

A woman with short dark hair is seated in a wheelchair at a computer workstation. She is wearing a headset with a microphone and looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The workstation includes a large monitor, a keyboard, and a mouse. The background shows other computer equipment and a window. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter, except for a circular cutout where the woman is visible in grayscale.

Impact Report: Disability 2019



scaling for impact:
disability



more meaningful employment
more investing in people
more families living healthy lives
more people overcoming workplace barriers
more inclusive communities



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we don't accept the status quo

We are passionate about building a better Canada.

To be truly inclusive, all Canadians must fully participate in society. However, for many Canadians living with disabilities, this vision is not reality. Individuals with disabilities face hurdles every day that prevent them from accessing the resources, support and opportunities they need to thrive.

We are here to change that.

In partnership with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), LIFT selected five organizations who are making a real difference in improving social inclusion to participate in ***Scaling for Impact: Disability (a pilot project)***.

Each organization was in a period of transition. LIFT worked alongside dedicated team members within each SPO to identify gaps and help them strengthen operations, organizational capacity and accountability, and measurement practices to do more for Canadians living with disabilities.

Today, each SPO has a bigger vision of

success tethered down by a strategic plan and all the tools and resources needed to realize it. In various ways, we have helped diversify and grow revenues, expanded capacity and improved impact. Insights and best practices will be shared with other SPOs helping Canadians living with disabilities.

We would like to thank ESDC for their commitment to people living with disabilities and for selecting LIFT as a partner in helping underserved Canadians access the foundations of a prosperous life.

We'd also like to thank our investors and dedicated partners for their continued contributions and support, which have proven to be truly transformative to the SPOs in our portfolio and essential in affecting real change across Canada.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Bruce Dewar
President & CEO

About Us

we build the capacity to do more

Despite the best efforts of hardworking SPOs and generous donors and investors, we are still only scratching the surface on widespread social issues such as unemployment and insufficient attainment of education and skills.

At LIFT, we make our investments in society work harder, deliver greater impact on a larger scale, and help vulnerable and at-risk populations in more significant numbers.

It's estimated there are 170,000 non-profit and charitable organizations in Canada, with 54% of them run entirely by volunteers. It is no surprise that many SPOs lack robust systems and structures, consistent funding, effective governance, accurate impact measurement data and the ability and capacity to scale up.

Our unique value is that we apply business discipline to SPOs that are already doing good work, helping to build their capacity so they can do even more.

We leverage financial investments with hands-on management and support from our team and partner network to maximize the value of dollars invested and provide an effective package of support.

We work in partnership with SPOs in essential areas such as strategy, governance, fundraising, legal, HR, research and evaluation, IT and financial management systems. We develop long-term business plans and help with diversifying income sources, fundraising tools and connections, raising profile, coaching senior staff, data capture and management, impact measurement, franchising agreements and fit-for-growth financial systems.

*"We transform good causes
into great social enterprises."*

By providing SPOs with expertise, leadership and strategic support focused on capacity-building, we are helping them be more effective and sustainable.

We transform good causes into great social enterprises and fundamentally change lives.



About Us

our focus

Our interest lies in SPOs that address health, education and skills development leading to employment and the specific needs of vulnerable Canadians.

We seek out proven SPOs that have:

- strong leadership who demonstrate operational and adaptive capacity
- a proven theory of change and distinctive delivery model that is outcome-driven
- the desire to scale and replicate
- been in operation for a minimum of three years
- annual expenditures of at least \$1.5 million
- several years of audited financial statements.

From this field we narrow our focus to organizations with proven track records, unrealized potential for substantial growth, a willingness to collaborate and work together with LIFT and the efforts and discipline needed to calibrate their impact along the way.



Disabilities in Canada

access to more

In Canada, one in five Canadians, or 6.2 million people, have at least one disability that limits them in their daily activities. For many, living with a disability means fewer employment prospects, discrimination and a lack of independence that creates a barrier to social inclusion.

The experience of living with a disability varies from individual to individual. However, persons with severe disabilities are two-and-a-half times less likely to be employed than those with mild disabilities. While employers are making strides today to accommodate disabilities in the workplace, the expertise developed and made available by disability SPOs is critical in furthering workplace inclusiveness.

When 20% of the population face barriers to true social inclusion, 20% of the population is not fully participating in our economy or our communities.

This impacts everyone.

We need to do more. We have an incredible opportunity to improve the lives of people with disabilities by providing access to the foundations that lead to a more rewarding and independent life: education, skills for meaningful employment and health and well-being. By investing in the business and program delivery models of high-impact disability SPOs, Canadians living with disabilities will lead better quality lives.



Scaling for Impact: Disability (a pilot project)

building more capacity

In 2015, with the support of ESDC, LIFT launched “Scaling for Impact: Disability (a pilot project).” LIFT selected five SPOs who did good work in the disability sector but had the greatest potential to do more.

The five included:

Community Living Parry Sound

Ensures people with developmental disabilities can live in their community under conditions that encourage personal growth and promote participation.

Groupe Convex

Creates inclusive economic development opportunities to create its vision of a human-based economy.

Neil Squire Society

Empowers Canadians with disabilities through the use of computer-based assistive technologies, research and development and various employment programs.

Rise Asset Development

Provides mentorship and micro loans to people who have experienced barriers to employment resulting from mental health conditions or addictions to start their own small businesses.

Skylark Children, Youth and Families

Provides counselling and support to children, young people and families struggling with complex mental health and developmental needs.



Each SPO was in the middle of significant change or at a strategic pivot, from mergers and new partnerships to scaling impact and changing funding structures. LIFT worked with each SPO to build capacity through a valuable combination of hands-on management support, expertise provided by a network of pro bono professional service partners and strategic funding.

The project had three key outcomes:

1

Enhanced capacity for SPOs to achieve social inclusion outcomes

2

Enhanced ability to measure outcomes

3

Increased relationships between SPOs and the corporate sector

The participating SPOs now have a strong foundation for strategic growth and innovation, with a new mindset and the plans, tools and resources to do more.





Knowledge transfer

top 10 insights

SPOs often work in isolation of each other. Without this pilot project, common themes and key learnings could not have been shared with other disability SPOs. Although SPOs in this pilot project are disability-focused, the lessons we identified are relevant to any organization wanting to grow its impact and do more.

1 Programs should be designed for impact, not funding

Organizations vying for financial support can lose programming focus as they apply for any funding opportunity that seems promising. Organizations succeed in creating change when their approach is driven by impact, not funding opportunities.

2 Adapt an innovative mindset and a strategic plan

Organizations today must embrace innovation or risk being left behind. However, change doesn't happen overnight. To succeed, a cultural change must be embraced and supported across all levels of an organization. The focus needs to shift from day-to-day operations to strategies and actions that are needed to succeed.

3 Pause to build an organizational toolkit

Think before you run. As organizations get excited about opportunity, they may neglect to take the time needed to turn strategy into action. Strategic organizational leadership and sustainable growth must be complemented by a suite of operational tools, resources and oversight – and a commitment to be consistent in their implementation.

4 Prioritize process and quality over speed

Entrepreneurial, impact-driven organizations are wired to run, not walk. The working culture is fast-paced and action-oriented, often at the expense of operational best practices. Create short-term, achievable milestones and celebrate quick wins. Both are integral to gaining leadership trust and buy-in.

5 **It's all about the team**

As organizations grow, particularly those faced with resource and personnel constraints, it is critical to ensure that time is taken to build healthy relationships between board members, staff and leadership. Front-line staff should be given opportunities to articulate their role and value to the evolving direction and strategic focus of the organization.

6 **Partner with unusual suspects to achieve a shared vision**

While most non-profits place a high premium on partnerships, some try to be everything to everyone rather than focus on their core competencies. Collaborating with like-minded organizations can play a key role in achieving shared goals. It is important that a partnership strategy cast a broad and strategic net to identify organizations, sometimes unusual suspects, that share your vision and goals.

7 **Alignment at the top**

The board and chief executive relationship is a critical and powerful one. For an SPO undergoing significant transition, this relationship must be based on both trust and a shared vision for the organization. Taking time to really understand the power dynamics and nuances is a necessary step prior to embarking on any fulsome change management or growth strategy.

8 **Create opportunities for development**

In many organizations, leadership development opportunities tend to focus on enhancing the capacity and skillset of senior staff or those at the top. Forward-thinking organizations also invest time and resources into providing practical learning opportunities for more junior and mid-level staff with an eye to succession planning. After all, these are our future leaders.

9 **Apply business expertise to prepare for growth**

SPOs often operate lean and can sometimes sacrifice process and long-term planning for innovation. To successfully scale and create sustainable impact, an organization must apply proven business practices and develop the tools and processes that will enable them to manage growth.

10 **Strategy first, structure second**

It's common for organizations to get stuck making decisions related to structure when their operational mandate has yet to be determined. To succeed, organizations should have a clearly identified plan and direction and then develop the teams, structures and systems to best support action.

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more meaningful employment

Groupe Convex (Gcx) is a non-profit organization established in 2004 to incubate and manage a network of social enterprise businesses in Prescott-Russell, Ontario. Through its businesses, the organization facilitates inclusive employment, creating jobs for people who face employment challenges.

Opportunity

Grow the organization from its existing network of social enterprises to become an active community economic development engine, working with businesses outside of its portfolio to find employment opportunities for individuals.

Plan

Focus on strategic planning, measurement, human resources and succession. Define key messages and develop a robust marketing and communications strategy.

Impact

- Successfully pivoted Gcx to a community economic development engine serving a wider population, including youth, newcomers and people with a history of mental health conditions
- Diversified Gcx's funding base, enabling it to better respond to the community's social and economic needs
- Increased annual revenue by 22% (2018 vs 2016)
- Increased employee headcount by 25% (2019 vs 2017)
- Creation and implementation of a performance measurement system to track impact and demonstrate success
- Developed a communications strategy with approved key messages, clearly communicating the organization's purpose and role in line with Gcx's vision and mission



LIFT has played a pivotal role in growing the capacity of GCx's senior management team. With LIFT's support, GCx has implemented a dynamic growth strategy and has the leadership capacity and confidence it needs to succeed as a community economic development engine."

Caroline Arcand, Former Executive Director, GCx



Exit: MARCH 2019

1.5M

Canadians with disabilities are unable to afford required tools or medications due to cost

more investing in people

Rise Asset Development empowers entrepreneurs with mental health or addiction challenges. Rise provides low-interest small business loans, training and mentorship to individuals facing barriers to employment. By 2015, Rise Asset Development had successfully refined its small business support model and demonstrated its impact in Toronto.

Opportunity

Help expand Rise's reach from coast-to-coast.

Plan

Develop and implement a national growth strategy to support Rise's growth across Canada. Identify and develop a clear vision, business model, governance plan and targets.

Impact

- Increased funding from non-government sources to 63% from 35% (2018 vs 2015)
- Grew annual revenue by 45% to almost \$1 million
- Established operations in 11 locations across four provinces, with plans for further expansion
- Improved team culture, promoting collaboration and strategic thinking
- Creation and implementation of a performance measurement system to track impact and demonstrate success
- Strengthened systems and processes to create a more efficient organization

“

LIFT initially focused on developing a national scaling strategy and then moved to implementation of the Rise scaling strategy with strategic capacity building support. LIFT also engaged some of its partner network to provide additional assistance in key areas. When we started working with LIFT, we were active in four cities in Ontario. Rise is now active in eleven locations in four provinces and will scale to two more locations by 2021.”

Lori Smith, Chief Executive Officer



more families living healthier lives

Skylark Children, Youth & Families was established as a non-profit organization in 2016 after a merger between Oolagen Youth Mental Health and Delisle Youth Services. Skylark supports children, youth and families with complex mental health, addiction and/or developmental needs and enhances their well-being and resilience. The merger created the opportunity to serve more youth and families, but required integration and change management.

Opportunity

Merge two organizations into one cohesive entity led by a strategic team and increase the organization's measurable, sustainable impact.

Plan

Define the renewed organizational focus and strengthen internal capacity. Develop a robust business model to strategically deliver programs.

Impact

- Skylark is now in position to serve the needs of more children, youth and families
- Established leadership strategy with a succession plan to support planning and decision-making
- Increased funding by 17% to expand capacity
- Increased fundraising dollars from corporations, individuals and foundations by 19%
- Creation and implementation of a performance measurement system to track impact and demonstrate success

“

LIFT tries not to come in as the experts but rather as a resource to help us build and grow. They engage participants in all aspects of the process.”

Lydia Sai-Chew, Skylark CEO



Neil Squire

Exit: MARCH 2019

A person living
with a disability is
2.5x
less likely to be
employed

more people overcoming workplace barriers

Neil Squire Society empowers Canadians with disabilities through the use of computer-based assistive technologies, research and development, and employment programs. While the organization had a presence across the country, the level of operations was inconsistent, with stronger representation in some regions over others.

Opportunity

Expand Neil Squire's reach, impact and organizational effectiveness to deliver high-quality programs and services across the country.

Plan

Establish a national presence and drive awareness of Neil Squire's offerings, streamline processes and structures and increase fundraising capacity.

Impact

- Neil Squire now serves 3,300 clients across nine provinces and territories
- Signed new partnerships and a substantial increase in revenue expected in 2019
- Created performance measurement framework to improve learning capabilities
- Refreshed Neil Squire's brand and logo to unite all programs under one powerful identity
- Invested in fundraising capacity with the placement of a leader in fund development and supported the transition of a new financial operations lead to guide organizational growth
- Conducted an IT audit leading to a roadmap for an organization wide IT system

“*LIFT's partnership has been instrumental to the growth and success of Neil Squire Society. As a result of LIFT's partnership, we now have the strong foundation, team and mindset required for strategic growth and innovation, to further the reach and impact of our programs. We couldn't be more excited for what's to come as we launch our new brand and bring our offerings to more people with disabilities across the country.*”

Gary Birch, Executive Director, Neil Squire Society



20%

of Canadians aged
25 to 64 years
have at least one
disability

more inclusive communities

Community Living Parry Sound (CLPS)

works to ensure people with developmental disabilities can live in their community under conditions that encourage personal growth and promote participation as valued and contributing citizens. CLPS had enjoyed a successful track record in providing “person-centred” services, working with families and the community to determine services based on an individual’s needs and goals.

Opportunity

Support CLPS’s transition from a “person-centred” model to a “person-directed” model, where persons with disabilities can lead the process to identify their life vision and goals.

Plan

Develop a strategy and roadmap to transition to a more personalized service approach. Map client experience to identify opportunities, bottlenecks and gaps in CLPS’s service offerings. Establish a leadership strategy to ensure future success for all members of the organization.

Impact

- Transitioned CLPS to a more sustainable model – moving from a grant-funded person-centred focus to a fee-for-service person-directed approach, reducing reliance on program-funding leading to deeper impact on families
- Implementation of a solid leadership strategy with a shared vision across the organization
- Grew the number of people and their families served by 13% (2018 vs 2017)
- Increased individual funding to people and their families to 41% from 21% (2018 vs 2017)
- Grew non-government sources of revenue by 7% (2018 vs 2017)
- Helped create stronger business practices and a shared leadership culture to accommodate growth
- Creation and implementation of a performance measurement system to track impact
- Improved efficiencies and reallocated staff time to increase the number of people served

“Without LIFT I believe we would not be as far along in the transformation of our business model, one I see being followed provincially.”

Jo-Anne Demick, Executive Director, Community Living Parry Sound

measuring more

Measurement is not second nature for LIFT; it is first nature.

We leveraged our partner network to measure the impact of the five SPOs. Our partner, MNP LLP accounting and business advisors, surveyed individuals and families supported by these five organizations throughout much of 2018. MNP's Economics and Research Consulting Practice aggregated survey and interview responses into statistical results.

MNP's report concludes individuals and families supported by these organizations reported greater social inclusion through enhanced personal, social, professional and financial well-being.

74%

of respondents reported an improved measure of **personal well-being**, defined as a sense of purpose, enhanced individual potential and a feeling of being valued by others (reported across all SPOs).

77%

of respondents indicated an improved measure of **social well-being**, defined as participating in activities, developing meaningful relationships and expanding personal networks (reported across all SPOs).

72%

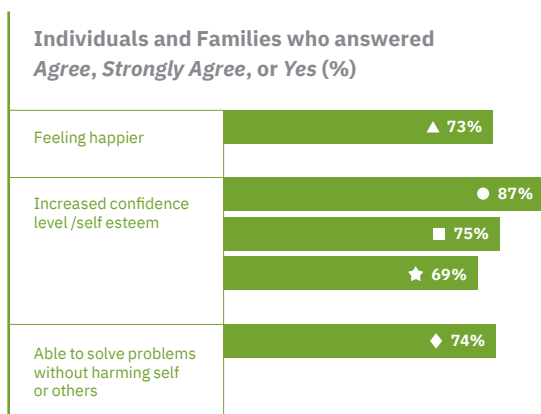
of respondents indicated an improved measure of **professional well-being**, defined as opportunities for learning, recognition of strengths and abilities and engaging in meaningful work (reported across three SPOs).

47%

of respondents indicated an improved measure of **financial well-being**, measured through an improvement in financial situation or increase in personal income (reported across three SPOs).

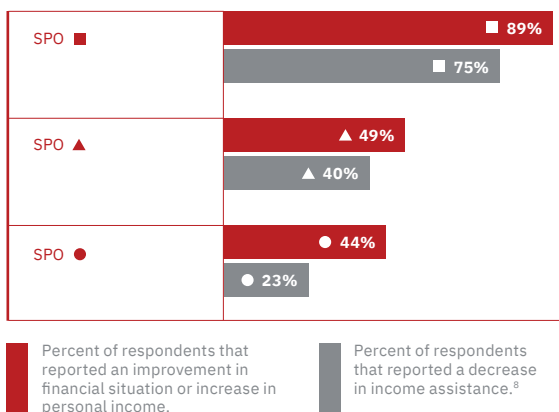
personal well-being

Each SPO measured personal well-being in different ways. Based on three measures of personal well-being reported across all SPOs, 74% of respondents indicated that the person receiving services had seen an improvement in their personal well-being.⁴



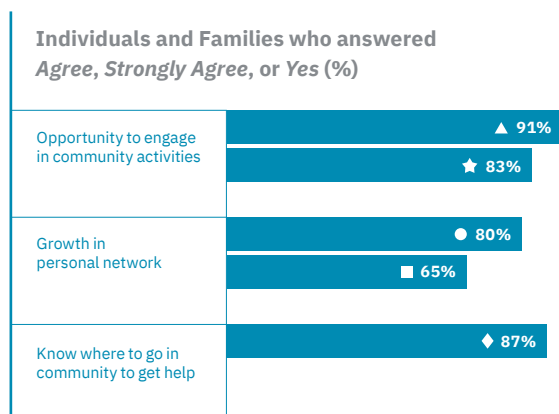
financial well-being

Across three applicable SPOs, 47% of respondents indicated an improvement in financial situation or increase in personal income, a measure of financial well-being.⁷ Not all organization focus on improved financial situation.



social well-being

Each SPO measured social well-being in different ways. Based on three measures of social well-being reported across all SPOs, 77% of respondents indicated that the person receiving services had seen an improvement in their social well-being.⁵



professional well-being

Across three applicable SPOs, 72% of respondents indicated an improvement in professional well-being through increased job-related skills or participation in educational programs or activities.⁶

⁴ Calculated as the sum of responses across the five organizations for select measures of personal well-being. Represents a total sample size of 384 respondents.

⁵ Calculated as the sum of responses across the five organizations for select measures of social well-being. Represents a total sample size of 377 respondents.

⁶ Calculated as the sum of responses across three organizations. Represents a total sample size of 74 respondents.

⁷ Calculated as the sum of responses across three organizations. Represents a total sample size of 196 respondents.

⁸ Not all SPOs who measure this indicator have a reduction in social assistance as their purpose of their organization. It occurs as an unintended consequence.



our partners

A key element of LIFT's model is our partner network, which complements the expertise of our staff team by providing pro bono services. SPOs gain exposure to high-quality professional services they would not otherwise have the opportunity to utilize. Our partners provide essential support for financial and strategic planning, technical support, research, evaluation, governance, communication and other professional services.

funding partner

Scaling for Impact: Disability (a pilot project) is funded in part by Employment and Social Development Canada.



Employment and
Social Development Canada

Emploi et
Développement social Canada

pro bono partners

The following private sector organizations engaged with the SPOs throughout the project:





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