



Media Release – March 11th 2022

OTF Helps Ashoka Create Economic Opportunities Through Community Benefit Purchasing

Central Ontario - In 2020, Ashoka Canada received a \$241,500 Grow grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to support the growth of social enterprise and diverse suppliers, and provide knowledge and tools for purchasers in social procurement. This project, conducted in partnership with Georgian College, was completed in March 2022 and provides a tool to build and distribute wealth in an equitable way through community benefit purchasing.

"As part of Changemaker Education, Ashoka Canada has taken the lead in developing and supporting individuals to drive change relating to societal problems," said Jill Dunlop, Minister of Colleges and Universities and MPP Simcoe North. "We are so fortunate to have Georgian College, a designated Ashoka Campus, which I was so proud to be a part of as faculty, in our region fostering a campus-wide culture of social innovation. This OTF Grow Grant has helped to build on an already proven model, to develop and create new social enterprise opportunities through their outreach."

Social procurement – also known as community benefit purchasing – involves leveraging a social value from existing procurement. It adds a social value consideration to the evaluation of price, quality, and environment of the goods and services purchased by individuals or organizations. Social procurement is relevant to many of today's most pressing social issues, and it can be a catalyst to break down decades of institutional and systemic barriers. In an economy where so many people and organizations have been excluded or displaced, this way of buying and selling provides space for historically silenced voices to be heard, to be seen and to be invested in.

Georgian College is the first and only college in Canada designated as a changemaker college by Ashoka for its role as a leader in social innovation and changemaking in higher education. Key project activities were designed and delivered by consultant Elly Green, alongside team members Ashleigh Addison and Jenna Stevenato. The team provided resources and training opportunities for social enterprises, diverse suppliers and purchasers in social procurement, including information gathering and data collection, developing a supplier directory, hosting virtual sessions and series with expert guests, providing coaching and mentorship for highly engaged individuals and organizations, and creating an audio documentary. Contributing experts included Encompass Co-op, Buy Social Canada and AnchorTO.

Over 24 months, 556 people engaged in project activities and 84 meetings/events were held. 65 social enterprise or diverse suppliers engaged, four of which received expert coaching to prepare their organization for social procurement opportunities. 17 purchasers engaged and within a facilitated Community of Practice, institutional policy and procedures were explored and a college-wide Purchasing Department was supported through the implementation of two pilots.

"We are pleased to have worked in collaboration with Georgian College, an [Ashoka Changemaker Campus](#), to build capacity in social procurement across Central Ontario, advancing systems change in our county," said Barb Steele, Executive Director of Ashoka Canada.

Ashoka is an international organization that "builds and cultivates a community of change leaders who see that the world now requires everyone to be a changemaker. Together, we collaborate to transform institutions and cultures worldwide so they support changemaking for the good of society". Ashoka's network brings together Ashoka Fellows, individuals who are creating the conditions for a better world, along with Ashoka Campuses, university and college campuses. To learn more about the Community Benefit Purchasing Project, [read the Resource Guide](#), [watch the project trailer](#), or listen to the audio documentary on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#) or [SoundCloud](#).

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada's leading granting foundations. Last year, nearly \$112M was invested into 1,384 community projects and partnerships to build healthy and vibrant communities and strengthen the impact of Ontario's non-profit sector. In 2020/21, OTF supported Ontario's economic recovery by helping non-profit organizations rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Visit otf.ca to learn more.

Contact for Media Inquiries: Barb Steele – Executive Director, Ashoka Canada | bstele@ashoka.org