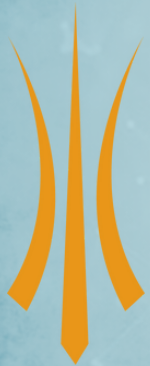


# EQUITY AND RADICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

## UNLEARNING WHILE TAKING ACTION

### 2021 IMPACT REPORT



**PILLAR**  
nonprofit network



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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Pillar Nonprofit Network acknowledges the history of the traditional territory and honours the longstanding relationships of the three local First Nations of this land we call Southwestern Ontario. The Attawandaran once settled this region alongside the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee, and this land served as their traditional hunting grounds. The three longstanding Indigenous groups of this geographical region are: The Anishinaabeg, The Haudenosaunee and the Lunaapeewak.

We would also like to recognize the three First Nations communities neighbouring what we call the City of London: Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Munsee-Delaware Nation. We invite you to learn more about the Indigenous territory on which you live and work, including the treaties that apply to your community.

Pillar Nonprofit Network recognizes the inequities connected to colonization and commits to working towards creating a just, inclusive and vibrant community for all. Our strategic plan acknowledges our shared complicity in anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and all intersecting oppressions, and drives ourselves and our network to action.

We invite you to reflect upon this land acknowledgement, what it means to your personal story, and what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action mean to you.

# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

Last year, we introduced a bold new strategic plan that obliges and empowers us to hold the goals of equity, inclusion and anti-oppression, transformational systems change, and an equitable and sustainable recovery at the centre of all we do. As a network organization of nonprofits, charities, foundations, social enterprises, cooperatives, social financiers, responsible investors, tech innovators, and caring individuals engaged in community care, we know these are shared goals.

While the breadth and scope of institutions in the impact sector is diverse, historically-marginalized groups often look to the sector to meet their needs and to advocate for improved outcomes for their communities. Two years into the pandemic, we know that many of our members and organizations in the impact sector locally continue to face resource challenges in the wake of COVID putting a strain on employees and communities served. For these reasons, we must call for systems change in both the external and the internal environment of the impact sector.

While we focus on external systems, we must also re-evaluate the foundations of the sector from funding structures to how we uphold systems of oppression in our own operations – in short, we need to be radically accountable. We need to examine how we are directly contributing to problems while benefitting from the legacy of colonization and the free labour of Black bodies.

Over the past year at Pillar, we have taken a deep look at the internal, cultural and relational ways that we operate and have taken steps to make improvements where needed to help us meet the commitments of our strategic plan. This ongoing process requires a great deal of vulnerability, humility, learning and unlearning while still moving forward on our core commitments to our network. We know we can't be responsible for our actions towards others if we don't start with the way we treat our colleagues and set standards for how we all show up.

In that spirit, our organization has shown great progress on the path to aligning with decent work principles, starting with pay transparency across the organization. We have worked to identify salary bands for all roles in the organization and commit to sharing salaries on all new job postings. Our shared leadership has led us to developing pay principles, sharing them across our network with great interest and uptake on our positioning.

Pillar's all women-led Director's team is also challenging traditional organizational power dynamics by implementing a shared leadership model. This means that everyone at the leadership table takes the opportunity to deliberate and discuss the steps needed to address key issues and pressure-points so we can lead our organization to greater clarity and genuine transformation, rooted in radical accountability.



# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR CONTINUED

We have also applied the principles of radical accountability to the way we build relationships with our members and equity-deserving groups in our community to help inform our programs and policy advocacy strategies. In 2021, we responded to the crises in our community, and across the country, by reaching out to Muslim and Indigenous leaders and community members, all levels of community decision makers, and all levels of government to voice our support for immediate action on eliminating Islamophobia and hate, and acting on reconciliation with the first peoples of this land. As always, we continue to consult with and advocate for our nonprofit members and the need for greater support and recognition for the community sector from the government.

This internal and relational work from the past year has laid the foundation for some important projects that we're already on the road to accomplishing. We continue our work towards aligning to decent work principles and building a psychologically healthy and safe workplace. Additionally, what we've learned from our community consultations has helped us on our way to developing a new policy and advocacy roadmap for our organization.

We hope that in sharing this look into Pillar's 'inner work', you'll see how we're beginning to apply this lens of radical accountability to all of our programs, some of which you'll hear about in this report.

We're excited to share our progress, knowing there is always further to go on this unlearning journey as we gain knowledge and do better.

Pillar's strength has always been the relationships we hold in our community, with likeminded people like you, across all sectors, who share our vision of a community where everyone thrives, feels supported and that they belong. We're so grateful that you're on this journey with us to do the hard, but necessary, work required to make this vision a reality, and we look forward to continuing to facilitate support and connection towards our mutual vision.

*Kindly,*

**Mojdeh Cox,  
Executive Director**



**Mary Alikakos,  
Board Chair**

# OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

## SPARKING COLLABORATION, CONNECTION & LEARNING

403

Individuals co-working at Innovation Works



283

Events held across all of our programs



192

Pillar Community Innovation Awards impact stories shared since 2006



4636

Event participants



## ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS

15

Pillar board members gave 360 volunteer hours



39

Welcome Desk volunteers gave 1910 volunteer hours



41,039

Online connections to volunteer opportunities





# OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

## SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

**700+**

Women and entrepreneurial ecosystem stakeholders engaged through WOSEN



**\$5M**

In capital unlocked for women and gender non-binary entrepreneurs through WOSEN



**19**

Individuals and 18 businesses supported through the Libro Social Enterprise Incubator



**\$977K**

Of loans approved by VERGE Capital for 9 social enterprises



## CONNECTING COMMUNITY TO OPPORTUNITY

**28**

Boards participated in Canada Life Young Leaders



**32**

Board candidates supported through Canada Life Young Leaders

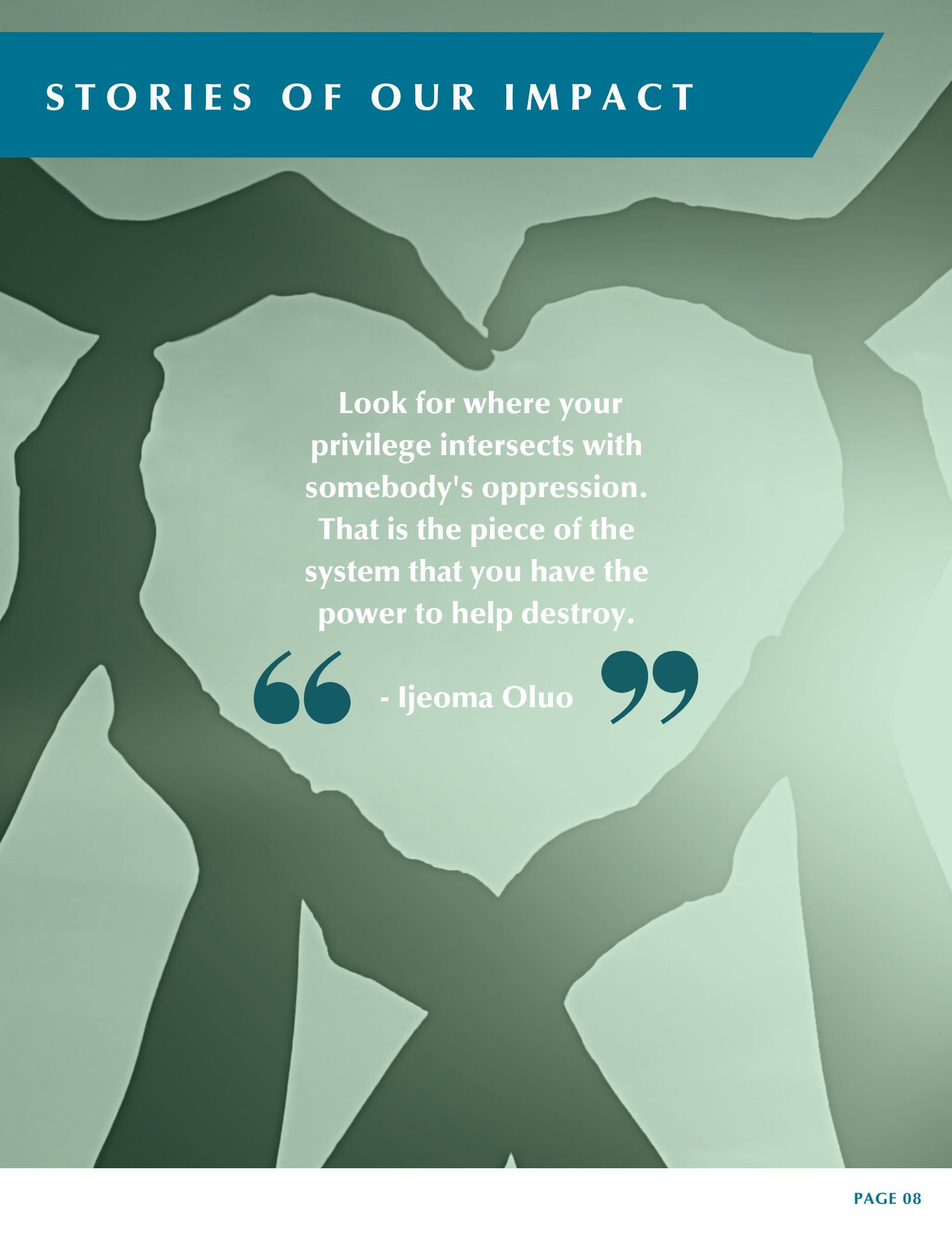


**41,933**

Online connections to job opportunities



# STORIES OF OUR IMPACT

The background of the page features a stylized illustration of several hands in various shades of green and teal, reaching in from the edges to form a heart shape in the center. The hands are rendered in a simple, bold, and somewhat abstract style.

Look for where your  
privilege intersects with  
somebody's oppression.  
That is the piece of the  
system that you have the  
power to help destroy.

“ - Ijeoma Oluo ”

# CONNECTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



In March, a grant from the federal government's Employment and Social Development Canada's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Program enabled Pillar and 10C Shared Space to launch the SDG Cities program. SDG Cities is a collaborative, community-driven project supporting localization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in Guelph and London through knowledge-sharing, story-telling and community connection.

The first program year was focused on planning, information gathering, and raising awareness that the SDGs can connect anywhere, and we were able to reach over 200 individuals at 7 presentations. Three of our intrepid Pillar colleagues also completed a 125km cycling route from London to Guelph to celebrate the launch of programming. The bike route passed through communities in the 'Innovation Corridor' that are advancing SDG initiatives.

To officially begin programming, we launched the SDG Community Learning series with 60 participants in the sector locally.



The session highlighted a shift in grant making organizations aligning decision making to the SDGs and helped initiate a local audience to the spectrum of benefits of aligning to the SDGs.

Internally, we were able to begin to implement and integrate the SDGs across our other programs. Our SDG program co-lead brought the SDG curriculum to our Social Six program participants, supported CityStudio's Week of Work Integrated Learning, connected with the recipients of the Pillar Community Innovation Awards, and worked to establish Pillar's internal strategic alignment with the SDGs.

This year, the program continues to increase awareness of SDGs within London and Guelph communities and share ideas about how they can be incorporated into existing and future structures and networks in mid-sized cities, working toward long-term systems change.

# FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE LEADERS TODAY



Supporting youth volunteerism has been an important part of our programming over the years and engaging youth is built into our diversity and inclusion practices across our organization. We can't do the work of solving systemic challenges and working towards a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable future without the input of the populations we hope to serve. If we are all unified in this better hope for the future, then we need to ask ourselves how well we are serving, and how well our actions are being shaped by, the stewards of that future state: youth.

In that spirit, Pillar's Social Six program exposes learners to an emerging set of social innovation tools; Social Innovation, Social Entrepreneurship, Social Finance, Social Technology, Social Inclusion, and Social Labs. The curriculum is designed to help young people feel more engaged and connected within their community, helping them strengthen their capacity to thrive in an age of disruption and automation; acquiring social competencies and skills, developing their networks, and gaining real-world experience.

Throughout the program, participants attend virtual modules on key social innovation skills, have the opportunity to participate in knowledge evaluation activities and gain a certificate.



In August, the program hosted an Innovation Competition where participants were able to tackle an important community issue, connect with impact coaches and gain entrepreneurial experience. Over nine groups came together with one winner selected for their idea FitBrain, an online community for fitness workshops and activities targeted at uplifting marginalized youth.

In 2021, the Social Six program saw over 500 young participants and is continuing this year connecting more youth to future-ready skills and knowledge while building their network. The program will grow this year with the addition of a second youth engagement coordinator.

Another successful youth-focused program came to a successful completion last year after four years at Pillar. The Canada Life Young Leaders program connected 32 youth aged 18-24 with a nonprofit organization, providing them the opportunity to serve as an ex-officio board member for one year and learn about effective nonprofit governance.



# ENABLING THE COMMUNITY SECTOR TO AMPLIFY THEIR IMPACT



The social sector is constantly under pressure to increase their impact, innovate their work and respond to the changing needs of their communities. Oftentimes, daily operations leave little time for long-term planning, deep reflection and vital discussions on topics such as financial sustainability, equity and inclusion and strategic planning. Sometimes you need someone to walk that journey with your organization, build connections and develop a plan of action.

Impact Consulting provides direct support to nonprofit organizations, government bodies, social enterprises and social purpose businesses across Ontario. Four full-time Pillar consultants, along with the entire Pillar team, leverage our experience and expertise to help amplify the impact of our clients. Last year alone, Impact Consulting contributed over 4,000 hours to working with 55 clients to build capacity for greater change.

**Equity & Inclusion** - Impact Consulting is committed to guiding organizations along on a journey of deeper understanding and action towards becoming anti-oppressive and inclusive. Across all projects, the team helps organizations to examine their past, present and future through an equity lens, encouraging brave and uncomfortable conversations and embedding anti-oppression values in the work.



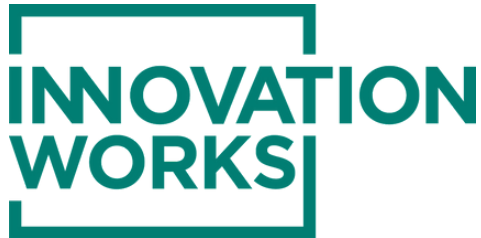
**Social Enterprise** - From the early ideation stages to scaling your social enterprise, Impact Consulting helps organizations explore business as a tool for impact. We know the value in leveraging financial models, market research, social financing and business plans as steps along the path to benefiting the community.

**Strategic Planning** - Where do we go from here? Over the past two years, communities have changed dramatically and inequities in our society have become ever more evident. Many nonprofits are redefining their vision and values, aligning with massive shifts in their communities and sectors. Recognizing the importance of shared strategy, Impact Consulting works with teams to navigate these conversations.

"We almost immediately went into a period of growth because we had a clear understanding of who we are as an organization, what we are trying to do, and what we want to create within our community. Things started to align, and we acquired new clients and team members because we knew exactly what we were looking for. Additionally, the consulting engagement gave us the validation to know that our work is both necessary and possible."

- Client Testimonial – COOK-UP

# CULTIVATING COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION ACROSS SECTORS



Innovation Works, a social enterprise of Pillar and a thriving co-working community space for aspiring changemakers celebrated five years of operations in 2021 with over 15 per cent growth in our community since the previous year. As the physical manifestation of Pillar's mission, Innovation Works exists to foster community and connection across sectors and catalyze new ways of working to solve our challenges in this city and beyond.

Through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Innovation Works team was able to stay true to our mission to cultivate and support community in many ways. Despite having to close our doors to non-essential businesses four times in the last two years, we prioritized providing rent relief to our co-tenant members in need.

In 2021, we were grateful to have had many opportunities to bring our co-tenant members and the local community together both virtually and in person starting with our virtual week-long Mental Health Week in May. The week offered attendees interactive and educational virtual sessions such as yoga, meditation, music therapy, and workshops on topics like anxiety and self-care. Thanks to our group of compassionate volunteers, the week was a huge success with a gathering of 1,600 attendees.



Innovation Works launched the CommUNITY Pop-UP Kitchen events throughout November that included a different local food vendor featuring international cuisine and various shop vendors each week, including Caf zia Coffee, Good Neighbours Canada, Carolinian Canada, and Changing The Flow. The events gathered significant community attention and provided an opportunity for co-tenants and members of the community to meet in person safely, socialize, and connect with each other.

During the pandemic, Innovation Works found support in other co-working spaces across Canada to share resources and discuss how government mandates affect each of our spaces. As the workforce continues to evolve and embrace flexible work, we're confident Innovation Works will continue to stand apart as a unique destination in which fellow changemakers can build relationships and work together for the benefit of this city.

# MOBILIZING CAPITAL TO INVEST IN PEOPLE & PLANET



With \$977,500 approved investments in three non-profit and six for-profit social enterprises, it was a busy year for the VERGE Capital team. Pillar's social finance program, which operates in collaboration with Libro Credit Union, London Community Foundation, Sisters of St. Joseph, and SVX supports local economies and communities by investing in social enterprises that put people and planet first.

Our mandate is to provide more equitable access to financing – especially to social entrepreneurs from (or organizations that serve) historically excluded and marginalized populations. In 2021, out of the six for-profit social enterprises VERGE supported, all were either majority or 50 per cent women owned, and two-thirds were majority or 50 per cent were owned by people of colour.

Our investment priorities are also aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which we've translated into four areas of focus: Equity and Justice, Climate Action, Local Impact, and Systemic Change. The investees we supported are pursuing those goals in a variety of ways, including tackling food insecurity, eliminating disposable takeout containers and nurturing the next generation of homegrown innovators.

VERGE also partnered with a cross-sectoral group of community finance stakeholders in Ontario to launch the Catalyst: Community Finance Initiative last year.



This multi-year project will help develop enhanced ecosystem and policy infrastructure to support the start-up and scale up community finance organizations in urban, rural and Northern communities in Ontario and across the country. Among its goals, the collective aims to design relevant ecosystem and provincial public policy infrastructure to ensure that community finance institutions can successfully and sustainably start-up and scale their impact.

Rounding out a fruitful year, VERGE joined Carolinian Canada, and many other community partners involved with the project, in celebrating the public launch of the Deshkan Ziiibi Conservation Impact Bond (DZCIB). This innovative financial instrument is aimed at conservation, reconciliation, and local green economic development. As of July 2021, the DZCIB pilot has supported 53 healthy landscape projects in the Deshkan Ziiibi region resulting in numerous ecological, sociocultural, and economic benefits.



## MEMBER TESTIMONIALS



In March of 2020, Pillar colleagues sought to quickly pivot programs and services to an online space in an effort to provide increased support to a network of organizations hit hard by the pandemic. With the leadership of member-volunteers, we co-created the Nonprofit Connector call as a way of checking in with one another during a time of great uncertainty and isolation.

Almost two years later, the meeting has transformed from a facilitated and issue-based call, akin to a lunch and learn, to a functioning community-of-practice. Even as we have transitioned in and out of virtual spaces as the pandemic unfolds, the Nonprofit Connector call has remained consistently well attended, and truly indicates a success in convening members across the network to offer peer support and guidance to one another during a time of great need.

"The community at Pillar and IW was my way of staying connected socially to my professional peers and getting the human interaction that often lacks in a consultant's day. The Nonprofit Connector call continues to serve this purpose for me during the pandemic - connecting me with other people and being able to talk about what was on our minds, whether it was processing big feelings related to the state of the world, or just having a much-needed laugh with a group of supportive folks."

**Larissa Stoddart, Fundraising Consultant at Growth & Co.**

"In the charitable sector, having the weight of what's going on in the world, coupled with the isolation of the nature of our work, these kinds of calls are refueling, help with the morale issue."

**Silvia Langer, Development Director at Unity Project for Relief of Homelessness**

"The non-profit connector call has been very beneficial for me as a Community Engaged Learning Coordinator at Western. Having the ability to connect with the non-profit sector through these calls has allowed us not only to understand the need in our community but also to tweak our programs to ensure we are able to support students who wish to find innovative ways to support the non-profit community. These calls have allowed me as a program administrator to listen, reflect on how we are designing programs and tweak programming with an eye on the community pulse."

**Kate Placide, Co-Curricular Experiential Learning Coordinator, Western University**



# WAYS TO SUPPORT AND BELONG TO OUR NETWORK

We're changemakers. You're a changemaker, too. We can do more together. We invite you to explore the various ways to engage with our network so we can grow together and work together toward a just engaged, inclusive and vibrant community.

## BECOME A MEMBER

1 Join our network of individuals, organizations and enterprises to bolster your resources, amplify your voice, and collaborate with other network leaders on the causes and communities you care about. Pillar members are committed to doing the work together to make positive change through shared learning and executing bold ideas to build a more equitable, vibrant and resilient community. For more information, visit: [pillarnonprofit.ca/membership](http://pillarnonprofit.ca/membership)

## BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE INNOVATION FUND

2 Flexible funding through the Innovation Fund is a critical component to the sustainability of our mission. Your participation is needed more than ever to ensure Pillar can remain a vital and reliable resource for our sector, and to create positive impact in our communities. For more information, visit: [pillarnonprofit.ca/sustainers](http://pillarnonprofit.ca/sustainers)

## JOIN PILLAR THROUGH INNOVATION WORKS

3 More than bricks and mortar, more than offices and desks, Innovation Works is a place to connect, where we create opportunities for people to convene and collaborate for community impact. When you join with our flexible leases, you automatically become a Pillar member and enjoy the benefits of joining our network. For more information, visit: [innovationworkslondon.ca/work-here](http://innovationworkslondon.ca/work-here)

## PILLAR SUPPORTERS

- Brescia University College
- Canada Life
- Centre for Social Innovation
- Cheshire
- City of London
- CityStudio Network
- CityStudio Vancouver
- Connect Dot Management Inc.
- Centre for Research & Innovation, Fanshawe College
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Fanshawe College
- Government of Ontario
- Huron University College
- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
- Innoweave
- Ivey School of Business
- King's University College
- The Lawson Foundation
- Libro Credit Union
- London Arts Council
- London Community Foundation
- Young London
- Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Multicultural & Anti-Racism Initiative
- Ministry of Economic Development & Growth
- NORDIK Institute
- onBoard Canada
- Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities
- Ontario Nonprofit Network
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- RBC
- Sisters of St. Joseph
- SVX
- TD Bank
- U.Lab
- United Way Elgin Middlesex
- Ursuline Sisters
- Western Continuing Studies
- Western University



# PILLAR COMMUNITY INNOVATION AWARDS SPONSORS

PLATINUM



AWARD



GOLD



SILVER



## PILLAR COMMUNITY INNOVATION AWARDS SPONSORS

### BRONZE

Auburn Developments | Lerner Lawyers  
McCabe Promotional | Miller Thomson LLP  
Sisters of St. Joseph | rTraction | TD Bank  
Tool & Cutter Supply Company

### COMMUNITY

Architects Tillmann Ruth Robinson | Bell Canada  
BlueStone Properties Inc. | Davis Martindale  
Decade Group Inc. | The Co-operators | Gay Lea Foods  
Horizon Leadership Institute Inc. | JPW | KPMG  
MacNeill Edmundson Professional Corporation  
Nothers The Award Store | Quiet Legacy Planning Group  
SportsXpress | Spriet Associates Ltd. | Teppermans

## PILLAR SUSTAINERS

- Architects Tillmann Ruth Robinson
- Albert Brule
- Blackburn Foundation
- Canada Life
- Canada Medical Hall of Fame
- CMHA Thames Valley
- Clients of Randy Sheffield
- Fanshawe College
- Goodwill Industries - Ontario Great Lakes
- Greg Moran and Mindy Gordon
- Kate Graham
- Larry Myny Investment Group
- The Lawson Foundation
- Libro Credit Union
- Louise McConnell – Gallagher
- London Chamber of Commerce
- London Community Foundation
- MacNeill Edmundson Professional Corporation
- Brian Meehan
- N'Amerind (London) Friendship Centre Inc.
- Kelly Regan & Tony Vannelli
- Kristi Sargeant Kerr and Jason Kerr
- Rick Spencer
- Randy Sheffield, IG Wealth Management
- Tracey Church & Associates
- Westminster College Foundation
- Wilson & Judith Rodger Fund
- Peter & Beth Whatmore
- Zavitz Insurance & Wealth



## VERGE CAPITAL FUNDERS

- Cambia Development Foundation
- Canadian Alternative Investment Foundation
- Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph
- Ontario Trillium Foundation

## VERGE CAPITAL VOLUNTEER REVIEW PANEL

- Lori Atkinson
- Ada Barlatt
- Drew Beckett
- Heather Cabral
- Jeff Campbell
- Lynn Davis
- Frazier Fathers
- Maya Gandhi
- Chris Healy
- Dale Holland
- Joyanne Howell
- Sigried Janzen
- Melissa Jean
- Jamie Kruspel
- Tania Kwan
- Alison Lobb
- John Marshall
- Mano Majumdar
- Tamara Milidrag
- Erik Ohrling
- Prachi Oza
- Dipesh Parmar
- Alicia Samuel
- Ariel Sharir
- Randy Sheffield
- Peter Shi
- Sheila Simpson
- Jennifer Slay
- Beth Tonken
- Janet Tufts
- Garrett Vanderwyst
- Laura Wimperis



**PILLAR**  
nonprofit network

**CONNECTING FOR  
COMMUNITY IMPACT**

**[pillarnonprofit.ca](http://pillarnonprofit.ca)**



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**[@PillarNN](https://twitter.com/PillarNN)**



**[@PillarNonprofit](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)**