



Overview: [Vital Signs and Vital Conversations](#)

Vital Signs is Canada's most extensive community-driven data program. Spearheaded by Community Foundations of Canada and led by community foundations across the country and around the world, *Vital Signs* uses local knowledge to measure community well-being and support action towards improving collective quality of life.

Local knowledge gathered by a community foundation through the program can be used to inform the organization's strategic direction, support evidence-based decision making when it comes to grants and investments, and it can help the community foundation improve the quality of life in the community by addressing the issues that matter most. The *Vital Signs* program can also be used to inspire civic engagement, provide focus for public debate, and help a range of actors take action and direct resources where they will have the greatest impact.

Vital Conversations

A Vital Conversation is a facilitated community conversation hosted by the community foundation. Vital Conversations may be used to collect insight from the community about priority issues, gather insight from specific demographics within the community, as a conversation starter, and/or as a tool to spark connections and collaborative action on identified community priorities. They may be inclusive of local decision makers (including donors, municipal government, politicians, and others). Vital Conversations are also an effective tool to bolster community engagement, as an opportunity to connect local organizations and resources and build new relationships.

Vital Conversations are an important component of *Vital Signs* that offer the community foundation the opportunity to collect insight and qualitative data directly from community members. The knowledge gained through Vital Conversations can be used by the community foundation to inform strategy, guide granting priorities, inform new donors about community needs, and/or to raise awareness of your community foundation and its leadership.

Vital Conversations may be used by community foundations of all sizes. Community foundations with less capacity to produce a *Vital Signs* report may instead use Vital Conversations as a tool to participate in *Vital Signs* and collect valuable community input. Some community foundations host Vital Conversations to supplement the research they are collecting for their reports, and some may choose to host Vital Conversations in the years between reports, to continue to keep track of the pulse of the community. Vital Conversations are a valuable tool for community foundations with every level of capacity, to build relationships, learn from community, foster connections for collaborative action, and to inform the strategic priorities of the community foundation.

Vital Conversations powered by Leith Wheeler

Inspired by the value that Vital Conversations are bringing to communities across the country, Community Foundations of Canada's national *Vital Signs* partner, [Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel Ltd. is providing \\$10,000 in both 2020 and 2021 to support Vital Conversations](#) as part of their multi-year commitment to the *Vital Signs* program.

We are excited to announce an opportunity for community foundations to apply to receive a grant of up to \$1,000 to complete a Vital Conversation in their community this year.

Who can apply?

Community foundations of all sizes and levels of capacity that are a part of the CFC network may apply to receive a grant of up to \$1,000. To be eligible to receive a grant for a Vital Conversation, community foundation applicants must describe in their application how they envision the event will:

- Bring community members together to discuss community priorities
- Enable learning about community needs and/or foster connections for collaborative action among community members
- Be leveraged by the community foundation in a broader sense - examples could be in relation to strategic planning, informing granting priorities, informing further research and engagement, etc.
- Represent values of diversity, inclusion, and equity in the event planning and in respect to the individuals who are invited to the event

Community Foundations of Canada will evaluate the applications and preference will be given to community foundations who meet the above criteria and also:

- Have assets under \$20 million
- Have never participated in *Vital Signs* (including through a Vital Conversation) before
- Will use the Vital Conversation to inform the strategic direction of the foundation
- Are using the Vital Conversation to engage with a specific demographic in their community they have not yet engaged with, or which is under-served and/or marginalized
- CFC will also consider geographic distribution across Canada when determining the grant allocations

Timeline

- March 3** - CFC begins to accept applications from community foundations
- March 24** - the deadline to submit an application
- April 3** - CFC informs applicants of the outcome of its evaluation and process cheque payments for selected community foundations
- April - December** - Vital Conversations take place

- ❑ **January 2021** - the program will be offered for the 2021 calendar year as well. Stay tuned for updates!

How to apply

To apply for a grant through the program, community foundations must complete and submit an [Application form](#) by **Tuesday March 24th at 5 pm PT**. The questions on the application are listed below for information as you prepare to apply.

Application text

About you

1. What is your name?
2. Which community foundation are you representing?
3. What is the size of assets held by your community foundation?

Vital Signs

4. Has your community foundation ever engaged in *Vital Signs* before? If so, how? (i.e. through a report, Vital Conversation, Vital Brief and/or Vital Topic)
5. When do you anticipate hosting the event? (estimations are helpful!)
6. What do you hope to gain, or learn, from the Vital Conversation?
7. How does the community foundation anticipate using the knowledge gained from the event?

Other considerations

8. How do you plan to incorporate the values of diversity, inclusion, and equity in the planning and hosting of your event?
9. If you are awarded a grant, do you commit to following the acknowledgement guidelines, as outlined in the Overview document?

Acknowledgement Guidelines

Community foundations that receive a grant will be required to review and abide by the Acknowledgement Guidelines as outlined below:

- ❑ Acknowledge the support from Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel in written and visual materials, including printed material, local media releases, and at Vital Conversation events. Please use the **Acknowledgement Text** (below).
- ❑ Give equal acknowledgement. When acknowledging multiple funders or partners, feature the **Acknowledgement Text** and/or **Logo** in at least equal manner and prominence to that of any other supporter or funding party that has made a similar contribution.
- ❑ If you use social media, community foundations are encouraged to acknowledge support from Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel with at least one post per platform.
- ❑ Get in touch with a Leith Wheeler representative with an invitation to attend and make brief speaking remarks. Please get in touch with Alison Sidney at asidney@communityfoundations.ca at least 4 weeks in advance of the event to be

put in touch with a local Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel Ltd. to extend the invitation and explore the feasibility.

Acknowledgement Text: *“This Vital Conversation is supported by Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel Ltd.”*

Logo:



Contact us

For more information about this opportunity please contact Alison Sidney, Manager of Strategic Initiatives, at asidney@communityfoundations.ca.