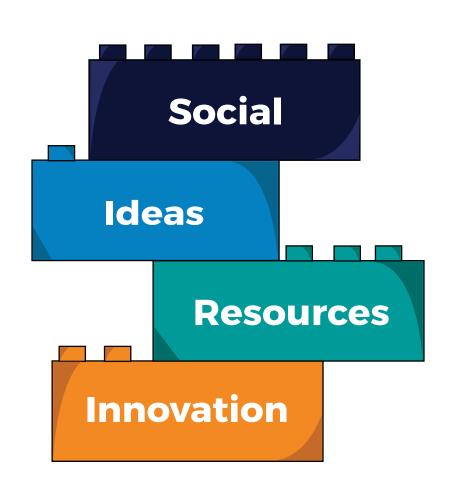


## **Mission**

Bringing together the ideas, people, and resources that fuel social innovation.

### Vision

Courageous Inclusive Communities that Excel.





# **Principles**

Empowering action through innovation, leadership, and entrepreneurship.



### **Values**

Embracing collaboration, diversity, and accountability with optimism.







### Capacity Canada: A Journey of Growth and Leadership

In 2009, Capacity Canada was founded with a bold vision: to strengthen the non-profit sector by equipping its leaders with the tools, insights, and support they need to drive meaningful change. Based in Kitchener, Ontario, the organization has grown from a regional initiative into a nationally recognized leader in capacity building, with a presence that now spans the entire country.

Over the last 16 years, Capacity Canada has worked alongside over 1,000 non-profit organizations, helping them build stronger governance structures, lead with better serve their communities and confidence. Through this work, a clear thread has emerged: when strongleadership is supported, the whole sector thrives.

Today, Capacity Canada offers a suite of programs tailored to the evolving needs of the sector — from ModernBoard, MatchBoard, and Board Governance
BootCamp, to peer support groups, coaching for executive directors, and design thinking initiatives that help teams uncover new and creative solutions to complex challenges.

Board Governance BootCamp is a program that has welcomed over 1,500 participants, empowering leaders to govern with clarity, confidence, and a shared commitment to their mission.

Programs like ModernBoard are evolving to reflect the way governance is shifting from a focus on individual directors to collective leadership at the board level. Instead of supporting board members in isolation, Capacity Canada is increasingly working with entire boards, helping them

align around mission, values, and shared accountability. This shift represents a deeper investment in organizational leadership and long-term effectiveness.

Capacity by Design, NFP
Assessment Services, and other
offerings continue to grow in
demand as organizations look
for new ways to understand their
capacity, engage with stakeholders, and plan with clarity.
These programs allow teams to
step back, reflect, and re-imagine how they work — fostering
innovation, resilience, and alignment at every level.

The Creative Day for Social Good initiative has worked with 175 charities over the past 14 years, engaging over 1,300 People

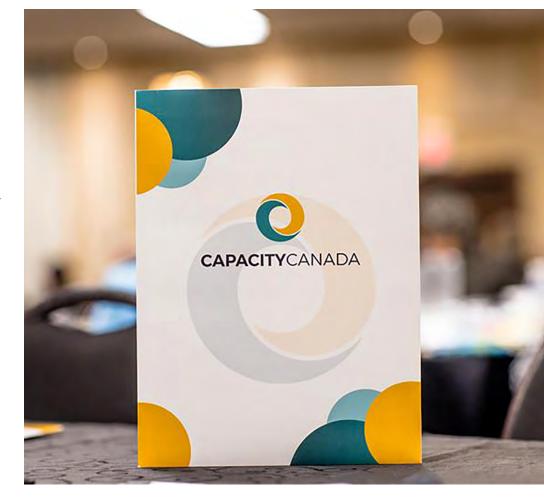
Their work is grounded in collaboration, innovation, and a belief that meaningful change begins with people.

Conestoga College students to develop an estimated \$1.5 million worth of professional marketing materials. This unique program demonstrates Capacity Canada's commitment to collaboration across sectors and to giving nonprofit organizations the creative tools they need to tell their stories and reach new audiences.

The organization's impact reaches far beyond training and workshops. Through mentoring, coaching, and peer-to-peer learning, Capacity Canada creates spaces where leaders can learn from one another and grow together. Initiatives like the Open Hearth Women's Leadership project, funded by the federal Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE), and the Board Chair Peer Group reflect a deep commitment to inclusive leadership and longterm sustainability in the sector.

What has remained constant throughout this growth is the dedication of Capacity Canada's staff and facilitators, who bring the organization's vision to life every day to create a world where social good flourishes because non-profit leaders are strategic, courageous, and well-supported. Their work is grounded in collaboration, innovation, and a belief that meaningful change begins with people.

As Capacity Canada looks to the future. its mission remains clear to stand beside non-profit leaders, helping them navigate complexity, innovation, and lead with confidence. Together, we are not just strengthening organizations; we are shaping a more resilient, connected, and compassionate Canada.





#### Honouring a Lifetime of Leadership: Cathy Brothers Named Kitchener-Waterloo Citizen of the Year

Capacity Canada's CEO Cathy Brothers was recognized as the 64th Kitchener-Waterloo Citizen of the Year, 2024, a well deserved acknowledgment of her remarkable contributions to the community. Known as a leader of leaders, Cathy has spent more than five decades shaping the landscape of social services, governance, and non-profit leadership in Canada.

Cathy's career is defined by a deep commitment to strengthening organizations and fostering innovation. From her early roles in community services at St.

Mary's Hospital to her tenure as Executive Director at Carizon Family & Community Services, she has been a guiding force for countless initiatives that support individuals and families.

Her passion for social policy also led her to the classroom. where she shared her expertise with students at the University of Guelph. In 2010, Cathy took on a new challenge as the founding CEO of Capacity Canada, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering other non-profits through collaboration, governance training, and leadership development. Under her stewardship, Capacity Canada has grown into a vital resource for organizations nationwide, bridging sectors and driving meaningful change.

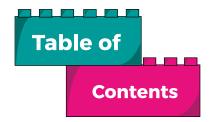
Beyond all her professional achievements, Cathy has been a dedicated board member for numerous organizations, including St. Jerome's University, the Rotary Club of Kitchener-Westmount, and St. Mary's General Hospital. Her influence extends far beyond boardrooms; she is a mentor, a visionary, and a steadfast advocate for building stronger communities.

Cathy's impact has not gone unnoticed, She has been celebrated as one of Laurier's 100 Alumni of Distinction and received the St. Mary's Mission Legacy Award for her outstanding service. Now, with the Citizen of the Year honour, she joins a distinguished group of past recipients whose contributions have shaped Kitchener-Waterloo.

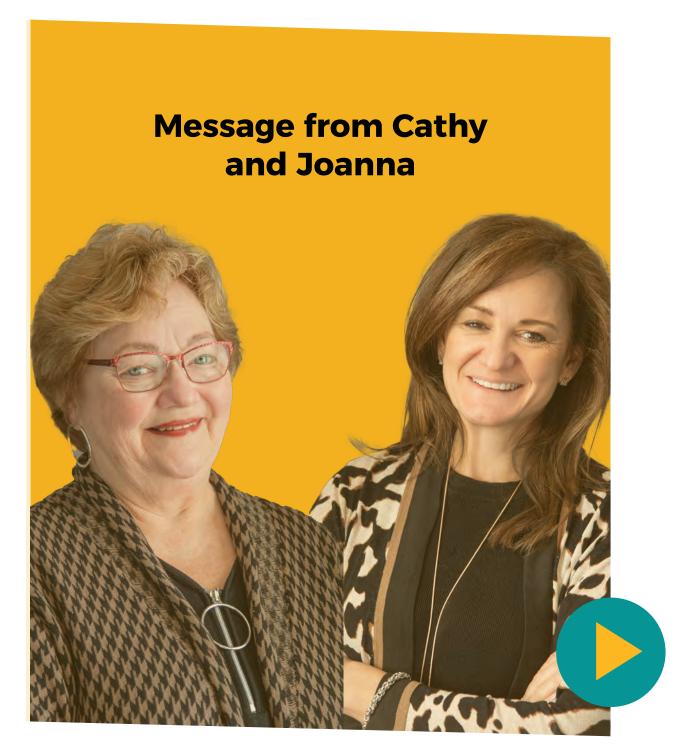
Reflecting on this recognition, Cathy shares, "I am grateful to live in a community in which I can work hard and be myself,, and feel loved and valued by so many beautiful friends."

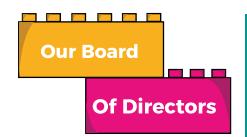
The Citizen of the Year Award, hosted by the Lions Club of Kitchener, has been a tradition since 1957. It celebrates individuals whose leadership and service leave a lasting imprint on the community. Cathy's dedication makes her a fitting addition to the list — a leader whose work continues to inspire and uplift those around her.





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Cathy Brothers CEO





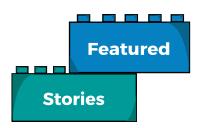




**Jeanette Bancarz Board Member** 









**Susy Martins Board Member** 

### **Powering Leadership Through Strategy and Heart: Susy Martins' Story**

Susy Martins knows what it means to lead through change. With a career that's has taken her around the globe and through some of the world's most environments business, she brings a sharp strategic lens – and a deep commitment to people – to every room she enters.

As the Founder and CEO of Advise2Rise, Susy is a trusted advisor to senior executives navigating growth, transformation, and leadership development. Her path has spanned continents and industries, from tech start-ups scaling at breakneck speed to industrial powerhouses managing billion-dollar budgets. Susy has built high-performing teams, led international expansions, and designed workforce models that are both future-ready and grounded in values.

But what sets Susy apart isn't just her business acumen – it's her ability to bridge human potential with strategic ambition.

Her relationship with Capacity Canada began in the early days of the Match board program when she joined as part of the inaugural Manu life cohort. That first board experience — with St. Mary's sparked a new perspective. "It was my first time stepping into board work," Susy says. "I saw how much learning and leadership can happen in that space – not just for the board, but for the organization. It made a lasting impression."

Now a board member herself. Susy sees this as both a full-circle moment and an opportunity to pay it forward. "Capacity Canada opened the door for me. Joining the board was a chance to give back – to support the next wave of leaders and to help guide the organization as it continues to scale its impact."

Susy's commitment to the community runs deep. Shes a first-generation Canadian of Portuguese heritage, she's served on boards supporting healthcare, refugee resettlement, and youth development. She's a multilingual advocate for inclusion, a mentor to emerging leaders, and a vocal champion for creating space where every voice is heard. At Capacity Canada, Susy brings clarity and momentum her sharp understanding of governance, coupled with her global insight and people-first approach, strengthens the organization's ability to help others lead with confidence and purpose.

### **A Commitment to** Community

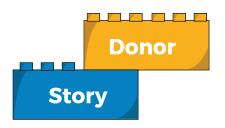
When Michael Lanteigne first stepped into the world of non-profit governance through Capacity Canada's MatchBoard program, he was looking to give back. What he found was something more – a deep connection to a sector powered by purpose, people, and the belief that everyone has a role to play in shaping stronger communities.

Michael began his career at Manulife, where he participated in the CPA development program, rotating through various finance teams while earning his designation. Over the years, he led multiple teams across the Group Benefits business – from underwriting and sponsor risk to analytics and operations – before taking on his current role as Vice President of Finance & Actuarial. Group Benefits, Equitable.

Though his professional life has been rooted in numbers and strategy, Michael has always carved out time to serve his community. He currently sits on the boards of Capacity Canada and the Elmira Golf Club. For Michael. non-profit governance isn't just a sideline – it's a meaningful way to contribute. "I've always been impressed by what Capacity Canada stands for." he shares. "Matchboard was my first exposure to volunteering in this way, and it was a great experience. I feel like I owe a lot to the organization for helping me get started and joining the board was a way to give back."

"I've always been impressed by what **Capacity Canada** stands for."







"It's really about people helping people."

# A Shared Vision for Stronger Communities: Dave and Jan's Story

Capacity Canada's work deeply resonates with Dave Jaworsky – and has for many years, his belief in the power of local non-profits spans decades, dating back to his time on the grants committee of the local community foundation. During that time, while visiting dozens of community organiztions, Dave first identified the gaps. Although passion and commitment were abundant. many of these groups lacked the structure, strategy, or tools to reach their full potential. They were unaware of what they didn't know - and lacked access to the necessary support.

When Cathy Brothers first shared the idea of Capacity Canada, something clicked. Dave was serving on the boards of the Chamber of Commerce and Communitech at the time – organizations focused on helping

small businesses and startups succeed. Why not apply the same logic to the non-profit sector? The need was clear, the model made sense, and the timing was right.

Today, Dave and Jan, are among Capacity Canada's most loyal supporters. "It's really about people helping people," Jan says. "Capacity Canada has attracted smart, capable individuals who are eager to share their expertise to mentor organizations that need it the most."

For Dave, Cathy's leadership truly stands out. "Cathy has always possessed a rare mix of vision, tenacity, and heart. The organization exists today because of her drive—and the community she has brought together."

Dave sees Capacity Canada as uniquely positioned to support non-profits through an increasingly complex landscape.

"These organizations are very important to us. They address urgent needs and help hold our communities together. But the challenges they face are growing and so is the need for Capacity Canada to scale its support system."

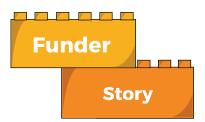
After leaving the business community, Dave briefly joined Capacity Canada as an Executivein-Residence in 2012. Shortly after, he ran for mayor. "It was a fantastic experience working with Cathy and the team," he says.

With steadfast donors like Dave and Jan, Capacity Canada is better equipped to meet the moment and continue building non-profits' strength and resilience from coast to coast.

Capacity Canada sincerely thanks Dave and Jan for their support, belief in our mission, and commitment to strengthen the non-profit sector. Their insight, generosity and encouragement make a lasting difference.

"Capacity Canada has attracted smart. capable individuals who are eager to share their expertise to mentor organizations that need it the most."







### Honouring a Legacy of Community Support: Thank You to the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation.

If you've spent time in the Waterloo Region, chances are you've felt the quiet but powerful presence of the Hallman family's legacy. From the Wilfrid Laurier University's Lyle S. Hallman Faculty of Social Work to the University of Waterloo's School of Public Health Sciences to neighbourhood green spaces like Eden Oak Trail Park, the Hallman name is woven into the very fabric of the community.

At Capacity Canada, we are deeply grateful to count the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation among our most dedicated supporters.

The Foundation's generosity and vision have helped us deliver programs that strengthen the non-profit sector and build more resilient, connected communities for years.

"We are privileged to have the opportunity to work closely with the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation," explained Cathy Brothers, CEO of Capacity Canada.

The Foundation's commitment to building a stronger, more caring community has touched countless lives. It has played a key role in building a supportive community in the Waterloo Region over the past 100 years. We are thankful for their support."

The Foundation's support directly enables two of Capacity Canada's very impactful initiatives: The Design Collective and the Not-for-Profit Assessment Service. Both programs are designed to help non-profit leaders and organizations grow stronger, more connected, and more responsive to the communities they serve — an approach

deeply aligned with the Hallman Foundation's mission: to invest so that children grow up loved and resilient, with families that are strong, neighbourhoods that are connected, institutions that are healthy, and systems that are creative and dynamic.

The Design Collective, a key initiative under our Capacity by Design program, empowers nonprofit organizations to reframe challenges by considering broader systems, diverse networks, and lived stakeholder perspectives. Rooted in human-centred design, the program replaces top-down decision-making with co-creation, ensuring that the people most affected by an issue are at the heart of designing solutions.

This approach helps organizations uncover root causes, generate innovative strategies, and deliver community-driven results.

One of the many nonprofit organizations that have received our support through the Design Collective includes Adventure4Change (A4C). Based in Waterloo. A4C is a nonprofit organization with one goal - to prevent poverty and negative life trajectories by inspiring self-discovery using the A4C model to enable communities to make meaningful contributions to society. The organization offers year-round programming for children, youth, parents, and families who live in vulnerable and low-income neighbourhoods in Waterloo, several of whom are from newcomer backgrounds. By supporting this work, the Hallman Foundation is investing in long-term change that reflects



"We're proud to walk alongside partners who share our belief in long-term, meaningful impact." its commitment to healthy institutions and dynamic systems. "Supporting organizations such as Capacity Canada allows us to invest in community-driven solutions, upstream, ," said Jim Hallman of the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation. "We're proud to walk alongside partners like Capacity Canada who share our belief in long-term, meaningful impact."

The Hallman Foundation also supports our Not-for-Profit Assessment, a pilot program helping charities and non-profit organizations across Canada gain a clearer understanding of their capacity and direction. Through structured, facilitated assessments, leadership teams receive data-driven insights into their strengths and opportunities for improvement. These insights spark alignment among executive directors, staff, and boards, leading to strategic action, improved operations, and ultimately, more significant impact.

Since its founding in 2003, the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation has granted over \$90 million to initiatives that reflect its core mission: advancing health, education, and children's well-being. Today, it contributes more than \$15 million annually, supporting more than 100 local organizations and grassroots efforts. The Foundation's philosophy of engaged philanthropy - investing early, building long-term relationships, and supporting partners beyond financial contributions continues to set a powerful example.

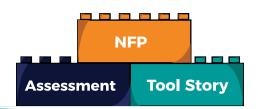
The Foundation represents the values of its founder, Lyle S. Hallman, whose lifelong commitment to improving the lives of others lives on through every project it touches. Whether funding preventative health programs, championing early childhood development, or strengthening non-profit capacity, the Foundation's support is

always guided by a commitment to upstream solutions and longterm community growth.

Capacity Canada extend the deepest thanks to Jim Hallman and the entire team at the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation. Your enduring partnership has made an immeasurable difference to Capacity Canada and generations of changemakers in Waterloo Region and beyond.

In 2001, Lyle Hallman was inducted as a member of the Order of Canada by the former Governor General, The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson.

# EHALLMAN foundation





**NFP Organizational Assessments and Capacity Building: Strengthening** Non-profit Growth, Adaptability, and Impact

Capacity Canada's pilot Not-for-Profit Assessment Service continues to help charities and non-profit organizations across Canada to gain a clearer and better understanding of their organizations, align leadership, and take strategic steps toward greater impact.

Through structured assessments, leadership teams receive a candid view of their strengths and areas for improvement, sparking conversations that lead to alignment, focus, and action. This data-driven approach gives executive directors and CEOs the insights they need to energize their boards and staff, strengthen operations, and position their

organizations for long-term success.

Organizational assessments are available on a standalone basis. but Capacity Canada is working with organizations to embed the assessment process into broader organizational initiatives and critical moments, including:

- Strategic Planning ensuring capacity-building efforts are built into the roadmap for achieving mission goals
- Mergers identifying premerger risks and capacity needs, and supporting post-merger integration
- **Leadership Transitions -**Informing job description, candidate search and screening, and creating a transition plan.
- New ED/CEO Coaching -Informing ED/CEO onboarding plan with organizational insights. Guiding ED/CEO self-development and/or coaching needs.
- Early Success and **Growing Interest**

Ten organizations have already leveraged the assessment service including the three organizations based in Waterloo Region – and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and bright.

"Our organization has had to grow and adapt quickly to the significant emerging needs in our community, and as many others have, we have done this on limited resources and capacity," says TK Pritchard, Former **Executive Director. SHORE** Centre. "Throughout that growth as we focus on excellent service. delivery and programs, it can be challenging to find the time and resources to take a step back and identify where we need support and change the structure to ensure sustainability.

Facilitated by experienced non-profit advisors, the service combines proven tools with an outside perspective to help organizations overcome complexity. In addition to a comprehensive assessment report, participants receive a customized workshop that helps leadership identify top priorities and co-create an actionable work plan.

"We are here to service the community."





2024 Bootcamp









Restoring Trust
Through Leadership:
Capacity Canada's
Board Governance
BootCamp Anchors
Sector in Purpose
and Practice

In November 2024, Capacity
Canada welcomed more than
200 non-profit professionals
from across North America to
celebrate its 16th annual Board
Governance BootCamp. Held at
Bingemans Conference Centre
in Kitchener, the three-day event
took on a timely and urgent
theme: Building Community
Trust: The Role of Non-profits in
Fostering Hope and Resilience.

As confidence in institutions continues to decline, this year's BootCamp created space for reflection, action, and renewal. Attendees, including board members, senior staff, and governance leaders, engaged in sessions that examined how

boards can serve as anchors of integrity in a rapidly shifting public landscape.

"Board governance is essential for building strong, sustainable organizations," said Cathy Brothers, CEO of Capacity Canada. "The BootCamp offers board members the tools and understanding they need to govern with confidence, clarity, and purpose."

Over three days, more than 20 speakers led focused on discussions on topics ranging from ethical oversight as well as financial accountability to equity, inclusion, and organizational culture. The sessions offered both strategic frameworks and practical tools to help boards navigate growing public skepticism.

Keynote speaker Nik Nanos, Chief Data Scientist and Founder of Nanos Research, challenged participants to reflect on the human cost of institutional mistrust. In a digital age dominated by fragmented narratives and misinformation



emphasized the need for boards to build meaningful connections - both within their organizations and with the communities they serve. "The work of Capacity Canada is critical," he said. "It builds communities from the bottom up."

Now in its 16th year opperating, the Board Governance BootCamp has supported over 1,500 non-profit leaders. Its growth reflects the ongoing demand for venues where governance is not only taught but also transformed—anchored in trust, transparency, and a shared commitment to the public good.

As Capacity Canada continues

to champion governance excellence, the BootCamp stands as one of its most enduring contributions to the sector: a place where leadership is sharpened, trust is restored, and communities are strengthened.

"Board governance is essential for building strong, sustainable organizations,"





### Navigating the Crossroads: Moving Forward in an Age of Mistrust

In his talk during our annual at Board Governance BootCamp, Navigating the Crossroads: Moving Forward in an Age of Mistrust, Nik Nanos raised questions about how we build and sustain community in a time defined by division. He noted that social media shapes much of that division.

"Young people today are growing up on platforms that push performance over conversation," he said. "Social media has become a space where people objectify themselves, where institutions are flattened into symbols, and where opinions that are often ungrounded in fact are shared without context."

His concern wasn't with technology alone but with what's being lost in its shadow: reflection, dialogue, and the shared experiences that build trust between people and institutions. Trust, he emphasized, is eroding across nearly every major Canadian institution, from the courts to health care to charities. "People forget there are human beings within those institutions, trying to serve the public good," Nik explained.

He highlighted concerning trends. Young people are more digitally connected than ever, but their participation in traditional civic activities, such as donating, volunteering, and organizing, is decreasing.

"Social media engagement is increasing while everything else is declining," he added. "Furthermore, most non-profits lack a formal strategy to involve youth. This should be a concern."

Still, Nik sees a way forward, one that is grounded in local action and human connection. He recalled the example of Syrian refugee resettlement in Canada, where communities across the country came together for support

welcome families. "That worked because we involved people in the process. We made it local. We made it human."

The challenge, he said, is re-engaging citizens, particularly younger generations, in meaningful offline ways. This starts with rethinking how we communicate, how we listen, and how we build trust in an environment where facts alone no longer hold weight. "It's not just about data," he said. "It's about connection. If we want stronger communities, we need to understand the mindset of the people and meet them there.

"That worked because we involved people in the process. We made it local. We made it human."











### KW AccessAbility: Doing the work better together!

When Amanda Hearn stepped into the role of Board Chair for KW AccessAbility, she knew she wanted to lead with purpose. Upon discovering Capacity Canada's Board Governance BootCamp, she recognized a timely opportunity to enhance her skills and deepen her understanding of board leadership.

"This was a chance to really learn and grow so I could better serve my board," said Amanda. "The lessons I've taken from these past few days are invaluable."

With over 200 board members and professionals from the non-profit sector in attendance, the BootCamp provided a dynamic space for both new and experienced leaders to sharpen their governance skills, clarify roles and responsibilities, and enhance collaboration across boardrooms.

For Amanda, one insight

stood out above the rest.

"Understanding the distinctions between the board's responsibilities and those of the executive director was a game-changer," she noted. "It gave me a clearer picture of how to support my fellow directors and build a stronger, more productive relationship with our ED."

As she returns to her board with new tools and perspective, Amanda reflects on her experience not only as a learning opportunity but also as a moment of grounding in her commitment to inclusive and informed leadership.

"I'm excited to bring this back to my board," she said. "It's not just about governance. It's about doing the work better together."



KW AccessAbility is a nonprofit Information and Resource Centre committed to providing an environment that supports self-determination for physically challenged people based upon the principles of choice, equality, cooperation and mutual respect.



"The lessons I've taken from these past few days are invaluable."



### Marillac Place: Governing With a Purpose

Colleen Barbeau joined the board of Marillac Place with a clear commitment to supporting young women and children facing significant life challenges. The non-profit organization offers a safe, supportive environment where residents can begin to rebuild, develop parenting and life skills, and move toward independent living.

Seeking to enhance their governance practices and navigate a period of organizational change, Colleen and fellow board members attended Capacity Canada's Board Governance BootCamp. It was an opportunity to build knowledge, connect with peers across the sector, and bring new tools and insights back to their work at Marillac Place.

Marillac Place serves up to ten

women at a time, offering transitional housing and personalized support for those navigating complex challenges — homelessness, addiction, domestic violence, or the risk of losing care of their child. Marillac Place is a critical lifeline for women seeking stability and a fresh start. As Colleen explained, "Our goal is to help them not only live independently but to thrive."

"It was our CEO who brought the opportunity to us," she said. "We're going through a time of transition, and this felt like the right moment to step back and strengthen our toolkit."

For Colleen, the BootCamp offered far more than just governance fundamentals. "The content was strong, and the learning was practical. But what stood out was the chance to connect — to learn from other board members, to hear what other charities are doing, and to apply those lessons to our own work."

As Marillac Place continues to evolve. Colleen feels better equipped to guide the organization forward. "This experience helped us sharpen our focus and reminded us of the responsibility we carry. Governance isn't just a duty – it's how we ensure the women we serve receive the support they deserve."



"We're going through a time of transition. and this felt like the right moment to step back and strengthen our toolkit."





#### Centering Relationships: A DEI Approach to Governance

At the Board Governance
BootCamp, Kelly Laurila offered
a powerful reflection on how
Indigenous knowledge can guide
boards toward more meaningful,
inclusive leadership. Speaking
from her identity as a Sámi woman,
social worker, educator, and
long-time drum keeper, Laurila
urged participants to look inward
before taking action.

The essence of her message: we already hold what we need to do this work. What's required is the courage to act from a place of relationship, humility, and truth.

"Indigenous peoples may not have used the words 'diversity, equity, and inclusion,' but these values are embedded in the creation stories and ways of being," she said. Kelly suggested that humility is essential for governance. It requires acknowledging the limits of our knowledge — what we know, what we don't know, and what we don't know we don't know. She cited a knowledge framework indicating that humans grasp only about four percent of all knowledge. The rest remains outside our awareness, prompting us to enter spaces not with certainty, but with curiosity.

This mindset is important in board settings where dominant systems and worldviews often shape how decisions are made and whose voices are heard. Kelly encouraged boards to move beyond representation and into deeper forms of inclusion, where different cultural teachings and ways of knowing are truly valued and integrated.

Kelly closed with a reminder that kindness, honesty, sharing, and strength are not soft values - they are the fire that fuels transformative leadership. "When I bring kindness into a space, it might invite others to be kind in return," she said. "That's where change begins."



"When I bring kindness into a space, it might invite others to be kind in return."

On the

Table

Talk













On The Table Talk









#### Building Stronger Communities: Insights from Capacity Canada's on the Table Talk

Capacity Canada hosted its 2nd in-person On the Table Talk on June 7, 2024, in Kitchener, Ontario, an event initiated by The Waterloo Region Community Foundation to foster meaningful community conversations.

Eleven participants, including youth, non-profit leaders, and community members, gathered to discuss challenges and explore solutions for a stronger, more resilient community.

The discussion began with participants sharing their perspectives and experiences around challenges faced within their communities. Participants highlighted a complex web of challenges, including housing instability, mental health struggles, rising drug dependency, gender-based violence, a pervasive sense of isolation.

Newcomers and international students encounter difficulties Getting resources, compounded by stereotypes, biases, and institutional barriers perpetuating inequality. Participants felt that the education system remains underfunded and talked about the role of faith communities in fostering inclusivity. Limited free activities and investments in community engagement, alongside stigma around seeking help, create additional obstacles. Participants emphasized the need for systemic collaboration to address these multifaceted challenges. The first step of which would be strengthening existing social infrastructure and fostering greater collaboration among nonprofit organizations with similar goals. While some agencies and non-profits are working to provide support, they often lack the necessary resources and coordination to make a lasting impact. Investing in grassroots initiatives, enhancing faith community relations, and empowering schools

as agents of change can create meaningful opportunities for progress.

Participants felt that effective action demands leadership from funders, stakeholders, and organizations willing to work together to address the Region's pressing issues. A unified approach will ensure that efforts are not duplicated but rather amplified for greater impact.

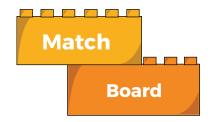
They also highlighted some barriers in achieving this level of collaboration, including under-resourcing, central silos, and reluctance to share resources. As the discussion came to an end, all the participants opined that prioritizing cooperation and resource-sharing, the community can build a more resilient and supportive environment for all.



#### **Attendees:**

- Blessing Akpan, Director, Community Impact, Waterloo **Region Community Foundation**
- TammyWebster, Director, Equity for Let's Talk Science; and Board Member Aanishnabeg, Outreach
- Victoria Baby, CEO, The Humane Society of Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth
- Charmaine Sheahan, Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Director, House of Friendship
- Paul Born, Founder BE Community, Co-Founder of Tamarack Institute and Vibrant Communities
- Leigh Savage, Residential Manager, Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region
- Jill Stoddart, Executive Director, Family and Children's **Services Foundation Waterloo Region**
- Gursimar Sachar, Financial Analyst at Manulife Financial; and Capacity Canada's GenZ on Board's participant.
- Cathleen Getchell, Supervisor, Programs, Waterloo **Public Library**
- Don McDermott, Executive in Residence, Capacity Canada
- Fableeha Choudhury, Project Manager, Capacity Canada





## **MatchBoard**



















#### **Building bridges** for social good

Serving on a non-profit board is a meaningful way to contribute to community well-being while developing valuable leadership skills. Yet, with over 170,000 charitable and non-profit organizations across Canada, and an increasingly complex governance landscape, it can be challenging to know where to begin.

Capacity Canada's MatchBoard program was created to bridge that gap and connect individuals with non-profit organizations that align with their values, expertise, and interests. The program ensures participants are well prepared to serve and that boards benefit from capable directors.

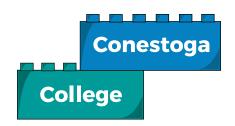
MatchBoard has been a success story for everyone involved - Capacity Canada, non-profit organizations and the employees that are matched," says Cathy Brothers, the CEO of Capacity Canada.

MatchBoard is supported by the participant's employer and is structured to deliver benefits both to the individual and the organization. Participants gain new insights, build governance expertise, and develop skills they can apply in their professional roles. Non-profits gain access to qualified board members who are committed to contributing with purpose and professionalism. Over the years, executives from organizations such as Manulife, TD, Google, Aecon, Suncor, Sunlife, Scotiabank and EY have joined the MatchBoard program. This year, RBC and Zurich joined the list.

Each MatchBoard placement is carefully curated. Through an interview and screening process, Capacity Canada matches participants with boards that align with their passions and leadership styles. Participants receive governance training and guidance to help them step confidently into their new role.

Beyond the employer-sponsored stream, Capacity Canada also offers an individual matching and training service. Individuals receive a personalized onboarding experience that includes an initial interview, resume review, governance education, tailored board search, and six months of follow-up support.

At its core. MatchBoard is about strengthening both people and organizations. Since its inception in 2011. MatchBoard has built leadership from the ground up. The program has supported good governance across the sector and has helped foster a generation of professionals who lead with clarity, commitment, and community focus.

















#### **CD4SG - Creating** real-world impact

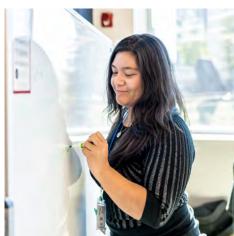
In the non-profit world, marketing isn't just about visibility – it's about building trust and making meaningful connections. Strong branding gives people a reason to lean in and learn more. whether it's a refreshed logo or a website that truly reflects a mission. These tools are often the first impression an organization makes, shaping how it's seen and how it shows up in the community. When done well, marketing becomes more than just promotion – it becomes a bridge to deeper relationships, shared values, and lasting impact.

Every year, Capacity Canada invites non-profit organizations from across Canada to apply to participate in Creative Day for Social Good (CD4SG). Around 100 students pursuing Public Relations and Graphic Design from Conestoga College team up with industry professionals to create free-of-cost marketing tools for participating charitable non-profits. This year, 9 non-profits were selected from across the country to be part of CD4SG, the various marketing tools created by the teams were presented on October 11th.

The annual event, in partnership with Intertek Catalyst, Conestoga College, HIM&HER, and the creative community, is an excellent opportunity for organizations with small to no marketing budgets to receive valuable design and marketing tools for no cost. It has made it possible for charitable non-profits to access professional resources to build their brand and have a more significant social impact. Together, the teams produced more than \$100,000 of work!







#### A day of giving back

For Jessica Braun, joining Capacity Canada's Creative Day for Social Good (CD4SG) for the first time was both a professional opportunity and a personal passion project. Drawn to the event after seeing posts on LinkedIn the previous year, she was immediately intrigued by its unique format – pairing design thinking with realworld impact for non-profits.

"I've always loved hacathonstyle events," she says. "But what made CD4SG stand out was its purpose. Helping non-profits get the design support they often can't access. That sealed the deal."

One of the biggest takeaways for Jessica was seeing just how much of a difference thoughtful design can make. "Some of these organizations came in with just a basic logo in one colour.

The students delivered new versions in multiple formats and colour options - and that alone was a game-changer. These are small changes, but they carry real weight for how a non-profit organization presents itself."

Jessica was also struck by the creative momentum the event generated. "When there's a clear mission and a focused team, it's amazing what you can create in just a single day."

For her, CD4SG was more than just a day of giving back. It was a chance to connect with a tight-knit design community in Kitchener-Waterloo and to collaborate with fellow graphic designers who share the same values. "Any chance to connect with other designers in our region is a good one," she says. "But when it's for a cause like this, it's even better."



#### **Designing with** a purpose

Now in her second year participating in Creative Day for Social Good (CD4SG), Alexandra Maurice, a graphic design student, reflects on what continues to make the experience stand out.

"CD4SG has been the highlight of my time in the graphic design program," she shares. "It's more than just a school project — it's a real opportunity to grow, collaborate, and contribute to something meaningful."

This year, Alexandra's team was matched with Volunteer Canada, a national non-profit organization. Together, they developed a refreshed logo, brand identity, and a full suite of creative materials. The team brought together students from both graphic design and public relations programs, working under the guidance of an art director and account manager - like a professional creative agency.

"It was a great experience to work in a multidisciplinary team," she says. "It helped me improve skills that are essential in a real-world design setting - teamwork, communication, time management, and creative problem-solving."

For her, one of the most valuable aspects of CD4SG is how it combines learning with impact. "We're using our skills to support non-profits that do important work in the communities, that's what makes this program so meaningful to be a part of."

Beyond the creative process, CD4SG also opened doors to new connections. "It gave us a chance to meet professionals, learn from mentors, and gain expereince into how design can drive real change," she adds. "Those are lessons that will stick with me as I move forward in my career."







#### A New Voice for our Community Wellness: The Waterloo Wellington Self Management Program at CD4SG

Danielle Hughes didn't expect to stumble upon a markeing opportunity while scrolling through LinkedIn — but that's exactly how the Waterloo Wellington Self-Management Program found its way into the Creative Day for Social Good (CD4SG) Program.

"I was online promoting our upcoming workshops when I saw a post about applications being open," adds Danielle, Program Coordinator. "I clicked through to Capacity Canada's website, and the more I read, the more it just made sense for us."

Danielle brought the idea to her team, who immediately saw the value in it — not only for the opportunity to receive professional marketing support but also because of the program's focus on student learning.

"We came in with gratitude and a willingness to trust the process," Danielle says. "Our hope was to walk away with a fresh look and a clear, cohesive voice — something we've struggled to establish across such a diverse region."

The Waterloo Wellington Self-Management Program supports individuals living with or at risk of chronic conditions, along with caregivers and healthcare professionals. Their audience is broad, their needs varied, and their message had to meet people where they are. Like many non-profit organizations, they did not have the budget for a full rebrand, but Creative Day for Social Good made that possible.

The student team assigned to their project approached it with curiosity and care. "At our first meeting, they asked thoughtful, unexpected questions that helped us see our work through new eyes. They took our history and vision and built something that truly reflects who we are."

The final deliverables included a new logo, brand guide, tagline, social media posts, and updated print materials. But it was more than just design work — it was a turning point.

Danielle expresses. "It tells a story. It's something we're proud to share. On presentation day, there were a few tears of joy around the table."

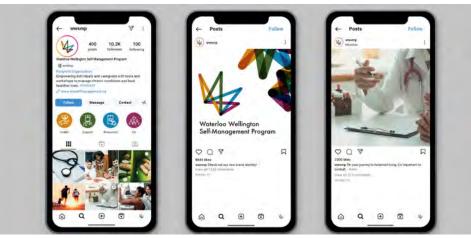
Beyond the excitement, the impact is real. With these new tools, the program can better reach those who need support, offering free workshops that build health literacy and self-efficacy. Caregivers will gain access to self-care education, and health and community professionals will be better equipped to support their clients.

"This experience has energized our entire team," Danielle says. "The work honours where we've come from and beautifully reflects where we're headed

We're incredibly grateful to Capacity Canada, the mentors, and the students." "It tells a story.
It's something we're proud
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of joy around the table."

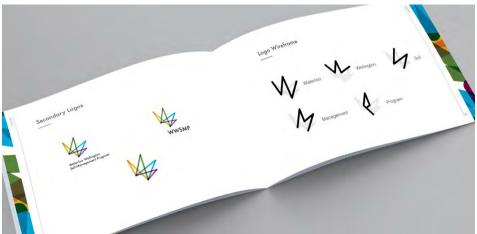












#### Designing Change: Armagh Partners with CD4SG to Launch "The Butterfly Society"

When Armagh was introduced to Creative Day for Social Good (CD4SG) through one of its board members, Community Development Manager Thanah Sriskantha saw an immediate opportunity. The timing aligned perfectly with the shelter's plans to launch a new giving program, and the chance to collaborate with a team of creative professionals was too valuable to pass.

"We knew we wanted to approach our new campaign, The Butterfly Society, from a different angle," says Thanah. "Partnering with CD4SG gave us access to fresh perspectives, practical tools, and creative minds who can bring that vision to life."

Like many non-profit organizations, Armagh — Peel Region's only second-stage shelter for women and children fleeing abuse – faces the challenge of doing a bunch with limited resources. Without a dedicated marketing team, promoting a new donor initiative posed its own set of hurdles, and CD4SG stepped in to fill that gap for them.

"Monthly giving programs are everywhere," Thanah explains. "What CD4SG did was help us stand out. The campaign they developed gave our message clarity and heart. It's professional, eye-catching, and deeply rooted in our mission."

The design team created a cohesive suite of capaign assets: postcards, flyers, Instagram posts, email templates, and branded visual elements. These tools are more than just polished visuals. They're strategic, adaptable, and purpose-driven.

Working with the student team proved to be a highlight. "They were incredibly well-prepared and professional," says Thanah.

"Coordinated, flexible, and open to feedback. It didn't feel like we were working with students. It felt like a true team." The result? A new campaign that exceeded expectations.

"The materials are stunning, and we finally have a strong foundation for our monthly giving program."

However, the impact of CD4SG goes further beyond the designs. With this new campaign in hand, Armagh is better positioned to recruit sustainable support from monthly donors. This is support that helps provide long-term, wraparound services for women and children rebuilding their lives free from violence.

"This partnership has given us more than just a new campaign," says Thanah. "It's given us a voice that will resonate in our comunity and tools for our mission."

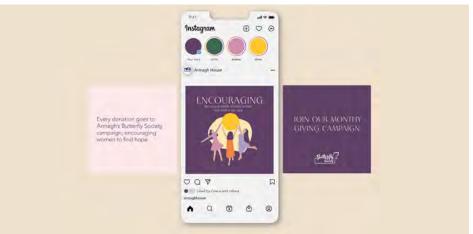
"The materials are stunning, and we finally have a strong foundation for our monthly giving program."











### Creating change, one story at a time

As a small but growing organization in the Waterloo Region, Together: For Perinatal Mental Health Inc. was facing a common challenge in the non-profit sector: not enough hands, not enough time, but a vision to create an impact.

Co-founder and Co-Executive Director Lisette Weber knows how to feels it's like to wear many hats. "We're a lean team with limited capacity," she says. "So, the chance to collaborate with students who could bring fresh energy, design knowledge, and creative direction was huge."

Lisette discovered CD4SG through social media as well as Capacity Canada's newsletter. The opportunity resonated not just as a non-profit leader but as someone who remembered the power of real-world learning. "I loved experiential learning as a student. So, I know how meaningful it is on both sides."

Together: For Perinatal Mental Health Inc. came to CD4SG looking for support to strengthen its outreach. Their mission — supporting families through the complex, often isolating experience of perinatal mental health — needed a clearer public voice. That's where the students came in.

"They asked really thoughtful questions right from the start," Lisette says. "They helped us think beyond what we initially had in mind. What they created is exactly what we needed."

The students developed a full suite of communications tools: a social media campaign, a style guide, an educational brochure, and blog content. These are resources that the organization did not have the bandwidth to create but ones that will carry lasting impact.

"Our message is grounded in storytelling," Lisette explains. "We're highlighting the lived experiences of parents navigating mental health alongside things like precarious housing or disability. The students' work helps us tell those stories more consistently, and with care."

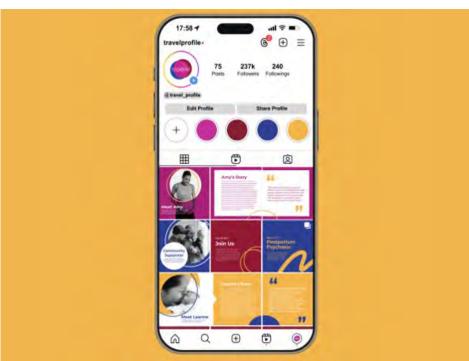
With the new materials in hand, the organization can maintain a stronger online presence, reach more families, and reinforce a powerful message: no one is alone in this. "The campaign reminds parents that what they're feeling is valid and that support exists," she says. Lisette sees the program as more than just a communications win.

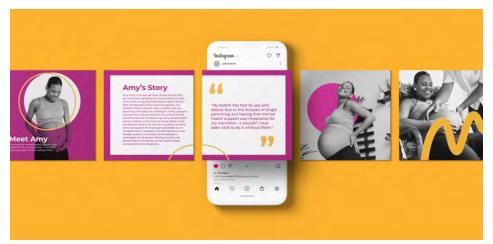
"It's helping us build our identity as an organization. And it's giving us tools we can use now and grow with." For Together: For Perinatal Mental Health Inc., CD4SG wasn't just about design. It was about capacity, creativity, and connection. And for families across the region, it means more accessible support, one post and one story at a time.

"It's helping us build our identity as an organization. And it's giving us tools we can use now and grow with."



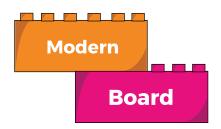












## **Building strong boards** in the non-profit sector

In the non-profit sector, governance is the engine that drives the mission's success. Board directors entrusted with the stewardship of resources and outcomes hold a profound responsibility to ensure their organizations thrive. However, despite the pivotal role they play, many directors begin their service with limited training, leading to missed opportunities for impact, governance missteps, as well asinefficiencies that ripple across entire organizations.

This is the challenge Capacity Canada sought to address with ModernBoard a comprehensive online program designed to elevate capacity of non-profit boards across the country.

ModernBoard offers more than just an introduction to board responsibilities. It is a transformational learning experience that reshapes how directors approach leadership, strategy, and inclusion. Developed in collaboration with sector experts, and delivered in partnership with Conestoga College, the two-course certificate provides a flexible, accessible format that meets directors where they are — no matter their schedule or prior experience.

Through a carefully curated blend of video lectures, reflective exercises, and guided readings, participants engage with current best practices in board governance. Topics such as fiduciary responsibility, strategic oversight, and diversity, equity, and inclusion are brought to life through real-world insights and peer learning.

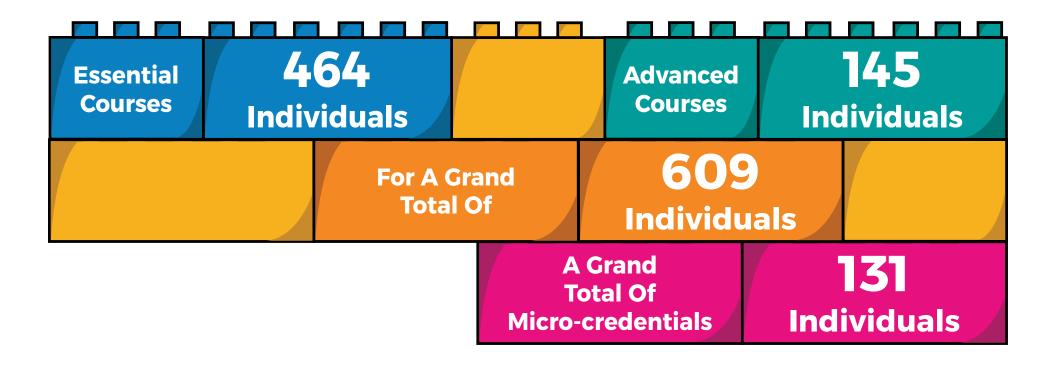
Graduates of ModernBoard leave with an accredited credential, deeper confidence, and the tools required to meaningfully contribute to their boards. They emerge prepared to ask better questions, make informed decisions, and lead with clarity and purpose.

As Eleanor Draper, Director of Finance at United Way Waterloo Region Communities, reflects, "The course material examines relevant topics that directly impact our experiences and relationships not only on the board but also outside of the boardroom and in the workplace. It provides the tools that are required to create a thriving future for us."

As non-profits continue to navigate complex challenges and rising expectations from funders, communities, and stakeholders, strong governance is no longer optional. It is essential. With ModernBoard, Capacity Canada is setting a new standard, ensuring boards are not only compliant, but confident, connected, and capable of leading transformational change.



## ModernBoard





#### Conestoga Public Relations students have the power to drive meaningful transformation.

Gaining hands-on experience and developing a standout professional portfolio in the public relations field is crucial for students aiming to thrive in the industry. To address this need, Capacity Canada has partnered with Conestoga College to address this need, creating opportunities for students pursuing their bachelor's degree in public relations to sharpen their skills while positively impacting their communities.

Supported by ambitious thirdyear students eager to make a difference, this collaboration has empowered 29 non-profit organizations across Ontario. The initiative kicks off with Creative Day for Social Good, where Alison Beveridge from Capacity Canada and Paula Barrett from Conestoga College connect with potential partners. This year, Marillac Place located in Kitchener, Ontario, was picked as one of the beneficiaries.

A highlight of this event is the Student PR Agency Experience, a major component of the Public Relations Consulting course this program provides students with the chance to apply classroom theory to real-world scenarios, such as crafting communication strategies and running PR campaigns. The students work as PR consultants, delivering tailored advice to their non-profit clients.

Organized into smaller groups with unique agency branding, students collaborate throughout a semester on meaningful projects. Through this process, they develop consulting skills, expand their professional network, and gain insights that opens doors to future career opportunities.

The Student PR Agency
Experience creates an learning
environment where students participate in hands-on projects and
reflective discussions. "Paula and
I provide ongoing mentorship to
guide students through the experience," Alison notes.

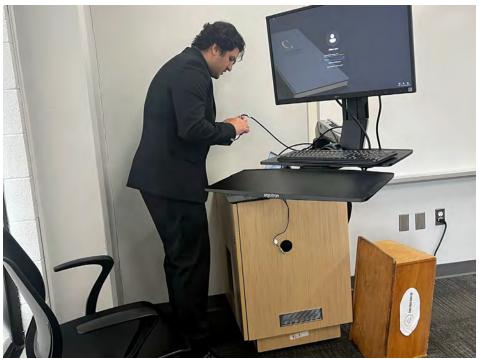
Not only do students build practical expertise and more professional portfolios, but the participating non-profits also benefit from cost-free design, communication, and marketing solutions. These future PR leaders are honing their craft while contributing to the greater good, leaving a lasting impact on their communities through their dedication to social change.

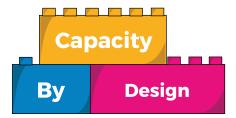














# Capacity oby Design



#### **Newfoundland Cohort**

Capacity Canada's Design Collective: Innovation Through Human-Centered Design.

When traditional solutions fall short in addressing complex challenges, Capacity Canada's Capacity by Design program provides organizations with a fresh approach - one rooted in human-centred design and collaborative problem-solving.

The Design Collective program, a key initiative under Capacity by Design, empowers teams to reframe challenges

by considering broader systems, diverse networks, and stakeholder perspectives this approach moves organizations away from top-down decision-making and instead fosters an environment of co-creation - where solutions are developed with the people they impact, not just for them.

By integrating human-centred design principles, organizations participating in the Design Collective gain the tools to uncover root causes, explore alternative solutions, and implement strategies that drive

meaningful, sustainable change. Through this lens, they can better align their work with community needs, enhance engagement, and ultimately create more effective and inclusive solutions.

As organizations continue to navigate increasingly complex challenges, Capacity Canada's Design Collective remains a critical resource in ensuring that innovation is not just about finding answers-but about asking the right questions alongside those who matter most.

Here's what some of our participants have to say.

"It's helping us build our identity as an organization. And it's giving us tools we can use now and grow with."





#### John Dinn and Leia Feltham, Canadian Mental Health Association, Newfoundland & Labrador Branch

Designing mental health support with the people who need it the most. For John Dinn and Leia Feltham and the rest of their team working at the Canadian Mental Health Association Newfoundland & Labrador (CMHA-NL), designing mental health programs isn't just about creating solutions but creating them with the people they will actucally serve.

Through Capacity Canada's Design Collective, John and Leia have embraced human-centred design, using design thinking tools to ensure programs are developed with direct input from people with lived experience. By engaging those who will ultimately benefit, the CMHA-NL team gains deeper insights into what support is truly needed

particularly as they adapt programs to suit the diverse needs of communities across the province.

Now, John and Leia, are taking this approach a step further, they aim to integrate co-design into CMHA-NL's standards of practice, ensuring that collaboration with service users becomes a cornerstone of program development. John is already using this approach through CMHA-NL's Wellbeing Learning Hub which co-develops and co-delivers courses with people with lived experience to support mental health and wellbeing. As John mentions. "These courses are developed and deliver collaboratively with people with lived experience, open to everyone."

In addition, John and Leia are spearheading staff training to embed human-centred design across all the organization's initiatives. As CMHA-NL looks to expand mental health programs for seniors, Leia emphasizes the power of listening: "They don't need to be told what they need."





#### Stella's Circle

Innovating to Meet Changing Community Needs In an ever evolving landscape of community care, Kayla Follett and her team at Stella's Circle knew that meeting participants' changing needs required more than just small adjustments.

Gathering her staff, Kayla posed a critical question: "How might we meet the changing needs of our program participants?"

Through collaboration and deep reflection, the team from Stella's Circle explored the root causes of emerging challenges, combining their collective knowledge with feedback from program participants. Their findings were clear a new program model was needed to provide more effective and responsive support.

Now, as they prototype and test modifications, the next step is to seek external feedback on a refined service model - one designed to enhance care.

For Kayla and her team, this process has been more than just an exercise in program development. It has been an opportunity to challenge assumptions, foster innovation, and create meaningful change for their community.

Simultaneously, Jackie Percy and her team are using human-centred design to help streamline housing referrals and create a road map for folks to make the process easier. "This process has helped us match the clarity of expectations on the outside with alignment on the inside." Jackie is a Residential Counselor at Housing Services of Stella's Circle. At Emmanuel House, a community-based residential program for mental health and addictions at Stella's Circle, Karen Pennell is leading a shift in how programs are developed and refined. By using divergent thinking techniques from design thinking, she is gathering fresh perspectives on how each department contributes to the overall success of the program.

This collaborative approach has created feedback loops, fostering a culture of continuous learning and staff-driven improvements. As a result, team roles and expectations have become clearer. ensuring better staff support and reducing burnout. For program participants, these refinements have already made a difference - helping individuals complete and transition out of the program more effectively.

"In order to make the best use of the new resources we have available for the residential program. I decided to throw it all

into the pot and ask the people involved to get ideas on how it can be done the best," says Karen.

By embracing innovation and collaboration. Karen and her team at Stella's Circle are enhancing program effectiveness and ensuring a smoother path to recovery for those they serve.



#### **Designing Inclusive Childcare Solutions**

At YWCA St. John's, Deanne Howlett and her team are reimagining childcare through a human-centred design approach - one that prioritizes diverse voices and lived experiences.

Through the Childcare At Work project, the organization is working to remove barriers to childcare access for all, but particularly for those of equity deserving groups. By engaging directly with women and gender-diverse parents and guardians across Newfoundland and Labrador, they are gathering insights on challenges and co-developing solutions for more inclusive and accessible childcare.

"Getting to be a part of the Design Collective was a really enriching opportunity. Exploring ways to envision community led and designed solutions felt re-energizing and getting to put it into practice was even better! Thankful for

Liz and Hugh's support in applying these concepts and to the broader collective for being a space to explore together."

This ethical and empathetic approach reflects YWCA St. John's broader vision: a feminist future. where communities are empowered and liberated from systemic oppression. By ensuring childcare solutions are designed with equity in mind, Deanne and her team are helping expand economic security and opportunities for families in Ontario.

**Getting to be a part of the Design Collective was** a really enriching opportunity. Exploring ways to envision community led and designed solutions felt re-energizing and getting to put it into practice was even better! Thankful for Liz and Hugh's support in applying these concepts and to the broader collective for being a space to explore together.



#### **Capacity By Design - Calgary**

#### **Tackling Climate Change in** Calgary With Design Thinking.

A Calgary-based, volunteer-led non-profit organization is taking significant measures to enhance its volunteer engagement and campaign effectiveness to counter climate change. The Calgary Climate Hub, started in 2017 by a small group of local citizens interested in working on climate change, is committed to supporting meaningful local action for a more significant impact!

The Calgary Climate Hub is one of the four participants in Capacity Canada's Design Collective program. The organization learned about the program when Communications Manager and Volunteer Coordinator Daniel Smithies stumbled upon the program through social media and the CCVO newsletter. "We are a

volunteer-based organization! The reason for applying to Capacity Canada's Design Collective program was to intensify our facilitation, ideation, and group organizing skills," Says Daniel.

With a primary focus on climate action, the team wanted to acquire techniques for organizing and leading volunteers in campaigns against climate change that made a difference and had a significant impact.

The team has started implementing the principles of design thinking in their volunteer groups and has successfully conducted three workshops. "Most of the feedback received is positive, and we hope to continue these workshops," said Daniel. The Calgary Climate Hub plans to continue offering similar workshops and will incorporate adjustments based on their experiences to enhance the effectiveness and uptake of the campaigns.

"It was great to see Liz Dennis and Hugh Munro in person in Calgary!" Daniel stated.

Calgary Climate Hub's participation in the Design Collective program shows how targeted skill development can empower teams to lead meaningful initiatives in the field of climate action. With their new skills. the organization is set to drive impactful change in their community, proving that local action can make a significant impact when it comes to climate change!

#### Using design thinking to inspire people to live lives worth living.

Based in Waterloo. Adventure4Change (A4C) is a non-profit organization with one goal - to prevent poverty and negative life trajectories by inspiring self-discovery using the A4C model to enable communities to make meaningful contributions to society. The organization offers year-round programming for children, youth, parents, and families who live in vulnerable and low-income neighbourhoods in Waterloo, several of whom are from newcomer backgrounds.

"These families often find it difficult to access meaningful, affordable, and nearby afterschool activities. A4C. therefore. addresses these inequities by administering relevant programming throughout the year, related but not limited to education, physical activity, and learning new skills," says Elysia Bednarek. Director at A4C.

Adventure4Change is one of the organizations that is part of Capacity Canada's Human-Centred Design Thinking Program - Capacity by Design.

"The five-week training sessions, during which we learned and implemented the teachings in practice sessions, were very insightful and thorough," reflects Elysia. Liz and Hugh gave us all the tools and guidance necessary to successfully begin running our design-thinking process at A4C, and we are excited to see where this process takes us."

The Program and Youth Team at Adventure4Change hopes to use the teachings learned through the Design Thinking process to better understand their programs and thus update and create new programs based on this process. "Our organization has significantly changed throughout the past few years in terms of both demographics and the number of participants in our programs. We, therefore, want to review and potentially revise our programs to ensure that we meet the community's current needs. We are beginning this journey of the Design Thinking program by re-evaluating one of our youth programs called Connect, and then we will move on to new and existing programs," adds Elysia.

Aiming to change the world by inspiring people to live lives of self-worth, respect, opportunity, and contribution, Capacity Canada cannot wait to see A4C's future journey.

### Diabetes Canada using the power of design thinking!

Improving the quality of life for people with diabetes is at the heart of Diabetes Canada's commitment to all Canadians diagnosed with this chronic health condition. That means connecting children and youth with type I diabetes through Diabetes Canada's D-Camps; providing healthcare professionals and people with diabetes with expert information that improves care and self-management; supporting researchers working on leading-edge treatments; and advocating on behalf of those with diabetes for equity, improved access to medications and supplies and more.

Diabetes Canada is one of the participants of Capacity Canada's **Human-Centred Design Thinking** Program - Capacity by Design. The organization's digital team has been using design thinking to complete a re-envisioning of its website based on stakeholder needs. The team consulted a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders and designed a user journey that incorporates the unique needs of their constituents. Once the new site is launched, Diabetes Canada plans to continue refining it based on stakeholder feedback.

"The whole human-centred design process was new to me. I appreciate everything about it. The cycle of developing a prototype, testing it, refining it

and re-testing it has been particularly transformative," shared Ann Besner, Senior Manager, Diabetes Knowledge and Connection, Diabetes Canada. "I like the idea that it's acceptable to pilot something that's 'half-baked', that it's okay to arrive at a product or program only after many rounds of testing and refining, and that effective problem solving isn't about coming up with a perfect solution immediately,".

Diabetes Canada hopes the design-thinking process will also help the organization develop high-quality education and support assets for its constituents. "Spending time ideating is really useful for coming up with lots of different ways to meet stakeholder needs," Ann shares.

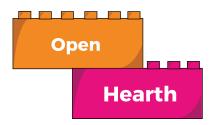
While reflecting on learnings, Ann says the design-thinking process is broadly applicable, logical and effective. "It's hard to think of a sector that wouldn't stand to gain from using human-centred design principles in its work."

Ann says she and her Diabetes Canada colleague, who were privileged to participate in the Collective, enjoyed their experience. She hopes to find a way to train more people within her team on human-centred design. "The whole human-centred design process was new to me. I appreciate everything about it. The cycle of developing a prototype, testing it, refining it and re-testing it has been particularly transformative,"



<sup>L</sup><sub>s</sub>HALLMAN foundation





# Beyond Diversity: The Cultural Shift Needed to Empower Women in Leadership

Despite increased attention to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA), women from underrepresented groups, such as racialized women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, immigrant women, as well as non-binary people and trans women, continue to face barriers in attaining leadership roles across various sectors, including non-profit, public, solo, and corporate environments.

Capacity Canada's Open Hearth project aims to increase the presence of underrepresented women in leadership and decision-making roles within the non-profit sector. In a series of stakeholder interviews, we have been asking women leaders about their experience in advancing non-profit equity and what they have learned along the way.

During these conversations, we heard about the important role organizational culture plays in determining not only the entry of women into leadership positions but also their long-term success in these roles.

Organizational culture is the set of values, beliefs, attitudes, systems, and rules that outline and influence employee behaviour within an organization. Research has shown that 77% of workers consider company culture before applying for jobs, and nearly half would leave a position for one that offers a better cultural fit.

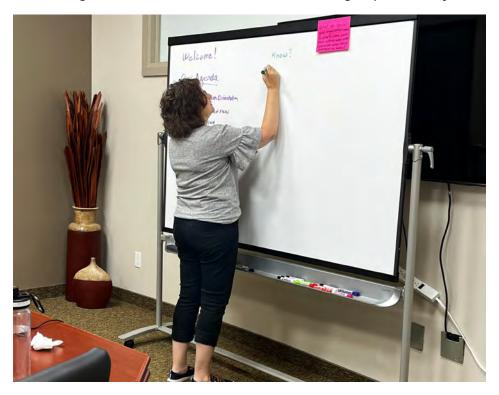
Thus, culture plays a fundamental role in employee satisfaction and retention, and for women aiming for leadership positions, it can either act as a barrier or provide a foundation for growth.

The non-profit, public and corporate sectors have developed initiatives and programs to advance EDIA, more needs to be done to generate momentum around to change efforts and to understand their longer-term impact.

We have learned that initiatives often fall short in addressing deeply rooted cultural and structural barriers that prevent women from thriving once they have attained leadership positions.

Women leaders we spoke to talked about their encounters with entrenched cultural biases, where diversity was seen as a mere obligation rather than a genuine asset. As a result, women, particularly those from underrepresented groups, reported struggling with a lack of inclusion and a genuine sense of belonging, making it difficult for them in leadership positions.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed that many women faced significant work-life balance challenges, particularly



in environments that viewed family commitments—such as parenting—as incompatible with leadership. Rigid organizational structures and inflexible work policies exacerbated this issue, limiting women's ability to balance professional aspirations with personal responsibilities. This perception was often compounded by stereotypes about women's leadership capabilities.

Interviewees also emphasized the interdependent relationship between individual and organizational culture. Several women shared that their success in leadership was directly tied to the support they received from mentors and colleagues. However, when key supporters left the organization, their progress stalled, highlighting how leadership advancement can be fragile and dependent on individual relationships rather than embedded within the organizational culture.



To create lasting change, organizations must shift from focusing solely on diversity numbers to fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging that allows women to truly thrive. Leadership must take an active role in driving this change by aligning values with actions, promoting transparency, and ensuring that diversity and inclusion are integral to all organizational systems. Moreover, leaders and managers need to ensure that changes resonate with the needs of the entire team. This leads to smoother transitions and better acceptance; helping staff see where they fit and how they can help support ongoing efforts to create more equitable workplaces.

Mentorship programs, flexible work policies, and structural reforms are crucial in supporting women's leadership, but they must be part of a broader cultural shift that addresses intersectionality, work-life balance, existing power dynamics and the stereotypical definition of leadership. Only by creating a truly inclusive environment can organizations ensure that women from all backgrounds not only access leadership roles but succeed and lead effectively.

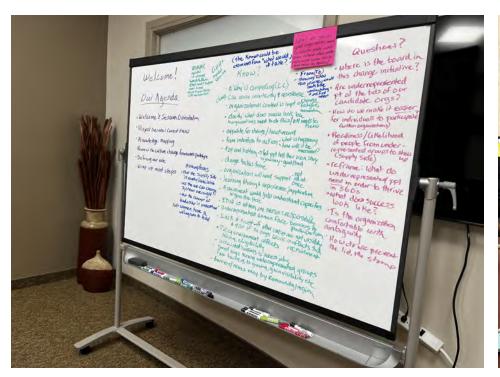
In the coming months, the Open Hearth project will be working with underrepresented women to co-design a culture change framework that will be tested and refined with non-profits in Waterloo Region. In year two of the project, the culture change framework will be introduced to non-profit organizations in St. John's, NL and Calgary, AB.



"It's helping us build our identity as an organization. And it's giving us tools we can use now and grow with.

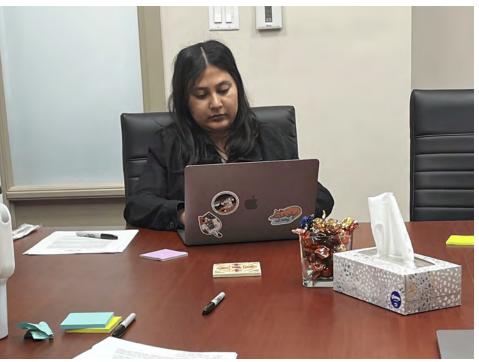


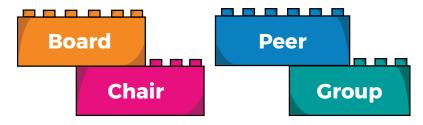
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# Supporting new board chairs through peer **learning**

When new leaders step into the role of board chair at a non-profit organization, the learning curve can be steep and often isolating. In response to conversations with first-time chairs who expressed a desire for connection and shared experience, Capacity Canada launched its Peer Group Series just last year.

The initiative brings together individuals who are new to the board chair role, creating a space where they can exchange ideas, ask questions, and learn from one another in a trusted environment.

"Peer group topics respond to what board chairs want to learn. so each peer group has had a

different emphasis depending on the interests of the group and the challenges they are experiencing," explains Jennifer King, Executive-in-Residence as well as co-facilitator.

Capacity Canada's Executivein-Residence (EIR) team plays a central role in shaping the experience. They facilitate discussions, curate resources, and bring in guest speakers to spark insight and conversation.

Now approaching the close of its third cohort, the program has already shown strong results. "We've learned a lot from the participants, and the participants have told us they've learned a lot from each other," says Don McDermott, an Executive-in-Residence and co-facilitator. "We've heard how board chairs are making new decisions or

trying different chair approaches or techniques based on what they've learned from their peers."

Participants have also shared that they feel more confident in their roles, reassured by knowing others face similar challenges and are finding creative ways to lead through them.

With plans to launch a new round of peer groups in September, Capacity Canada is committed to supporting strong governance leadership through connection, conversation, and shared learning. To learn more about the Peer Group Series, contact Jennifer King at: jen@capacitycanada.ca.

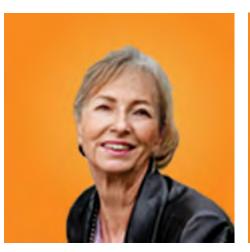
"We've learned a lot from the participants, and the participants have told us they've learned a lot from each other"



**Sharyn Ayliffe** 



**Kerry-Ann Bent** 



**Karen Backway** 



**Rachel Berdan** 



**Kris Braun** 



**Linda Brooks** 



**Meg Burns Dolson** 



**Anne Cesak** 



Mike Gallant



**Elizabeth Kim** 



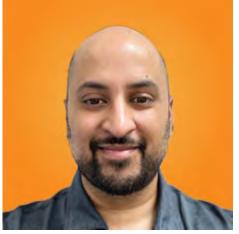
**Allyson Kroetsch** 



**Hayden Leacock** 



**Kelly-Anne Meadus** 



**Satish Mistry** 



**Pete Mosney** 



**Marg Parks** 







**Alicia Rose** 



**Julie Scott** 



**Mukesh Sharma** 



**Karen Quigley Hobbs** 



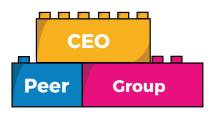
**Connie Smith** 



**Lizbeth Wall** 



**Beverly Young** 



## **Strengthening Leaders Through Peer Connection: CEO Peer Group Launches Pilot**

Leading a non-profit organization is both a privilege and a challenge. It demands vision, resilience, and clarity – qualities that are often tested in the unique isolation of the CEO role. For those at the top, there are few opportunities where they can openly share the personal and professional weight of the responsibilities they have. Capacity Canada recognized this gap and responded with a solution rooted in community.

In February 2025, Capacity Canada launched its first CEO Peer Group pilot in the Ottawa Gatineau region. The program brings together 11 chief executives from a range of non-profit and charitable organizations, offering them a structured, confidential space to connect, reflect, and support one another.

Modelled on long-standing peer support frameworks from the private sector, such as McKay Leadership Forums and TEC Canada, the CEO Peer Group is tailored specifically for the nonprofit sector. It acknowledges the complex realities of mission-driven leadership and the need for trusted peers who understand those realities firsthand. The pilot is facilitated by Scott Haldane, Executive-in-Residence at Capacity Canada and retired CFO of YMCA Canada and the Rideau Hall Foundation. With decades of experience, Scott brings a depth of understanding to his role that sets the tone for meaningful dialogue. Early feedback from the group has been very positive.

"The first two sessions have been powerful," says Haldane. "Leaders are engaging with real honesty about the strategic questions, operational tensions, and personal leadership challenges they face. It's clear there was a need for this space."

Throughout 2025, the group will meet for four more full-day sessions, each one designed to offer CEOs the opportunity to step out of day-to-day operations and focus on the bigger picture their leadership, their organizations, and the shared challenges shaping the sector. The program also includes access to quest speakers, one-on-one coaching, and facilitated peer support.

As part of the pilot, Capacity Canada will conduct a thorough evaluation to determine the potential for expanding the initiative nationally. The long-term goal is to build a community of senior leaders across Canada who can lean on each other for insight, accountability, and greater encouragement.

For Capacity Canada, this initiative is more than a new program—it's an investment in the future of non-profit leadership. By strengthening leaders, we strengthen the sector. By creating space for CEOs to learn from each other, we move one step closer to a more connected, confident, and effective community.

"Leaders are engaging with real honesty about the strategic questions, operational tensions, and personal leadership challenges they face. It's clear there was a need for this space."











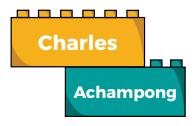












#### **Inspiring Connection. Growth, and Impact**

With a career spanning over 20 years across the public, private, philanthropic, and non-profit sectors, Charles has dedicated his work to driving transformative change and helping individuals and organizations reconnect with what truly matters. From the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics Committee to Scotiabank to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Mitacs, he has played a key role in leading meaningful initiatives that create lasting impact.

Now, as an Executive in Residence with Capacity Canada, Charles is helping expand the MatchBoard program - an innovative initiative that pairs employees with non-profit boards that align with their passions, skills, and values. By fostering these connections, MatchBoard strengthens social innovation and builds leadership capacity within the non-profit sector.

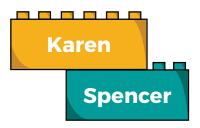
"I've always believed that when people pause and align their time, talent, and treasure with something meaningful, real change happens," says Charles. Capacity Canada creates that kind of alignment. Through the MatchBoard program, I saw an opportunity to help high-potential professionals find purposeful

roles on non-profit boards – roles where they can grow, give back, and truly make a difference. It's a natural fit with my passion for connection, leadership, and impact.

"I've always believed that when people pause and align their time, talent, and treasure with something meaningful, real change happens."

Beyond his professional work, Charles is a storyteller, keynote speaker, and author of Around the World in Family Days, a memoir that reflects on his life-changing journey travelling the world with his family. Through humorous stories and universal lessons. he explores how stepping away from routine fosters resilience, shifts perspectives, and strengthens relationships.

Charles continues to inspire leaders, families, and individuals to pause, reflect, and reimagine their approach to life's challenges through his work, writing, and speaking engagements, embracing a more connected, intentional, and fulfilling path forward.



#### **Strengthening Leadership** in the Non-profit Sector

With 30 years of progressive management experience, including seven years as Executive Director of Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region and Family and Children's Services Foundation, Karen Spencer has long understood the challenges and opportunities faced by non-profits.

A commitment to child and family well-being, social justice, and the fight against racism and discrimination has shaped her professional journey. These values have guided Karen through roles in governance, leadership, and strategic planning. Her academic background – a Bachelor of Arts focused in Social Development Studies, a Master of Arts in Social Work, and advanced certifications in Public Sector Leadership (Rotman School of Business) and Lean Six Sigma (Schulich School of Business) has provided a strong foundation for driving meaningful change.

"Joining Capacity Canada has been a deeply rewarding experience, one that builds on a career dedicated to helping strengthening organizations and supporting communities," says Karen. "Over the years, I've seen first hand the impact of Capacity Canada's work. As an Executive Director, I had the privilege of benefiting from the "I embrace wholeheartedly the opportunity to support and elevate the sector's impact"

When the opportunity first arose to join this team, it was an easy decision. It was a chance to give back to a sector that has given so much to me and to support other leaders in navigating complexity with confidence. Karen's goal is to help leaders in the non-profit sector strengthen their organizations, build capacity, and create sustainable solutions for the future. Going beyond her role working at Capacity Canada, Karen remains committed to

> "Being part of Capacity Canada is both an honour. I embrace wholeheartedly the opportunity to support and elevate the sector's impact, and I look forward to contributing to a stronger, more resilient not-for-profit community," adds Karen.

Kitchener-Westmount Rotary Club as well as the International Women's Forum. These engagements continue to fuel her passion for leadership development.

community service as Board Chair

of Renison University College

and as an active member of the

organization's expertise in gover-

nance, strategy, and innovation.



#### **Strengthening Leadership for Lasting Impact**

Marie-Hélène Lamarre is committed to empowering board members with the confidence and expertise necessary to address ethical and complex governance challenges her extensive background across non-profits, global corporations, and small businesses offers her a unique perspective shaped by real-world leadership in high-stakes settings.

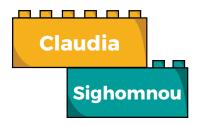
As both a CEO and board member. Marie-Hélène has steered organizations through transformative change. She has successfully negotiated international partnerships, managed multi-million dollar projects, and built consensus across sectors such as renewable energy, infrastructure, and technology.

"Empowerment fuels decisive action - Marie inspires boards and executives to lead with purpose, driving lasting impact in their communities"

Her ability to unite diverse stakeholders around shared objectives ensures organizations stay focused, resilient, and effective.

Committed to fostering collaboration and continuous growth, Marie-Hélène empowers boards and executives to act decisively and with purpose. Through her work, she strengthens governance structures, enabling organizations to deliver meaningful and lasting impact in their communities.

Her strategic insight as well as hands-on approach make her an invaluable asset in driving positive change within the non-profit sector.



# **Bridging Sectors for Meaningful Impact**

Claudia Sighomnou has nearly two decades of leadership experience in the non-profit, government, and private sectors, driving strategic initiatives that strengthen organizations and foster lasting connections. Her skill in designing and implementing programs that enhance governance, professional development, and stakeholder engagement has produced, impacts throughout her career.

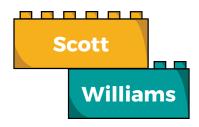
She has led large-scale training programs, overseen national human rights education efforts, and advanced international humanitarian initiatives. Known for her strategic vision and operational excellence, Claudia is deeply committed to empowering individuals to reach their full potential.

Passionate about collaboration, she excels at bridging the corporate and non-profit worlds to foster inclusive, high-impact governance. Her work ensures that organizations not only meet their goals but also develop the resilience and leadership necessary for long-term success.

At Capacity Canada, Claudia continues her mission of strengthening leadership and building sustainable networks that drive social change.

Her expertise and commitment are invaluable assets to the organization and the community.

Claudia excels at bridging the corporate and non-profit worlds to foster inclusive, high-impact governance.



#### **Advancing Inclusion** and Empowerment

A dedicated leader with over 20 years of experience in the not-for-profit sector, Scott Williams specializes in 2SLGBTQIA+ advocacy and mental health. Most recently, he served as the Executive Director of Spectrum Waterloo Region's Rainbow Community Space, where he championed inclusivity and community support. Excited to be part of Capacity Canada, Scott is looking forward to sup-

porting many of non-profit organizations in meeting their goals. "In my experience, non-profit leadership is extremely rewarding but can also be very challenging," says Scott. "I've been lucky to learn from some incredible mentors who helped me build capacity and

I'm in a position to help others do the same." Scott holds a BA in English Language & Literature

stabilize organizations I've been involved with now,

from Wilfrid Laurier University and a diploma in

Film Production from Vancouver Film School. He has furthered his skills with certificates in Diversity & Inclusion Fundamentals and Anti-Racism from the Canadian Centre for Diversity & Inclusion and Diversio. He is also a graduate of Engage!KW from the KW Community Foundation and the Leadership Waterloo Region

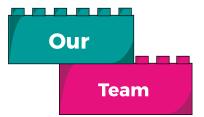
class of 2023

"I've been lucky to learn from some incredible mentors who helped me build capacity and stabilize organizations I've been involved with now,I'm in a position to help others do the same"



Scott is a committed volunteer

Scott's career and volunteerism reflect his deep commitment to equity, inclusion, and community empowerment.





**Cathy Brothers Chief Executive Officer** 



**Andrew Wilding**Director of Operations



Alison Beveridge
Director of Public Relations



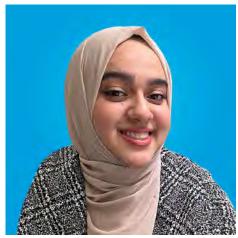
Claudia Haack Finance Manager



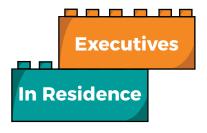
Nasreen
Director of Communications



Fableeha Choudhury
Project Coordination
and Community Lead



Fatima Awan
Director of Project Assistant









Lisa Allen



**Ruth Cruikshank** 







**Steve Farlow** 



**Diane Fehr** 



**Fred Galloway** 



**Janine Giovinazzo** 



**Scott Haldane** 



**Sandra Hanmer** 



**Erica Hornsey** 



**Andrew Jardine** 



**Bob King** 



**Jennifer King** 



Marie-Hélène Lamarre







**Don McDermott** 



Ian McDonald



**Joanne McKiernan** 



**Matt Miller** 



**Hugh Munro** 



Julie Newman



**Lori Payne** 



**Susan Radwan** 



**Lyn Royce** 



Claudia Sighomnou



**Karen Spencer** 



**Stephen Swatridge** 



Marion Tomson Howell



**Bryan Webber** 



**Scott Williams** 







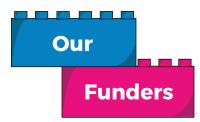
**Paul Wilton** 

**Dario Gazzola** 

Simran Kaur



# **Special thanks to**





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## **Audited Statement Of Operations And Change In Net Assets For The Year**

Revenue	2024	2023
Grants	772,282	705,440
Fee for Service	543,934	482,924
Donations	148,748	174,655
Interest Income	30,946	26,350
	1,495,910	1,389,369
Expenses		
Salaries and benefits	674,052	545,727
Contracted services	405,646	478,708
Educational events	185,221	101,406
Administration	47,139	30,415
Technology	50,936	46,742
Marketing and promotion	25,302	23,693
Professional fees	10,955	20,258
Meetings and conferences	65,564	51,247
Amortization of property and equipment	1,775	1,702
	1,466,590	1,299,898
EXCESS (DEFICIT) OF INCOME OVER EXPENSES	29,320	89,471
NET ASSETS - beginning of the year	603,968	514,497
NET ASSETS - end of the year	\$633,288	\$603,968



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