

Social Innovation

in British Columbia

April 2014

WHAT IS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

Social innovation refers to new ideas that resolve existing social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges for the benefit of people and planet. A true social innovation is systems-changing – it permanently alters the perceptions, behaviours and structures that previously gave rise to these challenges.¹

Social enterprises, or businesses that direct their profits toward a social purpose, are one common example of social innovation. Another example is social innovation labs, which use product design, testing and prototyping processes to develop and implement solutions to social problems.

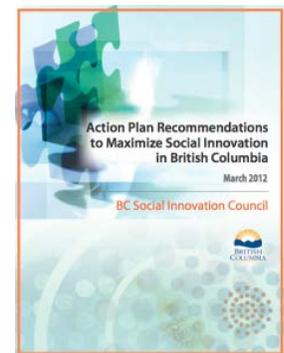
WHY IS SOCIAL INNOVATION IMPORTANT?

People and organizations around the world are recognizing that traditional approaches to problem solving break down when they are brought to bear on society's most complex, pervasive challenges. Because these challenges cut across the boundaries of organizations and sectors, the development and implementation of solutions must do the same, and this is difficult to accomplish with traditional institutions, structures, and policies. At the same time, the cost of addressing these problems is rising, and the resources available to do so, particularly in government, is limited. New ideas, and new ways of thinking, are necessary to meet the growing demand for services, as well as to develop effective preventative strategies.

WHAT IS B.C. DOING TO FOSTER SOCIAL INNOVATION?

In January 2011, the Government of British Columbia convened the BC Social Innovation Council to make recommendations “on how best to maximize social innovation...with an emphasis on social finance and social enterprise.” In March 2012, the Council presented its Action Plan, which contains 11 recommendations that chart out a course of action for the province. The recommendations focus on supporting social enterprise; exploring new approaches to collaborative problem solving; engaging communities in social innovation; learning and research; and ensuring B.C.'s legislative and regulatory framework enables social innovation, social finance and social enterprise.

In the Action Plan, the Council recommended the creation of a multi-sector group of partners to work toward implementation of the recommendations. That group, the BC Partners for Social Impact, was established in the summer of 2012 and continues to work collaboratively to support and promote social innovation across the province.



Since the release of the Action Plan, a great deal of work has been done. The BC Ideas competition invited people to submit innovative ideas for addressing the province's health, social and environmental challenges and awarded over \$270,000 in prize funding, provided by the Province and its partners. Social enterprise owners were, for the first time, included in the February 2013 Small Business Summit and the subsequent development of the Small Business Accord. And on July 29, 2013, the Province established a new corporation type – the Community Contribution Company – to support social enterprises to attract private investment.

¹ Source: [Centre for Social Innovation](#)

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WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SOCIAL INNOVATION?

Visit these websites for more information about social innovation in B.C.:

- Government of British Columbia social innovation site (includes the Action Plan): www.sdsi.gov.bc.ca/social-innovation/index.htm
- BC Partners for Social Impact: www.socialimpactpartners.ca
- enterprising non-profits: www.enterprisingnonprofits.ca
- VanCity: Social Enterprise and Social Venture: www.vancity.com/AboutUs/InvestingInCommunities/Stories/Social/
- ISIS Research Centre (Sauder School of Business, UBC): www.sauder.ubc.ca/Faculty/Research_Centres/ISIS
- RADIUS (Beedie School of Business, SFU): www.radiussfu.com/