



# REIMAGINING PLACE IN A POST-COVID WORLD

The role of social enterprise for  
strengthening communities

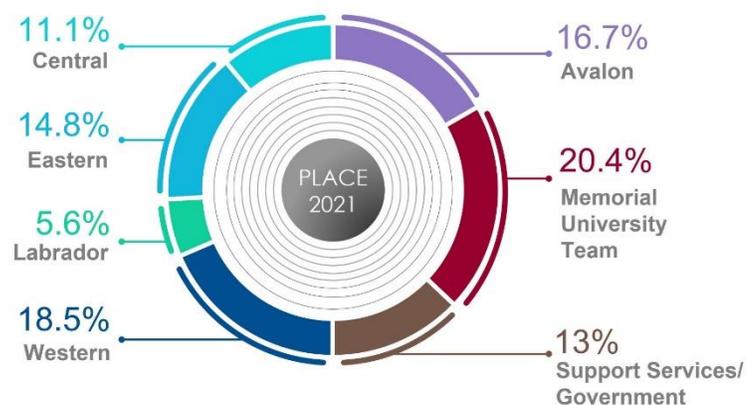
Thank you all for taking the time to continue an important conversation that started on Fogo Island in November 2018 when community leaders and partners gathered to learn from, and support, each other in our collective goal to use the power of social enterprise to strengthen our communities. Our love of place is what drives our work and we believe that social enterprise is a fundamental tool to serve our communities. I hope we will be able to see each other in person in Norris Point in 2022 to further this conversation, while continuing to build an even stronger network of community leaders. Together we are more resilient!

*Natalie Slawinski, on behalf of the PLACE Check-In organizing team:  
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## Our Resilient Community Leaders

On November 19, 2021, more than 30 community leaders, several governmental representatives, and Memorial University researchers across Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) gathered virtually at the 2021 PLACE Check-In to discuss the role of social enterprise for strengthening communities in a post-pandemic world. The annual event is part of [Memorial University's PLACE research project](#) led by Dr. Natalie Slawinski and funded by the Ocean Frontier Institute (OFI) to study the role of social enterprises in revitalizing coastal and rural communities in NL. After almost two years of navigating the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, community leaders reflected that the pandemic had driven them to explore new opportunities and innovative strategies.

Attendance by region



Community leaders emphasized that emerging challenges can be turned into opportunities for new and existing social enterprises that aim to strengthen communities by embracing entrepreneurial approaches. Social enterprises proactively seek various funding sources and find innovative ways to generate revenue to support their communities. [Previous research](#) has shown that five key activities help social enterprises strengthen communities: Promoting community leaders; Linking divergent perspectives; Assessing and leveraging local capacities; Conveying compelling stories; and Engaging in both/and thinking.

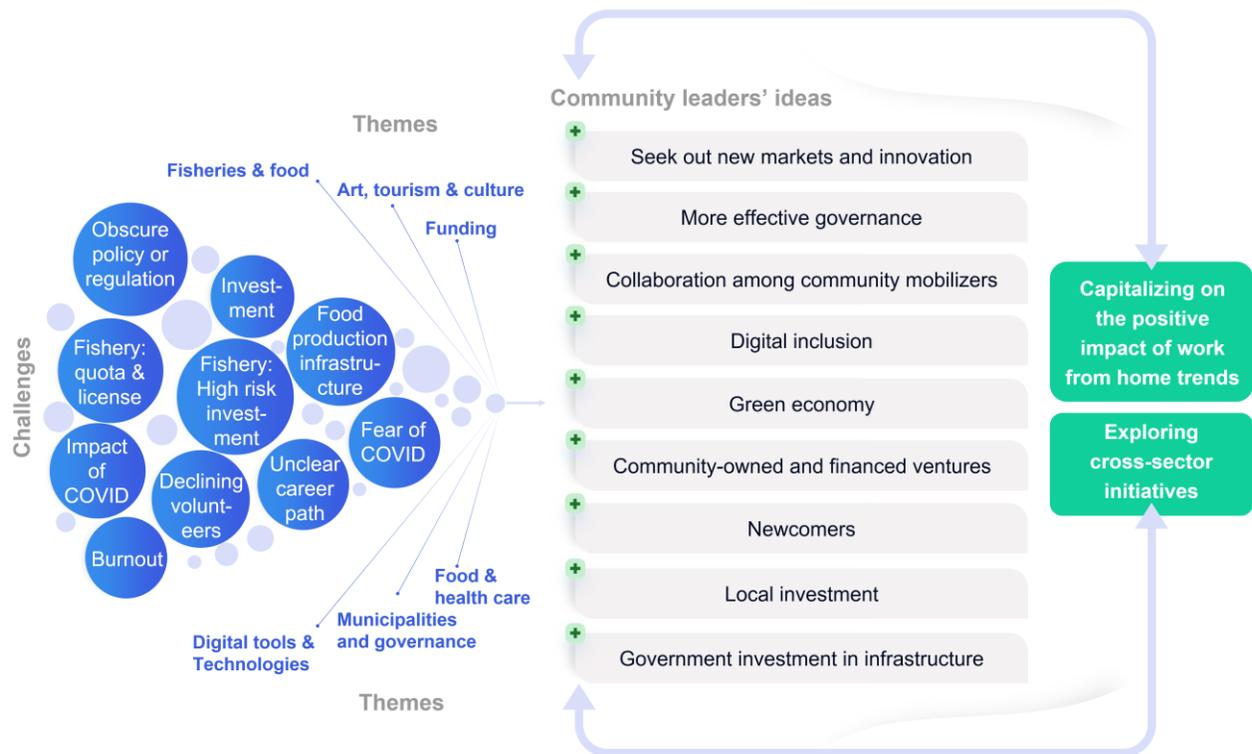


*Social enterprises proactively seek various funding sources and find innovative ways to generate revenue to support their communities*

The pandemic has amplified the pre-existing challenges that rural and coastal communities across Newfoundland and Labrador are facing, such as fewer healthcare services, limited access to digital infrastructure, out-migration, and aging populations. Despite these limitations, community leaders found ways to pivot and run most of their programming by embracing new opportunities supported by a variety of newly available government funding programs. Community leaders appreciated that the government had shown itself to be a capable partner during the pandemic with a more efficient funding application process. They hope that the government can maintain such efficiency going forward.



## Moving from challenges to opportunities



### Capitalizing on the positive impact of work from home trends

When Covid-19 restrictions were put in place last year, community leaders were forced to modify their programming and join an increasingly virtual world of work. This situation revealed two main opportunities:

1. Leveraging technology for greater reach  
 With in-person activities curtailed, community leaders had to quickly shift their activities, either to adopt fully online or hybrid formats. The experience helped social entrepreneurs to realize that technology could allow for greater local and global participation and increase reach and inclusivity.

2. Creating new programs, products, and services for newcomers

With the possibility of working from home, the province is witnessing a wave of in-migration of returning and new residents. Community leaders saw this wave as a window of opportunity for their social enterprises to engage with these new residents. Social enterprises can create programs, products, and services that support newcomers' needs and motivate them to participate in community life.

### Exploring cross-sector initiatives

The limitations and resource constraints imposed by the pandemic have taught community leaders to consolidate their resources and work regionally and across sectors. Participants identified the following opportunities that emerged from collaborating with others:

1. Pooling resources

In some cases, it is easier to access more funding sources and/or to organize more effectively when community leaders work collectively with other groups and organizations. For example, social enterprises can partner with municipal governments, local businesses, and community groups to organize initiatives such as festivals, community services, or new business ventures. [The Bonne Bay Cottage Hospital Heritage Corporation](#) is an example of how cross-sector collaboration can strengthen and serve the communities in the region, as they have partnered with various groups and organizations to provide space for a public library, hostel, museum, public kitchen, and radio station. Shorefast is another example of how social enterprises can collaborate with government and other sectors to create new economic opportunities.

2. Tapping into the green economy

Community leaders can work across sectors to help the province strengthen its green economy. For example, PLACE Check-In participants agreed that collaborations across food and health sectors are urgently needed to shorten the food supply chain, which would lower the carbon footprint of our food. During the pandemic, the NL government reported that food prices had increased significantly with an average of four percent inflation. Community leaders suggested that proactive government policy-making could help the province create greater food security, including by supporting local agricultural social

enterprises, and then enabling them to supply hospitals, retirement homes, and other institutions.

3. Applying for pilot projects

Creating cross-sectoral pilot projects can result in innovative products and services that encourage returning and new residents to stay in the province and regenerate regional economies. Even if pilot projects falter, communities can gain valuable lessons that they can use to develop new projects.

4. Creating community-owned businesses

Working across sectors provides opportunities for communities to further develop existing local businesses. Many businesses in coastal and rural communities are family owned and struggling with succession planning. To work through this challenge, business owners and municipal governments can work together on succession planning by transforming existing family businesses into community-owned businesses. For example, transferring fishing licenses to community-based organizations could increase the sustainability of the province's fishing industry. Currently, succession is a known issue among fish harvesters. Although many fish harvesters will retire in the next few years, not many young people are willing to take over the business because of large up-front costs.

## EVENT SNAPSHOT



## See you at the 2022 PLACE Dialogues!

In 2022, social enterprises and community leaders can continue to build on the energy and momentum that they have gained over the past year and leverage new opportunities. Joan Cranston closed the 2021 PLACE Check-In with an invitation the 2022 PLACE Dialogues in Norris Point and the following thought: “We are at a tipping point. So that we can get out of the pandemic and the post-pandemic, we can create a social epidemic for change, linking all the sectors: business, social enterprise research, food, health, municipalities, population growth. We can tell a new story!”



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