PROOF

HOW SHARED SPACES
ARE CHANGING THE WORLD

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ISBN 978-0-9865436-4-7 90000
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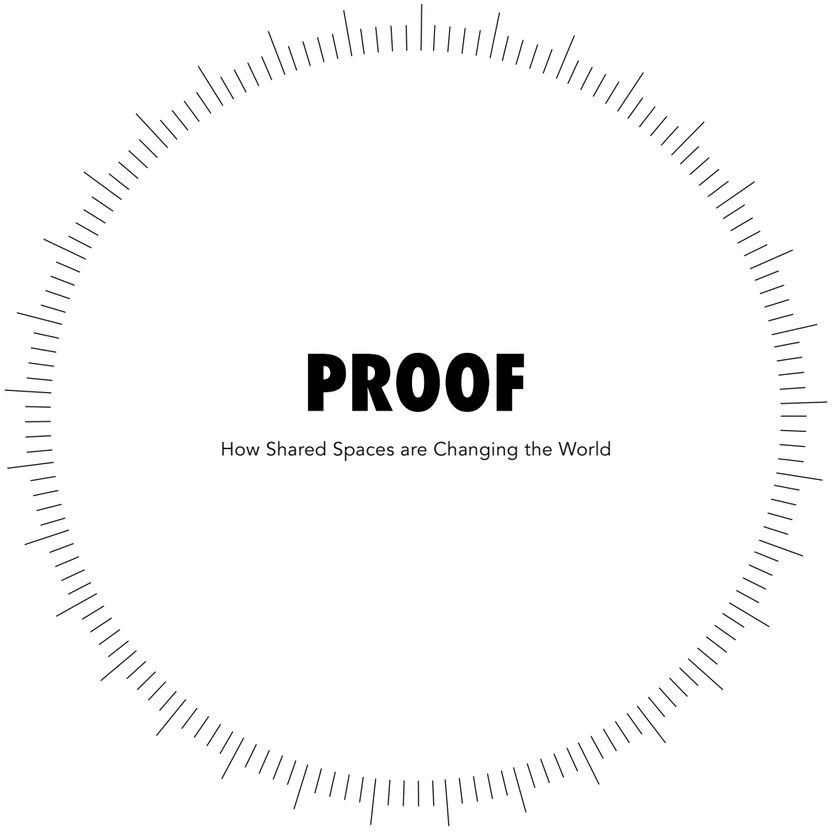

PROOF

How Shared Spaces are Changing the World

The Centre for Social Innovation catalyzes and supports social innovation in Toronto and around the world. We create community workspaces, incubate emerging enterprises, and develop new models and methods with world-changing potential.

We believe that society is facing unprecedented economic, environmental, social and cultural challenges.

We also believe that new innovations are the key to turning these challenges into opportunities to improve our communities and our planet. We are working together to fix our future.

WANT TO HELP?

FOREWORD

The Centre for Social Innovation opened its doors in June 2004. At that time, we had incredible passion, extraordinary vision, and only an inkling of how we would make it all work. It was, needless to say, an adventurous start. At the time, we weren't aware of any other similar models. It felt like everything we were doing was new. We were making it up as we went along, and through hard work, clear vision, and a fair amount of good fortune, we made it work. Our model and our team proved their mettle and within a few short years we were running a 23,000 square foot facility that was home to over 180 members representing missions from arts to environment to education to social justice.

Slowly, as our model grew, we began to attract the attention of others who were interested in what we were accomplishing. Some were at the idea stage and interested to know 'how we did what we did'. Others were already building shared spaces and wondered what they could borrow and adapt to their community. Still others were asking if we would come to their city to establish a Centre for Social Innovation.

What began as an occasional trickle began to gain steam. By our fourth year we were overwhelmed with requests and inquiries about our model. We were, and continue to be, absolutely delighted and honoured by this attention. But we struggled with our own capacity. We are a small social enterprise that has been stretched to the limits evolving our own community and programs.

We tried to share as much information as we could, as frequently as we could, but we began to realize that we needed another strategy to meet the growing interest in creating shared spaces for social innovation...

...So we created this series.

Shared Spaces for Social Innovation is about sharing our story and empowering others to learn from our experience. The Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) has always been open with its model. We've long preached the benefits of shared spaces and we've been doing our best to encourage as many new spaces as possible. We figured that the best way to open our model – to reveal everything we've learned in hopes of supporting the emergence of new and better spaces – was to document what we've done and make it available to anyone who was interested.

It has taken a fair amount of courage for us to let it all hang out and give it all away! Many people advised us that we should be franchising, licensing, and holding our knowledge close to our chests. But this went against our values. Instead, we are putting this whole series into the creative commons for others to benefit from and contribute to.

We believe that good ideas scale when they are open. We also believe that ideas get better when we share. We look forward to working with you on this journey to create and grow new strategies for social innovation.

The Shared Spaces for Social Innovation Series is made up of three books:

Emergence: **The Story of the Centre for Social Innovation.**

In this book we weave a narrative around our genesis and development. Starting back when the Centre was just a glimmer in the eyes of a few social entrepreneurs, Emergence follows our growth from concept to operation to scale.

Rigour: **How to Create World-Changing Shared Spaces.**

This book is a manual for those planning or operating a shared space. It reveals the accumulated knowledge of six years of experience and offers a ton of tips, lessons and tools for developing a strong organization and vibrant community.

Proof: **How Shared Spaces are Changing the World.**

This report shares our most recent research on the impact of the Centre for Social Innovation in order to demonstrate just what shared spaces for social innovation can accomplish.

Each book can be read on its own. Together they provide a comprehensive picture of the Centre for Social Innovation.

Looking to build or grow your own shared space for social innovation?

CSI offers tailored consulting, training, and speaking services to help you with challenges from start-up to scale. Get in touch by sending a note to sssi@socialinnovation.ca.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

Of course, the story of the Centre for Social Innovation is still unfolding. And yet the challenge with writing a book is the finality of it all. We therefore invite you to participate in our online space. At first, we'll have pdf versions of the series publications and a set of templates and tools available for download. In time, we'll make amendments to these books, release additions to the series and create a platform for a community of practice.

OPEN SOURCING OUR MODEL

Shared Spaces for Social Innovation reveals just about everything we've learned about creating and growing shared workspaces. We're telling our story, sharing our research, and offering the tools and templates we've created along the way.

But sharing is a two-way street. Actually, it's more like a highway interchange!

While it is truly our pleasure to provide this material, our hope is that you will embrace the Creative Commons spirit. This means recognizing our contribution and letting us know what you've used, adapted, and developed. More importantly, it means sharing your experiences and tools with other shared spaces.

By contributing to a shared body of knowledge, we're empowering others to be even more successful, building this field and advancing our own spaces in the process.

We're not yet sure what it will look like, and we're very sure that it won't be up to us alone to determine. But we're hoping this effort starts us along a path to an open community of practice that is creating the spaces where people change the world.

Access new releases and supporting materials.

socialinnovation.ca/sssi

Identify yourself as part of this growing community.

socialinnovation.ca/sssi

Download all of our templates and tools.

socialinnovation.ca/sssi

LOOKING FORWARD

This series starts with the Centre for Social Innovation. But we know there are dozens of like-minded spaces around the world, and we hope to add other stories, experiences, templates and tools over time.

Our vision is a vibrant, shared platform that includes the experiences of shared spaces dedicated to social innovation around the world – your experiences. We're hoping to work with a community of likeminded people that is sharing ideas, strategies and… who knows?

Just imagine a network where we can share promising practices, collaborate on joint projects and infrastructure, replicate good ideas and leverage investments from community to community.

Let's work together to support each other, our members and to build this exciting field!

THANK YOU

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to the many people who have made the Centre for Social Innovation and this series possible. First, a thanks to the CSI Staff and Board team, whose vision and industry have made the Centre what it is today. Second, a special thanks to our incredible network of partners and supporters, including Urbanspace Property Group, Canadian Heritage, The Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canadian Alternative Investment Co-Operative, Ashoka, Harbinger Foundation and the Province of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

A publication like this only comes together with incredible dedication. Eli Malinsky has played author, editor, project manager and overall superhero on this project; Shared Spaces for Social Innovation provides only a glimpse of the value that Eli brings to CSI and to this emerging field.

Hamutal Dotan deserves special recognition for her writing on Emergence and Proof – her effortless style perfectly captures the tone of the Centre for Social Innovation. For turning beautiful words into compelling publications, The Movement continues to mesmerize and engage. We'd also like to recognize Margot Smart, who meticulously designed and analyzed the 2008 member survey, which forms the basis of our statistics.

Finally, we would like to recognize our members. They are the reason we do what we do. They inspire us, they motivate us, they ground us and they challenge us. Their passion, commitment and creativity are what make it all worthwhile, and it is truly our honour to support their work.

Now let's change the world together!

Tonya Surman

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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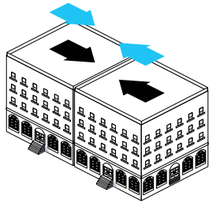
CHAPTER
1

CONTEXT

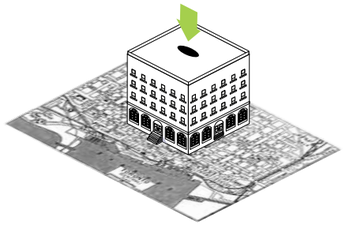
CREATING THE SPACES WHERE CHANGE HAPPENS

A SHARED SPACES GLOSSARY



Co-location refers to spaces that are shared among a number of separate organizations. Multi-Tenant Nonprofit Centers are types of co-location spaces that focus on the nonprofit sector.

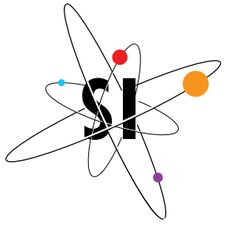
Coworking refers to the sharing of workspace among freelancers and other independent workers. Co-working spaces provide workspace and community to people who are often working on their own.



Community Hubs are shared spaces that provide direct services to the geographic community in which they are situated. Community Hubs co-locate service providers that offer a range of supports such as language instruction, job training, after school programs and drop-in groups.

Hot Desks are temporary, shared workspaces that are typically found in coworking spaces.

Incubators provide programmatic, strategic, administrative and/or financial support to small projects and organizations.



Social Innovation refers to new ideas that resolve social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges for the benefit of people and planet.

Even more simply, *a social innovation is an idea that works for the public good.*

WHY ARE SHARED SPACES EMERGING?

For-profit and nonprofit strategies are blending together. Shared spaces – and frequently their members – are examples of how mission-based and market-based approaches can coincide.

There is increasing recognition that the problems we face are too complex to be addressed by any single player. Shared spaces connect diverse organizations and individuals, giving them the chance to collaborate, share knowledge and develop systemic solutions to the issues they are trying to address.

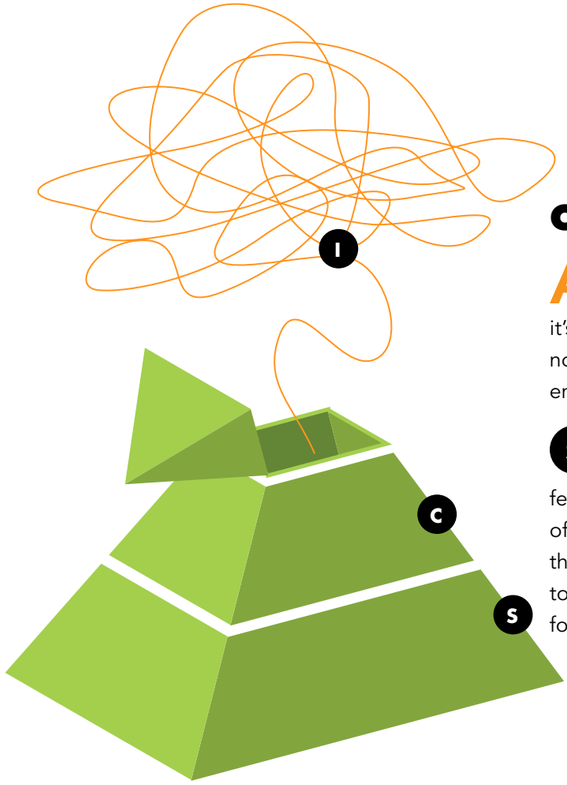
The incentives for cost sharing have been growing. Nonprofits and charities are enduring ongoing cutbacks in administrative budgets while facing increasing demands from communities and individuals.

Alongside new technologies has been the rise of 'independents' who work with several clients but who are not bound by the restrictions of any one physical space.

Real estate prices are soaring worldwide, making it increasingly difficult for small groups and individuals to find affordable workspace.

The pendulum is swinging from global back to local. While the 90's promised 'virtual work', the new millennium is reinforcing the importance of space.

Shared workspaces are themselves a social innovation – an entirely new way of working. The dominant workplace model has been separate organizations working separately. That may have made perfect sense at one time and it may still make perfect sense in many instances. But it is by no means a universal or desirable approach. The nature of work is changing – and with it the workplace. These changes offer incredible potential for economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress in the coming years.



OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

As we've built and expanded CSI over the past few years, we've developed our theory of change—it's our way of capturing how the Centre for Social Innovation creates the conditions for social innovation to emerge.

S Serving as the foundation is the physical **space**, the environment which our members see and feel and touch and inhabit every day. It's at the very base of the pyramid because it's what sets the tone for everything else: our members want to come to work simply to enjoy the space. The physical space is the container for everything that occurs at the Centre.

C The physical space sets the conditions for community. **Community** develops as people start to feel comfortable in a space, are happy to spend time in it, and develop relationships with other members doing the same. A kitchen, for instance, isn't just a place to eat; it can also allow for shared meals and impromptu gatherings, and those, in turn, are the basis of the relationships which lead to a real sense of kinship among the members. With some delicate animation, the bonds of community are forged and strengthened, building social capital and a network of relationships.

I Community relationships allow members to exchange ideas, to collaborate easily, to find services and access knowledge that might otherwise be hard to come by. In short, community is what leads to **innovation**, because a community of other creative, engaged people is what blows away the cobwebs, allows you to see an old problem in a new light, and helps you find creative ways of implementing solutions you might not otherwise have considered. And that—all the myriad ways in which space and community foster social innovation—well, that's the whole purpose of the Centre for Social Innovation.

Sierra Health Nonprofit Innovation Center in the Sacramento area (sierrahealth.org)

The Hub, a coworking space, also applies a social change lens to their work (the-hub.net)

National Community Development Institute builds capacity for social change in communities (ncdinet.org)

A THREE-PRONGED MOVEMENT

The shared spaces movement is exploding. While various forms of shared workspace have been around for decades, the idea of shared space as a unique field of practice is more recent, and the past few years have seen a dramatic rise in the number of shared spaces and in the interconnections among them.

We have witnessed the birth and growth of three distinct but related movements. The first is a movement toward **co-location**. Co-location generally refers to the more-or-less permanent sharing of space among organizations. Within this field, there is a particular trend toward co-location of nonprofit organization within a single facility, often known as a Multi-Tenant Nonprofit Centre. The members in these centres are individual organizations who have decided to share space, often an entire building, as a strategy to save costs and advance their missions. The Nonprofit Centers Network in San Francisco (nonprofitcenters.org), a project of Tides Shared Spaces, is the primary organizing body for a network of over 200 such shared spaces, mostly in the United States, and is leading the charge in developing and connecting the field. CSI is a proud member of the Nonprofit Centers Network.

The second movement is often referred to as **coworking**. Born of 'independents' (freelancers, sole practitioners, consultants, etc.) primarily in the tech and design sectors, coworking spaces are generally more informal and of smaller scale than co-locations. Many members are motivated by opportunities for social connectedness; as independents, they are too often working alone.

Coworking spaces provide shared space for part-time members and are popping up all over the globe. This movement, more ad-hoc than the co-location movement, is being loosely connected and organized through the Coworking Wiki (blog.coworking.info). While most coworking spaces do not apply a 'social change' lens to their work, one notable exception is The Hub (the-hub.net), a global network of coworking spaces now reaching into over 20 countries around the world. CSI is an affiliate of The Hub Network.

The third movement is a movement toward **incubation** of social change projects. Although it's a fuzzy term, incubation generally refers to support given to early-stage projects and organizations. This support can include programming, trusteeship, shared services, investment and financial back-end services. The past few years have seen an increase in the application of traditional incubation strategies for commercialization to social enterprises.

THE CSI TWIST

The Centre for Social Innovation is a hybrid of these movements. Like co-locations we provide permanent, stable office rental to organizations. Like coworking spaces, we provide part-time desk spaces to 'independents'. Like an incubator, CSI provides programming and shared services to its members, and offers a handful of projects support ranging from strategic advice to back-end financial services.

This makes us unique. In fact, there are a few other unique characteristics of the CSI model.

A SOCIAL CHANGE LENS

The Centre for Social Innovation is designed to support and foster social innovation. All of our members are selected based on their commitment to that goal, and all of our programming is designed to increase the capacity of social enterprises, non-profits, charities, green businesses, artists, designers, creators, and activists to improve the well-being of people and our planet.

A FOCUS ON SMALL

We focus on groups with five or fewer staff. The vast majority of our members are one- and two-person operations. It is these small groups that are in the greatest need of shared facilities and administration; it is also these groups that are best positioned to collaborate and connect with others.

PHYSICAL DESIGN

We understand the critical role of physical design in setting the tone of a space and the behaviour of its users. We have developed a very specific approach to physical design that has been a key ingredient in our success and in the 'experience' of the Centre for Social Innovation.

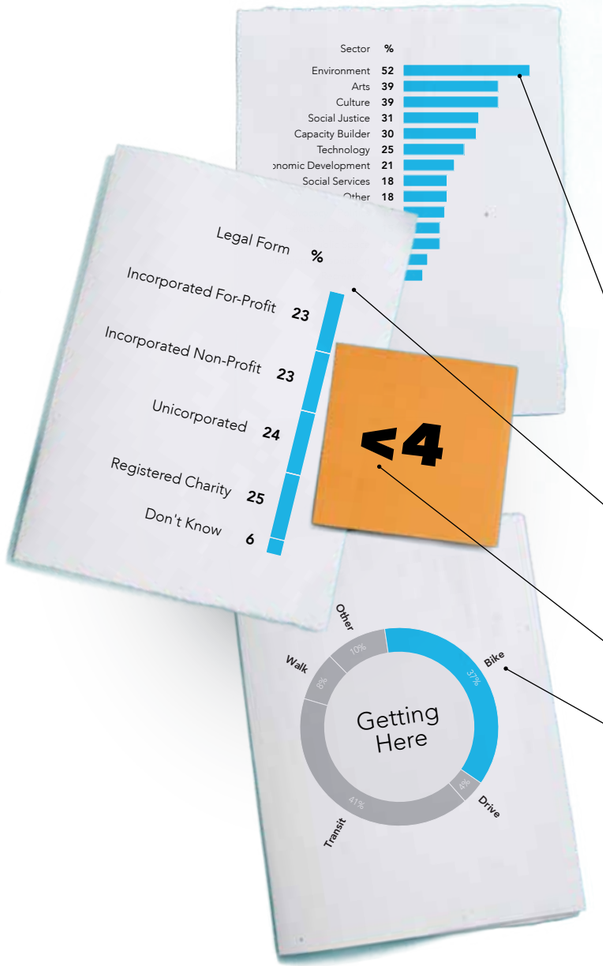
ANIMATION AS PRACTICE

Community animation is what turns "a place to work" to a space of social innovation. We've been building the practice of animation and developing its role as a central feature of successful shared spaces.

MEMBER SNAPSHOT

In November 2008 we conducted a comprehensive member survey. The survey comprised more than one hundred questions, investigating everything from customer service to the effect of membership on organizational revenues. The results include, in addition to quantitative measures, more than 2,000 submitted comments, anecdotes, and suggestions. We are honoured and grateful that so many of our members were willing to share their thoughts and insights with us, and thrilled to now be sharing them with you[1].

[1] Throughout this report, unless otherwise noted, any statistics or feedback attributed to CSI members refers to the information gathered from the 80 respondents to our November 2008 survey, who represent about 30% of our membership.



So, just who are the members of CSI? It's an eclectic mix that cuts across sectors and organizational types, ages and skill sets, and it's an altogether glorious jumble.

52% of members describe themselves as working on the environment, 39% in culture, 31% in social justice, and 25% in technology (respondents were allowed to select multiple sectors).

Incorporated for-profit and incorporated nonprofits are equally represented among our members, at 23% each. 25% of members are registered charities, and 24% are unincorporated.

We are a community of the small but mighty: 94% of CSI members have three or fewer full-time equivalent staff.

Two-thirds of members are under the age of 40, doing their best to keep the other third feeling young! Thirty-seven percent of members bicycle to work every day (fewer in Toronto winters!).

Download the survey and a report of the results:

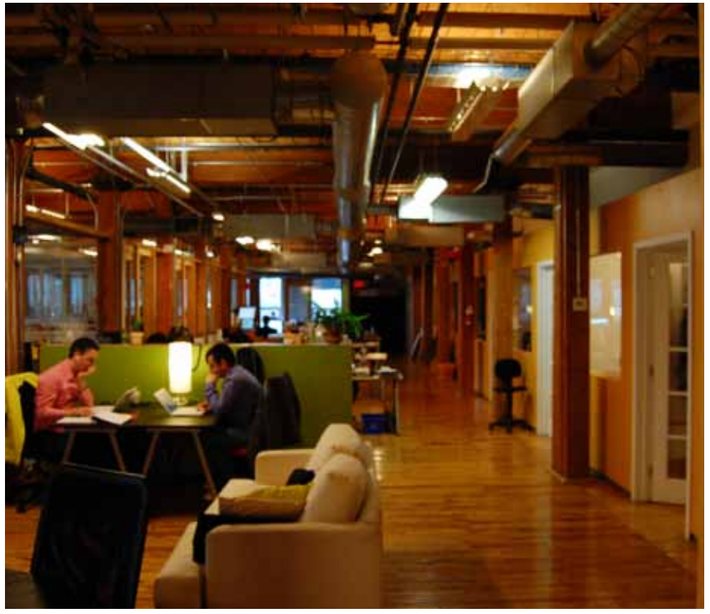
socialinnovation.ca/sssi

CHAPTER
2

INTRODUCTION

THE SUMMARY VERSION IS: IT'S WORKING

In 2004 a small group of social entrepreneurs launched the Centre for Social Innovation in the heart of downtown Toronto. We did so in the belief that sustainable design, thoughtful community-building, and responsive programming could foster social innovation, and that working collaboratively was more powerful than working alone. We created an open-concept space in a beautiful heritage building and selected a diverse group of social mission organizations with which to fill it. We didn't entirely know what would happen next, but we had no doubt that it was worth finding out.



CSI housed thirty-five people working in fourteen organizations when we opened. We've had several growth spurts since then, and we now provide shared space and services to over 180 social mission organizations and projects. Our members are nonprofits, activists, artists, tech wizards, and all manner of socially-minded entrepreneurs, and they work in sectors ranging from the environment to social services to arts and culture.

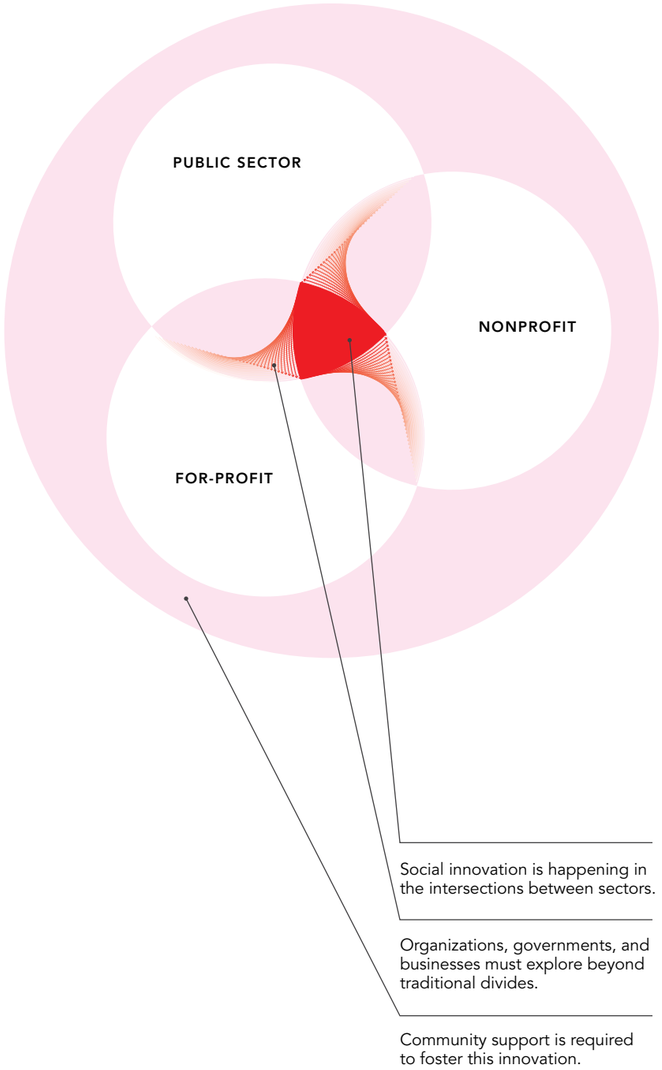
CSI members generate an estimated $25 million per year in revenues. It's a lot of activity to pack into 23,000 square feet, and a testament to the value CSI and its members create. After just a few years of existence CSI is a vibrant mini-economy, dynamic and constantly evolving. We have been recognized (we can't help but be a little proud to say) at the local, national, and international levels for our work, and have been honoured with, among others, the Toronto Community Foundation Vital Idea Award, the Canadian Urban Institute City Innovation Award, and the Ashoka Global Fellowship for executive director Tonya Surman.

SPACE + COMMUNITY = INNOVATION

Our aim, in building CSI, was to catalyze social innovation. A social innovation is a new idea, or a new application of an old idea, that resolves social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges for the benefit of people and planet. More simply, a social innovation is an idea that works for the public good. Social innovation is about doing things differently, and social innovation happens when people re-examine assumptions about how things ought to be done.

More simply, a social innovation is an idea that works for the public good.

How does social innovation emerge? Well, it can't be neatly pinned down or reduced to a formula, but we can say for certain that it requires the freedom to explore and the opportunity to collaborate across silos. Social innovation can emerge in the for-profit, nonprofit, and public sectors and, increasingly, it is happening in the intersections between the three. It requires energy, practical smarts, the ability to do a lot with few resources—and perhaps most of all, it requires a community of support. That is why, around the world, we are witnessing the emergence of shared spaces designed to foster social innovation.



When we created CSI we had more questions than answers:

WOULD MEMBERS BENEFIT FROM EXPOSURE TO OTHERS WHO WERE LIKE-MINDED?

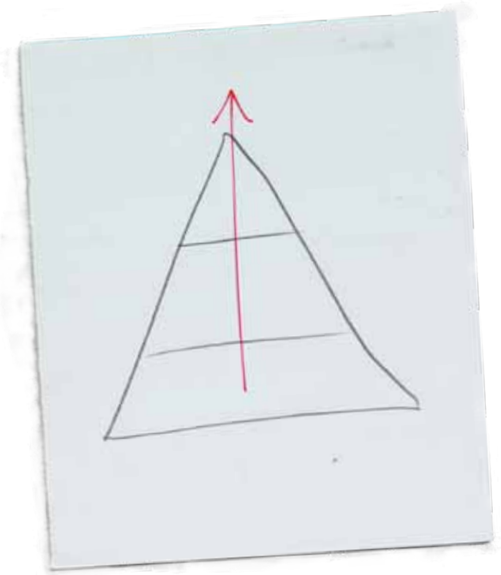
WOULD THEY BE ABLE TO WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY?

WOULD ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAME TO WORK IN THE SAME PLACE END UP WORKING TOGETHER?

WOULD SOCIAL INNOVATION ACTUALLY EMERGE?

Now, more than six years after we first opened our doors, we finally have the time, the experience, and the body of evidence to help us answer these questions. In the pages that follow you will find a summary and analysis of our findings—our internal report card, in a manner of speaking—based on the member survey we conducted in November 2008. We have, under one roof, the collected wisdom of nearly two hundred member organizations: it's an unprecedented opportunity for reflection, evaluation, and learning, and we didn't want to let too much longer pass before making the most of it.

The detailed discussion of CSI's impact unfolds over the following chapters, but the summary version is: it's working. Turnover is low, the waiting list is permanent, and CSI is only going to keep growing over the next few years to keep up with demand. Members have made new connections, shared knowledge, improved their bottom lines, and increased satisfaction in their work. They are fulfilling their missions, fulfilling them better, and developing a much deeper understanding of and engagement with the social mission sector of which they are a part. Quite simply, CSI both fosters social innovation and is a social innovation—a new model for how individuals and organizations committed to social and environmental progress can combine their energies to both create a more humane working environment and do more effective work.

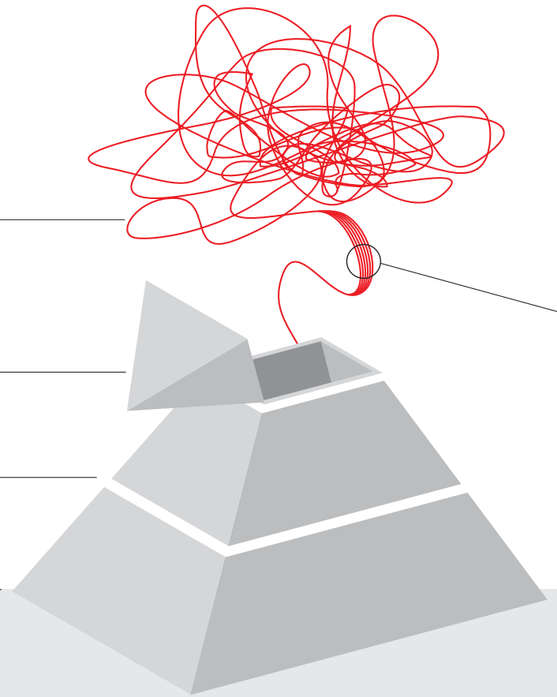


We believed in our theory of change from the very day we decided to open CSI: we were convinced that if we created the right kind of space that community would emerge, and if we supported the right kind of community that innovation would emerge. What we didn't know back then was just how that innovation would manifest itself—we didn't know what shape it would take. We started to get a sense of this as CSI and its members flourished and grew, but it didn't fully come into view until we conducted our member survey. By then we had a substantial population with a significant amount of experience in the space, all of whom were very generous in sharing their experiences and insights with us, and we were able to draw out a more nuanced sense of the ways in which space and community were contributing to social innovation.

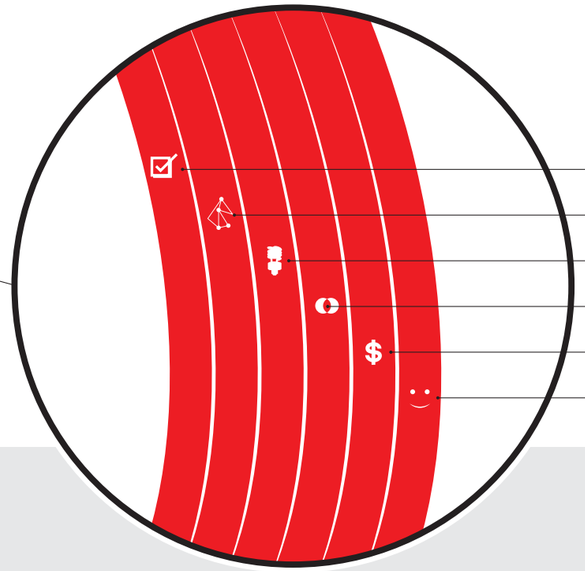
What we'd been after, what the survey crystallized and what we detail in the chapters that follow, are the ways in which membership in CSI catalyzes social innovation.

PACE + COMMUNITY = INNO

We wanted to understand just how space and community creates the conditions for social innovation to emerge.



We found that membership at CSI produces six key impacts.



These six impacts are key to catalyzing social innovation in a shared space.

CHAPTER
3

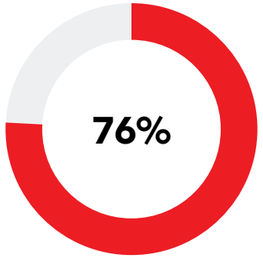
IMPACT

EACH OF THESE SIX IMPACTS PLAYS A ROLE IN CATALYZING SOCIAL INNOVATION

IMPACT
Mission

At first glance, you might think that organizations opt for a shared workspace in order to save on expenses. That is certainly the case sometimes, but not actually the general rule at CSI. Most of our members came out of home offices and they spend more on rent here than they did previously. These are organizations running, for the most part, on shoestring budgets, and as congenial as they may find the atmosphere at CSI they also need to see real practical benefits. The first and most basic of these is that moving to CSI frees up an organization to focus on its mission, rather than having to regularly tend to administrative, maintenance, and other routine office tasks.

Simply: the space we provide, the very foundation of our theory of change pyramid, aids innovation because we take all kinds of mundane operations off our members' plates. Organizations are better able to attract and retain top-notch staff because of the amenities and working environment we provide compared to other, lower-cost options, and organizations are better able to benefit from their staff's expertise because they are focused on program delivery rather than clearing photocopy jams. We provide space, but also take care of all the work that goes along with it: we deal with everything from office cleaning to phone line maintenance, which means our members don't have to.



76% of organizational leaders say that membership has enabled their organization to access better facilities than they had previously.

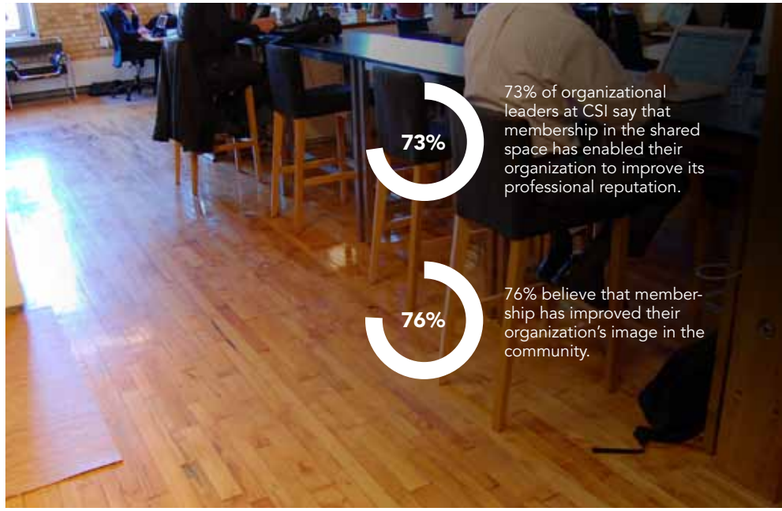
71% of organizational leaders at CSI say the shared space has enabled their organization to work more efficiently.

70% of individual tenants say that working in the shared space has enabled them to do their job more effectively.

An additional benefit of having access to better facilities is increased professionalism. CSI provides facilities that are more conducive to professional activity than many organizations' previous locations. This boosts staff energy, and allows members to put a polished face on their operations. According to the survey, 71% of organizational leaders feel that membership at CSI has improved the professionalism of their organization and 70% of individual members feel that working in the shared space has enabled them to do their job more effectively. Moreover, 73% of organizational leaders at CSI say that membership in the shared space has enabled their organization to improve its professional reputation, and 76% believe that membership has improved their organization's image in the community. Essentially all of CSI's members (97%) say they are proud to bring funders, partners and clients to their workplace.

"CSI has provided efficiencies and services that took a huge administrative burden from our small overworked staff."

Essentially all of CSI's members (97%) say they are proud to bring funders, partners and clients to their workplace.



"It has allowed our organization to focus its limited human and financial resources on mission."

"It is wonderful to work… where so much is done for you in terms of amenities so that you can get down to business."

How a Focus on Mission Catalyzes Social Innovation

SUPPORTING YOUTH WORKERS ACROSS TORONTO

The Frontline Partners with Youth Network (FPYN) brings together more than 1,000 youth workers from all sectors across the Greater Toronto Area.

They come together regularly to support each other in dealing with the effects of gun violence, oppression, and hatred. Through workshops and training, discussion groups, and information sharing, FPYN connects and empowers individuals that are working in an otherwise isolating and often traumatic field.

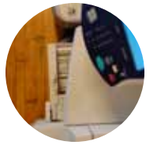
Now in its third year at CSI, FPYN attributes much of its success to the services and infrastructure available to its staff. The core CSI staff team eliminates basic office management duties, such as coping with photocopiers, phone lines, and printers. Without those burdensome tasks, FPYN staff can concentrate on developing the organization's programs and advocating for policy change. Equally, FPYN staff benefit from ongoing support and mentoring from a diverse group of business experts and innovators within CSI environment.

The facilities offered to members at CSI also lend a sense of permanence and professionalism to FPYN that is crucial for attracting and retaining their network of workers. Having regular access to meeting rooms for get-togethers helps to bind the network together, and creates a space of trust and openness. As one worker notes, "The [CSI] space does physically what youth workers do personally," alluding to the sense of connectivity and intimacy that CSI embodies. Having the necessary facilities, equipment, and technology provided by CSI means FPYN staff can dedicate their time to meet the needs of these workers. This stability and sense of community encourage the workers to take chances, discuss challenges, and collaboratively come up with solutions to any challenges they are facing in their work.

And as for its successes? FPYN's networks have flourished from 200 to 1,100 members who represent hundreds of organizations. The network facilitates the exchange of over 2,000 youth-related information items every year and has held over 40 trainings and facilitations to youth workers. Last year, FPYN completed a research study on Grief and Trauma impacts on Frontline Workers - the first and only study of its kind.

Jenny Katz sums up the story neatly: "It's like these reverberating circles of impact. The infrastructure support we receive at CSI allows us to focus on our mission and to be creative about our work. We're doing things we imagined years ago but never had the means to achieve – and it's making a real different in the lives of youth workers in Toronto."

"The [CSI] space does physically what youth workers do personally..."



The core CSI staff team eliminates basic office management duties.

IMPACT
Networks

Moving to CSI doesn't just give an organization access to new facilities—it provides access to a whole new community of fellow members. As we all become increasingly aware of the power of social networks, the advantages this confers are ever clearer.

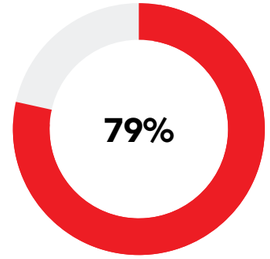
The most reliable way to find a new service provider, collaborator, or colleague is often to ask for recommendations from people you already know, and the best way to expand and deepen your work is by engaging with others who have similar interests and have experiences and insights to share. This is one way that community creates innovation: it brings people together to learn from each other, mutually aid and reinforce one another, and introduces members to other organizations who may have skills or experiences that can enhance their own work.

Small organizations such as the ones that take up residency in CSI often start out in someone's basement: they generally exist in isolation until they come here. This can not only be dispiriting, it poses practical limits on the ease of learning about, pursuing, or implementing anything out of an organization's base skill-set: that is, isolation creates barriers to innovation. Because CSI members have been intentionally chosen from a mix of sectors—arts, environment, social services, technology, and others—members have, immediately on joining, ready access to a vastly expanded network, with a wide variety of skills, experience, and knowledge bases, on which they can easily draw.

This network expansion happens both organically, as a natural outcome of sharing common space, and as a result of community animation.

82% of members indicate that membership at CSI has expanded their personal networks.

92% of members indicate that membership at CSI has expanded their professional networks.



79% of members indicate that services, programs, events, and other CSI initiatives have helped them exchange contacts with other members.

"The most important thing that tenancy at CSI has done for me is to expand my networks and horizons."

"Being a part of CSI has expanded my knowledge of the social sector and vastly built up my network as well."

"Tenancy in this shared space has plugged me into a whole new network of friendly, interesting people."

"It seems like every time I need a contact for a job, somebody [in the shared space] knows exactly who to contact."

How Expanded Networks Catalyze Social Innovation

A MOVEMENT BEGINS WITH A BRISK WALK

In the spring of 2006, Jane Jacobs – an urban planning icon – passed away. Her death affected many members of the CSI community; she had been an incredibly influential voice and thinker, especially in Toronto.

Shortly after Jane Jacob's death, a CSI member named Chris Winter, of the Conservation Council of Ontario, attended a meeting at CSI hosted by the Ontario Smart Growth Network. The purpose of the meeting was to explore how to promote more walking in neighbourhoods. Chris proposed the idea of having neighbourhood walks to celebrate Jane Jacobs. Each walk would be locally led and would encourage an exploration of the urban environment and the relationship citizens have with the spaces they inhabit.

Chris shared his idea with CSI co-founders Mary Rowe and Margie Zeidler. Using their collective social networks and the support of the Jane Jacobs' Award at the Maytree Foundation, the idea went viral. On Jane Jacob's birthday, six weeks after the idea was first hatched, 27 neighbourhood walks were held in Toronto to explore and celebrate peoples' relationship with urban spaces and with each other.

Jane's Walk is a social innovation for its unique approach of getting citizens engaged with their local urban environments. In a brilliant yet simple way, Jane's Walk starts a conversation and rekindles the powerful relationship between city design and citizens. Jane's Walk is predicated on an open, decentralized and self-organizing model whereby anyone can offer to lead a walk by proposing a tour idea. Using a light-touch, a single staff person supports the leaders and creates buzz that raises awareness of all the walks across the city.

"It's a story born and bred on networks," confirms Jane Farrow, the Executive Director of Jane's Walk world-wide. "Our genesis was based on a web of connections formed and fostered through the Centre for Social Innovation's extended family. And our success is based on our ability to leverage these and additional networks, reaching into all corners of the city."

3
YEARS

68
CITIES

400
WALKS

12,000
WALKERS

Three years later, Jane's Walk is operating neighbourhood walks in 68 cities around the world, boasting more than 400 walks with over 12,000 walkers. It's the story of the city by the city, led through civic action…and fuelled by networks.

IMPACT
Ideas

"By being surrounded by so many wonderful and socially responsible people, I have certainly raised my own awareness... I attribute this success to CSI and the social net we have, as interaction is a constantly inspiring and illuminating experience."

Ideas are at the heart of social innovation: the ability to reimagine a situation, problem, or challenge, and to bring fresh approaches is what innovation is all about. Ideas require initial inspiration, and then they require refinement based on knowledge and experience if they are to be implemented effectively. The single biggest catalyst for a new idea is being exposed to other people, their work, their knowledge, and their experiences. An innovation is never created new out of whole cloth: it always owes debts, and always has catalyzing influences. And this is another crucial way in which community aids innovation: it provides catalyzing inspiration.

Becoming a member of a community, because it expands the network of people with whom you engage, also multiplies the number of ideas to which you are exposed, and thereby expands your capacity to generate, expand on, or find new applications for ideas yourself. New ideas don't emerge in a vacuum—they need oxygen, and that is what CSI provides. By constantly meeting and engaging with other members and learning about their work, an organization can always find fresh sources of inspiration, learn about the latest developments in other sectors, accelerate learning curves, and become more intellectually, strategically, and practically robust.

of members say that membership has enabled them to learn about new ideas, trends, information, techniques and/or audiences that have helped them become better positioned in their work.

of CSI members say the shared space has enabled them to exchange ideas with other social innovators.

"I have learned a lot more about trends in the sustainability world that I would not otherwise know about."

"Connection to the 'meme stream' of ideas around social innovation, social entrepreneurial initiatives, and the whole 'getting to maybe' concept, have all impacted my work over the last few years."

CSI is an environment rich in communication and sharing: this is both due to its space and to its community. In this atmosphere, information and ideas flow among members, and between members and their expanded networks of contacts outside the space, and when increasing numbers of creative, passionate people connect and communicate, what emerges are new ideas for social change. Members view this open exchange of ideas as one of the most valuable aspects of participation in CSI's shared space community.

How New Ideas Catalyze Social Innovation

BRINGING GREEN IDEAS TO LIFE

Chris Winter – inspirer of Jane's Walk – isn't just churning out bright ideas for others; he's been able to advance his own organization as a result of membership in CSI.

Established in 1951, the Conservation Council of Ontario is a leader in environmental awareness across the province. After its nearly sixty years, the CCO still continues to improve its practices in virtue of the intellectual stimulation it finds at CSI.

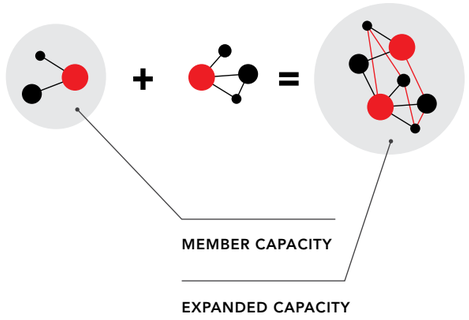
Chris admits that when he first came to CSI he felt a hint of scepticism about how the member mix, including many organizations working outside of the CCO's environmental sector, might benefit the organization. However, it didn't take long for him to discover the wealth of knowledge that was available to him, and the creative ways he could apply this knowledge to his work. "You may or may not know what you want from someone," he says "but as you encounter bumps along the way, someone is always there with a solution."

Creative Trust and Community Cultural Impresarios are two other CSI members—both arts rather than environmental organizations—that have offered tremendous informal fundraising guidance to CCO over the years. With their experience in managing large sums of money, Chris says they have been instrumental in helping with grant proposals and organizing budgets. CCO has also bounced around ideas with the Chinese Canadian National Council of Toronto (CCNCTO) to enhance its understanding of social marketing. Since having some conversations with CCNCTO, CCO has more consciously tapped into its networks for outreach and community-based engagement projects. One result of this has been a contract with the municipal government to create a city-wide network of LEED certified organizations.

Within the environmental sector, CCO has swapped stories with the Sustainability Network about building and connecting various groups. These conversations have strengthened its community capacity-building practices. Similarly, conversations between CCO and Green Enterprise Toronto have resulted in a job-sharing arrangement.

What he has seen, says Chris, is that everyday exchanges spark new ideas for programs and projects that help CCO to fulfil its mission. The organization's membership at CSI is helping it make our world a greener place, one conversation at a time.

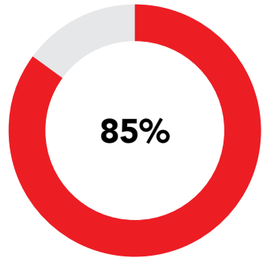
IMPACT
Collaboration



Because our members tend to be fairly small, one of the greatest barriers they encounter is running up against their own organizational limits: sometimes they have goals or envision projects which they don't have the capacity or the resources to pursue, or pursue as effectively as possible, on their own. Membership at CSI is tremendously useful in these cases, because the community at the Centre provides a ready-made pool of potential collaborators. Moreover, being embedded in a community can inspire organizations to collaborate on entirely new projects none of them would have envisioned were they not in close contact already.

56% of tenants say that CSI's services, programs, events, or other initiatives have helped them to engage in joint activities with other tenants.

50% of members have collaborated or done business with outside individuals or organizations referred to them by their fellow members.



85% of CSI members have collaborated with at least one other member.

70% of members have engaged in at least one joint initiative.

41% have engaged in collaborative activities with at least five other members.

"I certainly believe that interaction and collaboration with other tenants is important—in fact, that is one of the most important reasons for choosing CSI versus just an office space. Other people hold perspectives and information that is exceptionally stimulating for my business, and I greatly enjoy both volunteering for others' projects and being employed by them…"

In this sense, collaboration acts as a capacity-building mechanism, allowing a pair or group of organizations to accomplish more than they each could on their own. This is one of the greatest boosts to innovation CSI provides: by virtue of the extended networks that come along with membership, more ambitious pursuits become possible.

Most social mission organizations already know that the problems we face can rarely be addressed by any one organization, sector, or point of view. Joining forces allows several social innovators to leverage each of their strengths in the service of larger goals, and to become stronger as individual organizations because of the learning and growth these collaborations facilitate.

In addition to the collaboration occurring within CSI, 50% of members have collaborated or done business with outside individuals or organizations referred to them by their fellow members. Members value opportunities for collaboration, both within and outside of CSI, as among the most important benefits of participation membership in the Centre.

How Collaboration Catalyzes Social Innovation

PROTECTING OUR FURRY FRIENDS

"Save the 'Bou" was born out of CSI in 2009, as an innovative solution to conserving the Ontario Woodland Caribou and its habitat.

How many people does it take to save a caribou? According to Shiloh Bouvette of Canopy, "Tackling an issue using all players in the field is instrumental in effecting change." Canopy is one of four organizations collaborating on the "Save the 'Bou" campaign. The project was born out of CSI in 2009, as an innovative solution to conserving the Ontario Woodland Caribou and its habitat. Together, Canopy Planet, Forest Ethics, the David Suzuki Foundation, and Greenpeace have pooled their resources to raise awareness about the at-risk species.

"The advantage, is that all our candid chats often lead to those 'aha!' moments."

Conversations at CSI initially sparked the campaign, and it has been sustained by the close working relationship the organizations have been able to develop because of their location at CSI. Shiloh shares an office with Catharine Grant of Forest Ethics, and the David Suzuki Foundation is just two floors down. (Greenpeace isn't based at CSI, but its offices are only blocks away). The organizations agree that being in such close proximity enhances their ability to achieve project goals.

"The advantage," says Shiloh "is that all our candid chats often lead to those 'aha!' moments." She can quickly run ideas by Catharine over a coffee at noon. Similarly, Catharine observes that while collaborative projects are often stunted by logistical frustrations or miscommunication, having partners nearby allows them to address any issues immediately. Moreover, this sense of ease keeps the groups energized and fresh ideas flowing.

The partners mainly attribute the success of "Save the 'Bous" to the distinct but equally valued roles each plays. Each group contributes something different, drawing on their individual networks, areas of expertise, and tried-and-true approaches for reaching different sectors. As a result, the campaign came together in short order. In the fall of 2009, the partners launched a social media strategy to help raise awareness about the issue. Within six months of launch, the Save the 'Bou campaign drew about 1000 fans to the Facebook site, and have generated over 10,000 emails to Ontario Premier McGuinty about the importance of protecting Woodland Caribou.

While the campaign hasn't yet reached its goals, the partners have garnered attention and mobilized action with greater ease than any one partner could achieve on its own. As the groups have realized, the problem is a complex one, and it needs to be approached in a creative, multi-dimensional way. This takes innovative thinking: collaboration is often this first step on this path.

IMPACT
Money

30% of members agree that membership has helped them to generate more interest from funders.

60% of members indicated that being at CSI had improved their organization's ability to generate revenue through the sale of goods and / or services.

All of the community-driven impacts we've just looked at—administrative efficiency, expanding networks, sparking new ideas, and fostering collaboration—combine to create another crucial benefit: improving members' financial positions.

Even for nonprofits, the bottom line always matters: financial sustainability is essential for any organization, no matter its funding or income-generation model. If ideas are to be implemented—if projects are to be not just conceived but actually realized in the world—then they must be backed by viable financial plans that offer stability and adequate resources for the full duration the project requires. This is doubly true for innovative organizations, whose projects break new ground and may take some time to find their footing, and which may not fit traditional funding schemes or business models to begin with.

For many social mission organizations, a lack of stable funding is the biggest limiting factor on their ability to innovate. When we founded CSI one of our main hopes was that it would help organizations' finances, and our survey found that it has, in fact, done just that.

"The most important thing that tenancy at CSI has done for my organization's ability to achieve its mission is to provide a network of organizations interested in our work – all of our business is word of mouth."

How?

In part, CSI provides members with greater access to markets and to funders. Many new business relationships have sprung up among members at CSI—an extension of the collaboration we've already seen. Additionally, because working out of CSI rather than home or other makeshift offices increases an organization's professionalism, profile, and public exposure. Joining CSI ensures members are better placed when they approach outside funders and potential clients.

"The thing that has most pleasantly surprised me about CSI is business from people I like and met here."

And in part, as organizations grow and change over time, CSI helps keep costs down by providing lower-cost workspace than an independent office would, once those organizations have made the leap from the home office to a rented space. In a recent expansion, almost all the newly created offices were taken by existing CSI members who were "graduating" to larger workspaces than the ones they'd previously occupied, and on other occasions organizations have downgraded their member packages if they found they needed a smaller space or fewer hours. Because CSI offers a variety of workspaces at a variety of price points, it gives members the flexibility (as waiting lists clear) of shifting up or down as best suits their resources and work.

We conducted a short follow-up survey in November 2009, to further explore the impact of CSI members' ability to generate revenue. In this survey, of the 53 respondents whose organizations generate revenue through the sale of goods and/or services, 36% reported that they had generated revenue through sales to other CSI members, and 30% reported that they had done so by conducting business with outside contacts to whom they were referred by fellow CSI members.

CSI drives revenue among its members by fostering referrals and collaborative opportunities: by facilitating a vastly expanded range and number of interactions, CSI ensures that its members are meeting potential clients every day. Moreover, CSI members increase their professional credibility by being located in the shared space, resulting in increased access to and a heightened reputation among funders and clients.

36% of respondents who generate revenue through the sales of goods or services reported that they had generated revenue through business relationships with other CSI members.

Additionally, 30% reported that they had done so by conducting business with "outside" contacts to which they were referred by other CSI members.

"[A main benefit of CSI is] by just being here, clients have walked up and asked if I would be interested in working with them…the networking alone is worth the rent."

How Increased Revenue Catalyzes Social Innovation

MAKING SOCIAL CHANGE SUSTAINABLE

Two years into the project and TechSoup Canada has provided donated software to over five thousand NPOs and saved Canada's nonprofit sector over $23 million.

Of the many infrastructure challenges facing Canada's nonprofit organizations, a lack of up-to-date software can be among the most painful. Too many organizations suffer through substandard technology; a situation that CSI member Partnership Platform decided could no longer be tolerated. So they partnered with TechSoup Global to create TechSoup Canada - a dedicated software provider to support Canadian charities and nonprofits.

"Canada's nonprofit and charitable sector wasn't being served as effectively as it could," says Jane Zhang, TechSoup Canada's Program Director. "A made-in-Canada program would focus its efforts on the 160,000 organizations that support our local communities."

TechSoup Canada works with major software producers like Microsoft and Adobe to help manage their charitable giving programs. Acting as intermediary, TechSoup Canada connects nonprofit organizations to these programs as a way to foster savings and improve access to new technology. The program got its start in Canada in 2008 with a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The hitch: When the money ran out, TechSoup Canada would be left on its own to sink or swim.

"Being at CSI has been essential to our success. The networks and support we've gained through membership have allowed us to scale our operations at an extraordinary pace. We've built a self-sustaining enterprise that empowers the work of thousands of organizations in Canada."

Two years into the project and TechSoup Canada had made thousands of sales that have saved Canada's nonprofit sector over $23 million. With the grant money now expired, TechSoup Canada generates enough revenue through its administration fee to cover its operational costs – and to support its growth. Jane concludes, "Being at CSI has been essential to our success. The networks and support we've gained through membership have allowed us to scale our operations at an extraordinary pace. We've built a self-sustaining enterprise that empowers the work of thousands of organizations in Canada."

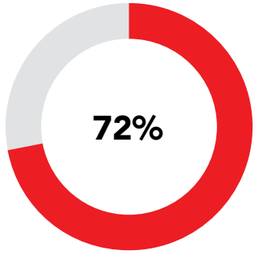
IMPACT
Happiness

Increased happiness and well-being: it is the most ephemeral, but also perhaps the most important benefit of working in a shared space like CSI. It can't easily be measured, and its worth doesn't translate into dollars and cents, but it was the most gratifying of all the impacts our survey uncovered. Process matters, health matters, functionality matters—happiness matters. For us at CSI, there is no greater reward than knowing that the space we've created and the community of people we've brought together have made our members happier—most especially because our members are people who are dedicating their lives to creatively tackling the problems our society faces.

Increasingly, employers are also recognizing the more pragmatic benefits of happiness and well-being. They are learning that this kind of satisfaction translates into staff retention and productivity, and we know that our members are doing better at their work because they are enjoying it more. In fact, those working in the social mission sector often do poorly in terms of the quality of their own work conditions and stress levels, and often report feeling precarious and anxious. Health and happiness are critical for staff retention and for ensuring that social innovators can maintain their commitment to their work—we cannot innovate unless we are coming from a position of security and personal sustainability. By providing a beautiful, healthy workspace, and a community of supportive, like-minded compatriots in the social mission sector, CSI contributes vitally to that sense of well-being. In doing so, it provides essential support for social mission workers with big dreams, and often bigger challenges.

87% of members feel that working at CSI has improved the quality of their professional life.

63% of CSI members say that working in the shared space has influenced their decision to stay employed in their current organization.



72% of members feel that CSI has helped them to live their values.

"CSI has provided me with an energizing, intellectually stimulating, warm and welcoming work environment."

"[Moving into CSI] helped me settle in [Toronto] and provided a healthy and inspiring and fun environment."

"Life is too short to work in sterile places. CSI is alive and has built a community of good people. I love being a part of that."

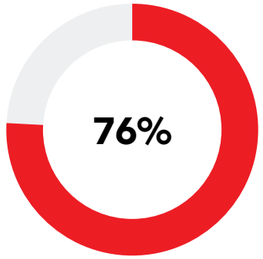
At CSI, 96% of tenants feel that the space has a "great vibe"

92% of members feel that CSI is a healthy physical environment in which to work.

62% indicate that working at CSI has made it easier for them to live a healthy lifestyle.

"The most important thing that tenancy at CSI has done for me, personally, is to provide me with a healthy place to work – physically and emotionally in so many ways."

"I feel lucky to be here. It is a vibrant, beautiful and inspiring place that makes me happy to live and work in this city."



76% of members agree that membership at CSI has made them a happier person.

How Happiness Catalyzes Social Innovation

YOU'LL ALWAYS HAVE A HOME AT CSI

Allanah feels a tremendous sense of value and honour in being part of such a talented community of people.

"You'll always have a home at CSI," reflects Allanah Scott, project manager at independent film company Coptor Productions. "The spirit here is fantastic," she says enthusiastically, "and there is such a sense of belonging." Allanah, now in her early 60s, has a background as an artist, educator, and activist. She and her husband moved to Toronto just a short while ago, in 2007—however, far from being intimidated by the transition, Allanah celebrated the relocation of her work to a space so well-aligned with her personal values.

"CSI is out to serve you," she comments, "It is such a democratic environment that offers members freedom for optional ways of working." Flexibility and trust are two ingredients that are crucial to Allanah's ongoing participation in CSI life and commitment to her professional work. CSI can accommodate just about anyone with its variety of work packages and all the available shared resources. Moreover, Allanah feels a tremendous sense of value and honour in being part of such a talented community of people. Contrary to many organizational structures that differentiate individuals by age, experience, or professional background, Allanah finds the diversity of CSI community truly stimulating. Being well-established in her own career, it is energizing for Allanah to work alongside those just starting out—their enthusiasm is buoyant, and their spirit transfers into her work.

> *"The spirit here is fantastic, and there is such a sense of belonging."*

Allanah also benefits from the learning process that goes on between members and across sectors. By hearing what solutions and innovations others around her are implementing, she reflects on her own ideas and practices with Coptor Productions. Working for a company that brings awareness to political, social, environmental, and cultural issues through film, Allanah finds that CSI and its members offer her continual sources of inspiration. Since moving into the Centre, Coptor has produced and released a number of films on the Canadian arts scene and an eye-opening documentary on the weaponization of space, which has shown in fourteen European and African Documentary Film Festivals and which is slated to be the opening film at the Oxford UK Film Festival.

It may be hard to measure, but personal happiness – our own confidence, comfort and sense of purpose – is what powers our efforts to pursue our passions and make a difference.

CONCLUSION

One of the great joys of operating the Centre for Social Innovation has been watching our members blossom and grow. On one level, CSI's goal is to ease the practical load small social mission organizations have to carry: to take some of the mundane but time-consuming burdens off their plate and free them up to do their work better, do more of it, and do it more efficiently. But on another, deeper level, our goal is to serve as something like a science lab: a safe, stable environment in which organizations can experiment, work across silos, learn from each other, and create entirely new goals and projects—ones that are more exciting and ambitious than anything one of them individually would be able to cook up with a home chemistry set.

And now, in presenting this report, we are striving to achieve something else as well: helping others build more shared spaces for social innovation. While we had a pretty good sense all along that we were helping our members achieve and grow, this is the first time we've been able to thoroughly measure the impact of the shared space CSI provides, and by extension, that other similar centres might be able to provide. We've been able to use the findings of our comprehensive survey to analyse the specific ways in which shared spaces support organizations, and support the social innovations that those social organizations pursue—and we very much hope that this will help city-builders elsewhere reproduce these benefits in their own communities and in their local social mission sectors. This Impact Report isn't just our internal report card: it's our way of trying to buoy the field of shared spaces for social innovation more generally, to support the emergence of other shared spaces by pointing out just how valuable they can be.

At CSI organizations focus on their missions, expand their networks, generate and adopt new ideas, collaborate, strengthen their bottom lines, and have happier staff. Taken together, these impacts make the case—practical and philosophical—for the importance of and opportunity contained in the shared spaces movement.

In addition to all the facts and figures, the percentages and the quantitative feedback, we wanted to make sure to include expanded, detailed anecdotes and experiences that some of our members shared. They help put a human, personal face on CSI's impact, and illustrate how the benefits yielded by shared spaces can drive social innovation far more compelling than the numbers alone could do. And these members provide but a handful of examples: we see the impact of shared spaces on our members' ability to push themselves, to grow, to innovate, every single day at the Centre for Social Innovation.

Shared spaces are more than just a place to work. They can be – with the right motivation and attention – hotbeds of social innovation. Through this report we have attempted to uncover the ways in which CSI supports social innovation in hopes of inspiring other shared spaces, and in a heartfelt desire to foster social innovation in communities around the world.

THE MOVEMENT

This book was designed by The Movement, as part of our effort to work with people and groups who are doing better. Working with social entrepreneurs and innovators, we use the power of design thinking & doing to give form to complex ideas. We're a network of committed people ready to tackle complex problems, and a studio dedicated to delivering results. We work openly with groups, on challenges that matter.

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