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**STAKEHOLDER
INTERVIEW
PROJECT**

**Continuous
Improvement
Fund**

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SUBMITTED BY:

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SUBMITTED TO:

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1. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the interview project was to talk to key Continuous Improvement Fund (CIF) stakeholders and clients to provide potential insights to the development of CIF activities and strategies for the 2nd and 3rd year of operation.

2. RATIONAL

The CIF has been operating for one year, with an initial focus on setting up operations and systems to support the fund and its administration and governance. Early in the 2nd year is an excellent time to learn what the current perceptions and future expectations of the CIF might be. Engaging with municipalities, as the principal direct recipient of CIF funds, and with other clients and stakeholders will allow CIF to address any emerging or latent concerns and to address, and or to challenge/shape expectations for the future.

3. DESCRIPTION OF WORK

This project initiates a process of inquiry with municipalities and other stakeholders that can best be described as checking perceptions as to whether the CIF is “doing the right things, right.” The scope of work involved:

1. Selection of interview candidates

Ms. Muise worked with CIF personnel to produce a list of potential interview candidates reflecting a cross section of Ontario municipalities (size, geographic location and those who have and have not been involved with the CIF to date) and other clients and stakeholders. Although a diverse cross section of interviewees was selected, no attempt was made to achieve statistical representation. The list of interviews is provided in the Appendix.

2. Development of interview questions/prompts

A draft and revised interview format was prepared for consideration by the client. An unscripted, but structured interview process was developed, with specific prompts identified, but not necessarily formulated into scripted questions. Two separate interviews were developed; one for municipalities and one for other clients and stakeholders. Copies of the interview questions are provided in the Appendix.

3. Conduct interviews

A total of 24 interviews were completed, 15 with municipal representatives and 9 with other stakeholders. Interviewees were told that their comments were being recorded, but would remain un-attributed in the report. Tabulated interview comments for both audiences are provided in the Section 3 of this report. One interviewee requested that their specific comments be removed from the detailed tabulation (Section 3).

4. Prepare summary report

This report provides the following sections and documentation:

- Section 1: A high level summary of the key findings in tabular format.
 - Section 2: A key point summary of each question for each audience
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- Section 3: The detailed tabulated responses for each audience
 - Appendices: Interview contacts, interview form
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Key Finding	Municipal Audience	Other Stakeholder Audience
100% awareness of the fund		
Reasonably good awareness of goals and objectives of the fund	Close to 100%. If lower awareness, due to being overwhelmed by other priorities	100%
Reasonable application process but definite opportunity/need to improve. Current proactive outreach approach highly regarded but do more of this (provision of personnel/resources/hands-one support, particularly for smaller municipalities).	<p>Time biggest barrier, followed by lack of resources (particularly for smaller municipalities). Time required to complete application, clarity and transparency all cited as issues. Also time required relative to size of project (not proportionate) is an issue.</p> <p>Some strongly felt opinions about eligibility (more open-ended, accommodate regional differences, municipalities are entitled to this money and shouldn't have to apply for it)</p>	NR
Specific improvements can be made to the application process, to the clarity of the criteria and related to communication about the fund. Some discussion/management needed regarding potential for more open eligibility/access to funds.	<p>Be proactive – complete the application for the municipality (even help them to identify the project), especially for smaller and northern municipalities</p> <p>Promotion – celebrate success</p> <p>Communication/application – streamline the process, make it clearer, make the criteria more explicit/transparent (as they stand today and in the future).</p> <p>Access to funds/criteria – be more generous and flexible, 50% funding is an issue for some, (small rural in particular)</p>	Communicate, improve accessibility, be proactive, have measureable targets and goals
Some tension regarding desired goals and objectives specifically related to the % weighting of efficiency and effectiveness and equitability and return on investment	<p>General support (9 of 15) for more even (50/50) split between efficiency and effectiveness. 6 respondents in support of current 70/30</p> <p>Divided response regarding equitability versus ROI: 1/3 want a balance, 1/3 want equitability and 1/3 want</p>	<p>Majority support 70/30 efficiency/effectiveness (but review annually) and minority support higher ratio for effectiveness.</p> <p>Majority support ROI versus equitability</p>

	<p>ROI as priority</p> <p>Sub group exists that feels very strongly about equitability –sense of entitlement is very strong, that it is their money</p>	
<p>Moderately positive perceptions of the fund (so some opportunity for improvement) but some strongly felt minority opinions that may need management.</p>	<p>Overall perception is 3.75/5 and most view it as better than the E and E fund. Minority opinion that there is too much money and that municipalities need the money to resolve revenue shortfalls and that municipalities are entitled to the money.</p> <p>Some minor issues regarding lack of transparency, perhaps a few respondents not 100% comfort level - need to have a clear and consistent explanation of where the money is going and why (example, why the focus on spending in SW Ontario).</p>	<p>Overall perception is 4/5. Some perception that municipalities are the dominant audience and that other stakeholders aren't being considered</p>
<p>Strong support for increased communication (but avoid overload)</p>	<p>Majority support for an electronic newsletter (but caution about information overload). Communication should be high impact – just the facts</p>	<p>Reasonably strong support for increased communication but be aware of overload and also use existing networks (SO, AMO, etc)</p>
<p>Divided support for CIF role to develop markets for problematic materials – an advisory role might be suitable</p>	<p>Support for CIF role in an advisory capacity but little support for additional involvement. Some don't see involvement in markets as a CIF role.</p>	<p>Divided response, some positive, some negative but general recommendation that CIF could play a role as partner. Some clearly do not see a CIF role as appropriate in market creation</p>
<p>Reasonably strong support for MRF strategy</p>	<p>Majority support. However some negatives and sensitivities about regionalization</p>	<p>Strong support. Some recognition of the resulting challenges associated with implications/local dynamics</p>
<p>Other – unprompted discussions about BBPP review and implications to current spending and to future role of CIF</p>	<p>BBPP review – minority concern that CIF funds are being used in anticipation of 100% EPR</p>	<p>BBPP review and 100% EPR – some see/discussed possible CIF role in preventing transition freeze</p> <p>Stewards and industry is an audience too – don't just focus on municipalities</p> <p>Need more CIF lead projects</p> <p>Link with green investment</p>

Set up: I am calling on behalf of the Continuous Improvement Fund, and I am calling to ask you a few questions about the fund and its activities over the last year. CIF staff is in the process of making changes to the application form and direction of the fund based on comments received to date and would like your input before proceeding further/finalizing their plans. **Disclaimer:** Your comments will be shared with the CIF but unattributed.

Part A: Have applied and been accepted, have applied but pending, have applied but declined

If not yet applied – go to Part B

1. Application process. How does the CIF application process compare (in terms of clarity of process, ease of application, etc) to other funds your municipality may have applied to (e.g. FCM Green Municipal Fund)?

- Same, very different (why)
- The experience was satisfactory, not satisfactory (why). Can you rank the experience out of 5 (1 = bad, 3 = average, 5 = excellent)?
- Specific probes:
 - Information requirements
 - Clarity of requirements, process
 - Time from start to finish (or subparts)
 - Interaction with CIF

2. Based on your experience, is there anything CIF can /should do differently to improve the application process? First open ended and then probe:

Probes:

- i. Clarity of the criteria/considerations for a successful application. For example, unlike a program based on strict eligibility criteria (for example, when qualifying for CPP, you must be X years old, have 20 years work record in Canada, etc), there is an assessment of how the application measures against the funding priorities and also an estimate of the business case (for example the return on investment) value of the project. In light of this, what recommendations do you have?
- ii. Suitability of the criteria/considerations for eligibility (for example, 70% focus on efficiency, 30 % focus on effectiveness in areas of best practice, innovation, emerging technology and communication).

IF ACCEPTED:

3. Regarding the post-accepted stage (contract, reporting, wait time etc), how does the CIF compare to other funds your municipality may have applied to? Overall, can you rank the post acceptance stage (contract process, reporting requirements, wait time) from 1 to 5 (1 = bad, 3 = average and 5 = excellent)? Specific probes:

- Contract process
- Reporting and go forward requirements
- Wait time etc
- Amount of funding (exclude this from the 1-5 ranking)

IF DECLINED:

4. How would you evaluate how CIF handled the process of your application being declined? Specific probes:

- Clear reason
- Clear criteria
- Prompt notification
- Fairness

Can you rank (from 1-5) how CIF handled your application being declined?

PART B: HAVE NOT APPLIED

5. Have you (before this call) heard about the CIF Fund? Specific probes:

- What source
- What key things did you hear about it?

6. Are you currently thinking about applying to the CIF Fund? Specific probes:

- What for?
- What amount?
- Any reservations or barriers?
- Are you clear how to proceed?
- What do you know about eligibility, the application process?

7. IF NOT thinking about it – any particular reason?

C: EVERYONE

8. Before my call, how had you heard about the CIF fund?

9. What do you understand are the intended goals/outcomes for the CIF fund over its 3 year mandate? (Probe: If they don't know, ask if the issue is not hearing about the goals or hearing about the goals but not understanding what was communicated).

10. What do you think the goals/outcomes should be? Another way to think about goals and outcomes is to think about what would be different/have occurred with Ontario's blue box program as a result of the funding. What infrastructure would be different, etc.

11. The CIF's top funding priorities as defined by the board are:

70% applied to improving efficiency and 30% applied to effectiveness (for example, increasing capture rate and adding new materials), with a focus on:

- Best practices
- Innovation
- Emerging technologies
- Communications

Do you agree? Any recommendations on how to go about achieving these priorities? How should the CIF determine who would get the money amongst those applying?

12. The CIF has an obligation to endeavor to distribute the money equitably amongst municipalities. If the choice comes down to funding a series of projects that distribute the funds evenly or to one or two projects which truly make the Ontario BB system more cost effective, which approach would you support and why?

13. How important is it that the CIF work towards improving system efficiency vs focusing on ways to increase diversion?

14. Overall, what are your perceptions of the fund so far? (rank 1 = poor, 5 = very good)? Why?

15. What do you think the perceptions of the fund are among your colleagues?

16. Is there anything CIF can/should do to change perceptions?

17. Can you think of any good things they are and should continue to be doing?

18. Is there anything CIF can/should do differently for it to be more successful?

TME PERMITTING:

19. What role, if any, should CIF have in developing markets for problematic materials?

20. Should the CIF be spending funds on distribution of information such as through an electronic newsletter?

21. Should the CIF be working on a MRF strategy?

Set up: I am calling on behalf of the Continuous Improvement Fund, and I am calling to ask you a few questions about the fund and its activities over the last year. CIF staff is in the process of making changes to the application form and direction of the fund based on comments received to date and would like your input before proceeding further/finalizing their

1. Have you (before this call) heard about the CIF Fund? Specific probes:
 - What source
 - What key things did you hear about it?

2. What do you understand are the intended goals/outcomes for the CIF fund over its 3 year mandate? (Probe: If they don't know, ask if the issue is not hearing about the goals or hearing about the goals but not understanding what was communicated).

3. What do you think the goals/outcomes should be? Another way to think about goals and outcomes is to think about what would be different/have occurred with Ontario's blue box program as a result of the funding. What infrastructure would be different, etc.

4. Are you aware of the kinds of projects the CIF is currently engaged in? Are they the right projects?

5. The CIF's top funding priorities as defined by the board are:

70% applied to improving efficiency (for example things that lower cost per tonne or per hhld) and 30% applied to effectiveness (for example, increasing capture rate and adding new materials), with a focus on:

 - Best practices
 - Innovation
 - Emerging technologies
 - Communications

From what you know, on a score of 1-5 (or don't know) how would you rank CIF in terms of successfully spending against its priorities?

6. Do these seem like appropriate standards with which to evaluate and fund projects?

Appendix: CIF Stakeholder/Client Survey

7. Do you agree with the emphasis on efficiency vs increased diversion? Are these the right priorities? How important is it that the CIF work towards improving system efficiency versus focusing on ways to increase diversion?
8. How should the CIF determine who would get the money amongst those applying (ie CIF has an obligation to endeavor to distribute the funds equitably amongst municipalities. Is this appropriate)?
9. Overall, what are your perceptions of the fund so far? (rank 1 = poor, 5 = very good or don't know)?
10. What do you think the perceptions of the fund are among your colleagues?
11. If negative, probe - Is there anything CIF can/should do to change perceptions?
12. Is there anything CIF can/should do differently for it to be more successful?
13. Would you like CIF to be communicating more regularly with you on its activities and performance? How should CIF keep stewards informed?
14. What role, if any, should CIF have in developing markets for problematic materials?
15. Should the CIF be working on a MRF strategy?