

Winter 2023

# Core funding impact stories

8 nonprofits and charities across the country explain what a lack of core funding means for their communities, workers and long-term viability





# Girls Action Foundation

**Montreal, QC**

## How does your organization serve its community?

Girls Action Foundation promotes and supports the independence, leadership and healthy development of girls, young women, and gender diverse youth by giving them access to more resources and opportunities.

## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's ability to serve your community and pursue its mission?

The lack of core funding has a direct impact on our organization's ability to serve our community and pursue our mission. Due to financial unpredictability, we cannot offer long-term programming which, in turn, makes it difficult for us to maintain a consistent relationship with our community.

## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's staff and long-term sustainability?

All our employees are contract workers, and hiring is completely dependent on the funding we receive for individual projects. The lack of stability it creates is not conducive to good working conditions and generates a high turnover among our staff, which endangers our organization's long-term sustainability as it is difficult to pass on knowledge when employees only stay a short while.



Projects we implement can rarely be extended, even though our community has indicated through consultations that our projects are essential to their well-being, the advancement of social justice, and the breaking of the cycles of oppression endured by girls, young women, and gender diverse youth. After over 25 years serving girls and young women from the most marginalized communities, we had to reduce our activities. Although our national organization was active throughout Canada before the pandemic, we have had to limit our action to the Greater Montréal Area since then. The sustainability of our organization is very much at risk, and we do not even know whether we will be able to offer programs and services in 2023-24, despite the high demand and ever-evolving needs of our communities.

## What else would you do if you had more core funding? Who else would you serve?

If our organization had core funding, we would hire qualified staff, strengthen our basic operations, and continue to offer our core programs over the long term. Our five-year strategic and sustainability plan includes finding core funding to improve work conditions and keep our employees, so we can follow up on our actions. In addition, core funding would help us target causes that are important to our community, including increasing our rights advocacy and representation with the government.

**“The sustainability of our organization is very much at risk... despite the high demand and ever-evolving needs of our communities.”**

Words by Naoual Laaroussi, Communications Manager at Girls Action Foundation.



# Ecology Action Centre

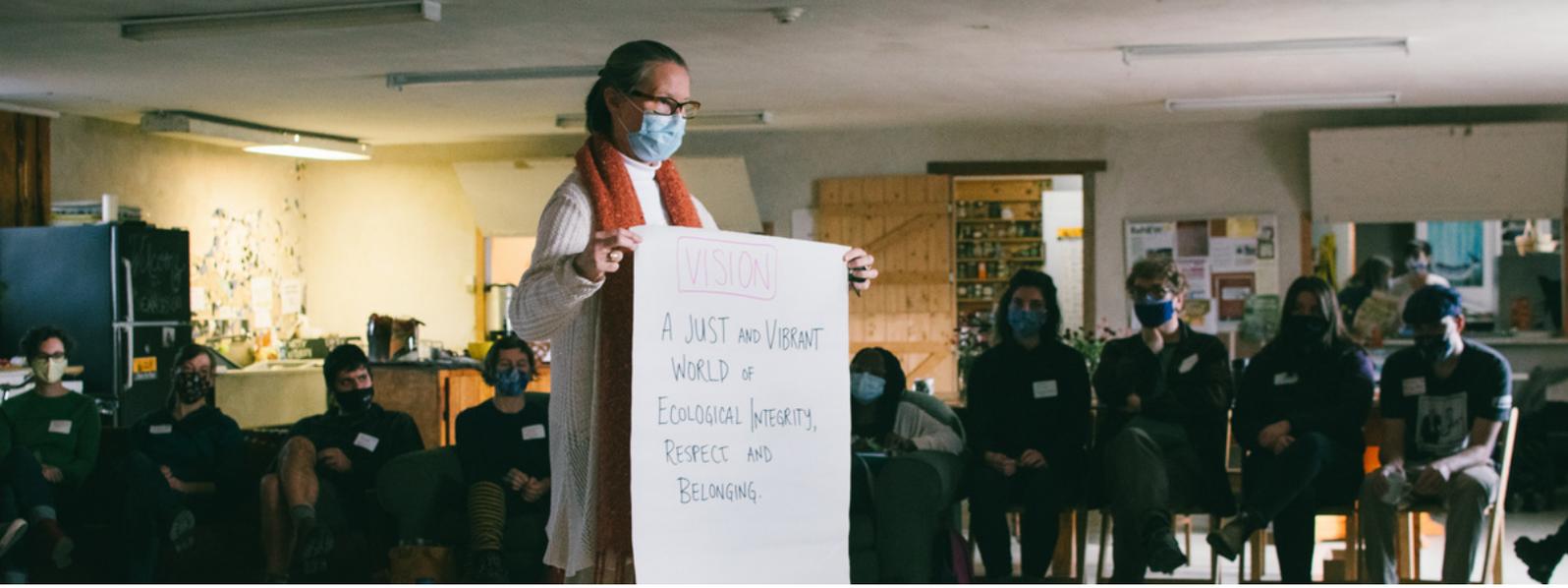
**Halifax, NS**

## How does your organization serve its community?

The Ecology Action Centre engages community to create systemic change in the face of urgent, complex environmental issues. In our role, we act as a watchdog, convener, mobilizer and incubator for advocacy and community development initiatives.

## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's ability to serve your community and pursue its mission?

Government funding – all of which is dedicated projects – is approximately one third of our organizational revenue. While we apply a 15% administrative fee to all of our project funds, we regularly encounter government funders unwilling to cover this cost. To be frank, properly staffing our financial, fundraising, human resources, and communications teams, not to mention maintaining our office, costs more than 15%. It's hugely frustrating when government funders have onerous reporting requirements, overly complex match funding needs, and then limit or disallow administrative costs. It's a catch-22 that hampers or prevents the reports they are requesting from being generated.



## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization’s staff and long-term sustainability?

When the core of our organization isn’t properly resourced, it puts a greater burden on existing staff, leading to burnout and retention issues. It also means we have fewer resources to invest in staffing, professional development, and upgrades – like tech systems - that would allow our organization to grow our impact and operate more effectively.

## What else would you do if you had more core funding? Who else would you serve?

The Ecology Action Centre works to equip human and ecological communities for resilience and build a world where ecosystems and communities are restored, not just sustained. In order to do that, we too need to remain resilient. We need the time and creative energy to devote to developing our next program idea. Our work encompasses everything from mobile bicycle repair in underserved communities to incubating a sustainable seaweed farm to advocating for nature and climate action. The world is in a climate and biodiversity emergency. If we’re going to mobilize for the changes we need to see, we need the staff and tools to make that happen.

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**The world is in a climate and biodiversity emergency. If we’re going to mobilize for the changes we need to see, we need the staff and tools to make that happen.**

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Words by Marla MacLeod, Director of Programs at Ecology Action Centre.



# 4Rs Youth Movement

**Baawaating, also known as Sault Ste. Marie, ON**

**How does your organization serve its community?**

The work of the 4Rs Youth Movement is about centering the needs and role Indigenous young people play in moving forward reconciliation between individuals, communities & systems in Canada.

**What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's ability to serve your community and pursue its mission?**

A lack of core funding means that oftentimes our work has to be aligned, and reshaped to serve the political priorities of the day in order to secure funding and keep our organization staffed, rather than the needs of Indigenous youth and their communities. In the context of the work that we do - reconciliation - this means that we delay progress significantly on meeting the TRC Calls to Action, and ensuring justice for Indigenous peoples. While we do our best to protect ourself and the youth from this toxic dependency loop, as a leader often my energy is leaked navigating colonial systems, made-up fiscal timelines, extractive reporting processes and funding requirements. The position of Executive Director is also rarely considered an eligible expense, and so I have to work extra hard to keep myself and my organization functioning and resourced sufficiently without staff becoming burnt out and unwell.

**What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's staff and long-term sustainability?**

Since the formation of 4Rs in 2015 we have been operating under one to two year funding cycles with so much uncertainty around whether or not we will be renewed for funding or find new sources - it is near impossible to plan for any kind of future. In the formative years of 4Rs, gaps in the rollout of government and foundation funding programs meant that I had to lay staff off and be



the sole employee for months at a time for an organization with a national mandate. This also meant that when new funding was secured, I spent several months training new hires so that they would embody the values and culture of 4Rs only to have funding run out within a few years time, and needing to start all over with a new team. This left 4Rs, and our small team, in a constant state of anxiety and uncertainty. While I have managed to build an awesome team of brilliant young program staff over the past few years, each one is often also taking on the work of the core operations of the organization including communication, human resources, and finances and not nearly being paid enough. While I am happy to see former employees move on to careers in the public sector and within philanthropy, the irony of the situation is that even if I wanted to keep them on staff, I could never compete with the offer of a permanent position, nor the compensation packages that these non-Indigenous employers pay. Funding models that do not take into consideration the maintenance of the key infrastructure of an organization - including both program and operations - prevents Indigenous-led organizations like 4Rs from retaining employees and building towards the future of an Indigenous-led charitable and non-profit sector.

## What else would you do if you had more core funding? Who else would you serve?

First and foremost we would be able to put time into shifting our work towards building more structures of care and approaching reconciliation through a lens of healing justice and building reciprocal relationships with other movements centered around racial justice and reparations for Black and Indigenous peoples globally. One dream that we've had for many years is to travel internationally to learn from Indigenous youth in other parts of the world (Africa, Aotearoa, South America for example) who are implementing Indigenous rights frameworks, and working in their own ways on reconciliation within their communities and nations.

Words by Jessica Bolduc, Executive Director of 4Rs Youth Movement.



# Stop Abuse in Families Society

## St. Albert, AB

### How does your organization serve its community?

The Stop Abuse in Families (SAiF) Society is a second stage trauma organization providing trauma informed care, education, prevention services, advocacy, and support to those living in St Albert and nearby rural communities who have been impacted by family violence and/or bullying.

### What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's ability to serve your community and pursue its mission?

Almost 50% of our revenues comes from donations which have fallen dramatically during the pandemic and the recent economic challenges. Because so few grants will cover the adequate costs of management (including reporting and financial administration) or insurance (appropriate risk coverage for our work is expensive) or actual market costs for office and utilities, these costs are covered by what we can fundraise, taking away dollars from the enhancement or expansion of successful ongoing programs. Couple that with grants that will often only fund new projects rather than existing, evidence-based, demonstrably proven programming on an ongoing basis, and it means that our fundraising dollars are stretched to the point where we're constantly cutting or reducing services.

## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's staff and long-term sustainability?

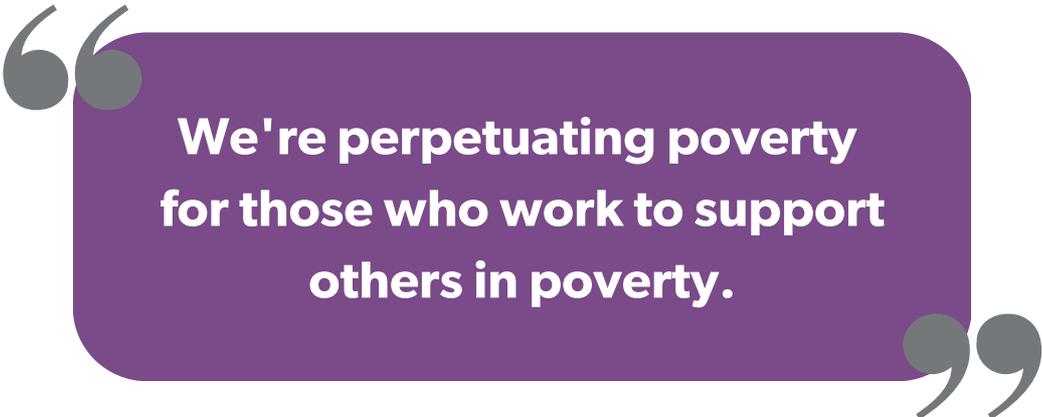
Too often, organizations deliver programs to meet client need and demand but to the detriment of staff salaries - leading to high burnout rates and resulting in many non profit staff needing the very same social services that the charitable sector provides. And it's well understood that women, gender diverse people, and people of colour are most vulnerable to chronic under compensation in the charitable sector. We're perpetuating poverty for those who work to support others in poverty because we can't afford to do all the work with what we're granted.

Government needs to recognize the social contract it engages with when it comes to the charitable sector. We are providing services, supports and programs efficiently, effectively and in more responsive ways than they can. Given that we, the charitable sector, are taking on this work, we ask the government (at all levels) to rethink its approach to granting and consider the real costs of providing these services as part of fair and just contract negotiations.

## What else would you do if you had more core funding? Who else would you serve?

Consistent core funding would allow us to not only ensure we compensate our staff fairly and equitably, it would also allow us to focus more attention on the needs of our clients, better address gaps in service we come across, ensure existing evidence-based programs with great outcomes don't have to be cut, and be able to extend our services to more rural populations with few or no services to support them. Instead, we restrict our service area more and more to maintain capacity of programming, leaving many populations without any support.

We need to look at equity not only for our clients, but for the people that provide these services, too. Core funding would help us get there.



**We're perpetuating poverty  
for those who work to support  
others in poverty.**

Words by Areni Kellepan, former Executive Director of SAiF Society.



# Quadrangle Community Centre

## St. John's, NL

### How does your organization serve its community?

Quadrangle NL's mission is to create and operate Newfoundland and Labrador's provincial 2SLGBTQIA+ community centre with dedicated services that are led by and for the community. This mission is to create and allow for shared space for any and all 2SLGBTQIA+ group or initiatives to have a home that supports our growth, wellbeing, and contributions. Newfoundland and Labrador is currently one of the last remaining provinces without a hub for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and with our mission, we will change that.

### What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's ability to serve your community and pursue its mission?

The lack of core funding creates an instability which makes it hard to effectively reach our goal of creating a provincial 2SLGBTQIA+ Community Centre. Not having annual core funding means that our limited staff of two lack the necessary employment stability for sustainable program planning and long-term vision, and our volunteer board must take on multiple roles and responsibilities simply to keep the organization afloat and serve the community. Having to seek out funding opportunities, deliver programming, build partnerships, foster community investments, speak with elected officials, plan fundraisers while concurrently looking after the day-to-day administration of a growing organization with a budget that hardly covers operational needs depletes our ability to achieve our mission. Our current operational budget for organizational essentials like staffing is thanks to the LGBTQ2 Community Capacity Fund from the Government of Canada, but it does not provide annual ongoing financial support for continued success and growth. Our organization relies heavily on our supportive board to fill the gaps left by a lack of core funding. This however makes it difficult for them to perform the necessary planning and strategy for our work.



## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's staff and long-term sustainability?

Without core funding we are unable to have sustainable staffing or continue to grow our staff to meet the needs of the community. This limits our ability to provide support to the local community which deserves and desperately needs it. Having long-term staff creates generational knowledge within the organization while creating reliable and trusted programs for the community seeking connection or support. Core funding is an investment in the health and well-being of the community we serve as well as the long-term sustainability and health of staff and the organization itself. Without this type of investment we open ourselves and those that work with us to burnout, along with both mental and physical health concerns. As a group led by and for the underserved 2SLGBTQIA+ community we know first hand what the community will do to support each other, many times at our own expense. An expense that would be avoided with core funding.

## What else would you do if you had more core funding? Who else would you serve?

If we had annual core funding we'd be able to better plan and be more strategic, thinking more about growth rather than survival. We'd be able to collect more data and be even more research-driven than we currently are. It would help us better provide for those coming to us for guidance and connection. It would also ensure staff their job security and remove fear of them leaving for more stable and long-term offers. With core funding we'd be able to focus our sights on bigger opportunities for funding and program creation, allowing us to get back to our mission of serving people first over focusing on the funding needed for organizational survival. We'd be able to create a stable space for the community with trusted and reliable services that would reach intersectional identities deep in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Words by Charlie Murphy, Executive Director of Quadrangle Community Centre.

My disability  
is invisible.  
**My abilities  
will be very obvious.**



## Level IT Up

**Winnipeg, MB**

How does your organization serve its community?

Level IT Up is dedicated to promoting the mutual benefits of employing skilled individuals with Autism Spectrum in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's ability to serve your community and pursue its mission?

Core funding allows us to keep our doors open. Our funding model depends upon us offering our three week training and assessment process to eligible candidates with Autism Spectrum. It is only as employers prepare for and hire our candidates that any costs are recouped through our service fees. As such, we apply for grant funding and rely upon the support of the community to fund the training and assessment process. It is highly valuable to our candidates even if they are not successful in attaining employment immediately afterwards. Unfortunately, most if not all of our candidates could not afford to participate in this process if it was not offered free of charge. Current core funding pays for office space, executive director and trainer salary, website and social media presence, insurance and cell phone charges.

## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's staff and long-term sustainability?

We are currently experiencing a lack of core funding due to increased competition and prolonged grant processes (for example, the recent call for applications for federal Autism Spectrum Disorder funding took over a year to resolve and left us in a position where we had to stall plans and eventually cancel a proposed expansion when we were not successful in attaining this funding). This leaves us in a position where we have to rethink our future. Without the core funding, we must trim our budget, look at reducing staff hours (you cannot plan for succession when you can't offer staff full time or steady part time work), closing our office and offering our services and supports much less regularly. With core funding we could engage in more outreach and build our brand, reputation and footprint in both the Autism Spectrum community as well as the business community. Without core funding, it is much harder to maintain a presence among various business-related communities and with our current and potential candidates. The future is looking bleak, even though our service is valued and fulfilling a need in our community. Who will pick up the slack when we are no longer here?

## What else would you do if you had more core funding? Who else would you serve?

If we had more and predictable core funding we could engage in meaningful succession planning to build community capacity to support our mission and vision. We could expand our reach into other fields where skilled adults with Autism Spectrum face barriers to employment (i.e. the arts, business, etc.). We could regain some ground when it comes to our identity as a go-to organization for both those with Autism Spectrum and the business community. We would be a valued resource as workplaces continue to diversify and strengthen their ability to embrace employees with neurodiversity.

**The future is looking bleak, even though our service is valued and fulfilling a need in our community. Who will pick up the slack when we are no longer here?**

Words by Anne Kresta, President & Executive Director of Level IT Up.



# Developing Young Leaders of Tomorrow Today

**Toronto, ON**

**How does your organization serve its community?**

The mission of DYLOTT (Developing Young Leaders of Tomorrow Today) is to address barriers to economic security for Black youth and young professionals. We prioritize relationship-building in niche career fields such as diplomacy and cybersecurity in order to dismantle traditional barriers to entry and invisibility of secure employment opportunities.

**What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's ability to serve your community and pursue its mission?**

As a Black-led, Black-serving and Black-focused (B3) nonprofit organization, there already exists a plethora of systemic forces working against DYLOTT's mission to specifically serve the diverse needs of Black youth and young professionals. Of particular note are the challenges faced by B3 organizations that are offering new and innovative programs that deviate from the kinds of programs that are traditionally funded. These challenges include a lack of relationship and visibility to funders with similar interests, a requirement to compete with larger, more well-resourced organizations for limited pools of project-based funding and the expectation to possess core infrastructure viability without the provision of the necessary capacity-building financial support necessary to do so.

As a result, a lack of core funding stunts DYLOTT's impact possibilities from an organizational, psychological and community trust perspective. Project-based funding creates and perpetuates an environment of lack of confidence from society that the organization will survive beyond the end of the funded project; thus fulfilling stereotypical narratives about the success trajectory of Black businesses.

Further, there is a replication of precarious and impoverished economic conditions – the same conditions that the organization was created to dismantle are being experienced within the organization. What these amount to are:

- Delayed start or cancellation of programming
- Decline in quality of programming due to patchwork of services
- Restriction to serve Black communities within the immediate vicinity; and opportunities to test scalability are eliminated.

## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization’s staff and long-term sustainability?

A pervasive lack of core funding directly contributes to high staff and board member turnover rates; further de-stabilizing the infrastructure necessary for the organization to be sustainable. In this regard, DYLOTT is unable to retain adequate talented, committed and well-informed operations team and board of directors, given the specialization of our programming. Having to always be “putting out fires” results in leadership burnout due to requirements to do everything from program delivery to fundraising. Organizational risks become more entrenched and manifest through:

- Lowered morale each time a project-based funding application is declined
- Unstable and unpredictable compensation for staff
- Contrary conditions to decent work and economic growth for organization predominantly serving Black youth and women
- Mental and physical exhaustion in pursuing every project-based grant pool to enable full program deliverables
- Inability to fulfill strategic mission and vision as the organization can only plan for days or weeks at a time

## What else would you do if you had more core funding? Who else would you serve?

Unrestricted and core funding would enable DYLOTT to provide permanency, predictability and consistency to the staff team, program participants and the communities we serve. It would also allow us to build out wraparound aspects of our programs that have been proven to have positive complementary impacts within much more manageable timeframes. Further, reduced pressure related to time constraints of project-based funding would allow us to pursue other forms of revenue for the organization that is independent of grants and donations that change based on political will.

Words by Candies Kotchapaw, Founder & Executive Director of DYLOTT.



# New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity

**Moncton, NB**

**How does your organization serve its community?**

The New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity is a group of individuals and organizations that pursues and promotes the right to pay equity and decent work for women, through awareness, research, and public policy.

**What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's ability to serve your community and pursue its mission?**

The Coalition is dependent on project-based funding which lacks flexibility, as it is provided for specific programs and actions. There can be gaps of months or even more than a year between us receiving major project-based funding. Although the Coalition organizes yearly fundraisers, the proceeds of these events do not even cover basic operational expenses (i.e., rent, full-time ED's salary, telephone, transportation).

As such, the Coalition's lack of core funding has several key impacts:

- Our ability to raise awareness on emergent issues and to participate in public policy dialogue is limited.
- The coalition cannot do as much in-depth research as we need in order to inform our engagement and participation in government consultations.
- We're less able to represent women's perspectives about the workplace in discussions about public policy that impact them. This is especially true for women in women-dominated and non-unionized jobs.
- Our organization's financial stability and long-term sustainability is not secure.



## What impact does a lack of core funding have on your organization's staff and long-term sustainability?

The greatest threat to our organization's long-term sustainability is the loss of expertise. Due to unpredictable and uneven funding, our staff are financially insecure and question their future with the organization. In such a small organization, the loss of even one employee has a huge impact. A few years ago, we had three full-time employees. Due to a lack of funding, there are now only two and this could be further reduced to one in a few months if we do not get new funding.

Additionally, if the Coalition does get more funding in the future, we will then need to use more resources to hire and train new people.

## What else would you do if you had more core funding? Who else would you serve?

We could focus our energy, time, and resources on our mission, rather than on constantly trying to find funding. We could better adapt our offerings to the changing socio-economic context and to meet new needs. We would no longer have to create projects that sometimes have very little to do with our mission to ensure our organization's survival. We would keep qualified employees and the expertise they develop over the years and would be able to fulfill our mission with more confidence.

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**[If we had core funding] we could focus our energy, time, and resources on our mission, rather than on constantly trying to find funding.**

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Words by Johanne Perron, Executive Director of the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity.