



Grassroots at the heart  
of the community.

Civic Hub Waterloo Region  
is a collaborative and inclusive  
space where grassroots is  
anchored, where faces go with  
names, and where energy  
and ideas are activated.



## Civic Hub Waterloo Region Shared Platform

*Redistribution of resources and funds to the underfunded work in communities*

Social Development Centre Waterloo Region  
[www.civichubwr.org](http://www.civichubwr.org)  
10/06/2022

### Information on Shared Platforms

[ONN work on shared platforms](#)

[Bill S-216 on changes to the Income Tax Act](#) (use of resources as a registered charity)

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## Civic Hub WR Program 2019-2022

The Civic Hub initiative was many years in the making, and has taken shape in 2019 with the federal seed funding for anti-racism initiatives to respond to the needs of grassroots and small nonprofits to ensure:

1. Sharing of knowledge and resources
2. Cross-promotion and cross-recruitment
3. Common space for activities, events and collaboration

In the first year of the operation, it brought together over 20 groups and organizations working across different spheres including climate justice, arts and culture, spirituality, housing, social justice, anti-racism, peace and conflict resolution, anti-poverty, etc. By the start of the pandemic in 2020, 30 groups were working under the banner of the Civic Hub (see <https://civichubwr.org/partners/>). The greatest achievements were serendipitous encounters during events and activities organized by partner groups that spurred collaborations and joint projects that brought funding opportunities and partnerships to life.

With the onset of the pandemic, the need for financial resources peaked for many of the existing partner groups and emergent initiatives to respond to disproportionate challenges that underserved communities were experiencing especially in housing and homelessness, local land back claims, domestic violence, school success for Black and immigrant families, mental health, vaccination reluctance and other psycho-emotional responses to the pandemic (see <https://civichubwr.org/hub-on-line/>). In order to provide financial support to many of these initiatives, the Social Development Centre's team invested in the creation of the Shared Platform initiative.

## Two Prongs of the Shared Platform Initiative

**The response from the SDC Team, despite the end of the funding from the federal government, was to invest more of its own resources to offer grounding support to initiatives such as A Better Tent City, Land Back Camp, Black Lives Matter, Unsheltered Campaign, Peace for All Canada and East African Coalition.**

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## Two prongs emerged in this process in 2020:

1. **Philanthropic partnerships to collect and disburse community donations to informal initiatives and unincorporated groups.**
2. **Fiscal sponsorship partnerships to support grant applications of informal groups and non-profit organizations.**

To be able to do this within the existing legislation for disbursement of funds to non-qualifying donees, with the legal assistance of the ABTC leadership group, we adopted and evolved Intermediary Agreements that:

-validate alignment of mission, goals and values with partner groups who are non-qualifying donees

-establish accountability to the funding agencies and the community, including amounts to be disbursed, and reporting on activities and spending.

## Sustainability of the Shared Platform Activities

Table with annual distribution of funds to community initiatives 2020-2022

Shared Platform	2020	2021	2022 (Jan-May)
Philanthropic Partnerships	177,141.00	198,167.00	144,138.00
Fiscal Sponsorship Partnerships	58,592.00	121,250.00	46,500.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>235,733.00</b>	<b>319,966.0</b>	<b>190,638.00</b>

After two full years of running the program, we launched the 2022 sustainability study of the Shared Platform model. It reveals that the philanthropic partnerships work is not set up in ways to ensure sustainability and does not cover the cost of operations. It is currently in review.

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The fiscal sponsorship model of collaboration between charities and non-charities has been around for a long time and there is an established threshold of 10-15% administrative fee dedication from sponsored grants, which makes this type of partnership more sustainable. Most funders allow for multiple sponsorships; however, the specific sponsorship agreements are signed for each grant with each funder in addition to the Intermediary Agreements created specifically for the overall partnership work with a non-charitable partner. This imposes a set of specific reporting assurances and requirements on the sponsor agency by the individual funders and the work of building autonomy of the partner organizations can be demanding for the SDC team.

## Upstream Fund Design Process 2022

**After the design session hosted by the Upstream Initiatives Fund team on June 9th 2022, SDC updated the report with the following insights and recommendations for future engagement with the process to support the successful implementation of the fund for the fall of 2022.**

### **“It is not all about money”**

Our experience testifies that both the sponsor (SDC) and the sponsored groups benefit immensely from the collaboration in the process. Sponsored groups increase their capacity in different areas, from grant writing to financial coordination, including access to all the benefits that the Civic Hub Program and the collective have to offer.

The fiscal sponsorship model also allows Civic Hub to welcome a greater number of groups and initiatives, making sure that funds are redistributed, new initiatives are emerging, and numerous opportunities are opened for intersectional work across groups and communities engaged in a range of advocacy and community sustainability work.

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## **“We are not only here to fill the gaps in funding, We need to transform the systems.”**

One current partnership research project to start this summer **“Filling the Gap: The role of social engagement hubs in a world changed by COVID-19”** with the Dr. Laura Pin, Political Science, at Wilfrid Laurier University and the SDC is aligned with some of the objectives of the Upstream Initiatives Fund program of the Region of Waterloo.

The principal research question for the SSHRC funded research project is: "In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, what strategies can social engagement hubs adopt to maximize social inclusion and civic engagement?" This line of inquiry can include exploration and experiences of other fiscal sponsor organizations and advocacy groups in their efforts to support transformation of existing systems towards greater self-determination and autonomy of traditionally marginalized groups and communities beyond our work with the Civic Hub cohort of partners.

Through surveys and key informant interviews, focused on Waterloo Region, this proposal responds to the research question through four goals:

1. Documenting how COVID-19 has affected equity serving grassroots community organizations with attention to changes in their civic engagement and service provision activities.
2. Investigating how the use of Civic Hub by grassroots organizations has evolved during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Developing evidence-based adaptation strategies informed by knowledge gained through objectives 1 and 2.
4. Partnership development with university, municipalities and community

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## Upstream Fund Design Partnership Proposal 2022

**SDC would offer its assistance through infrastructure and knowledge built at the Civic Hub/Shared Platform program to the development, implementation and evaluation of the Upstream Initiatives Fund program in following domains:**

- Contributing research on the role of social engagement hubs in a world changed by COVID-19
- Acting as an intermediary agency to mentor grassroots applicants that are connected to the Civic Hub collective
- Bringing together diverse groups and experiences toward knowledge creation and resource sharing
- Further development of approaches for equitable and responsive reallocation of public funds through collaboration of the institutional and community partners.

**Current resources to be shared with Upstream Initiatives Fund process:**

- Research and evaluation on an intermediary model for implementation of the Upstream Initiatives Fund that enhances grassroots activities, projects and community advocacy
- Exploration of the needs of diverse grassroots groups across different cultural, institutional, and organizational contexts to support mutual learning and growth across different communities and areas of focus
- Sustainability and evolution of the Shared Platform model that may engage multiple stakeholders in a transformative model of resourcing and reallocating funding towards grassroots initiatives.

Current needs of the Civic Hub program:

- Increased operational costs due to the increase in need for the use of space and resources at the Civic Hub and its Shared Platform (rent, administration and accounting)
- Coordination of partnership development initiatives

We look forward to further exploring how we can work together to achieve shared goals.

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