

**October 2016**

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## **Green Corner: The First Year of the Greener Co-op MicroGrant Program**

The idea came from the Agency's Sustainability Committee, a staff group from our four offices across the country. Although most Agency meetings take place through the magic of video conferencing, senior staff come and go, our relationship managers visit their clients and our board meets face to face. Years ago, the Agency started to budget for carbon offsets to make up for the environmental harm this travel causes.

Our Sustainability Committee searched for ways to invest these funds. Instead of buying carbon-emission credits from the world market, it came up with the idea of a micro-grant program that would help our clients begin to reduce their harmful effects on the environment. Once the Agency's Board had given its support, a program was developed that would impose the minimum of paperwork on applicants. Then CHF Canada agreed to take the program under its wing and add its own contributions to the fund.

By mid-July, all the funds had been spoken for on a first-come-first-served basis. Nineteen applications had been approved for projects that included community gardens, rain barrels, LED lighting, e-bike charging stations, a garbage/recycling room study, fruit trees, solar lights, dual-flush toilets and a slow-drip irrigation system.

Julie LaPalme, CHF Canada's program administrator, told our Sustainability Committee, "This program has motivated co-ops to expand their green minds.... Thanks to your dedication and creativity, this idea became a reality." Julie also shared a wonderful e-mail from a B.C. client about their micro-grant, which reads in part...

All of you at the Agency giving your carbon credits back to the Co-operative Housing Movement, in the form of micro-grants for a greener world, was a spectacular act, and for us to get a grant makes us so proud and happy.

This will make an enormous difference, not just to our bottom line, but to our level of consumption of the water itself. If everyone does their share and goes a little beyond, it will help everyone.

The Agency is grateful to CHF Canada for adding its funds to the project and making the program available to all of its members. We encourage our clients to start planning for a grant application in 2017. Watch for information from CHF Canada and be ready to spring into action when it comes. And please don't forget to send us pictures to share with our board. We'd like our directors to know that when they approved the micro-grant initiative, they made a good decision.

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## Hitting a HomeRun

The Agency is offering co-op clients a free service that many haven't tested out as yet. A self-serve program, [HomeRun](#) is what we call our benchmarking and best practices service. We've created a [tutorial video](#) that will help you make the most of HomeRun and convince you to step up to the plate now and then.

Once you've logged on with your Agency username and password, your co-op's [Dashboard](#) gives you a snapshot of your scores on various measures. House icons will show you at a glance whether your co-op hit a single last year (one house) or made it all the way home (four houses).

The [Benchmarking](#) section gives you live information that changes from month to month as co-ops feed in new data through their AIR filings. Think of it as your Co-op Data Report on (legal) steroids, with you in control of the peers you're compared with. Pitch the game your way, and see what comes up on the scoreboard.

The [Good Practices](#) section has stories from co-ops themselves about what they did right or how they solved a problem. If your co op has a story to tell about your good operation or your struggle back from the brink, we'd like to hear it. Please let your relationship manager know you're willing to share.

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## Heads Up on Upcoming Rent-Supplement Program Transfer (Ontario and PEI)

The Agency is hard at work preparing to take on responsibility for running CMHC's co-op rent-supplement programs in Ontario and PEI, at a date not yet decided on. (The province manages rent supplements in B.C. and Alberta.) One of our first steps will be to have our clients sign rent-supplement agreements where these have either lapsed or, until now, didn't exist.

As the planning solidifies, you'll hear more. This is just early notice from the Agency, because we don't like to be taken by surprise, and we don't think you'd like it either.

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# A New Approach to Management Services

The Agency has developed a new model management services agreement for Alberta, Ontario and PEI. (B.C. co-ops have so much experience with such agreements that we didn't think they needed another one.)

We also went out into the market to find property-management companies that want to work with housing co-ops, are affordable and will use our agreement. After meeting certain qualifications and being interviewed, selected companies were placed on a Vendor of Record (VOR) List. Using the VOR list means co-ops can skip the tender call and go straight to interviews with promising companies.

Our agreement has three special features. First, because management fees are a percentage of the revenue the manager collects, the company is highly motivated to fill vacant units and collect arrears. Second, the agreement states just what the manager has to do and by when. Finally, the agreement includes templates for reports to the board. These templates make supervision easier and guarantee that the board gets the information it needs. Our [Q&A](#) has more information.

To help a co-op board evaluate the manager's work annually or near the end of the contract term, the Agency has developed an evaluation tool. The use of this tool makes for a fairer evaluation process and better communication between board and manager.

The management agreement, the VOR List and the evaluation tool are all available on our password-protected [client website](#) under Resources. You can also ask your relationship manager for a copy. Treat yourself to a read and see what you think.

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## Events Not to Be Missed

All of Us

[CHRA Webinars:](#)

- The Missing Piece: How Housing Policy Benefits from a Socio-Economic Perspective: 17 November
- Driving New Housing Supply Across a Range of Affordability Options: 13 December

B.C.

[CHF BC Legal Duties of Directors Workshop:](#) November 1

[CHF BC Fall Island Education Day:](#) November 5

[CHF BC Yikes I'm the Treasurer! Webinar:](#) November 17

[CHF BC Annual Meeting:](#) November 20

[CHF BC Co-op Housing Basics:](#) December 6

Alberta

[SACHA Fall Education Event: 19:](#) November

NACHA Fall Education Event: 26: November

Ontario

[COCHF Fall Education Conference](#): Cambridge: 29 October

[CHF Canada Fall Education Event](#): London: 29 October

[ONPHA Conference and Trade Show](#): 4-6 November

Agency Meeting with Independent Staff (Oakham House, Toronto): 11 November

[CHASEO Fall Education Day](#): 19 November

[PH CHF Co-op Learning Day](#): 19 November

[CHFT Fall Education Event](#) ([registration](#)): November 19