

Exploring
Community Wealth
Building Through
Social Procurement
in Ontario

Community Wealth Building Wednesdays

FINAL REPORT

July 2021

Throughout Ontario, social procurement is contributing towards the creation of inclusive, vibrant and healthy communities. This report recaps a five-part knowledge series that examined the Ontario social procurement ecosystem – social enterprises as suppliers, social value purchasers and the construction sector generating demand, and how community is re-defining wealth and driving social value outcomes.



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#WealthBuildingWednesdays

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Kelly Merti- [United Way East Ontario](#)
Marc Soberano - [Building Up](#)
Martin Adelaar - [Ottawa Community Benefits Network](#)
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Executive Summary

Across Ontario, governments, non-profits, and private businesses all purchase goods and services. Every purchase has an economic, environmental, and social impact, whether intended or not. Through social procurement, purchasing offers the transformative power to create community capital; healthy communities that are rich in human, social, cultural, physical and economic capital. A key success factor to design effective social procurement policies and implementation is to share knowledge of what has worked, why, and establish the conditions for expanded collaboration across the entire social procurement ecosystem.

Throughout the province, social procurement is creating community wealth, community capital and contributing towards the creation of inclusive, vibrant and healthy communities. This five-part knowledge series examined the entire social procurement ecosystem – social enterprises as suppliers, social value purchasers and the construction sector generating demand, and how community is defining and driving social value outcomes.

To wrap up the series we combined the different components of the social procurement ecosystem and, through a design café architecture, invited social procurement champions to share what projects or initiatives they are contemplating or working on currently that they wanted to receive community support for. During our final gathering, we committed to continuing to redefine the way that goods and services are bought and sold, and to creating opportunities for social procurement at all levels in the marketplace.

Buy Social Canada invites policy makers, governments, private sector businesses, social enterprises, non-profit networks, foundations, and other key stakeholders within the social procurement ecosystem to share learnings, resources, and explore opportunities through collaboration, to accelerate local social procurement. We request that you leverage the shared experiences, challenges and successes of social procurement practitioners and champions. We encourage you to create a space where stories and examples of community wealth building, policy and implementation can be shared.

Together we are unleashing the transformative power of the market and leveraging social value from purchasing as a powerful tool to create a positive ripple effect in our communities.

Maham Tarar, David LePage, Elizabeth Chick-Blount, Emma Renaerts, Niamh O'Sullivan, Mariana Jimenez Ojeda and Tori Williamson

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Community Wealth Building and Community Capital

In cities and rural communities across the province, many Ontarians are faced with income inequality, equity challenges and social exclusion. With the onset and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the current market-based threats will only worsen unless we can create an economic system that builds wealth and prosperity for everyone.¹

Community wealth building strategies seek to empower communities by leveraging local resources to generate wealth equality. It does so through seven essential wealth building drivers: place, ownership, multipliers, collaboration, inclusion, ecosystems, and workforce development.² Each of these drivers offers a powerful contrast to traditional economic practices.

Another way to shape community wealth is through the lens of community capital. Community capital is the foundation of healthy communities and consists of five kinds of capital: cultural, physical, human, economic and social. One way to create community capital, and the focus of our ecosystem journey, is through social procurement.

Social procurement leverages a social value from existing procurement and provides the capacity to transform procurement from the traditional model of merely an economic transaction between buyer and seller, to a means for social transformation in communities. Social procurement, depending on the purchaser's goals, can include: employment opportunities, including for persons facing barriers; training and apprenticeships; supply chain inclusion for social enterprises and social value suppliers; and local economic development.³

Social Procurement

Social procurement creates community wealth, the foundation of building inclusive, healthy and vibrant communities.

¹ [Keane Bhatt, Educate and Empower-Tools for Building Community Wealth \(2015\)](#)
² [Marjorie Kelly, Cities Building Community Wealth \(2015\)](#)
³ [Buy Social Canada, Social Procurement in 2021: Unprecedented Potential for a Paradigm Shift \(2021\)](#)

Social Procurement Ecosystem

In a social value marketplace, a social procurement ecosystem supports both the demand side and the supply side of market relationships. The supply side is comprised of those supplying the goods and services within the marketplace: social enterprises and

social value suppliers. The demand side is comprised of purchasers who are demanding those goods and services, such as governments, contractors, large corporates, and individual consumers. Like any ecosystem, it is made up of several highly interconnected elements. Each of these elements will be explored throughout the duration of this webinar series. The stronger the ecosystem, and the more integrated the elements, the greater the impact of a purchase, and the greater the community wealth and community capital created.

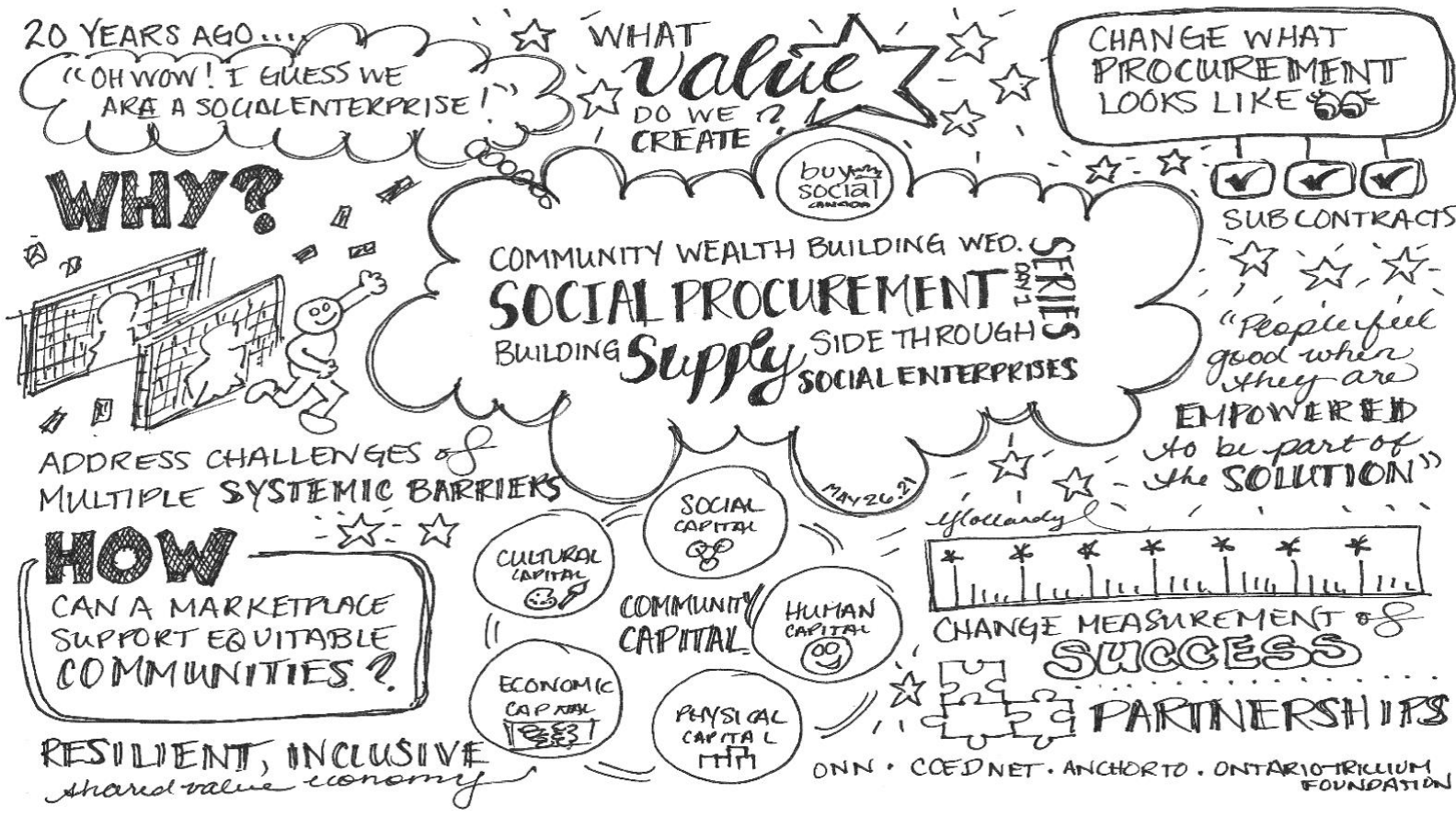
A Community Benefit Agreement (CBA) is an agreement between the community, the construction developer or owner, and the government. Community benefits can include employment, skills and training, social value in the supply chain, and community development. CBAs leverage development and construction projects to achieve a broad range of community outcomes beyond just the standard scope of cost, quality, and time. CBAs contain pre-determined and defined social value outcomes that will be delivered as part of an infrastructure or land development project like building a bridge, a road, school, hospital, office tower, or transit system. These social value outcomes are agreed upon, prior to the project initiating, between the community, government, and developer. Community Benefit Agreements in infrastructure projects inevitably aim to maximize community impact and community value for residents.

Community Benefit Agreements

Social Enterprise and Social Value Suppliers

A social enterprise is a business that sells goods or services, embeds a social, environmental, or cultural mission into their business, and reinvests the majority of profits into their mission. Buy Social Canada certifies businesses who meet this definition. Social value suppliers are social enterprises as well as other types of

businesses that create social value, like social purpose organizations, diverse-owned businesses, B corporations, and local businesses with a social value.



Building the Supply Side of the Social Procurement Ecosystem through Social Enterprises

Social enterprises are businesses with a central environmental, cultural or social mission who invest the majority of their net profits back into their mission. During the first Wealth Building Wednesdays Webinar, we heard from three pioneers who have been tilling the social enterprise soil for decades. Buy Social Canada's Managing Partner, David LePage, hosted a conversation between three of his personal heroes; Anne Jamieson of the [Toronto Enterprise Fund](#), Paul Hubert of [Pathways](#), and Rosalind Lockyer of [PARO](#). This discussion highlighted several community-oriented intentions which motivate social enterprise. Anne reflected on how her work focuses on opening the door to employment. Both Paul and Rosalind noted that they were 'doing social enterprise' even before there was a name for it. Social enterprise is a verb and a tool for shaping healthy, vibrant communities.

If the purpose of the social value marketplace, where we buy and sell goods and services with a social value consideration, is to create community wealth and community capital, then social enterprises are essential to this task.

Anne believes social enterprise can be a key player in building back better, post-pandemic, by creating jobs for people who have been marginalized while at the same time reinvigorating the economy.

This is a pivot point, a shift in how the economy works. Municipal governments and the Canadian federal government are building social value outcomes into their purchasing. As social procurement proliferates, it increases demand for social enterprises who can maximize community capital and community wealth building.

How can social enterprises leverage that shift? For a social value marketplace to become a reality we need both the supply and demand side to come together and collaborate.

Social Enterprise Pioneers



In 2016, TEF began supporting [Building Up](#), a construction social enterprise that provides training and employment in the trades to those who need it most. To date, more than 400 people have passed through their training program.

There are some key players who have helped build the social enterprise ecosystem in Ontario.

[PARO](#) has been supporting women-led social enterprises across Ontario since 1995. They have provided funding opportunities, business development programs, advisory services and technical resources to women and women-led businesses across Ontario for the past 26 years. PARO does this through leveraging its network of social enterprises, entrepreneurs, and partner organizations. In the last decade alone, PARO has supported more than 22,000 women and social entrepreneurs through their programs and wrap-around services. Rosalind Lockyer, the Chief Executive Officer of PARO, believes that social enterprises, specifically those led by women, are the cornerstones of

creating community capital and community wealth.

“Collaboration has been an essential driver and one of the biggest reasons behind the economic success and sustainability of female-led social enterprises in our network all across Ontario.” – Rosalind Lockyer

[Toronto Enterprise Fund](#) (TEF) was founded in 2000 and was one of the first programs to provide support and services to employment social enterprises in Toronto. Employment social enterprises are businesses that create training and employment opportunities for people facing systemic barriers to entry into the mainstream labour market.⁴ TEF works towards creating an enabling environment for social enterprises to thrive in and has supported more than 60 such enterprises since their inception 21 years ago.

⁴ [Toronto Enterprise Fund Website: What is an employment social enterprise](#)

As an outcome of this support, 75% of all individuals participating in their programs have gone on to find training or employment opportunities. TEF shares knowledge, funding opportunities, tools and resources with these social enterprises and social enterprise owners. This in turn enhances social enterprise capacity and increases their preparedness to effectively respond to social procurement opportunities. Winning contracts allows social enterprises to grow their business and increase the employment and training opportunities for people facing barriers to employment.

“A key to supporting social enterprises and helping them become sustainable, is to enhance their capacity to fulfill the purchasing demands of larger contractors and purchasers.” – Anne Jamieson, TEF

[Pathways Employment Help Centre](#) is a London-based social enterprise that assists individuals to overcome barriers to meaningful employment. They provide personalized employment services to job seekers, job matching and hiring assistance for employers, and specialized skills training and advocacy supports. In the last 10 years alone, Pathways has provided hands-on skills training to 1,800 individuals. They have worked with more than 1,300 employers and found employment opportunities for 3,200 job seekers. Through their London Community Woodshop, a community woodworking space founded in 2015, people can learn wood crafting and furniture-making. In the past 6 years, they have trained nearly 400 Londoners and helped them to expand their skills, supporting them to create their own furniture and launch their businesses. Clean Works, another social enterprise supported by Pathways, is a community-based, service-oriented interior and exterior cleaning company. They specialize in interior janitorial services, graffiti removal and power washing. As a social enterprise, their mission is to provide high quality cleaning services while making a positive difference in the lives of their employees by providing opportunities to staff to develop new skills and create positive outcomes for themselves and their families. Over the last 20 years, Clean Works has helped many employees as they transition into full time employment and overcome employment barriers.

“Your social enterprise can truly achieve its mission when you balance financial sustainability with community benefits — this creates the highest positive outcomes for people” – Paul Hubert, Pathways

PARO, Toronto Enterprise Fund, and Pathways have demonstrated that social enterprises are successful in creating community wealth by increasing employee incomes, increasing attachment to the labour market, improving health, increasing housing security, and keeping people out of the criminal justice system. Social enterprises create jobs and provide training and growth opportunities to those who have previously been excluded from the traditional labour market. When we purchase from social enterprises, we contribute towards those outcomes and create a ripple effect of social and economic wealth throughout our communities. Supporting social enterprises through purchasing helps build the social procurement ecosystem and creates healthy and vibrant communities.



Building the Demand Side of the Social Procurement Ecosystem through Purchasing of Goods and Services

Our second Wealth Building Wednesdays Webinar dove into the work of creating demand for the goods and services that social enterprises supply.

As Hanifa Kassam from [AnchorTO](#) and Elly Green of Georgian College's [Social Enterprise Network of Central Ontario](#) shared, anchor institutions have the potential to be on the front lines for social change, but it will take commitment, as both Hanifa and Elly have shown, to create an enabling environment for both sides of the social value marketplace.

When purchasers understand the power they have to create social value by leveraging their existing purchasing, they can become catalysts for social change and community wealth building. The next step is the creation of social procurement policies and practices, coupled with an effective change management framework. We spoke about social procurement strategies, like unbundling purchases into smaller contracts so as to give social enterprises the opportunity to fulfil them. Even with vendor portals built to connect purchasers with suppliers and pilot projects to boot, we have a long way to go. A key factor in determining the success of social procurement programs will be to effectively connect social enterprises and social purpose businesses with relevant social procurement buyers.

Buy with Impact

Governments, institutions and organizations across Canada are increasingly including social procurement objectives in their purchasing considerations, through bids, RFPs, direct awards and small buys or p-cards. These organizations are embedding social value considerations into their existing procurement processes, including direct spend targets with social enterprises and social value suppliers, and through sub-contracts. There are many social procurement efforts and projects in Ontario, from government, corporates, and communities, who are making a considerable impact with their purchasing.

Institutional Purchasers with Purpose



AnchorTO partners working together to support social procurement

AnchorTO was launched in 2014 in an effort to lead and coordinate anchor institutions across Toronto to carry out community-based purchasing and hiring through social value suppliers and diverse-owned businesses. With its multi-billion dollar budget, the City of Toronto is a critical anchor in the social and economic growth of the City. The aim of AnchorTO is to leverage the institutions' annual spending of billions of dollars of goods and services each year, alongside the purchasing carried out by other anchor institutions.⁵

Since 2014, AnchorTO has distributed various tools and resources to help their network maximize the impact of their institutional spending. They have

created a Community of Practice, a space where their 18 network members can come together and share experiences, resources and lessons learned. In 2019, they held the first AnchorTO summit. This was an opportunity to not just identify community partners but to recognize that implementing social procurement effectively cannot be done in silos. It requires the entire ecosystem to be engaged and to work with one another. This premise led to the building of the AnchorTO Vendor Portal, an online directory of social enterprises and diverse suppliers that anchor institutions could have access to while sharing social procurement opportunities and updates.

⁵ [Webinar | Leveraging Local Assets and Social Procurement: Tamarack Institute, Jan 28, 2020](#)

“Anchor institutions need to develop supportive and collaborative relationships with the vendor community to successfully implement social procurement programs. Collaboration matters.”
– Hanifa Kassam, AnchorTO

[York University](#) is one of Canada's first universities to have a social procurement policy, which was approved by the University board and implemented in 2019. The main purpose of this policy was for the University to diversify their supply chain by providing social value and diverse suppliers equitable access to tendering opportunities. York University's Social Procurement Policy aims to demonstrate the University's commitment to use its purchasing power to benefit local communities and to provide access to underrepresented businesses and communities within its supply chain.⁶

By leveraging existing purchasing, the University is providing opportunities to those who otherwise face social and economic barriers and disproportionately face social exclusion and income inequality. Currently, several of York University's Campus Projects have social procurement targets embedded within the contracts. One of these projects is the construction of their New School of Continuing Studies. These contracts ensure that purchasing is done from social enterprises and diverse suppliers that fall within a certain radius of the University's campus to ensure that local communities and neighbourhoods are positively impacted through these projects. The University is also in the process of constructing a new Markham campus, and has set a social procurement spend budget to ensure more benefits are shared with their surrounding community.

“We identified the vendors we wanted to work with through a pre-qualification process. This process allowed us to identify which suppliers would support our focus and mission of uplifting our local communities through our Social Procurement Program.” - Dexter King, York University

Other organizations in Ontario, like Georgian College's [Social Enterprise Network of Central Ontario \(SENCO\)](#), are working with purchasers to support community wealth building and community capital creation through social procurement programs and initiatives across the central region of the province. In 2020, SENCO, in partnership with Ashoka Canada, launched their Community Benefit Purchasing Project.⁷ The project is supporting social enterprises and social procurement purchasers through a host of project activities, including the compilation of a database of diverse and social enterprise suppliers in Central Ontario, introductory social procurement sessions, expert-led events exploring successful projects in social procurement and expert facilitation for social enterprises and purchasers across Central Ontario.

⁶ [Social Procurement at York University](#)

⁷ [SENCO and Ashoka Canada launch Community Benefit Purchasing Project, 2020](#)

Public sector organizations, anchor institutions and large corporates are all powerful engines of community wealth building. Organizations like York University, AnchorTO and SENCO are demonstrating that when procurement dollars are spent on social procurement, it drives the social value marketplace and fuels healthy communities. The social procurement carried out by governments, anchor institutions and other purchasers creates the demand needed by social enterprises, thus playing their part in strengthening the social procurement ecosystem.



Building the Demand Side of the Social Procurement Ecosystem through the Construction Sector

During the third Wealth Building Wednesday, we heard from Rosemarie Powell, Executive Director at the [Toronto Community Benefits Network](#) (TCBN), Marc Soberano, Executive Director at [Building Up](#), and Tim Coldwell, president at [Chandos Construction](#). These three organizations represent the trinity of social value creation: the construction firm as the buyer, the social enterprise as the supplier, and the intermediary who brokers community benefit.

When asked what these three are seeing by way of shifts or pivots within the social procurement ecosystem, what we heard was optimism. Policy shifts at the federal government level now require social procurement and community benefits to be embedded within infrastructure projects. This comes before what are anticipated to be significant build projects and infrastructure spending in Ontario in coming years. Construction firms are beginning to see how social procurement is good for business, and social enterprises like Building Up are stepping in and fulfilling labour shortages within the construction sector. This suggests that a sea-change is underway.

Rosemarie outlined a central motivation behind advocating for social procurement and Community Benefit Agreements; creating more inclusive, equitable, and healthy communities. She pointed out how construction firms are seeing the direct results for their business, and the positive effects they are having on communities, families, and individuals by engaging local talent to increase capacity and diversity.

Tim pointed out that the construction industry is facing a labour pool shortage and will need to find new and better ways to find, and support, people to join the sector. This labour shortage can now be met by social enterprises such as Building Up, an organization that is clearly cutting a new path and doing so very successfully. It would seem we are in the process of making a pivot, one that could make a huge difference for millions of people and shift the social context in which we live and work. A more equitable economy might find itself growing out of this very spot.

The annual spend in the construction industry is approximately \$140 billion dollars and there are over one million construction workers across Canada.⁸ The federal government infrastructure budget is \$180 billion over the next ten years, and with COVID-19 recovery, this figure is expected to grow.⁹

Role of Construction Sector in Social Procurement

Provincial and federal governments are realizing the potential impact that every taxpayer dollar invested in public infrastructure projects could have by intentionally leveraging community benefits to create good jobs, build more equitable and inclusive communities, and tackle pressing environmental issues.

Recently, the federal government announced that \$12 billion of funding for transit projects in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) will be dependent on satisfying conditions that benefit communities where the projects take place. The stated outcomes include Community Benefit Agreements that create employment opportunities for underrepresented communities including Black, Indigenous and people of colour, and women.¹⁰ Community capital and community wealth is created by leveraging a social value from procurement dollars already within existing government budgets.

Private construction companies working on public or privately funded projects can create opportunities for social value by adding a social value lens to their subcontracting and supply chains. Construction companies help create social value outcomes when choosing to work with local businesses, diverse-owned businesses, social enterprises, and other social value suppliers.

⁸ [Canada: Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\) by industry December 2020, Statista](#)

⁹ [Investing in Canada Plan – Building a Better Canada, December 2020, Infrastructure Canada](#)

¹⁰ [Infrastructure Canada News Release, May 11, 2020](#)

Private construction companies create demand for social enterprises and social value suppliers by embedding social procurement within their project sub-contracts. Construction social enterprises, part of the supply side of the construction social procurement ecosystem, provide public and private sector projects with on-site labour and other services resulting in job placement, targeted apprenticeships and training for individuals facing barriers to employment.

Through construction projects, the following organizations in Ontario are leading the charge by using social procurement and Community Benefit Agreements as tools to create community wealth and community capital.

Constructing Community



Chandos Construction workers on a site

[Chandos Construction](#) is a Canadian construction company that was launched in 1980 with an aim to use construction to make a positive impact in the world. Chandos is 100% employee owned and is one of the first and largest B-Corp Certified commercial builders in North America. Over the last decade, Chandos has been instrumental in building the growing demand for social procurement within the construction sector. They have demonstrated this by embedding social procurement and social value outcomes into their supply chain for public as well as privately funded projects, which is why, by 2025, Chandos has made a [Buy Social Pledge](#) that at least 5 percent of their addressable spend will shift to social impact businesses including

social enterprises, B-Corp Certified companies, and other diverse-owned businesses.

Chandos believes that empowering a more diverse supply chain and supporting people from equity-seeking groups is not just good for society, it is also good for business. Through their social procurement initiatives, Chandos has been able to provide employment opportunities, offer skills training and provide fair wages to under-represented groups, and has helped local businesses to grow. Chandos has been working with social enterprises like [Embers](#) in Vancouver, [Women Building Futures](#) in Edmonton, and [Building Up](#) in Toronto. Chandos believes that by working closely with social enterprises, you can have a lasting impact on the economy and environment, and create social value for communities.

“Our biggest success has been in customizing our work packages to meet the capacity of social enterprises. For social enterprises to effectively bid for, and win, construction contracts, you must unbundle larger contracts and make sure that your work packages are well suited for the capacity which currently exists within the social enterprise ecosystem.”

– Tim Coldwell, Chandos Construction

Building Up is a construction social enterprise that runs intensive pre-apprenticeship trades training programs for individuals who face barriers to employment. The social enterprise is modelled on BUILD Inc from Winnipeg, Manitoba, and was established in 2015 in Toronto’s West End. Building Up trains and employs people with foundational construction skills and provides experience through their own business operations. The profits generated by this work fund their social mission. 90% of Building Up graduates have moved into apprenticeships and/or full-time employment as an outcome of participating in their training programs.¹¹

Building Up provides opportunities for construction clients to improve the livability of their spaces while providing employment and skills development opportunities to community members. Some of the work they do includes installing water efficiency retrofits, providing general labour services, and providing renovation and apartment turnover services such as painting and flooring.

In their first three years of operations, their revenue grew at a rate of close to 100% a year. In 2019 their annual budget was \$4 million, 70% of which was revenue generated through their business operations.¹² Building Up focuses on achieving several outcomes through what it calls social contracting. They aim to succeed as a viable and sustainable business while supporting construction companies to diversify their supply chains and improve the surrounding community.

¹¹ [Building Up Official Website](#)

¹² [When Training Works: Promising workforce development practices, September 2020](#)

Skills and Training



A Building Up trainee hard at work

“Building Up aims to fill the gap in the market between community members that need work and construction projects that need workers. We are a social enterprise that fulfills a market need within the construction sector whilst also creating positive community impact and outcomes” - Marc Soberano, Building Up

[Toronto Community Benefits Network](#) (TCBN) is a regional initiative that aims to provide Toronto residents with equitable opportunities and to ensure that Toronto’s construction projects provide jobs to immigrants, refugees, women, and groups under-represented in the sector. Most recently, TCBN successfully advocated for the City of Toronto to adopt a new community benefits framework to ensure equitable hiring practices on all city construction projects.¹³ TCBN believes in embedding community benefits within large development and construction projects, with community benefits and social procurement targets being a part of policy across all levels of government. TCBN is a community-labour network with a support base of workforce development groups, community partners, government and labour organizations. TCBN also provides programs in training, education, and mentorship. They work to ensure that whenever a new infrastructure is being built, the impacted community has a voice at the table and can contribute meaningfully towards the project’s vision. Recently, TCBN has been instrumental in the creation of the [Regent Park Community Benefits Coalition](#), supporting local associations and community groups and organizations to secure a legally binding agreement with Toronto Community Housing (TCH) and the selected developer that commits to both short and long term community benefits in Regent Park. After weeks of negotiations, a Community Benefits Framework Agreement for the next phase of the Regent Park revitalization has now been signed. This agreement will ensure that local workforce opportunities are created for Regent Park residents and businesses.

Social value outcomes are being created by the construction sector throughout Ontario. Private sector construction companies such as Chandos, construction social enterprises such as Building Up, and community advocacy groups such as TCBN create community capital and community wealth. Employment, training, and apprenticeship opportunities are being created for individuals who would otherwise face barriers in entering the construction labour market. Social procurement initiatives and Community Benefit Agreements in construction projects create opportunities for local subcontractors and suppliers, particularly for social enterprises and social value businesses. Embedding social procurement goals within construction and infrastructure projects contributes to strengthening the demand side of the social procurement ecosystem.

Working collaboratively, the social value demand and social enterprise supply side of construction create community capital and community wealth by intentionally leveraging their economic, social, and environmental multiplier and ripple effects.

¹³ [WES Insights, April, 2021](#)



Strengthening the Social Procurement Ecosystem through Community-led Community Benefits

The fourth Wealth Building Wednesdays Webinar began with remembering the journey so far. Our first stop was in the realm of social enterprise, the supply side of the social procurement ecosystem. We discussed community champions who are creating social value through business. Without considerable demand for their goods and services however, social enterprises run the risk of going out of business. In our second session, we explored how anchor institutions are working toward creating demand with social procurement. In the third, we visited the construction industry where we heard what's shifting as construction firms, social enterprises, and intermediaries advocate for stronger community relationships and benefits.

In this session, we heard from Martin Adelaar of the [Ottawa Community Benefits Network](#) Steering Committee and their ally Kelly Mertl at [United Way East Ontario](#) about how they are stirring the winds of change by bringing together community to advocate for community benefits through CBAs.

The discussion brought to light a paradigm shift. We are moving beyond making bilateral economic transactions that focus only on financial gain, and moving towards an ecosystem that takes community into account, that collaborates and creates community capital. We discussed the importance of relationships between all parts of the ecosystem and how these relationships are enhanced through networks, communities of practice, and common spaces where communities gather regularly to learn and share opportunities for more inclusive, healthy and vibrant communities.

Kelly shared how United Way East Ontario is deliberately convening new networks. Martin shared not only what is taking shape in Ottawa, but also about community benefit networks arising in other cities and across Canada.

Decades of work by many organizations and communities have cultivated the conditions for transformative change. Policies, practices, and capacities have been maturing on supply, demand, and community fronts. The necessary elements of a newer, stronger, and healthier ecosystem for creating community wealth and community capital are being built.

A Community Benefit Agreement is a tool used to create community capital and community wealth. For a CBA to be successful, local communities need to be engaged, organized, and empowered throughout the process.

Community Driven Community Benefits

The first CBA in North America emerged in 2001 at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, catalyzing a national movement of using CBAs as a tool to create community capital and community wealth through benefits such as local hiring, social procurement opportunities, living wage requirements, job training, workforce development programs, the creation of community spaces and neighbourhood centers, funding for community organizations, and affordable housing requirements.¹⁴

In 2003, one of the first major Canadian infrastructure projects to include a CBA was Vancouver's Olympic Village and in 2018, Vancouver was one of the first Canadian municipalities to adopt a Community Benefits Agreement Policy.¹⁵ Historically, developers and governments have maintained a top-down approach to Community Benefit Agreements, with owner and government interests superseding those of the communities.¹⁶ For CBAs to be an effective community wealth building tool, communities need to be given the autonomy to organize themselves and identify what specific benefits and outcomes they require from infrastructure and build projects. One of the ways this can be achieved is through the creation of a Community Benefit Coalition or Network.

A Community Benefit Coalition usually comprises of a group of local community organizations and community members who are working together to leverage CBAs for maximum community outcomes.¹⁷

¹⁴ [Policy & Tools: Community Benefits Agreements and Policies In Effect, Partnership for Working Families, 2019](#)

¹⁵ [P3s and Community Benefit Agreements in Canada, PPPCouncil Canada, Jan 2021](#)

¹⁶ [How to get community benefits agreements right: Engage and empower, Munk School, Dec 2018](#)

¹⁷ <https://www.regentparkcoalition.ca/>

Community Benefit Coalitions and Networks recognize that a CBA is one of the most effective and accountable ways to implement community-led, collaborative, and transparent processes to achieve community benefits from an infrastructure or redevelopment project. Coalitions typically represent a broad array of stakeholders, such as residents, racialized communities, representatives from labour, environmental groups, faith groups, educational groups, environmental advocacy organizations, affordable housing advocates, and more.

Community Collaboration Creates Community Wealth



Empty fields inside LeBreton Flats

The [Ottawa Community Benefits Network](#) (OCBN) is a grassroots network formed in June 2019 to advocate for the redevelopment of the 56-acre LeBreton Flats property as a vibrant, inclusive, equitable, healthy, and sustainable urban community and to use a Community Benefits Agreement as the platform to ensure meaningful community involvement and accountability.¹⁸ Initially known as the LeBreton Flats Community Benefits Coalition, the rebrand to the OCBN signifies an expanded mandate to realize CBAs for all major Ottawa developments, public and private, and to eventually have the City introduce a CBA Policy for Ottawa. The OCBN now has 32 members, including organizations with mandates in affordable

housing, homelessness, organized labour, health, sustainability, social procurement and social enterprises, childcare, and other key community priorities. The OCBN includes the Federation of Community Associations and [United Way Eastern Ontario](#) as formal allies.

OCBN's model believes in engaging its member organizations and constituents, along with other community stakeholders and citizens, to collaboratively identify and articulate desired community benefit outcomes for a particular development project. With regards to the LeBreton Flats redevelopment, the OCBN helped develop a comprehensive set of CBA targets which include affordable housing, social procurement, and hiring and training opportunities for equity seeking groups, alongside other community goals. The OCBN has actively engaged with the National Capital Commission (NCC), the federal agency responsible for this development, on ways to apply a CBA approach and to advance the community benefits sought from future NCC projects.

¹⁸ [Ottawa Community Benefits Website](#)

Ottawa is currently in the midst of an unprecedented infrastructure and construction boom. Community Benefit Agreements in construction and redevelopment projects such as The LeBreton Flats create opportunities for the demand and supply sides of the social procurement ecosystem, contributing to the creation of social value outcomes and community wealth for residents. CBAs have the potential to transform the way that governments purchase, build and think about community capital and community wealth. On the other hand, it poses a huge challenge organizationally to muster effective campaigns for these projects. The OCBN is still a largely volunteer organization and the absence of any institutional frameworks in the city makes the job that much more difficult. That is why strength in numbers is important. Municipalities across Canada and Ontario have significant and growing CBA project experience and community benefits networks now exist in Toronto, Windsor-Essex, Hamilton, Regent Park, Peel, Vancouver, St. Catherine's, and elsewhere. This collective movement demonstrates the potential that grassroots community organizations, and other key stakeholders, have in community wealth building.

However, the ability of community benefit coalitions and networks to effectively address the needs of local residents can only be achieved if communities are meaningfully engaged in all stages of the process. The Ottawa Community Benefits Network has demonstrated the potential that community organizations, associations and advocacy groups have in shaping community benefits and the critical role that collaboration plays within community wealth building and the creation of healthy and vibrant local communities.

***"The Ottawa Community Benefits Network is an opportunity for us to re-imagine the Le Breton Flats. We want to use the Le Breton Flats CBA as a tool to create a community which is vibrant, inclusive and healthy."
– Martin Adelaar, The Ottawa Community Benefits Network***

Wealth Building Wednesdays Series Wrap-Up and Design Café

In our final Wealth Building Wednesdays Webinar, we hosted a Design Café, an opportunity for different social procurement champions to share what projects or initiatives they are contemplating or working on currently that they would like to receive community support for. Five champions raised their virtual hands to lead the design café conversations and discover what it would take for these projects to be as successful as they possibly could be.

As we wrapped the series up, we identified that we must continue to redefine the way goods and services are bought and sold within the marketplace. We committed to playing our part to foster relationships between buyers and sellers from across the social procurement ecosystem to generate social, economic and environmental benefits for communities. We agreed that we must share resources, stay connected, remain in conversation and build mechanisms to make inclusive, healthy and vibrant communities a reality.

We welcome you to join us on this journey, to build community wealth and community capital through social procurement.



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