



Exponential Returns from Investing in Leaders

A Case Study of Roy Group's Work with Power to Give

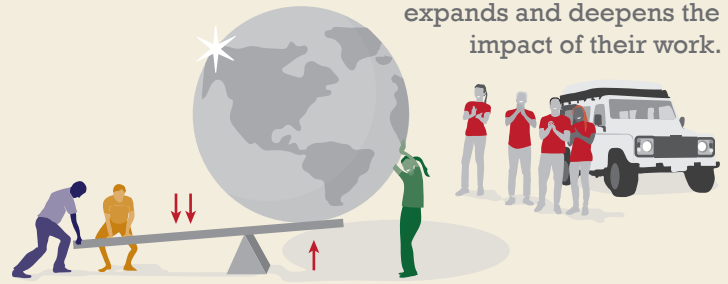




Exponential Returns from Investing in Leaders: A Case Study of Roy Group's Work with Power to Give

By bringing social impact leaders together and developing their leadership skills, Roy Group adds bench strength to the social impact sector. Investing in these leaders expands and deepens the impact of their work.

Leaders in the social impact sector are fearless, passionate individuals who do the world's most important work. With fewer resources than their peers in the private sector, charities must work harder with the dollars they have. Investments in training are often viewed as a luxury.



Roy Group and Power to Give recognize that it's necessary to fund more than just programs to help social impact organizations maximize their impact. Truly scaling charities' impact requires investing in their capacity to lead.



Exploring opportunity in conflict, EDI and complexity

Learning to coach, listen and lead more effectively



Building self-awareness and psychological safety

The Roy Group team trains and coaches social impact leaders in skills that are proven to strengthen culture and performance.

When Power to Give invests in an organization's impact we're looking for audacious ideas that will bring about serious change. But ideas don't do the work. The work is left to talented humans. The people leading these ideas are the ones who make incredible stories of change happen. We seek out great leaders and throw our support behind developing them further, through professional development opportunities and our annual Social Impact Summit. If they want to then continue that skill development with their teams, we'll support that too. Although it costs us money, we consider this to be a part of 'supporting beyond the dollar'.

Tim Cormode, CEO, Power to Give

Snapshot: A Critical Investment

As social and environmental crises mount, foundations are increasingly hungry to see significant progress over the next ten years. They are learning that it takes more than matching money to programs to expedite the work that needs to be done. Power to Give is a foundation with a conviction that fueling urgent change requires a new tack. Central to the foundation's success is the deliberate choice to fund the development of great leaders in the social impact sector. Because the leaders doing the world's most important work deserve to be at their best.

And that means investing in their capacity to lead.

Over its five-plus years in partnership with Roy Group, Power to Give has witnessed transformative growth in its grantees' ability to lead rapid change in complex arenas. This case study tells the story of our partnership.

You need an ecosystem that's safe for innovation, and that means there needs to be a shift in perspective from "don't fail" to "just try something". During COVID, I really leaned into David Snowden's Cynefin framework for understanding complexity, which I learned through Roy Group. In complex times, there are no experts and there are no procedures. It is time for experimentation and evaluation—What works and what doesn't? Often, people are not empowered to think for themselves or want to be told what to do because they are afraid of "failing". But procedures don't work in complexity. We don't know what's going to happen, we have no experts, and all we can do is try things and assess what works. What I have noticed is that when I frame things this way, people relax and expand into "what's possible?"

*Margo Long, Executive Director,
Youth Empowerment and Support Services, Edmonton*



training. So leaders don't grow stronger and steadier over time. In fact, the opposite frequently happens, and they burn right out.

This significant imbalance in the weight charities bear in our society is why Power to Give picks up the tab for the leadership development — so that our country's finest organizations are equipped to make their finest contributions.

I remember the first retreat, and the amount of guilt these leaders had. Taking time away from their desks, eating good food, going on walks with colleagues. The sector is tethered by all these constraints of: don't spend money on your people, CRA requirements, charity requirements, be lean and mean. Most of these groups would not have made the investment if it had to come out of their own bottom line, not because they don't see the value in it, but just because they're so mission-focused, and the system itself is not geared to support that kind of growth and development. These can be executive directors of multi-million-dollar operations, yet they do not feel they have the permission space to develop and grow. It's a shame that we don't have that freedom to grow and develop in the social sector. And I would say a majority of the groups that are part of this network now see the immense benefit that's showing up in multiple different ways in their business practice.

Jason Cole, Chief Strategy Officer, Power to Be, Victoria

The Engagement: How Roy Group Addresses the Challenge

While Power to Give focuses on changing the funding landscape, Roy Group works at the level of organizational capacity, offering immediately useful tools and powerful learning experiences to help NGOs do their best work.

Our first design challenge is to break down the walls of competition and build bridges of collaboration. This is new thinking for the social sector. Historically, organizations have had to fight for scarce funding. This has rooted a mindset of competition, rather than collaboration.

Our second challenge is to validate, value and invest in the wellbeing of these incredible humans. The world expects people in the social sector to work like Clydesdales, but for cheaper salaries than their peers in government and business. The deeply emotional nature of work in the social sector just intensifies the imbalance.

Adding to this already full load is the fact that NGOs themselves usually can't afford to invest in leadership

Roy Group collaborates with Power to Give on three levels:

Strategy. Strategy is all about good design work. We support Power to Give in shaping its goals and reaching its outcomes for the year ahead. Our involvement at the strategic level ensures the leadership development opportunities we craft for grantees align with the overall direction of the foundation's work.

Social Impact Summit. Here, Roy Group designs and delivers an annual summit of all 30+ grantees, providing experiential leadership development opportunities, building strong connections between grantees, and creating space for pause and reflection — a gift that leaders in the social sector rarely get to enjoy.

In-house work. We partner with individual grantee organizations to deepen their entire team's leadership capacity. In-house work expands the leadership development we do with executive directors, and ripples it out across the whole team.

Starting with Strategy

It starts with strategy, which informs Roy Group's design considerations. Every year, Roy Group facilitates a session for Power to Give to make sense of where they've arrived within their strategy, what has been accomplished, and what has emerged over the course of the year. We also focus on what the year ahead could offer.

Every year, Roy Group dives deep with us on our goals and strategy for the year ahead, then designs unique experiences that bring our community of stakeholders together for a quantum leap in their skills, commitment and connection. Every body of work is designed to leverage the intelligence and experience of the people in the room. Roy Group shares skills and models that help the group dig into the very real challenges they're all tackling. That might be individual challenges for each organization, or it might be something that the whole social impact sector is facing. Either way, people leave with multiple takeaways: they've learned from each other; they've acquired new skills and tools; and they've moved the ball forward on an issue that's important to their work. Aside from the annual grant, this investment in leadership development and working together on complex issues is the most impactful thing we do as a foundation.

Tim Cormode, CEO, Power to Give

The Social Impact Summit

With that strategy in mind, Roy Group designs and delivers the multi-day experience for each annual Power to Give Social Impact Summit. These experiences offer executive learning, networking,



emotional rejuvenation, and an annual touchpoint with Power to Give. Roy Group believes exceptional places create exceptional experiences. Power to Give has hosted this cohort at retreats in beautiful locales across the country such as Tofino's Wickaninnish Inn, Fogo Island Inn, and Arowhon in Algonquin Park.

Here, together with their peers, organizational leaders can raise their individual game and also learn new tools to help their team work better together — and ultimately, to deliver more effectively on their mission.

The sessions are incredibly helpful to get you out of your comfort zone and evaluate problems from different perspectives. With such a varied group of people, you need a facilitator that's holding the frame, holding the room. And what Roy Group is really good at is knowing when to leave space and when to activate. They know the right tool to use at the right time in the right place with the right people to broaden connection and awareness of the whole.

Diane Hodgins, CFO, Shorefast Foundation, Newfoundland & Labrador

The Social Impact Summits spur a sense of collegiality and invite inspiring conversations, both facilitated and organic, as grantees enjoy time together away from their desks. Roy Group curates impactful learning sessions that challenge and stretch thinking. Working together to solve problems brings these typically siloed orgs together, and serves as a multiplier of impact. What results is a community that is committed to each other's success — an “in group” that is united in its pledge to effect wide-scale change.

Our In-House Work

Some charities take it a step further, earmarking budget every year to work individually with Roy Group outside of the Social Impact Summits. Supported by Power to Give, these groups invest in leadership development for their own teams because they have an appreciation for how the personal and professional growth inherent in the teachings will benefit their people.

In the past, I spent a lot of time mediating hurt feelings and personality conflicts. We were micromanaging conflict at the executive level because staff did not have the training and tools for leadership. Now, with Roy Group training, staff at every level are making leadership choices in their own departments and with their peers. They are relating to each other honestly and specifically in ways that are direct and supportive and they are coaching each other through problems. That's a huge difference from somebody coming in and saying: "So-and-so is doing this and I don't like it!" and expecting me or a director to fix it.

Margo Long, Executive Director, Youth Empowerment and Support Services, Edmonton

The Results: Here's What Happens When a Foundation Takes its Grantees' Leadership Development Seriously

When private and community foundations make the choice to invest in their grantee organizations by providing opportunities to develop leadership at all levels, the return is multiplicative.



Stronger leadership creates stronger teams. They're better able to overcome conflict, both internal and external. Team members are better able to engage in deeper conversations and collaborations, both internal and external. They're better equipped for innovating together because they're more open to feedback and have a system in place for how they learn from one another.

As a result of our Roy Group work, we've made some pretty incredible accomplishments. The prioritization for us has been leadership and collaboration at every level, because we recognize that the only way we can truly serve youth and prevent youth homelessness is by collaborating...with everyone. We did not start out as good collaborators, and the competitive funding landscape creates unnecessary competition, but as we learned the Roy Group tools for collaboration — feedback, inquiry, coaching, difficult conversations — we were able to build more collaborative internal and external teams. We are very proud of co-founding the Edmonton Coordinated Youth Response in 2020, which brought more than 30 agencies together on an online platform to share information, connect youth to basic needs, isolation and screening, as well as enable virtual referral appointments with other agencies. We are also now working on a strategic and collaborative city model for the prevention of youth homelessness with our agency partners. We couldn't have done this work without the foundation and tools from Roy Group.

*Margo Long, Executive Director,
Youth Empowerment and Support Services, Edmonton*

Roy Group tools are designed to stick, especially when they're used regularly. And the mental models provide leaders with useful frameworks to organize their thinking and therefore how they approach issues. In our work with Power to Give grantees, we are able to scaffold thinking in ways that focus attention on the salient aspects of a given issue, saving time and energy for busy NGO leaders.

Roy Group's work with Power to Give grantees shows them how to ask the right questions, how to listen and learn from one another, and how to take and use feedback to improve processes and outcomes.

I've worked with our new Director of Programs for more than ten years now, with me being in that role until I moved to Chief Strategy Officer. About eight months through that transition, our meetings changed dramatically. She has really arrived in that role and

is owning it. If I didn't have that strong background in coaching fortified by Roy Group, it could be really messy. It leaves me feeling empowered...with less "power".

Jason Cole, Chief Strategy Officer, Power to Be, Victoria

Our work helps equip these organizations to meet complexity head on, using the tools of reflection and inquiry to guide right action and the taking of measured risks. People who onboard the tools and practice them develop a depth of self-awareness that enables them to embrace paradox more than ever before, and to make meaningful forward progress on complex issues.

These organizations' commitment to consistent, co-creative leadership development is helping to build

trusting, feedback-rich environments in the social sector.

Which in turn...helps them do the world's most important work.

We're a small team, and Roy Group has been able to come in and fill the gap to achieve the outcome we wanted. We're not a transactional foundation. It's about building strategic relationships over time, and providing resources and relationships that will help these organizations scale. Not just with the dollar, but we also want to work with them to help them become better at what they do, and develop them as leaders. Finding an organization to partner with that can do all of that with us is awesome.

Tim Cormode, CEO, Power to Give

