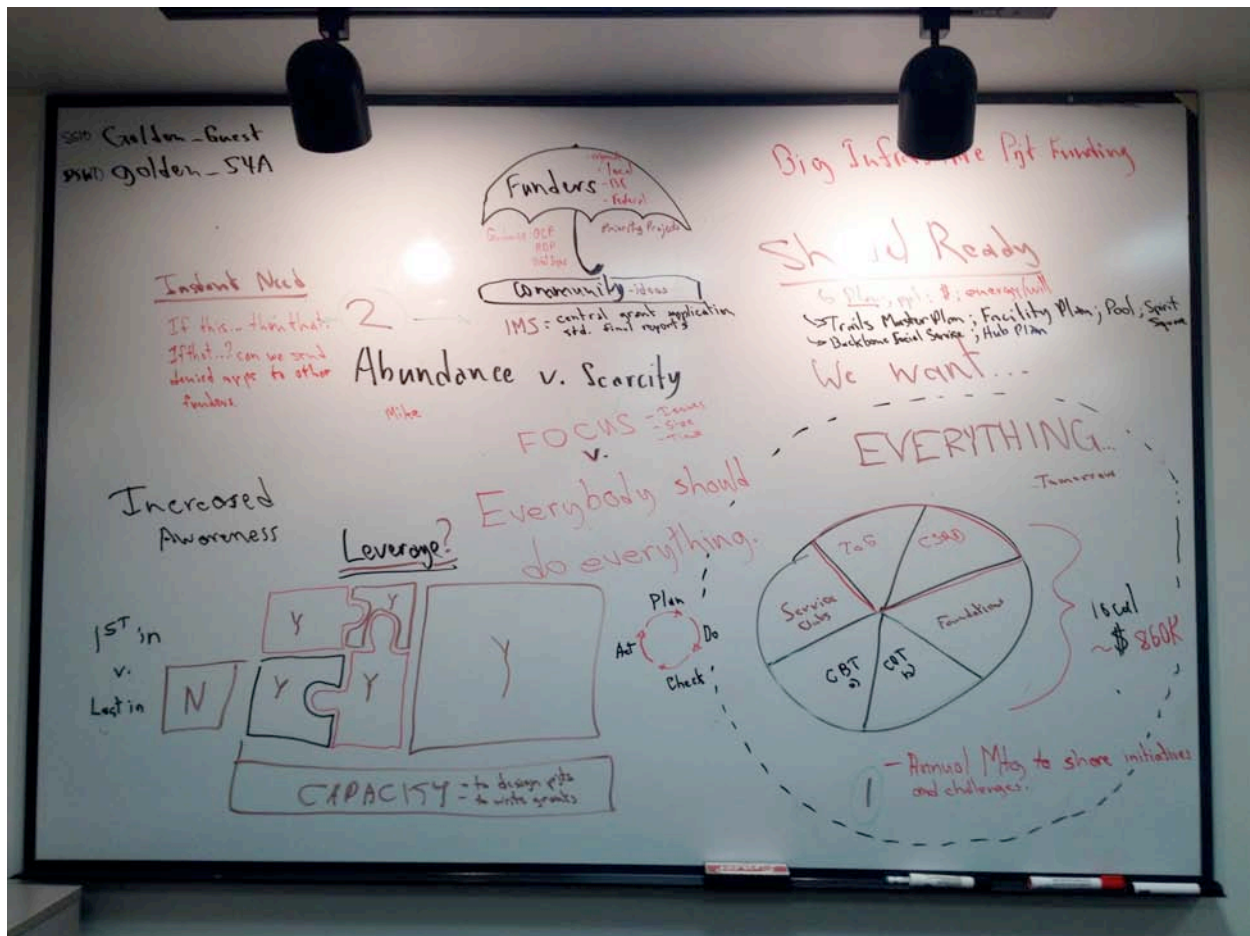


# NEWS RELEASE

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## Community Foundation Leads Funders

Golden & Columbia Valley Work Through Better Granting Together Prototype



Golden & District Community Foundation’s Ryan Watmough congratulates Golden and District Search and Rescue’s Shauna Speers, the 2015 recipient of the Mike McKnight Ski Industry Award.

By Ryan Watmough MBA, Executive Director, Golden & District Community Foundation

(Golden, BC) – For the last 10 months, community foundation leaders from across BC have been meeting and learning about how community and community foundations can become stronger. This project exploration process has been sponsored by the Vancouver Foundation and all participating community foundations. Through this Learning Lab process, as the Executive Director of the Golden & District Community Foundation (GDCF) I asked myself two questions. What are the

3 key functions of a Community Foundation? And what is the most relevant to our community and our foundation?

To answer the first question, Community Foundations exist to a) to hold & grow donations, b) to grant funds to charities that address community needs; and c) to provide community leadership.

And for the second question, I went with (b), the 'granting' task, focusing on "who," "how" and "why" we, and other funders in the community, grant to "what" and "where." This became the basis of the Better Granting Together prototype, which I developed, tested and adjusted over the better part of a year.

As a local citizen, and even as a non profit or charity volunteer, you may be asking yourself, "Why do this project now?"

In this low interest rate environment, our community foundation has seen decreasing investment returns and it is the interest from our endowment funds that we grant out. It is more important than ever before to make sure that our funding decisions address community capacity, sustainability and scale – both with the funded projects' target populations and across the community population.

Communities in the Basin will see an increase in funds from Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) over the next 2 years. With this windfall of funds for our communities, it is critical that Community Foundations back up their claim of community leadership so local organizations can make the most of these funds and improve the quality of life for all residents.

In Golden & Area A, a community of 6,766 people, there are more than 15 grant streams and over \$850,000 available each year to local projects. My hypothesis is that if funders know what each other is doing, we can align ourselves so that communities priorities are better supported and, eventually, better community-addressing projects are developed.

Starting in Golden & the Columbia Valley, local service clubs and community foundations are raising their level of community leadership through a series of face-to-face (local) and videoconference (regional) meetings between 'grant advisory committees.' Looking at issues like issue prioritization, decision-making, leverage, collaboration, grant size/impact, alignment and gaps, participants have been gaining an appreciation for their organization's role, responsibility, capability, and those of the applicants. Over the course of the prototype, which will also include the creation and update of a 'community grant continuum,' funders may become better aligned and able to serve their community.

On December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the GDCF hosted representatives from all local funders in Golden to hear about the "who," "how" and "why" they grant to "what" and "where." The 13 representatives represented 13 funding sources. We all listened as they shared their perspectives on granting and community development. Collectively, all of the funders are trying to do similar things, but in very different ways using their own unique "Theory of Change."

Funders can become more effective if they examine and understand their "Theory of Change." The term Theory of Change can be thought of as, "How does your organization plan activities so that you make an improvement in blank?" (Insert your organization's cause or priority here.)

Often funders know what or who they are focused on helping. But it should not be assumed that just because your organization has been around for a long time, you know your target or goal or how to achieve it. In fact, it is good practice for funders to review their Theory of Change on a regular basis. (If you haven't done so recently, why not try it BEFORE your organization's next strategic planning/budgeting cycle?)

In April, the Columbia Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) will be mirroring Golden and hosting a similar conversation with Invermere and area funders.

According to CVCF's Executive Director, Laurie Klassen, "There is real interest and support for this initiative in our area. This will truly be a first for us."

The findings from the Columbia Valley meeting will be compiled and shared with funders in Golden, too. Then, a virtual meeting of funders from both communities will connect all of these funders and commonalities and differences between funders and communities will be noted.

In the end, we don't know where this prototype will go or what change it will bring. However, we do know that connecting people with similar goals is advantageous.

Perhaps this will better align local funders. Or it could align local community developers. Maybe it will result in some regional collaboration. We don't know until we hold the time and space for this opportunity to happen.

To learn more about the Better Granting Together prototype, please contact me at [admin@goldencommunityfoundation.ca](mailto:admin@goldencommunityfoundation.ca) and follow us on Twitter @GoldenComFdn.

***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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