.

Sample size – our first impact report draws on information from 21 project reports. While the data is qualitative and we are confident in our findings, the sample is not a perfect representation of the types of projects REFBC supports.

Reporting Questions

1. In one sentence each, briefly summarize: (i) the land use or real estate challenge your project addressed, (ii) your solution or strategies deployed to address the challenge, and (iii) outcomes.
2. Project timeline
 - a. Has the timeline of your grant-funded project changed? Yes/No
 - b. If so, briefly describe these timeline changes and explain why they were made.
3. Partnerships
 - a. Please list your partner organizations (name, sector, First Nation or Indigenous-led).
 - b. If relevant, please comment on your partnerships. Have there been any significant changes to your list of partners?
 - c. Was there a particular partner who made an outstanding contribution? (Optional)
4. Geographic scale
 - a. Please indicate the geographic scale(s) of your project activities and outcomes (results).
 - b. Please indicate the region(s) of BC where project activities took place and where the project outcomes (results) took place.
5. Please describe any changes or modifications to your original project strategies, budget, implementation plan, or deliverables and explain why these changes were made.
6. During your project implementation:
 - a. What were your key successes?
 - b. What barriers and challenges did you face?
 - c. What lessons did you learn?
7. Project deliverables
 - a. Report on your project deliverables (define key deliverable, progress, include relevant link and comments).
 - b. What were your most influential key deliverables?
8. Describe in narrative form:
 - a. Your most important project outcomes.
 - b. The key activities, strategies, or approaches used.
 - c. How you think this project has or will contribute(d) to impacts in REFBCs interest areas.
9. Audiences
 - a. Who was/were the target audience(s) of this project?
 - b. How did you connect with them?
10. In point form, describe how the Foundation has or will be recognized for its support during the project implementation and in the final deliverables. Please provide web links to online resources/deliverables where available or upload relevant documents at the end of this report.
11. Challenges and barriers
 - a. What is a major challenge or barrier to further progress in the area you are working in?
 - b. In your view, what is needed to overcome this challenge/barrier? (Optional)
12. Based on project findings, what are the next steps? What are the follow-up steps or projects to be undertaken by your organization or others to support action on your project outcomes and advance project impacts?



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We recognize the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish),
səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam)
Nations, as well as First Nations across British Columbia, on
whose unceded and occupied territories we live and work.