

# Request for Proposal (RFP)

**Catalyst: Community Finance Initiative Knowledge Partner**

## About Catalyst: Community Finance Initiative

The Catalyst: Community Finance Initiative is a multi-year initiative to develop enhanced ecosystem and policy infrastructure to support the start-up and scale up place-based community capital organizations in urban, rural and Northern communities in Ontario and across the country. A growing, wide range of networks, intermediaries and funders are supporting this initiative including foundations, financial institutions, . Collectively, these organizations have identified both a need and an opportunity to catalyze the local community finance movement in Ontario and through partnerships across the country. This effort builds upon the recent work of Impact Response and Scaling Impact, including convening of community capital stakeholders in Ontario in fall 2020, as well as the longstanding efforts of individuals and institutions across Ontario that have been engaged in this work for decades. For more information about Catalyst, please visit: <https://catalystcommunityfinance.ca/>

## What is community finance?

Community finance, also known as place-based impact investing, refers to the local deployment of impact capital, meaning that investments are made with the intention of generating both financial returns and community benefit to address the needs of particular communities, regions, or ecosystems. Specifically, community finance uses repayable financing and equity investment to support the startup or growth of enterprises, organizations or projects that look to achieve specific community outcomes. The movement is growing rapidly, as capital moves into the impact investing sector at unprecedented rates seeking local impact.

Around the world, this approach to investing primarily occurs through funds and credit unions that aggregate local capital to finance local organizations, enterprises and projects. Because community needs vary, place-based funds typically invest in a variety of sectors, business types, and impact areas. These funds also leverage local capital from a variety of investor types, including high-net worth individuals, local foundations, corporations, governments, and the general public. This form of impact investing provides funds with the unique ability to bring private capital, public resources, and philanthropic assets together to build a stronger and more resilient community.

There are many examples of community financial institutions in Ontario, from VERGE Capital to DUCA Credit Union to Community Futures of Prince Edward Lennox Addington. These organizations provide critical financing to a range of entities from lending to small businesses on Main Street to providing debt financing for affordable housing projects.

For more information, please read our [Medium primer](#).

## Ecosystem Building Project

Supported by the Government of Canada, Catalyst partners will be working with individual and regional community finance partners across Canada, on an ecosystem building project to help build a stronger social finance ecosystem, with particular focus on technical and capacity building infrastructure. In particular, Catalyst will be seeking to achieve the following two core objectives over the next 12 - 18 months:

- Enhance capacity building infrastructure for community finance funds that supports improved start-up and scale-up of operations, and embeds equity into business practice; and
- Enhance technical infrastructure and knowledge resources for community capital institutions.

Ultimately, the Catalyst partners are seeking to achieve the following outcomes:

- Community finance funds and networks have been strengthened by having greater access to shared technical infrastructure, capacity building resources and programs, and expanded collaboration (with whom) and networks.
- Greater knowledge of back office technology needs, infrastructure gaps, and capacity gaps of community finance intermediaries;
- Improved effectiveness, efficiency, and scalability of community finance intermediaries, including increased capability and speed of new and more diverse intermediaries to start operations; and
- Improved long-term outcomes and alignment of capital towards equity for SPOs seeking investment from community capital institutions.

## Knowledge Partner Contractor Role

Catalyst is seeking a service provider (firm, individual or collaborative) to support the development of knowledge products including case studies and feature articles or resources with technical knowledge for community finance intermediaries.

## Scope of Work

The work includes the following activities:

- **Case studies** of community finance intermediaries in Canada, as well as similar intermediaries in the United States and the UK. These case studies should be based on interviews from peer intermediaries as a means of capturing and sharing their insights and lessons learned.
- **Feature articles and resources** on community finance, including articles covering the insights and activities of this project. These resources may include a range of different formats including feature writing, podcasts, videos, or other media as recommended by the Knowledge Partner.
- Activities to help **translate knowledge** for partners and key stakeholders, derived from the products and programs of the Catalyst initiative, particularly our infrastructure development project and capacity building programs.

## Deliverables

The required deliverables for this project include:

- **Knowledge Plan:** A plan outlining milestones, timelines, and deliverables for knowledge products and the delivery of these products.
- **Knowledge Assets:** Develop and refine knowledge assets including case studies and feature articles and resources for community finance institutions.
- **Knowledge Translation:** Mechanisms and methods to deliver and translate the knowledge products to target stakeholders, including translation of materials and insights from infrastructure and capacity building programs of the Catalyst initiative. For example, this may involve selecting course modules from the cohort-based capacity building program to be translated for a wider audience.

These knowledge assets should be freely made available to all stakeholders via Creative Commons license or equivalent, and further, these assets should be available for posting or re-posting without restriction by partner or non-partner organizations.

## Target Audience

This engagement is designed to support technical translation for a wider audience with interest and opportunity to be engaged in community finance as new supporters, activators, or leaders. Accordingly, the target audience for this engagement includes:

- Community stakeholders interested in community finance including civic, philanthropy business, and government leaders; and
- Active or interested community finance practitioners at an early stage of development.

## Engagement Period

The project is expected to take place between July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

## Skillset

The contractor(s) should have:

- an understanding of impact investing and community development;
- demonstrated skills in project management and relationship building;
- capability, skills and understanding of approaches to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion; and
- depth of experience or demonstrated understanding of community finance in Ontario and across the country.

## Budget

The budget for this work is set at \$50,000 for the engagement period.

## Deadline

The deadline for proposals is Friday, June 3rd at 5 pm EDT.

## Proposal requirements

### **Firm or Independent Consultant Information**

Please provide your firm's name, address, website and telephone number including information on the individual who will serve as your firm's primary contact. Include a brief description and history of your firm. Please include a summary of job title and experience of all key staff involved.

### **Approach**

Please explain your project approach, style and process.

### **References**

Proposals should include a list of at least two (2) references for similar projects.

### **Schedule, Timeline and Budget**

Proposals should include the proposed work schedule, timeline and deliverables. The contract is expected to begin in summer 2022 and must be completed by March 31, 2023. Up to \$50,000 CAD (excluding tax) is assigned for work associated with the contract.

### **Submissions**

All proposals should be submitted via email to:

Steering Committee

Catalyst: Community Finance Initiative

Email: [info@catalystcommunityfinance.ca](mailto:info@catalystcommunityfinance.ca)

There is no specified page limit or format to proposals, as we want to be flexible to a range of formats by potential providers. However, we do recommend that respondents are concise and clear in their submissions.

## Questions and Requests for Information

We are open to questions and requests for further information by potential respondents.

Responses to questions will be provided on both an individual and open basis to all prospective respondents, and we will also endeavour to make ourselves available for brief information and discussion sessions to prospective contractors.