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Project Overview

The Sustainable Funding Initiative (SGI SFI) is designed to support the grant-seeking and grant-writing needs of non-profit organizations (NPOs) in the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI). By investing in nonprofit professionals, this initiative strengthens funding capacity through a combination of resource development, training, community engagement, and direct support, ultimately increasing the financial sustainability of SGI organizations.

Nonprofits are essential pillars of community well-being, providing vital programs and services that drive economic stability, social mobility, and overall community resilience. Supporting non-profits is not only a social imperative but also an economic necessity. The Canadian nonprofit sector is a major contributor to the national economy, with registered charities and nonprofits accounting for approximately 8.5% of Canada's GDP in 2022, valued at over \$225 billion (Statistics Canada, 2024). This figure does not account for the immense economic value of volunteerism, which further enhances nonprofit impact.

A strategic and sustainable funding model is fundamental to ensuring long-term viability and programmatic success. By securing diverse and recurring funding sources, SGI non-profits can expand their services, strengthen infrastructure, and enhance their ability to address community needs. With improved funding access, these organizations will be better positioned to deliver essential programs and services, promote economic resilience, and support rural island communities in achieving their long-term development goals.

In 2023, SGI SFI expanded its grant database to include funding opportunities for businesses, individuals, and families, in addition to non-profits. This initiative continued into 2024/25, increasing access to grants, rebates, and subsidies that support entrepreneurs, small businesses, and residents. By broadening funding access, this initiative strengthens economic resilience in the SGIs by promoting business growth, job creation, and community development. When small businesses receive financial support, they contribute to local employment and economic diversification, while funding for individuals and families ensures greater economic stability, purchasing power, and quality of life.

Program History

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted the funding and operational landscape for local organizations. To address this crisis, the SGI Community Resource Centre (SGICRC) developed a proposal for an External Fund Development Service, aimed at expanding funding access and strengthening non-profit sustainability in the Southern Gulf Islands. The proposal was presented to the Southern Gulf Islands Community Economic Sustainability Commission (SGI CESC), aligning with its mandate to support local economic resilience, social equity, and sustainability. With the CESC's endorsement, the initiative launched in March 2021, and shortly after, was rebranded as the Southern Gulf Islands Sustainable Funding Initiative (SGISFI). As of March 2025, the program has successfully completed four years of operation.

The need for this program has never been greater, as inflation in Canada remains a pressing economic concern, with 2025 projections forecasting continued cost-of-living increases (Bank of Canada, 2024). Rising inflation disproportionately affects low-income individuals and families, increasing demand for nonprofit services such as food security programs, housing support, and health services. Additionally, small businesses and educational institutions are struggling with rising operational costs, workforce challenges, and reduced funding opportunities. Without strategic support, these entities may face reduced capacity, service cutbacks, or closures, further straining the local economy.

In response to these challenges, SGISFI has expanded its scope to assist small businesses in securing funding opportunities. By providing training, resources, and direct grant assistance, the initiative helps small businesses access grants and subsidies for workforce development, innovation, and sustainability projects—stimulating economic growth and diversification in the region.

By equipping nonprofits, small businesses with tools to navigate a complex funding landscape, SGISFI ensures ongoing economic and social development. Continued investment in capacity-building programs, grant access, and financial sustainability initiatives are essential to safeguarding the vital services and economic resilience of the Southern Gulf Islands.

Scope

The staff at the SGI Community Resource Centre (SGI CRC) have identified key challenges facing non-profits, small businesses, and community organizations across the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI). These challenges include:

1. **Limited Fund Development Capacity and Expertise**
Many organizations lack dedicated personnel or expertise in grant writing, financial planning, and donor engagement, making it difficult to secure funding. This gap limits their ability to sustain programs and services.
2. **Outdated and Insufficient Fundraising Strategies**
Traditional fundraising methods, such as in-person events and direct donor outreach, have become less effective due to shifting donor priorities and increased competition for available funding. Organizations must adapt to emerging grant opportunities, digital fundraising tools, and collaborative funding strategies.
3. **External Pressures: Inflation, Climate Change, and Policy Shifts**
Inflation continues to impact operational costs, reducing the purchasing power of non-profits and small businesses. Rising costs for rent, utilities, wages, and program materials make it harder to maintain essential services. Additionally, climate change and shifting government funding priorities require organizations to continually adapt their programming and revenue models to remain sustainable.

4. Low Organizational Capacity and Workforce Constraints

Many SGI organizations rely heavily on volunteers and have limited full-time staff, making it difficult to manage grant writing, reporting, and compliance requirements. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with declining volunteerism, have further reduced organizational capacity.

Expanding the Scope for 2025/26

To address these evolving challenges, the Sustainable Funding Initiative (SGISFI) will expand its focus in the following ways:

- **Small Business Grant Assistance:** Recognizing that rural small businesses face barriers to accessing financial resources, the initiative will continue expanding its grant database to include small business grants, rebates, and subsidies. Additionally, targeted workshops will provide business owners with grant-writing skills, financial literacy training, and networking opportunities to enhance economic sustainability in the region.
- **Strengthening the Grant Hub and Digital Resources:** The initiative will further develop the Grant Hub database, expanding access to funding information and integrating e-learning resources for grant seekers. Recorded grant-writing workshops and templates, funded by a separate New Horizons for Seniors grant will be made available for a small fee, ensuring long-term sustainability while improving accessibility.
- **Targeted Outreach and Capacity Building:** The initiative will enhance outreach efforts to increase workshop participation, newsletter engagement, and mentorship opportunities. Specific outreach strategies will be used to reach underrepresented sectors, such as agriculture, the arts, and Indigenous-led organizations.

By addressing these expanded focus areas, the SGI Sustainable Funding Initiative will increase regional economic resilience, enhance funding access, and strengthen the long-term capacity of non-profits, small businesses, and educational institutions across the SGI.

Project Activities

To address both ongoing and emerging challenges, the Southern Gulf Islands Sustainable Funding Initiative (SGISFI) will implement the following activities in Year 5 to enhance local organizations' capacity to secure funding and drive economic development.

1. Direct Support for Organizations

- **Grant Writing Workshops:** Provide hands-on workshops tailored to SGI non-profits, businesses, and educational institutions, focusing on effective grant proposal writing and persuasive storytelling techniques.

- **Grant Writers Hub Expansion:** Formalize a Grant Writer ‘Stable’—a network of trained grant writers—to offer ongoing support to local organizations. This initiative aims to increase the pool of qualified grant writers available for SGI non-profits, schools, and small businesses.
- **Rebate Program Growth:** Expand the highly successful Grant Rebate Program, which supports the capacity of local non-profits by covering partial costs of hiring professional grant writers to work on their behalf. Last year, the program contributed to the development and submission of over \$300,000 in grant applications.
- **Enhanced Deadline Tracking:** Maintain a regularly updated database of upcoming grant deadlines, ensuring that organizations remain informed and prepared.
- **Level Up Collaboration:** Support organizations in planning and posting their 40-80/hr online projects to the Level Up platform and marketing these opportunities to post-secondary students with ties to SGI (pending renewal of the federal government funding for the program).

2. Outreach to Build Organizational Capacity

- **Expanded Grant Newsletter:** Continue sending out monthly newsletters with detailed funding opportunities, targeting non-profits, businesses, and schools. In 2024/25, the newsletter subscriber base grew to 450, reflecting strong community interest.
- **Sector-Specific Networking:** Facilitate inter-island partnerships between similar organizations and increase collaboration with local small businesses to broaden grant-seeking capacity.
- **Fundraising and Non-Charity Partnerships:** Assist organizations in structuring charity-non-charity partnerships to expand eligibility for grant opportunities.
- **Targeted Outreach to Funders:** Continue strengthening relationships with funders to support for increased support for SGI-based organizations and communities.

3. Expanded Training and Education Initiatives

To meet the growing demand for skills development and strategic planning, SGISFI will expand its Scholarly Seniors program (funded by the New Horizons for Seniors Program) and other education initiatives, offering:

- **Advanced Workshops with Hands-On Labs:** Expanding on basic sessions to provide in-depth, multi-session training with real-world application.
- **Sector-Specific Grant Writing Support:** Tailored training for arts and culture, agriculture, education, small business, and environmental organizations.
- **New Workshop Topics:** Based on community demand, the initiative will introduce new workshops on:

- Project Management Fundamentals-12 module program.
- Treasurer’s Lab for improved financial oversight.
- Strategic Fundraising and Major Donor Engagement to diversify revenue sources.
- Volunteer Recruitment and Retention to address declining volunteerism.
- Cultural Safety and Equity in Grant Writing to support Indigenous and diverse community organizations.

4. Enhanced Grant Database and Resource Expansion

- Sustainable Database Growth: The SGI Grant Hub's subscription-based database, which has grown to over 700 grant listings, will continue to expand, ensuring that expired grants are removed, and new funding sources are continually added.
- Affordable Access Model: Maintain a low-cost subscription fee for SGI non-profits, schools, and businesses, ensuring accessibility while sustaining the service.
- New Workshop Recordings & Resources: Increase availability of recorded workshops and templates, offering users on-demand access to past sessions for a small fee, ensuring continued learning opportunities. These workshops and templates are funded by a separate New Horizons for Seniors grant.

5. Support for Small Businesses & Non-Profits

- Business Grant Support Expansion: Continue marketing effective grant writing to businesses in non-traditional sectors, such as the arts, and the environment.
- New Grant Listings for Individuals & Families: Expand coverage of grants, subsidies, and rebates available to individuals and families, particularly for housing, education, and green energy initiatives.

6. Scaling Up.

The 2025/26 SGI Sustainable Funding Initiative will continue to refine and scale up its services to address ongoing financial pressures, including rising inflation, limited grant availability, and increasing demand for non-profit services. By expanding direct support, training, networking, and the Grant Rebate Program, SGISFI will strengthen the long-term sustainability of organizations across the SGIs driving economic resilience, job creation, and community stability.

Project Deliverables for Year Five

Statement of Work

- Develop and finalize the Year Five Scope of Work, incorporating lessons learned from Year Four and expanding services to meet evolving community needs.

Project Schedule

- Establish a detailed timeline of project activities, workshops, grant application deadlines, and outreach efforts to ensure effective delivery and accountability.

Expanded Direct Grant Writing Support for SGI Organizations

- a) Offer sector-specific grant writing workshops, including new topics such as project management, donor engagement, and volunteer recruitment. These are funded by a separate New Horizons for Seniors Grant.
- b) Strengthen the Grant Writers Hub by expanding the local network of professional grant writers and providing training to new and existing grant writers. This is funded by a separate New Horizons for Seniors Grant.
- c) Provide direct professional grant writing services, editing, and review to SGI non-profits, businesses, and educational institutions.
- d) Continue and expand the Grant Rebate Program to SGI non-profits and businesses helping them access professional grant writing services.
- e) Expand business grant access, supporting economic diversification through targeted outreach and tailored funding resources.

Outreach to SGI Non-Profits, Businesses, and Schools

- a) Continue increasing subscribers to the monthly newsletter, aiming for at least 25% growth from Year Four's subscriber base.
- b) Continue to create and distribute monthly funding newsletters, now including a dedicated section for small businesses and education-based grants.
- c) Increase the number of SGI non-profit and business clients through targeted outreach, workshops, and networking opportunities.
- d) Strengthen partnerships between non-profits, and businesses, through platforms such as Level Up and other internship programs.
- e) Enhance targeted outreach to funders, increasing visibility of SGI organizations and their funding needs.

Expanded Grant Database and Resource Development

- a) Continue expanding the grant database, adding new grant opportunities while removing outdated ones in a timely manner.
- b) Increase the availability of recorded grant writing and capacity-building workshops through the Resource Portal, ensuring organizations can access training on-demand.
- c) Develop new grant writing and non-profit capacity-building templates to improve organizational efficiency.

d) Expand business-focused resources, including new templates, funding guides, and access to professional development opportunities.

Workshops and Training for Increased Capacity (**Note – Workshops and training funded by a separate New Horizons for Seniors grant*).

- a) Hire a part-time program coordinator and up to two senior facilitators to manage and deliver the SGI Scholarly Seniors workshop series.
- b) Offer workshops across a broader range of topics, including project planning, financial management, community engagement, and marketing.
- c) Develop a youth mentorship program, engaging young volunteers to assist with workshop delivery and hands-on skills training.
- d) Introduce hybrid learning models, incorporating in-person and online workshops to increase accessibility and engagement.

Strengthening Program Sustainability

- a) Expand fee for service offerings for workshops and templates funded by New Horizons for Seniors grant.
- b) Identify and secure additional external grants to sustain and expand programming.
- c) Strengthen partnerships with municipal, provincial, and federal funders to establish long-term financial sustainability.

Final Evaluation Report

- Conduct an impact assessment of Year Five program activities, measuring growth in grant applications, funding secured, organizational participation, and long-term sustainability efforts.
- Produce a detailed final report, summarizing program successes, challenges, and recommendations for continued expansion and improvement.

Project Team

Michael Cowan, *Program Coordinator*: Michael is a strategic and solutions-driven leader with a Master's degree in Global Leadership. His extensive experience includes leadership roles such as National Director, Executive Director, Program Director, Project Leader, and Project Manager. As a former Program Director at the Law Foundation of BC, he managed a grant portfolio of approximately \$4 million, supporting initiatives that promote equality and support for marginalized communities. Over the past year, he has successfully secured over \$1.2 million in grant funding for Pender Island. In this project, Michael will oversee overall coordination, strategic planning, and implementation.

Melody Pender, *SGI CRC Executive Director*: Melody brings expertise in finance and human resources to her role as Executive Director of the SGI Community Resource Centre (SGICRC). She leads the organization's growing team and oversees a range of community programs across the Southern Gulf Islands. In this project, Melody will work closely with Michael to provide strategic

guidance, liaise with the board, oversee program development, and support the recruitment and onboarding of key project personnel, including workshop facilitators. She will also ensure that administrative support is effectively allocated to sustain project success.

Katie Dentry, *Research and Outreach Coordinator*: Katie has over a decade of experience in program management and community development. Holding a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of British Columbia, with additional studies in environmental science at the University of Victoria, she is deeply committed to connecting SGI residents with resources and funding opportunities. Katie will be responsible for researching and curating a monthly grant newsletter, supporting over 250 non-profit subscribers in their grant-seeking efforts and capacity-building initiatives.

TBA, Workshop Coordinator (*Funded by New Horizons for Seniors Grant*): A part-time coordinator will oversee all administrative tasks related to workshop planning and execution for the SGI Scholarly Seniors workshop series. Their responsibilities will include hiring and supporting senior facilitators, managing workshop logistics, engaging with participants, and coordinating youth volunteers through the SGI Neighbourhood House. The ideal candidate will have a background in program development, event planning, and community engagement. This role may be combined with a facilitator position to optimize resources.

TBA, Workshop Facilitators (*Funded by New Horizons for Seniors Grant*): Experienced facilitators will be hired to develop and deliver up to 12 educational workshops as part of the SGI Scholarly Seniors series. Priority will be given to individuals aged 55+ who have extensive experience in non-profit leadership, volunteer coordination, and workshop facilitation. Facilitators will provide both in-person and online training sessions, ensuring accessibility for seniors across the SGIs.

Proposed Annual Budget (Approximate)

Year 5 Item	Description	Total
SGI Scholarly Seniors Workshop Series	Funded through New Horizons for Seniors Grant.	\$25,000.00
Outreach and Direct Support.	Coordinator @35/hr x 350 hours	\$12,250
Grant Writer Rebates	30 x \$250	\$7,500.00
Web Updates and Maintenance		\$600.00
Newsletters	Research Assistant 30/hr x 100	\$3,000.00
Marketing	Social media and print advertising	\$1,250
Administration @ 18%	Administrative overhead and program oversight	\$5,400.00
		Total Project Cost: \$55,000
SOW Request \$30,000		

Conclusion

Investing \$30,000 in the Sustainable Funding Initiative has enabled the submission of \$1.741 million in grant applications for the Southern Gulf Islands in 2024/25, highlighting the program's critical role in expanding funding opportunities and supporting local organizations. This program ensures that local non-profits and community organizations can access critical funding to sustain and expand their services, benefiting residents across the region. While the core operational costs remain stable, modest increases in advertising and outreach are necessary to enhance engagement and further amplify funding opportunities. By continuing to support this initiative, we are strengthening the financial resilience of our communities and maximizing the impact of every dollar invested.

The year 2025/26 program will focus on expanding the reach and impact of the Southern Gulf Islands Sustainable Funding Initiative. By strengthening the Grant Hub, expanding outreach to small businesses, improving capacity-building efforts, and enhancing the Grant Rebate Program, SGI CRC aims to increase regional economic capacity and funding accessibility. These initiatives will continue to empower non-profits, businesses, and educators to secure sustainable financial support, ultimately ensuring long-term community resilience and development.

References

Statistics Canada. (2024). *Satellite account of non-profit institutions and volunteering, 2022*.

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