



WINTER 2022

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# STEWARDSHIP REPORT

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# ABOUT

## The Rural Ontario Institute (ROI):

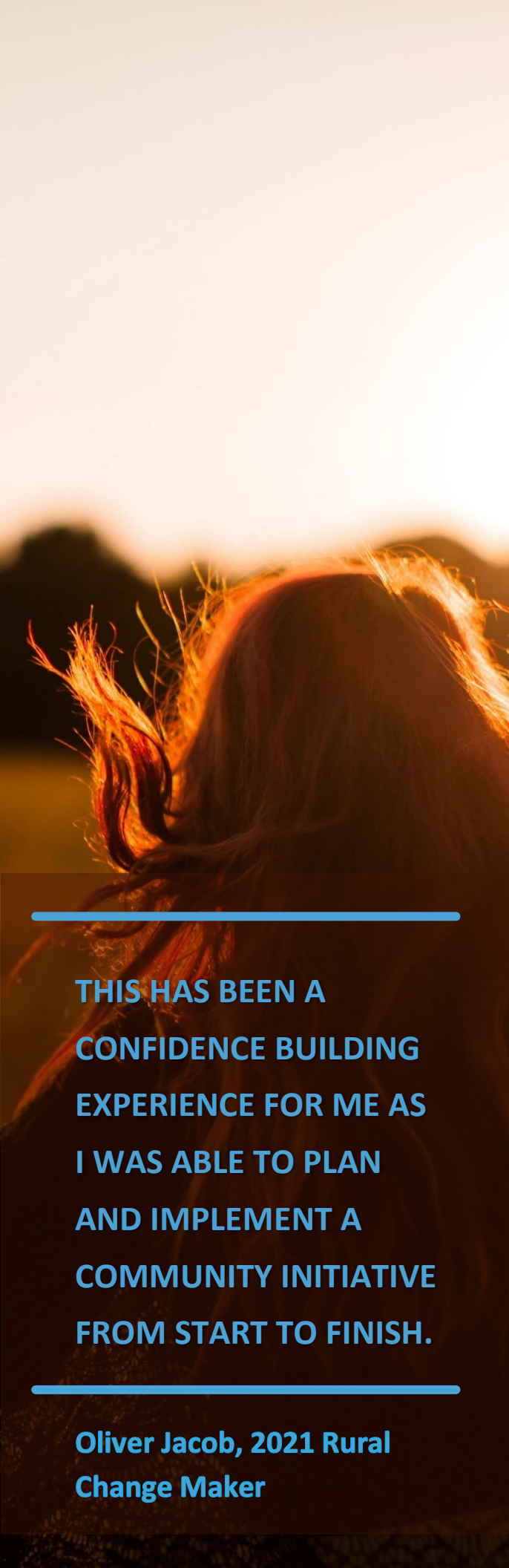
- Develops, Informs and Connects Leaders.
- Initiates dialogue and supports collaboration among rural stakeholders.
- Identifies and amplifies key issues and opportunities.
- Builds organizational capacity in rural and northern Ontario.

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ROI delivers a transformative and innovative program for emerging leaders 18-35 years old from rural Ontario – the **Rural Change Makers program (RCM)**.

RCM objectives: develop young leaders who are equipped with critical skills to identify and overcome challenges with their communities to optimize social, economic and community development capacity within rural sectors.

This **Stewardship Report** highlights how support from sponsors and donors helps to develop, inform and connect emerging leaders, build strong organizations and rural communities through investment in future rural leaders.



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**THIS HAS BEEN A  
CONFIDENCE BUILDING  
EXPERIENCE FOR ME AS  
I WAS ABLE TO PLAN  
AND IMPLEMENT A  
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE  
FROM START TO FINISH.**

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**Oliver Jacob, 2021 Rural  
Change Maker**







*discover - experience - model - reflect*



# RURAL CHANGE MAKERS

BUILDING TOMORROW'S LEADERS FOR TODAY'S RURAL CHALLENGES

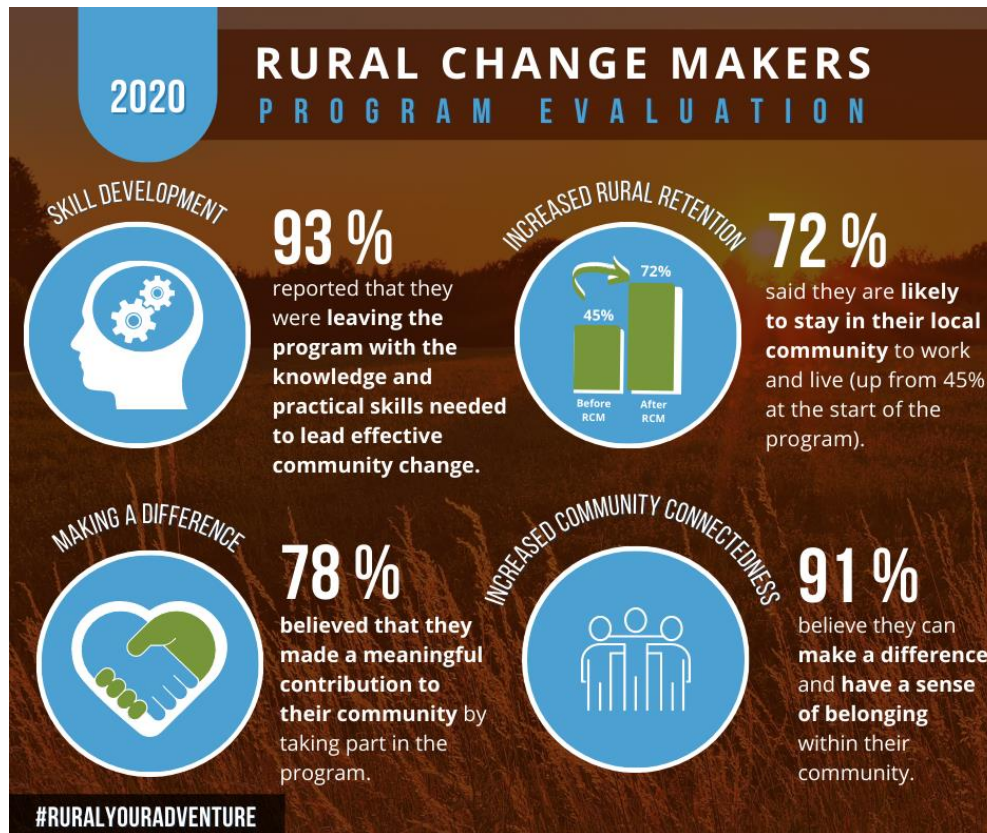
## THE RURAL CHANGE MAKERS PROGRAM

Since 2012 ROI has had a solid track record developing young rural leaders through youth leadership programming. The Rural Change Makers (RCM) Program is the culmination of a Youth Engagement Showcase, Municipal Youth Internship and successful 2019 pilot of the Rural Change Makers program. With over 40 graduates to date, youth leadership alumni span over 35 rural Ontario municipalities and are leading in many regional organizations including the Exeter Community Food Bank, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, regional United Way Directorate and local workforce development boards. RCM Alumni are also leading in many rural businesses including receipt of the distinguished South Huron Business and Community Excellence Award, in agricultural consulting, poultry and horticulture farms, and in the northern mining industry. Some RCM Alumni are furthering graduate degrees in law, Agri-innovation research and rural labour relations, while others are leading at local and provincial levels of government including local municipal council appointments, achieving MPP candidacy, mayoral candidacy and serving rural residents through planning and municipal public works.

“I ran for office provincially this summer [2022]. Otherwise, you can find me as an atypical board president at 25 years old for the local centre for workforce development or working on the local science fair as a director for the Quinte Regional Science and Technology Fair.”

Emilie Leneveu, Quinte Region Rural Change Maker Alumni

Alumni, report that RCM prepared and inspired them to take on leadership roles in their communities and comment that the program is “**a confidence building experience as I was able to plan and implement a community initiative from start to finish.**” The most significant indicators of success are showcased in the achievements of our Rural Change Makers, and increased rural retention of alumni, with over 72% reporting they are more likely to stay, live and work in their rural communities following the RCM program (up from 45% pre-program participation).



RCM has continuously grown to refine and expand program opportunities to emerging leaders and bring about community and economic development gains for regions. Seminars, self-directed learning and transformative skills building combine hands-on experience, introduce local rural community-economic development solutions and expose participants to contacts and networks that would otherwise take considerable time to accumulate.

**Support from industry leaders is vital to the strength of our program. In fact, without the support of sponsors and funders, the Rural Change Makers would not be possible. Financial commitments from the industry are matched by a commitment from the Board and staff of ROI to achieve the program objectives and maintain exceptional quality of leadership development programming.**

## ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES AND BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

We continue to deliver on program objectives by ensuring that seminar and skills development focus on mastery of and confidence in core leadership skills; exposure to innovative problem solving; discovery of key rural issues of importance including the economic, political, social, cultural, and physical environment; exploration of local community-economic opportunities; and personal and professional development.

### MILESTONES RCM 1 & 2

#### Meet the Changemakers of Rural Ontario



25 young men and women participated in the Rural Change Maker program from 2020-2022 to achieve the following highlights and milestones:



1. **Program Completion of 2 Cohorts:** RCM 1 (February 2021) and RCM 2 (June 2022).



2. **Completion of 12 Seminars and Learning Labs:** 7 in 2022-21 (Virtual Webinar Sessions) and 5 (on demand sessions) in 2021-22. All while navigating the shifting landscape of the Pandemic.



3. **2 Ignite Sessions:** Simcoe-Muskoka Region (September 2020), North Bay (May 2022). Applying learned skills, inspiring action through in-person, group activities; and developing community action plans.



4. **Over 12 Local Community Change Making Projects including:** addressing rural homelessness; youth literacy; social inclusion and wellbeing of rural youth; 100 Who Care Plan; rural food security; rural connections app; local-provincial agriculture policy planning; national rural remote housing and homelessness community of practice; She Matters – national status report on sexual assault and justice equity; inclusivity for newcomers to rural Ontario; and Greater Arnprior Community Council on Poverty and Homelessness priority setting activities.



5. **7 Core Competencies:** RCM participants developed skills in 7 core competency areas including community development; understanding change; the importance of trends, forecasting and foresight; and systems thinking skills like theories of change and social innovation.



# Leading our Future

## LEADERSHIP THROUGH 7 KEY COMPETENCIES

Different skill sets will be needed at different points in an organization's development, and over the course of leaders' careers.



**BUILDER**  
Builds strong, adaptive and diverse organization and relationships.



**THINKER**  
Anticipates change, assesses data, creates strategy, supports learning.



**MENTOR**  
Supports staff growth, demonstrates empathy and trust, models perseverance and resilience.



**STORYTELLER**  
Communicates the mission and vision, champions the organization brand.



**INNOVATOR**  
Encourages experimentation and risk taking, embraces change, adapts to dynamic environments.



**CONNECTOR**  
Develops networks, shares knowledge, collaborates, listens for diverse voices.



**STEWARD**  
Strengthens capacity through technology, demonstrates accountability, promotes effective governance.

Adapted from 1. Shaping the Future: Leadership in Ontario's Nonprofit Labour Force, Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2013  
2. Youth Perceptions of the Non-Profit Sector, Youth and Philanthropy Initiative, 2015

The Rural Change Maker program was delivered to 2 cohorts of emerging leaders between June 2020 and May 2022. During the 12 seminars and learning labs, cohort 1 and 2 participants covered the following topics:

### RURAL COMMUNITY BUILDING FUNDAMENTALS

- Introduction to Community Building
- The Increasing Importance of Community Building
- Tools for Community Leadership
- Outcome Focused Leadership
- Measuring Impact: Evaluation Fundamentals
- Essentials for Empowering Citizen Volunteers

### COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT

- Supporting Individual and Community Change
- Planning Using a Community Development Approach
- How-To's and Tools for Planning Using a Community Development Approach
- Marketing and Branding for Community-Led Development
- Social Media for Community-Led Development

### COMMUNITY – LED TRANSFORMATION

- Future-Focused Community Leadership Roles and Responsibilities of a Community Coach
- Supporting Multi-Sectoral Initiatives
- Working with Community Groups
- Scanning and Planning How-To's for Multi-Sectoral Initiatives



## COMMUNITY CHANGE MAKING - IMPACT PROJECTS

Through engagement, participants also add to their “toolbox of skills” by completing Community Projects supported by Libro Credit Union and the Province of Ontario. These are action-based leadership projects within the rural landscape of Ontario and some which took on a national scope. Change Makers worked with the following organizations and communities, in a leadership-facilitative role, to discover issues important to their rural communities:

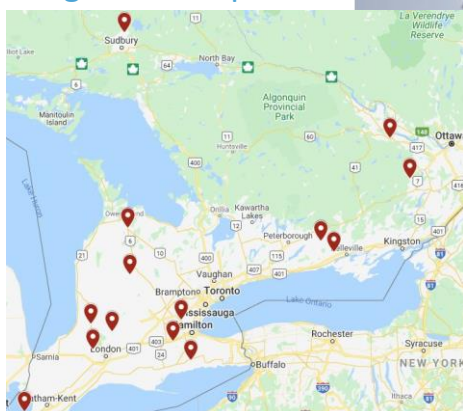
### Organizations

- Greater Arnprior Community Council
- She Matters – took on national scope of significance with in-depth [media coverage by W5](#)
- 100 Who Care – Elliot Lake Rotary Club
- National Rural & Remote Housing and Homelessness Symposium with the Rural Development Network
- Middlesex - Ontario Federation of Agriculture
- Trent Hills Youth Leadership Initiative

Community issues discovered by Rural Change Makers involved over 12 project areas including:

- **Rural homelessness** including hidden homelessness;
- Rural transportation;
- **Joint city/county solutions** working groups;
- **Youth literacy**;
- **Social inclusion** and wellbeing of rural youth;
- 100 Who Care Plan;
- **Rural labour force attraction** and retention;
- **Rural food security**;
- **Rural connections app**;
- **Local-provincial agriculture policy** planning (OFA – Middlesex);
- **National rural and remote housing** and homelessness community of practice;
- **She Matters** – [Silenced: Canada's Sexual Assault Kit Accessibility Crisis](#) A national status report on sexual assault and justice equity;
- **Inclusivity for newcomers** to rural Ontario; and,
- Greater Arnprior **Community Council on Poverty and Homelessness** priority setting activities.

### Regions of Impact:





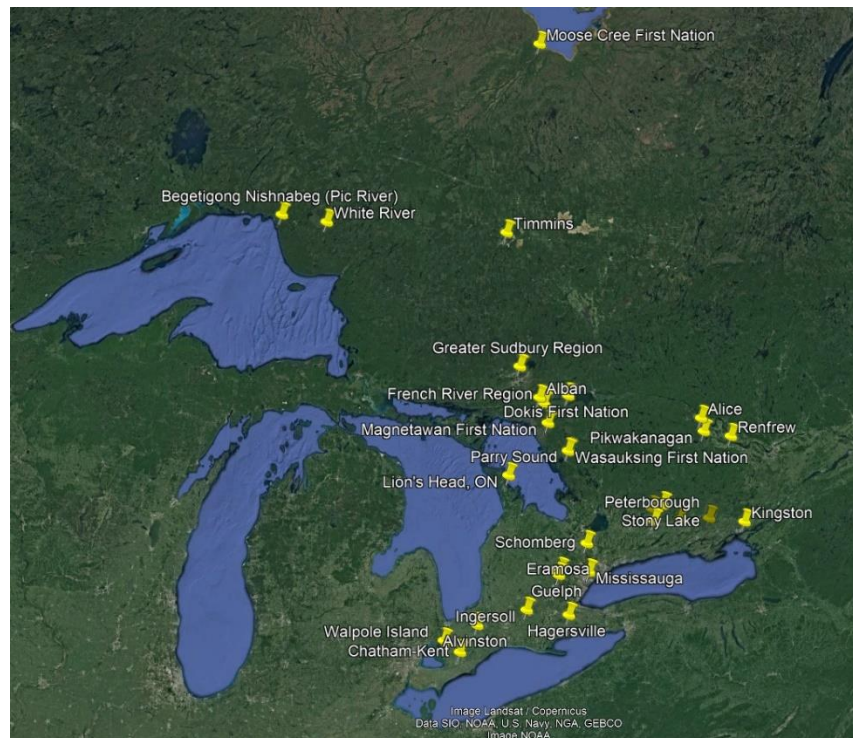
## COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECTS: YOUNG RURAL RESILIENT

In 2022, RCM 2 participants, ROI staff and emerging leaders from rural, remote and Indigenous communities throughout Ontario participated in the Young Rural Resilient Project (YRR) a focused evaluative project of the RCM program supported by the Trillium Foundation. Through interviews, outreach, surveys, and engagement critical perspectives were gathered, rural issues of importance discovered and barriers affecting rural youth were identified. The YRR project took on a provincial scope to determine the status of rural youth since the Pandemic, emerging issues, needs and aspirations of young adults. This critical assessment is being compiled and will be shared back with the broader community to help inform our collective concern for youth today and ensure continued opportunity for tomorrow's leaders.

### What We Heard:

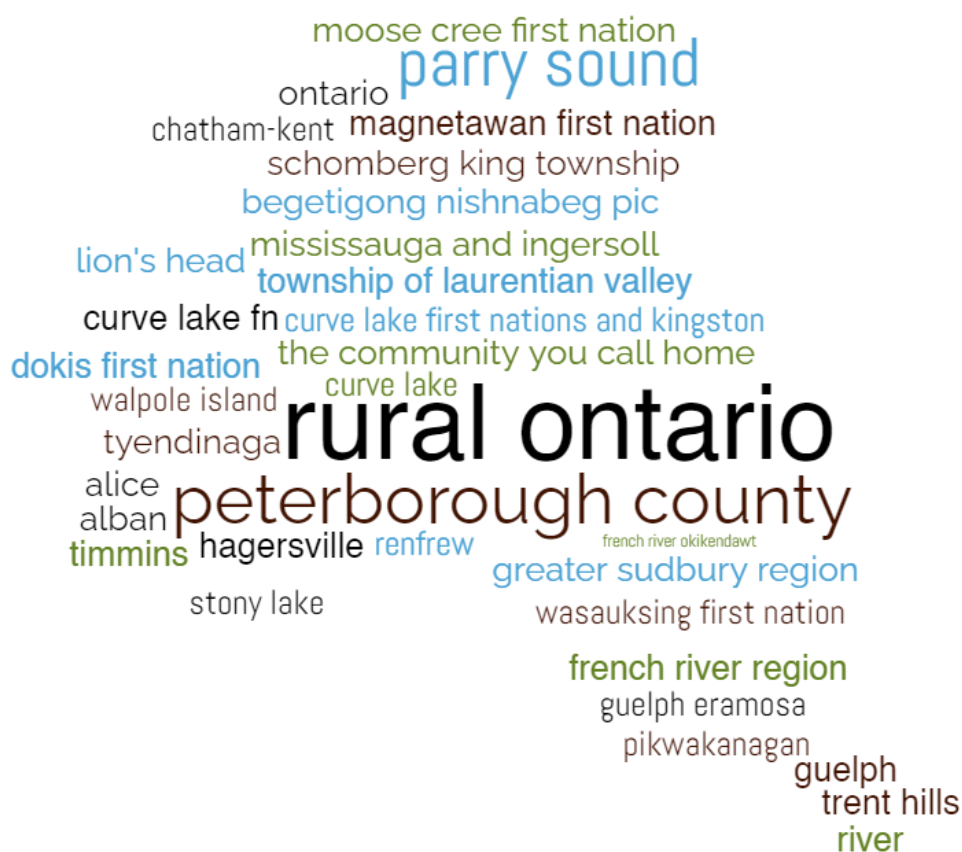
- Emerging leaders need mentors, elders, guides and each other to support their changemaking journey.
- Soft and core skill development is necessary to effectively lead community economic development change.
- Access to opportunities and community economic development projects is key for civic participation of many youth.
- Retention of youth is critical to the futures of rural communities.
- Communities need social capital and skilled youth to address community challenges.
- Rural economies thrive when youth choose to live, work and grow their businesses, families and future in rural Ontario.

### Regions of Impact:



## YOUNG RURAL RESILIENT PROJECT

As part of the 2022 Young Rural Resilient Project key perspectives, needs and aspirations of emerging leaders and rural Ontario communities were identified. Over 200 connections were made with rural, remote, and Indigenous youth and inter-tribal community members through a listening tour conducted in the Fall of 2022. Over 50 surveys were completed, and critical conversations held to identify opportunities and barriers affecting rural communities. Outcomes from this evaluation project are informing the 2023 Rural Change Maker program to minimize gaps and maximize opportunities for enhanced program delivery. Many transformative elements are being co-designed into the upcoming 2023 RCM program proactively ensuring that curriculum keeps pace with leadership, governance, youth and rural issues of importance. The listening tour was completed from September to November 2022, with research and interviews conducted from January to August 2022. Regions represented in the outreach spanned rural Ontario and included many northern, remote and Indigenous communities.



There were more than 200 respondents who participated in the Young Rural Resilient project with 5 Rural Change Maker Program Participants including ROI staff leads, YRR project Ambassadors and RCM 2 participants. Respondents both informed and defined priorities for the upcoming program.

## RCM PROGRAM EVALUATION

### TRACKING INDIVIDUAL GROWTH, COMMUNITY, AND PROGRAM IMPACT

In 2019, consultants were contracted to develop evaluative measures and benchmarks for program impact, effectiveness, and leadership competency development. Curriculum was tied to the competency areas to ensure most benefit for participants and communities while maximizing impact of sponsorship funding.

Rural Change Makers participating in the program not only surpassed program expectations and outcomes through their community projects and initiatives, but also in their personal and professional leadership development skills.

### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The program resulted in improved outcomes for participants in areas including:



- New connections with other Change Makers and community members
- New knowledge and skills for collaboration and community development
- Increased community connectedness
- Improved leadership confidence
- Increased awareness and commitment to address community issues

### New Knowledge and Skills:

**93%** of Change Makers surveyed reported that they were leaving the program with the knowledge and practical skills needed to lead effective community change.

When asked to share the most useful pieces of knowledge, skills, and/or ideas that they were taking away from the program, Change Makers expressed the value of learning how to communicate with groups in their community (e.g., community members, government officials) and how to engage with people in different ways. They also mentioned the importance of collaboration to solve problems, learn from one another, and share responsibilities.

Change Makers commonly said that their most useful takeaway from the program was learning about community development and dynamics, which they can now apply to their own communities with learning tools and concepts for community building.

### Stronger networks:

**64%** of participants met **other participants** who they believe they will stay in touch within the future.



### Increased community connectedness:

**73%** left the program feeling hopeful about the future of their rural community.

**91%** believing they can make a difference in their community.

**91%** feeling a sense of belonging in their community.

**72%** being very or somewhat likely to stay in their local community to work and live (up from 45% at the beginning of the program).

### Improved leadership confidence:

After completion of the program, **100%** of participants felt very or somewhat confident in their ability to be an effective leader while making a presentation at a local council meeting, facilitating a group meeting in the community, and while participating in an interview with the local radio station.

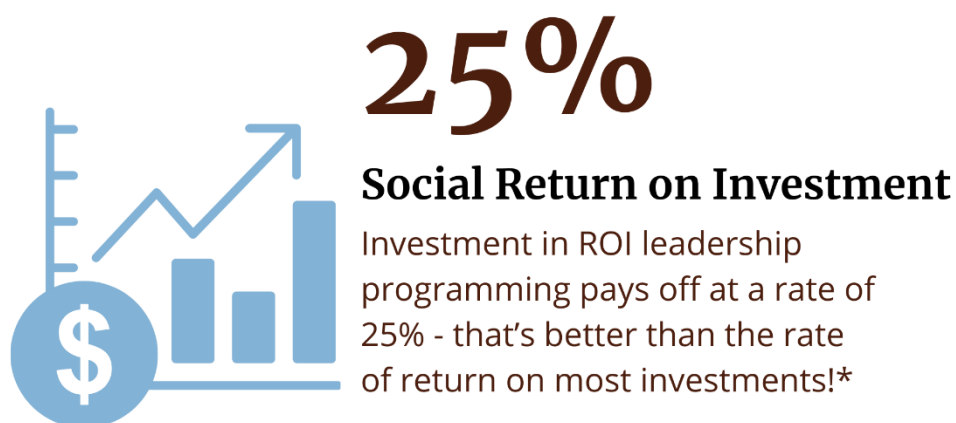
*“Results show that Rural Change Makers and the RCM program provide much needed leadership and social-economic benefit by serving rural communities interests and need, all of which strengthen the social fabric of rural Ontario.”*

Melanie Bidiuk, Rural Change Maker Program Coordinator

The future of rural life depends on the commitment, knowledge and leadership skills of the next generation of leaders. The Rural Ontario Institute supports youth and rural Ontario by delivering the Rural Change Maker Program.

### George Morris Centre Study & University of Guelph Evaluation

In 2013, the George Morris Centre completed the study: [Social Return on Investment](#). The study reaffirmed the tremendous value of Leadership Programming to rural Ontario society and the economy. Social return on investment is a method to track and capture the impact a program has on the lives of its participants. The social return on investment from ROI leadership programming is 25%. That means for every \$1 invested, the social return on investment is \$1.25.



\*According to the 2013 Social Return on Investment Study completed by the George Morris Centre.

## LOOKING AHEAD

As a result of engagement and evaluative activities, ROI remains confident that RCM is valuable to participants and to rural, northern, and Indigenous communities across Ontario.

Because of the overwhelming affirmation received many program elements are staying the same such as the Ignite session and community development curriculum, while some core aspects are changing. Going forward: face-to-face experiential learning opportunities are expanding to include regional community youth exchanges and Cultural Dialogue Walks – *Lighting the 8th Fire*. Curriculum is also advancing to encompass 14 foundational skills including cross-cultural understanding of Indigenous governance systems and other world views, as well as Bridges training, Co-active Leadership training, financial literacy and sustainable project management.

Community economic development opportunities are transforming to include:

- Self-guided, community-led project development
- Group-peer-partner community project opportunities
- Up to 3 Regional RuralPOPs – temporary regional hubs for youth engagement activities
- & community projects promoting economic, business and community development stimulus.
- Mentor-guided learning journeys tied to individual interests and community projects.

**Becoming CHANGE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

- Foundational resources for change thinking**  
Bridges Model
- High Impact Communication Skills**  
Authentic Relationships
- Cross cultural understanding**  
Indigenous Governance Systems
- Future visioning**  
How to see the change you want  
11 Essential Resources
- Co-active Leadership**  
How to lead change together
- Action Labs**  
Community Engagement Practices

**Becoming CHANGE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

- Fundraising Fundamentals**  
Resource Acquisition for Sustainable Projects
- Financial Literacy**  
Budget, Taxes, \$ Management
- Community Development**  
Needs Assessment Project Planning & Management
- Project Evaluation**  
Tracking & Measuring Success and Outcomes
- Leadership Development and Styles**  
Elastic, Coactive, Collaborative
- Civic Engagement**  
Civic Engagement Tools & Techniques

### SOFT SKILLS BUILDING

- 8 Learning Labs**  
Sharing knowledge and building foundational leadership skills.
- 14 Foundational Leadership Skills**  
Pairing self development and discovery with practical skills needed to lead effective change.
- 4 Reflective Evaluations**  
Checkpoints along the learning journey to assess competencies, readiness and program effectiveness.



*discover - experience - model - reflect*

### CORE SKILLS BUILDING

- 1 Cultural Dialogue Walk**  
*Lighting the 8th Fire* - inter-tribal dialogue offering respect, understanding, and perspective sharing among changemakers.
- Up to 3 Regional RuralPOPs**  
Regional engagement hub providing economic & community development stimulus.
- 2 Community Exchange**  
Igniting project planning and passion in preparation for community projects at an IGNITE EVENT. Discovering regional economic community development projects through INTER-REGIONAL VISITS.



\* Out of the Anishinabe's Seven Fires comes the idea of the eighth - Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations as a continuous path, informed by the past, but whose course can be changed by working together in the present with hope for future generations.

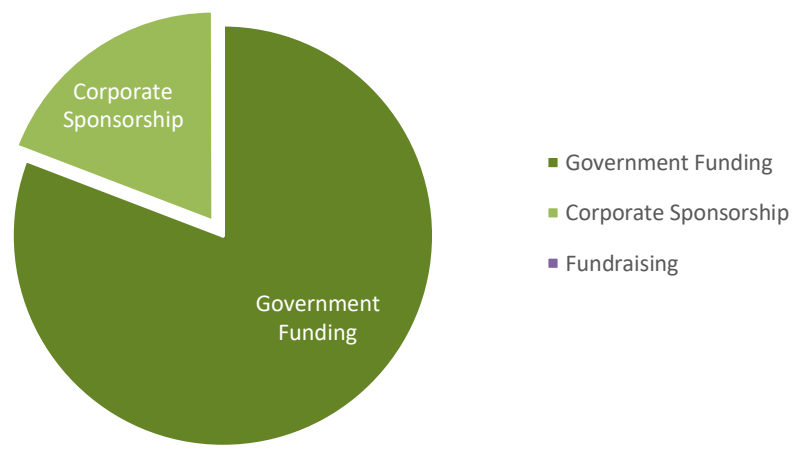
These exciting program elements reflect the input of participants and stakeholders, with some program aspects able to scale to reflect the financial realities of providing the program.



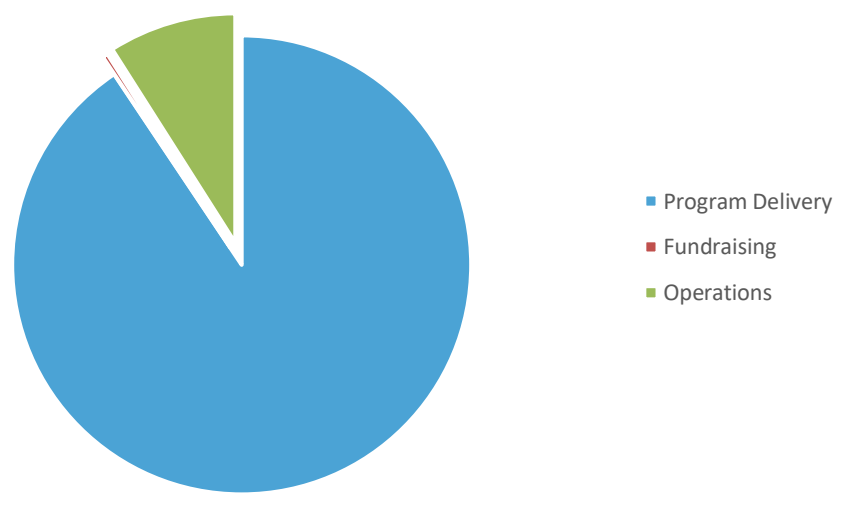
## HOW YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS USED

Sponsorship support goes directly toward funding leadership development through the Rural Change Maker Program. Throughout the history of ROI leadership programming, costs have increased and so has our commitment to deliver a program of exceptional quality. This requires a large investment from many stakeholders within the industry. Program delivery accounts for approximately 3/4 of the cost of RCM while 1/4 of the funding for the program is provided through the generosity of sponsors, funders and fundraising endeavours.

### Typical Rural Change Makers Funding Sources



### Rural Change Makers Expenditures





## RECOGNIZING COMMITMENT TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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Program sponsors play a significant leadership role in rural community economic development in Ontario and provide tremendous support to RCM. We continue to recognize this leadership and showcase sponsor support at every opportunity.

In each cohort, we acknowledge our sponsors in a number of formal and informal ways including:

- Sponsor spotlights are shone on RCM sponsors in select learning labs and training sessions.
- Sponsor logos are included in printed and online communications - ROI newsletters, selected media releases, on our website and in the Rural Ontario Institute Annual Report.
- Individualized social media posts are used to thank each sponsor.
- Sponsor brands are displayed in signage and printed materials at seminars.
- Sponsors receive special thanks (verbally, in printed materials and on signage) at key events:
  - RCM Welcome Session
  - Ignite Retreat
  - Partner sponsors will also be included in RuralPOP marketing and branding in the 2023 program
  - RCM Graduation Ceremony
  - Partner sponsors will also have the future opportunity to be highlighted at the Provincial Youth Summit.

# Hear From Our Alumni

*"This has been a confidence building experience for me as I was able to plan and implement a community initiative from start to finish."*

**RCM Alumnus**

*"I'm a lot more self-confident in myself after this program. It tied in with changes to aspects of my life, but the process of coming to understand what it was that this program was asking of me and challenging me to face gave me an arena in which to realize my strengths as a leader, and especially the power that comes with grass roots support."*

**RCM Alumnus**

*"Through Change Makers I learned a lot about community. There were lots of aspects I had ever heard of, so I came out of it with a better understanding of community and dynamics within."*

**RCM Alumnus**



## WHY SPONSOR RCM?

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**Align your organization with emerging leaders who are needed to move rural communities forward – in businesses, in associations, in organizations, in government, in communities and on farms.**



**RCM graduates go on to hold many different influential positions within industry and their communities. Many credit their RCM experience as a cornerstone that helped them get there. You make this possible.**



**Sponsor representatives have many opportunities to interact with each Cohort and keep a pulse on what is changing in rural communities.**



**Governance and rural issues are high priorities for the province. Together we have an opportunity to shape the future of our sectors and rural communities across Ontario.**



**Investment in ROI Leadership programming pays off at a rate of 25% - that's better than the rate of return on most investments!**



## RCM IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS



**Building tomorrow's leaders  
for today's rural challenges!**

PATRON



Ontario  
Trillium  
Foundation



Fondation  
Trillium  
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario.  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario.

GUARDIANS



BUILDERS



# RURAL CHANGE MAKERS

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