

# Wood Buffalo Community Foundation

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Strategic Plan 2019 to 2021  
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# 1 Introduction

Wood Buffalo Community Foundation is one of over 140 community foundations across Canada. It is one of the newest Community Foundations, established in March 29, 2017, and holds to the principle of socially investing in its community to enhance the quality of life, the fostering of connections, and building community affinity and prosperity.

The Foundation is operated by a committed Board of Directors which undertakes not only the governance of the organization, but also its day to day operations involving finance, investments, grant applications and allocations, and overall organizational development.

2018 represents the first year for grant allocations within the new granting program, involving \$250,000. Of this amount, \$45,000 was earned income, with \$205,000 coming from other funding sources.

In February 2018, a shorter term organizational development plan was prepared with a Vision, Mission and Values. The Action Plans that emerged were primarily focused, through three committees and a task force, to advance the development of the organization in achieving its primary role and mandate. As 2018 came to a conclusion, the Board of Directors identified the opportunity to undertake a new strategic planning process to build off the earlier experience, and to chart a series of Strategic Directions and Priorities based on the learnings, capacity building and experiences of the last year. On Thursday, December 13, 2018, the Board of Directors met to build connections within the group, and to develop preliminary discussions that would support a full day strategic planning session on Friday, December 14, 2018.

The Strategic Planning Workshop involved a series of tasks undertaken by eight members of the Board of Directors. The workshop opened with a review of strategic trends that are influencing society, involving population aging and diversity, philanthropy and related perspectives. This task was followed by a review of internal and external opportunities and challenges identified by the Board of Directors in the winter of 2018. Some small amendments were made and the results are available in Appendix 1. Following this work, considerable time was spent on four discussion questions that were developed as a basis to facilitate the development of the Foundation's Strategic Plan going forward. The four questions involved:

- What were the key successes in Year 1 and why?
- How to connect with the community / community needs and to meaningfully invest?

- What is our best role / unique space to occupy / key relationships and partnerships?
- What is the resourcing model we need to move forward?

The key discussions points identified for each of these questions is available in Appendix 2.

With the situational perspectives finalized, the workshop participants moved to a review of the Foundation's Vision, Mission and the development of Principles and Values. With these in place, the workshop activities focused on developing the key Strategic Directions and aligned strategies and priorities for implementation over the 2019 to 2021 strategic planning period.

This document represents the new Strategic Plan for Wood Buffalo Community Foundation for 2019 to 2021. It was reviewed by the workshop participants, and approved by the Board of Directors. Implementation will be undertaken, initially through the Board's committee structure and the Board itself.

## 2 Vision

A Vision is like a horizon, identifying a point in the future on which all the stakeholders of an organization can find common value and purpose and move towards in unison. But like a horizon, as one moves towards it, the vision can move to reflect the continuation of change occurring in the operating environment.

This amended Vision, based on an earlier statement, was affirmed at the strategy session.

### **Healthy and vibrant communities, enabled by long-term social investment.**

The following points provide some further detail and understanding of the Vision for Wood Buffalo Community Foundation.

**Healthy and Vibrant Communities** Represents the key outcome, benefit and focus of the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation in all that it does. It contributes to and works collectively with donors, volunteers, other social profit organizations and the community at large to achieve a community that is healthy and prosperous, vibrant, and innovative in all its dimensions, and is inclusive of all its citizens.

**Enabled by Long-Term Social Investment** Identifies the importance of focusing on long-term funding strategies that facilitate ongoing, valued social investments that continually improve, grow and contribute meaningfully to a healthy and vibrant community

### **3 Mission**

A Mission informs the reader of the fundamentals and focus of the organization. In application terms, all Wood Buffalo Community Foundation decisions, whether strategic or operational, need to align with and be supportive to the achievement of the Mission. If a decision is being considered that is not aligned or is supportive, the organization needs to consider why it would undertake such a decision or whether it is time to review the Mission.

The following Mission Statement was developed for Wood Buffalo Community Foundation, based on a Mission Statement developed earlier in the year.

**To enhance the quality of life in our region through grants and partnerships that improve the capacity and sustainability of our community.**

**We achieve this Mission by:**

- **Connecting people, families and companies with causes that inspire them;**
- **We pool resources, knowledge and expertise, working with others for an even greater impact;**
- **Working alongside donors to help them realize their philanthropic goals by matching their interests with community needs and finding innovative ways to make every donation count.**
- **Providing professional and reliable fund management with the flexibility to respond to changing needs and priorities;**
- **Funding local initiatives in a wide variety of areas, including health, education, arts, culture, social services, sports and recreation, the environment or other emerging community needs;**
- **Collaborating with others in the community to prioritize issues and find solutions; and**
- **Taking a long term view of our community to address complex issues now and for generations to come.**

The following material provides some additional perspectives on the key themes within the Mission:

**To Enhance The Quality Of Life In Our Region** This phrase identifies the key purpose that drives all the work of the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation. Our work focuses on continually striving, through funding and donor support for community initiatives, to continually improve the quality of life for all residents in the region.

**Grants And Partnerships** Identifies the two primary approaches that drive the work of the Foundation in realizing its goals. This involves first, the issuing of grants to social profit organizations that contribute to and enhance the quality of life in our region. The second approach involves working through collaborative initiatives and partnerships that leverage and integrate all the resources of the community to achieve a greater good.

**That Improve The Capacity And Sustainability Of Our Community** Identifies the key outcomes that the funding and partnerships undertaken by Wood Buffalo Community Foundation target / focus on, being the capacity and the sustainability of the community as it moves forward. By building capacity and supporting sustainability, the community can then actively enhance the quality of life for all its residents.

A second dimension of the Mission identifies how Wood Buffalo Community Foundation goes about achieving the outcomes and the impacts that it identifies within its Mission. Six strategies are identified that describe the basis by which the Foundation will operate, interact and achieve its Mission.

## 4 Principles and Values

Principles and Values have three roles within a Strategic Plan. First, they can be utilized to further describe and support key themes within the Mission. Second, they identify how the organization will interact and work with people and organizations. Third, they can identify key areas of accountability for the Foundation.

The following Principles and Values have been identified for the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation.

### *We believe in...*

<b>Collective Action</b>	The ability of our communities to come together collectively and use all our resources to enhance the quality of life and well-being for all residents.
<b>Understanding Our Community</b>	Continually working to better understand our community today and as it evolves, in order to use the resources available to support our communities' quality of life, prosperity and long-term sustainability.
<b>Integrity</b>	Developing positive relationships with donors, partners, social profit organizations and the broader community built on trust, common goals, collaboration and acting with integrity in all that we do.
<b>Diversity</b>	Celebrating the diversity of our community and using the collective wisdom and experience of all in developing and pursuing our donor, granting and community development initiatives.
<b>A Culture of Innovation</b>	Building an organizational and a community culture that fosters innovation, experimentation, goodwill, learning, continuous improvement and the application of best practices.
<b>Accountability</b>	Being accountable as an organization for the decisions we make, the effective use of the resources provided to us by community members and donors.

## 5 Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions identify the key strategies and priorities the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation has identified and intends to work on over the next three years. Four Strategic Directions and ten strategies have been identified for the 2019 to 2021 planning period.

The following Strategic Directions and aligned strategies have been identified for the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation.

### 1 Growing Our Fund Development Initiatives

- .1 To develop and implement a targeted Fund Development Plan, with consideration to incorporating flexible donor products.
- .2 To develop a Donor Management and Stewardship Plan in three parts:
  - Recognition of the Founders' Circle;
  - Implementation of more immediate, appreciation contacts with donors; and
  - Preparation of a longer term Stewardship Plan.

### 2 Growing Our Granting Capacities and Effectiveness

- .1 To review our granting cycle results to further develop our granting model based on these learnings, including the possible inclusion of multi-year granting.
- .2 To establish an evaluation framework for identifying priority community needs for grants, potentially involving the introduction of the Vital Signs Program; and/or using data projects that exist within the community.
- .3 To explore collaborative initiatives to assist social profits in enhancing their ability to undertake and improve the quality and content of grant applications.

### **3 Growing Our Community Collaboration**

- .1 To continue active efforts to work at and foster greater community agency collaborative thinking and actions including:
  - Continuing to pursue United Way, FuseSocial and Wood Buffalo Community Foundation initiatives, along with involvement with the Social Sustainability Plan.
  - Other longer term collaborative initiatives as they emerge.
- .2 To undertake community initiatives, through direct participation, leadership and other roles and efforts, that positively influence and contribute to achieving identified community outcomes and needed benefits.

### **4 Growing Our Organizational Capacities**

- .1 To finalize a Human Resources Strategy for the Foundation, optimizing:
  - Board member capabilities,
  - Volunteer contributions,
  - Potential purchase of service arrangements via multiple strategies, and
  - Potential staff acquisition.
- .2 To continually improve and evaluate the governance of the Foundation, focusing on:
  - Governance Model
  - Governance Practices
  - The ongoing development and renewal of Governance Policies.
- .3 To develop a Marketing and Communications Plan focussed on our fund development strategy, our granting activities and brand recognition, while ensuring the use of multiple communication channels, within two frameworks:
  - Immediate marketing and communication tasks to address the current work of the Foundation;
  - The development of a longer term and more comprehensive and integrated Marketing and Communications Plan.

## **1. Growing Our Fund Development Initiatives**

One of the two fundamental activities / priorities of the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation is to further its ability to continually attract donations that will grow the endowment fund. The ongoing growth of the fund development role of the Foundation is critical to its long term success. This work needs to be constantly developed, evaluated and practiced in order to generate the successful financial resources necessary to meet the Mission of the Foundation.

The first strategy within this Strategic Direction, involves the need to transition from a relatively ad hoc approach to fund development activities to a more targeted, and comprehensive approach. This work needs to include reaching out to different generations, from legacy to techies, as well as to ensure there is engagement with cultural communities, businesses and a host of other sources of possible donor contributions. This plan needs to identify the target audiences and methods to best reach them, and messaging, as well as to undertake an active program of asks, follow-ups, nurturing planned gifts and a host of other activities.

A second dimension of this plan, is the need to continually develop a flexible array of donor products that respond to the broad interests of the potential donor base. These could range from endowment products to products that respond to growing interest in term-based giving, flow through and other approaches.

The second strategy will become increasingly important to the Foundation as it expands its donor base. Donor stewardship is an area that is vital in both generating future gifts as well as to create ambassadors in the community for the Foundation's work. When donors feel that they are being told how their money has changed people's lives, and the resulting value of their contribution, they will stay more engaged, have higher affinity for the organization and will undertake both continuing donor and ambassador roles.

The stewardship program needs to evolve in three parts. The first is to ensure immediate recognition of the Founders' Circle. There also needs to be a program of short term, 'early touch' contact with donors through letters, possible Board phone calls and other non-event based initiatives. The third part of the stewardship program involves developing a comprehensive strategy incorporating early touch, events, communication strategies and other initiatives that will continually connect donors to the organization and its social investments and outcomes.

## **2. Growing Our Granting Capacities**

The second fundamental component of the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation is the granting of funding to social profit organizations based on proposals, their evaluation and related assessments. The granting side of the Foundation is critical in that this is where donors see value for their contributions, but equally or more importantly, where the quality of community life is enhanced, and there is a positive difference being made in people's lives.

The first strategy is to undertake a review of the first granting cycling that has just been completed. This evaluation would need to identify what worked, what could be improved and other learnings. Building on these learnings, the second granting cycling can be developed and implemented for 2019. A further consideration in building the granting model might be the inclusion of multi-year grants as a basis to increase impact, as system change often requires multiple years of effort in order to be effective.

The second strategy focuses on the reality that there are many more dollars asked for than are available. It also aligns with the need to ensure that donor contributions are being utilized to overcome the most urgent and important needs of the community. The Foundation needs to develop a framework to establish priorities, to facilitate outcomes evaluation, and equally important, to facilitate social profit grant application development.

The discussions at the workshop identified the possible use of Community Foundations of Canada's Vital Signs Program. Also identified were several existing data-based initiatives within the community that may have value to create a grants evaluation framework. Further discussions identified the possibility to combine the existing data opportunities with Vital Signs. The Foundation will need to establish what is the right approach and develop the capacity to bring forward an evaluation and priority setting framework.

The third strategy responds to an evolving need where some social profits, particularly smaller ones, are constantly writing grant proposals but may not have the capacity to do this work effectively and efficiently. It is possible that the Community Foundation, in partnership with other organizations in the community, could support an initiative that would allow for the development of common applications forms among granting agencies, provide training of social profits staff in seeking out and writing grant applications, and undertake other initiatives that support social profits in their application processes.

## **3. Growing Community Collaboration**

One of the dominant discussion points in the strategy workshop involved the importance of the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation being fully and actively engaged with other community organizations working collaboratively to leverage community resources, reducing duplication and creating a greater sense of unity, effectiveness and focused outcomes. This work is seen as essential in supporting the Foundation's fund development and granting activities, but is also seen as contributing in very meaningful

ways towards enhancing overall community development and the capacity and effectiveness of the social profit sector.

The first strategy focused on continuing the active efforts of Wood Buffalo Community Foundation in increasing greater sector collaborative thinking and action. Considerable work has evolved in this area in the first year of the Foundation's activities. The intent of this strategy is to continue to build on that work and to be an increasingly active player in community collaboration.

This strategy has two components:

- To sustain and grow the current initiatives the Foundation has undertaken with the United Way and FuseSocial, along with participation in the Social Sustainability Plan.
- To continue to look for new opportunities for greater community collaboration.

The second strategy involves continually building the community leadership role and presence of the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation as a community leader and contributor. This strategy focuses on participating in and accepting leadership roles in community initiatives that could positively influence the region. They represent opportunities the Board will need to assess from time to time as to what is the right role, positioning and engagement of the Foundation in moving key community initiatives forward.

#### **4. Growing Our Organizational Capacities**

In order to achieve Strategic Directions 1, 2, and 3, Wood Buffalo Community Foundation needs to build its own organizational capacities in order to advance its Vision and Mission. It is essential to invest time and energy in organizational development for what is an emerging and new entity that will take a number of years to track to a higher level of capabilities and impacts.

The first strategy represents probably one of the most important ones within the Strategic Plan, being the need to move from active discussions on the human resource requirements of the organization to finalizing and implementing a Human Resources Strategy. This strategy needs to focus on optimizing the organization's available resources, including:

- Board member contributions and capabilities;
- Use of volunteers in key roles and operations;
- Potential service agreements for operational tasks using multiple approaches;
- Potential recruitment of staff to provide facilitation, coordination and other efforts that contribute to the ongoing development of the organization.

The second strategy involves a continuous improvement initiative, to improve the governance of the organization. Governance is a growing requirement and focal point for many stakeholders, donors, media,

regulator bodies, etc. It is vital that Wood Buffalo Community Foundation ensures its governance model is constantly evaluated and assessed, that its practices are consistent and effective, and that its policies and procedures are well documented, up to date and support decision-making and all its ongoing activities.

The third strategy under this Strategic Direction involves the development of a Marketing and Communications Plan that supports all the functional activities of the organization, including fund development, granting and operations. It also needs to have the capability to continually develop and enhance brand identity and awareness in the community. Further, this plan needs to ensure that it has multiple marketing and communication channels identified and implemented to support generational, target audience and other differentiated interests.

In implementing this strategy, it will be important that the 2019 focus be on specific marketing and communication tasks involving granting, immediate fund development needs and related activities.

Over multiple years, the Marketing and Communications Plan will need to deal with broader brand development and more comprehensive approaches to marketing and communications for all dimensions of the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation needs and activities.

## 6 Implementation

### 6.1 WORK PROGRAM

The following charts provide a framework for developing the implementation plan for Wood Buffalo Community Foundation's 2019 to 2021 Strategic Directions and strategies.

The implementation plan represents a roadmap that guides the specific activities to be undertaken in support of the Strategic Directions and their aligned strategies. However, this roadmap must also remain flexible as change continues to evolve within the operating environment, and other impacts will occur that will adjust/amend priorities, methods and activities.

A three part prioritizing framework has been utilized to positioning each strategy as to sequencing and importance.

<b>A</b>	<i>Immediate priority or needs to be completed before another strategy can be initiated</i>	<b>B</b>	<i>A second level strategy priority or needs an 'A' strategy to be completed first before it can be launched</i>	<b>C</b>	<i>Lower priority, often dependent on resources and time being reasonably available.</i>
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### 6.2 STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

A three-part Strategic Plan review process is identified for Wood Buffalo Community Foundation:

- Semi-annually, the Board should complete a review on the following:
  - Actions taken
  - Barriers occurring
  - Recommendations on revisions and new inputs
  - Other key information
- Every year, the Board and others allocate a block of time to review the Strategic Plan, the key inputs, changes in the operating environment and make appropriate adjustments to the timing, tasking and related dimensions of the Strategic Plan's implementation.
- Every three years, the Board and others should engage in a full review process similar to their current initiative in order to ensure the relevancy, timeliness and scope of the Strategic Plan in moving Wood Buffalo Community Foundation towards the realization of its Vision and Mission.



Priority / Task	Responsibility	Date	Approval	Metrics
<b>B</b>	<b>2.2</b> To establish an evaluation framework for identifying priority community needs for grants, potentially involving the introduction of the Vital Signs Program; or using data projects that exist within the community; or a combination of Vital Signs and existing data sets.		<b>Grants</b>	
<b>C</b>	<b>2.3</b> To support initiatives that assist social profits in enhancing their ability to undertake and improve the quality of grant applications.		<b>Grants</b>	



Priority / Task	Responsibility	Date	Approval	Metrics
<b>3. Growing Our Community Collaboration</b>				
	<b>3.1</b> To continue active efforts to work at and foster greater community agency collaborative thinking and actions.		<b>Board</b>	
<b>A</b>	Current Initiatives			
<b>B</b>	New Initiatives			
<b>A-C</b>	<b>3.2</b> To undertake community initiatives, through direct participation, leadership and other roles and efforts, that positively influence and contribute to achieving identified community outcomes and benefits.		<b>Board</b>	



Priority / Task	Responsibility	Date	Approval	Metrics
<b>4. Growing Our Organizational Capacities</b>				
<b>A</b>	<b>4.1</b> To finalize a Human Resources Strategy for the Foundation.		<b>Governance</b>	
<b>B-C</b>	<b>4.2</b> To continually improve and evaluate the governance of the Foundation.		<b>Governance</b>	
	<b>4.3</b> To develop a Marketing and Communications Plan focussed on our fund development strategy, our granting activities and brand recognition, while ensuring the use of multiple communication channels.		<b>Communications</b>	
<b>A</b>	Current Tasks			
<b>B</b>	Plan			



## APPENDIX 1 – Internal and External Opportunities and Challenges



## Opportunities

### Internal:

- Well connected Board with recruitment capability
- Complementary Board strengths
- Maintaining and keeping social media active
- Planned Giving Program
- Maintaining Google Drive
- Growth for new Board members
- Delegation – ourselves and other organizations

### External:

- Support of Suncor and Syncrude and some key individuals
- Support of CFC and movement
- Donations from past residents as well as current community
- Time is right
- Red Cross Funding
- Collaboration with other community agencies and local foundations
- Branding and knowledge
- Involvement in social sustainability plan
- Capitalizing on our unique demographic profile

## Challenges

### Internal:

- Time commitment challenge for a start-up working Board
- Volunteer fatigue; competing priorities and balance
- Minimal flexibility utilizing ECF processes and agreements

### External:

- 1 in 5 people have left community; scarcity of good Board members
- Near term vs long term funding (funding our operating costs)
- Public/potential donors not familiar with Community foundations
- Community history of reliance on business funding; engaging individuals
- Wildfire impact on community – community needs change
- Donation fatigue



## APPENDIX 2 – Summary Points for the Four Strategic Discussion Questions



## **1. What are our key successes, and why?**

- The inaugural grants program and the success of the first granting cycle.
- Building the Foundation through its committees, and moving on the development of our policies, structure and organizational capacities.
- The increased Board knowledge about Community Foundations and the Wood Buffalo Community Foundation.
- The interaction and growth between Wood Buffalo Community Foundation and multiple other community organizations.
- The growing knowledge we have of our community, its needs and organizations.
- Not having any significant mis-steps in the first year that could set us back.
- Achieved our first \$500,000 match.
- Can see a growing fund development base emerging for the Foundation over the next five years.
- Working with the United Way in partnerships around bookkeeping and the provision of other services.
- Continuing engagement in and working on partnerships and collaborations in the broader community where we are now seen as an important contributors.

## **2. Community Connections and Investments**

- The success and value of the pre-consultation program completed before the Foundation launched its activities.
- Our strong message of collaboration, and not being competitive that has resonated well.
- Starting with a small group and working towards growth and increased impact.
- Staying community-minded in all that we do.
- Our Board members have been involved with other funder groups, and bring considerable knowledge through these connections.
- Potential for Vital Signs to be a basis to establish priorities, and to position Vital Signs to bring value to the total community.

### **3. What is the best role, positioning and unique space?**

- Being an advocate, a partner and potentially a catalyst for enhanced communications and collaboration through facilitations and support efforts.
- To be a sustainable funder for both short and long term needs.
- Support clear roles and mandates within the community by facilitating a connector role, supporting other organizations to deliver service, etc.
- Capability to undertake capital funding.
- The opportunities for social investors to have a long term positive impact on the community.
- Leveraging our expertise through Community Foundations of Canada and others to support broader community initiatives.
- Potential to pursue and grow social enterprise as a key community development builder.

### **4. Resourcing Model**

- How do we enhance our human resources to be able to fulfill a growing mandate and capability within the organization? Do we continue with the Board-driven delivery model or do we need to move towards a model of the Board plus possibly volunteers, purchase of service agreements and staff to increase overall capacity and outcomes? The second model was preferred and needs to be explored and addressed.
- Key human resources focuses need to be on:
  - Fund development;
  - Granting;
  - Being the face of the community;
  - Supporting grant writing;
- Need to address what the potential timing is for expanding beyond a Board-driven delivery model, and how other human resources can be brought into the mix to increase our impact and outcomes.
- Need to explore whether Wood Buffalo Community Foundation can achieve an agreement with another organization to undertake some of its operational tasks for a number of years and to provide organizational staff leadership to the Foundation involving twenty to thirty percent of a staff position's time as a bridging strategy to the long term development of the Foundation's staffing model.