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NEWS RELEASE

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Prototyping Better Granting Together

Columbia Valley and Golden funders work together

(Golden, BC)   Thanks to a series of local and regional discussions, funding organizations in Golden & throughout the Columbia Valley have a better understanding of how granting can support community development.

With the support of the Vancouver Foundation and coaching from Harvest Moon Consulting, Ryan Watmough of the Golden & District Community Foundation developed a prototype called "Better Granting Together" for funders in the Columbia Valley and Golden & CSRD Area A, BC. Funders include local & regional government, foundations, service clubs and other organizations that provide financial support for community projects.

The Better Granting Together prototype was developed during a BC Community Foundation Learning Lab, through discussions between executive directors of the Golden & District Community Foundation and Columbia Valley Community Foundation, who guessed that there were approximately $1M in funding granted from the community, to each community each year. Each Community Foundation hosted a local funders meeting (or meetings) in their community. For some funder representatives, this was first the introduction to other funders in their community. Discussion topics included:

- How much did they grant each year?

- When and how funds were granted?

- What was the focus/goal of providing funding?

- What is the funder's theory of change?

- Where are there opportunities for funder collaboration?

With this data, a Regional Funders Meeting was held in Golden & Invermere, with funders for both communities connected via videoconference in the Golden CBT Boardroom and the College of the Rockies in Invermere. Further discussion focused on where and how funders could collaborate.

Figure: The Better Granting Together Cycle

1. Measure & Report Community Performance

Tracking the same, or ideally even more relevant data over time, will enable better funding decisions to be made.

2. Prioritize Community Issues

Once communities and funders know how their community is performing, they can begin to prioritize the more pressing issues. Surveys and Reports, like Vital Signs, can help encourage community participation.

3. Determine Funding Organization Fit & Theory of Change

Funders would be wise to communicate, determine their "best fit" for one of the community's priorities and collaborate with others so that efforts are multiplied rather than attenuated.

4. Initiate & Plan Projects to Address Priorities

This is the stage where the non profit organizations, seeing the community priorities and the funding available, attempt to meet the community's need by designing projects and applying for 'best-fitting' pools of funding.
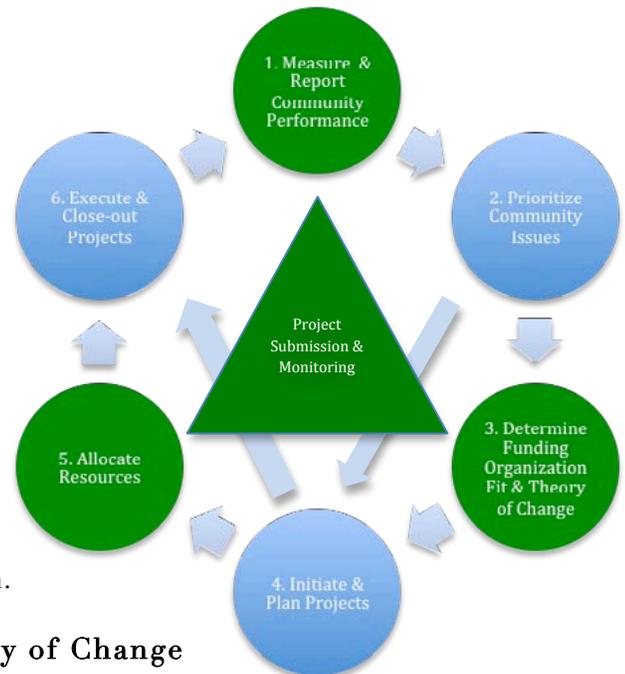
5. Allocate Resources

With community project plans submitted, it is up to the funders to determine where the resources are going, often evaluating multiple bottom-lines (e.g. community economic development's 8 pillars; Vitals Signs' 12 issue areas).

Grant adjudication should evaluate breadth and depth of the applicant project's impact; and alignment with the community priorities; and ensure that top citizen priorities receive the lion's share of the funds available.

6. Execute & Close-out Projects

Each funder's policy and procedure for wrapping up funded projects should be as simple as possible to ensure that money is spent properly and lessons are shared.

Project Submission & Monitoring

Funders should endeavor to have an application process that reflects the size of request and possible reward.

Intake Timing

While some people would like to see all funders come together and allocate resources once a year (as per business and government planning cycles), sharing their decision-making in real time so that the applicants and other funders could know which projects are supported and which are not, other funders believe that urgent community needs could not be addressed under this system.

Grant-making Software

If funders collaborated, a customizable, online grant application and forms could stream line all of the Columbia Valley and Golden & Area A funders   if not the entire Columbia Basin.

Fund(raising) Coordinator

Similar to large foundations that have professional fundraisers who work to bring in large donations, this role would help groups become aware of what funding is available, not just locally, but provincially and federally.

Photo: Representatives from funding organization in Invermere meet to discuss Better Granting Together with Ryan Watmough, from the Golden & District Community Foundation on April 6, 2016.

Next Steps

Now, introduced and experienced with the language of funding and community development, funders in each community, and the Columbia Valley/Golden region, can collaborate where they see a need and fine-tune their organization's practices toward better practices.

About the Golden & District Community Foundation
The Golden & District Community Foundation's mission is to attract and effectively grow permanent funds; provide leadership and administration that helps in addressing significant community needs; and help donors fulfill their philanthropic interests.

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