

“Convening Collaboration” in Greater Victoria: Emerging Impacts and Insights Summary

WHAT

WHAT role has Victoria Foundation played in supporting Collaboratives?

Since 2014, the Foundation has offered a wide range of capacity building supports to multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral collaboratives in the Greater Victoria region, including a dedicated Collaboration grant stream, convening, training and strategic leadership support for Collaboratives.

Why Collaboration?

When organizations work together towards shared goals, particularly on complex community challenges which cannot be solved by a single organization, there is the potential to have greater impact through working together.

What are “Collaboratives”?

Victoria Foundation defines “Collaboratives” as groups of 3 or more partners, networks or coalitions where organizations have identified a shared aspirational goal and are intentionally collaborating and aligning activities.

Victoria Foundation's Three Key Roles



**Collaboration
Grant Stream**



**Convening,
Connecting &
Capacity Building**



**Strategic
Leadership**

1 Collaboration Grant Stream

2 Types of
Collaboration
Grants

Systems Change

(2017-2023)

Shift the conditions that hold a complex community problem in place by addressing underlying root causes.

\$2,374,943

In total grants awarded



46

grants to

22

different collaborative
groups/initiatives

7

Collaboratives
supported for

3+

years,
including:

Collaboratives

- Alliance to End Homelessness
- Psychosocial Rehab Collaborative
- Food Share Network
- Good Food Network
- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness
- Greater Victoria Alliance for Literacy
- One Ability Network

Issue areas of Collaboration grant recipients



Adult and youth mental health



Housing and homelessness



Literacy



Emergency food distribution



Regional food systems (including
Indigenous food sovereignty)



Supports for people with
disabilities



Conservation and
environmental restoration



Neighbourhood supports
for families



Inclusive sports



Supports for newcomers



Climate Change

Practice Innovation

(2023)

Strengthening sector and organizational effectiveness through collaboration.

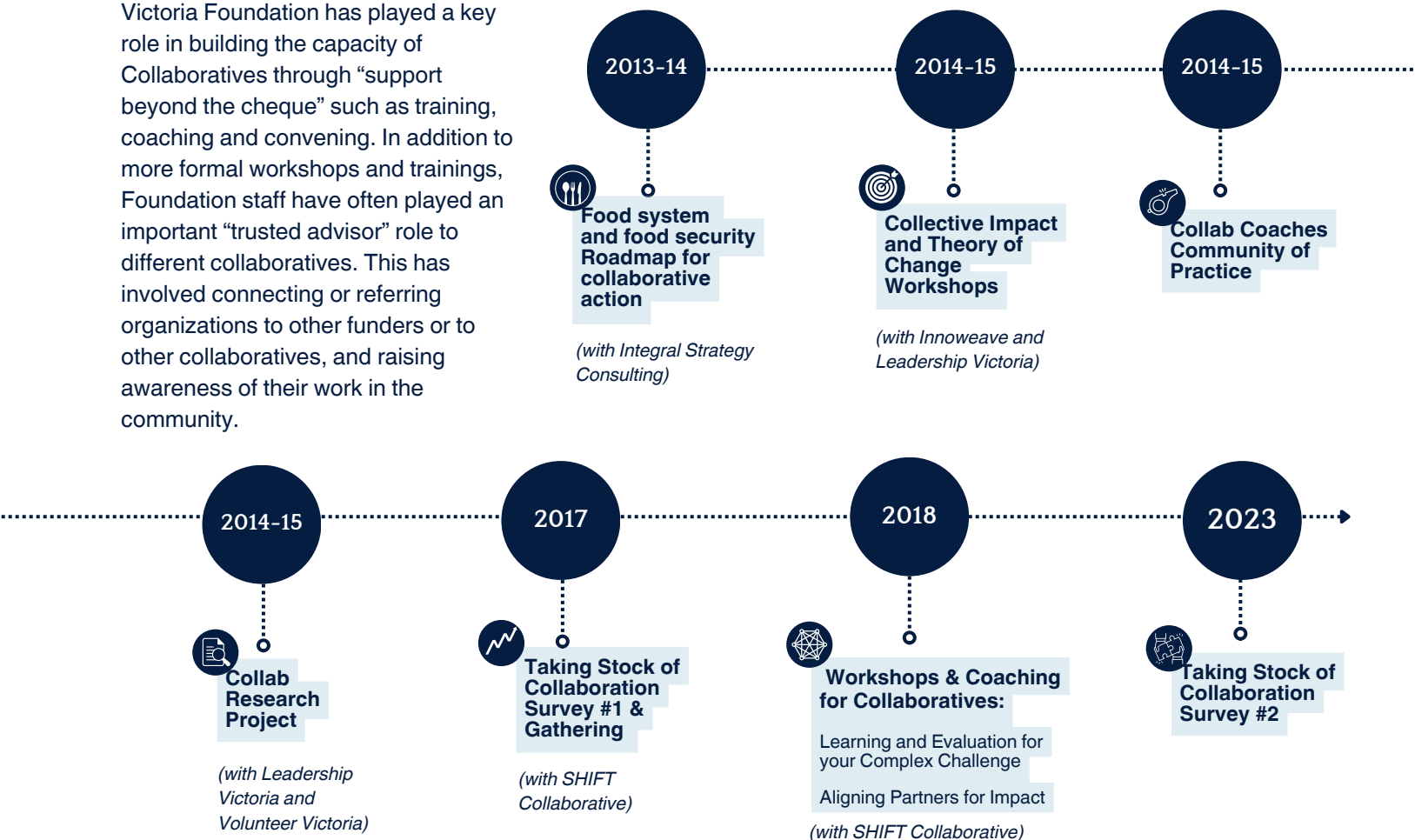
Collab Grant History

	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	2022	2023
Systems Change	6	5	5	-	4	4	6
Practice Innovation	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
	\$357,267	\$246,500	\$290,026	-	\$549,950	\$549,950	\$671,000

*Funding was distributed through the Community Recovery Grants. Some Collaboration grantees received Recovery Grants.

2 Convening, Connecting & Capacity Building

Victoria Foundation has played a key role in building the capacity of Collaboratives through “support beyond the cheque” such as training, coaching and convening. In addition to more formal workshops and trainings, Foundation staff have often played an important “trusted advisor” role to different collaboratives. This has involved connecting or referring organizations to other funders or to other collaboratives, and raising awareness of their work in the community.



3 Strategic Leadership

Victoria Foundation staff have played key leadership roles in several Collaborative efforts (e.g. Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region, Food Share Network and others) and have worked to grow investment in these efforts by connecting and convening funders around a shared focus and alignment of efforts, through raising awareness of Collaboratives' work.



Photo credits: Good Food Network.



Photo credits: XAXE ÁLENENEQ EQÁTEL TFE MEQ A Collaborative Conservation Partnership Initiative



Photo credits: Good Food Network.

SO, WHAT

SO, WHAT difference has the Victoria Foundation made by supporting regional collaboration over the past 10 years?



Key Findings

1. Collaboratives in the region report a cascading series of impacts that build over time.

Operational benefits such as funding, staffing, research, planning, policy development

Engagement of partners and others and building relationships

Supporting collaboration between organizations

Filling program/service gaps

Systems change impacts

Examples of Collaboratives' systems level impacts:

- Transformation of how food is rescued and re-distributed in the region (core practice of emergency food organizations).
- Community ownership and control of food system infrastructure.
- Development of alternative transportation infrastructure to reduce GHG emissions.
- Development of peer led social gathering space.



What 2023 Taking Stock Survey Respondents Said:

"We would not have been able to continue our efforts with collective impact without the funding from the Victoria Foundation. They are literally the key to our work."

"This funding has allowed us to put our time and energy into building relationship with other non-profits, cut down on duplicate labour and services and envision a more synergistic approach...."

2. Funding and staffing are among the most important factors that Collaboratives attribute to their success and impacts.

In the 2023 Taking Stock survey:

71%

Identified funding and staffing as one of the top three factors linked to success.

Over half of Collaboration grantees

equated Victoria Foundation's funding with their ability to innovate and pilot new approaches.

3. Collaboratives value Victoria Foundation supports that go "beyond the cheque"

Including:

- The long term nature of Foundation interest and support
- Victoria Foundation's knowledge and understanding of the nature of collaborative system change work that makes them a trusted advisor
- Awareness raising and promotion of Collaboratives' work with others
- Advocacy with other funders and policy makers

"We feel as a funder they are above and beyond other actors in their understanding of the issues and their participation in finding solutions together."

(2023 Taking Stock Survey Respondent)

SO, WHAT

SO, WHAT are we learning about where the field of collaboration is at currently in the region?



Key Findings

1. The field is maturing and diversifying.

The number of collaborative initiatives in the region has close to doubled since 2017 and overall the field has matured:

21

Collaboratives participated in the 2023 survey

VS.

12

Collaboratives participated in the 2017 survey

↓ 28% were 2 years old or less.

↓ 55% were 2 years old or less.

In 2023 Snapshot

7

Mature Collaboratives with 3+ years experience.

57%

of survey respondents have 11 or more formal partners.



New focus areas not represented in 2017: 2 Collaboratives with an environmental focus and 1 representing newcomers.

8

8 Collaborative who are first time grantees under the Practice Innovation stream.

2.

Collaborative leadership skills and partners' investment of time are key success factors.

81%

Identified leadership skills and time as key factors contributing to their success.

2023 Taking Stock survey

- Time and leadership of Collaborative partners is essential for the start-up and sustainability of collaborative efforts.
- Essential activities like securing funding, establishing connections, engaging other partners and helping to build a shared vision and goals are critical to success.
- A key challenge is maintaining momentum and alignment of partners' efforts.

3. Gaps in funding and capacity limit investment in governance structures, planning and evaluation.

Top 3 Reported Challenges

1. Funding
2. Capacity (including stable staffing)
3. Maintaining momentum.

The informal way in which many Collaboratives are structuring governance, planning and evaluation may be a result of these gaps, and also perpetuating them.

In the 2023 Taking Stock survey and focus group:

- Less than half have Memorandums of Understanding between partners.

57%

- Only 57% have a formal shared plan in place such as a strategic plan or Theory of Change.

63%

- 63% of focus group participants indicated they did NOT have the staff capacity they needed to advance their strategies.

40%

- Only 40% are measuring progress and impacts.

4.

Collaboratives' learning priorities remain focused on shared governance structures, institutional buy-in and aligning partners' efforts on shared goals over time.

2017 Learning Priorities	2023 Learning Priorities
Developmental Evaluation (67%)	Maintaining momentum (53%) (as partners and situation changes)
Funding sustainability (50%)	Alignment of partners around goals (53%)
Institutionalizing partner support (42%)	Governance structures (32%)
Alignment of partner efforts (33%)	Systems thinking and practice (32%)

NOW, WHAT

NOW WHAT are some opportunities for Victoria Foundation to support Collaboratives to achieve even greater impacts moving forward?

1. Continue to build the capacity of Collaboratives through responsive, diverse supports.

Feedback from Collaboratives on priority roles Victoria Foundation can play moving forward:

90% More/multi-year funding

47% Amplify work of the collab

63% Support Collab Leadership Development

42% Convene/host capacity building workshops

58% Evaluation Supports

37% Research Support

53% Advocacy with other funders (to grow \$/support)

37% Convene networking & participate in governance

32% Facilitate connections to other resources

3. Support impact evaluation and use data to inform ongoing learning and adaptive action.

4. Continue to promote awareness of the nature of collaborative work and the important role of trust-based philanthropy.

2. Work toward a Collaborative “development pipeline” by strengthening granting opportunities and targeted investments.

“Finding funding every year is exhausting and just burns people out. We all know that Collaboratives can have a system change impact but need a stable / reliable funding source. I think our Collaboration would have benefited from investing in the staff position – offering a more stable employment contract.”

(2023 Taking Stock Survey Respondent)

“It would be wonderful if the funding were made available for 3 - 5 year periods, as this type of systems-level change is not a year to year undertaking. It would also be wonderful if Foundation staff would visit our organization to find out more about our work, help us to see where we might be capacity building, and connect us with similar initiatives in the region to help us learn.”

(2023 Taking Stock Survey Respondent)

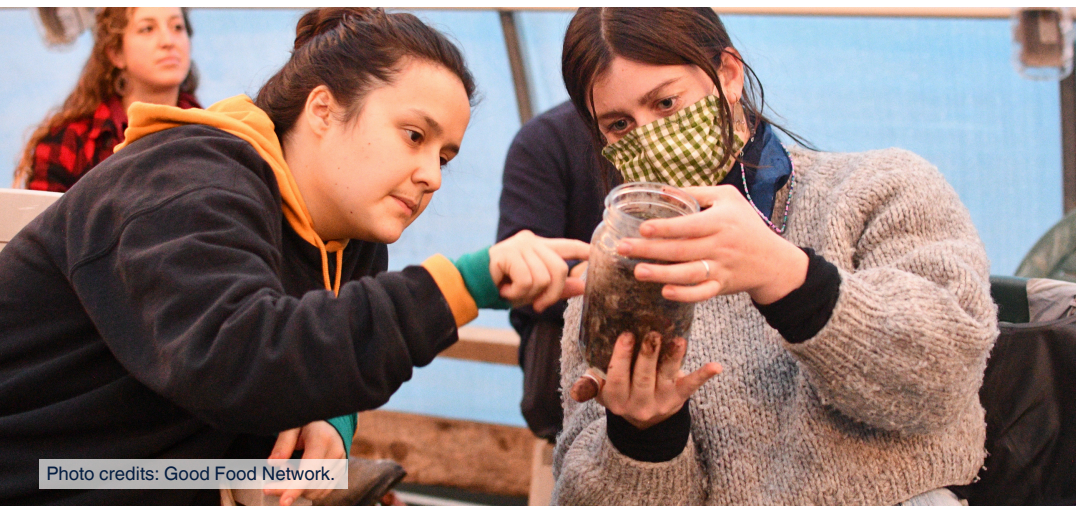


Photo credits: Good Food Network.

Evaluators: Michelle Colussi and Stacy Barter, SHIFT Collaborative



Prepared for:

