


Strategic Compass

2026–2030



The background of the slide features a warm, orange-toned gradient. Scattered across this background are numerous paper boats, some in sharp focus and others blurred, creating a sense of depth and movement. The boats are made of a textured, slightly translucent orange paper. The text is centered within a rounded rectangular area that blends into the background.

We've chosen a compass — rather than a fixed plan — because our network is navigating complex shifting terrain, and we need shared direction to move with courage, multiple perspectives, foresight, and collective action.

The Terrain We Must Navigate

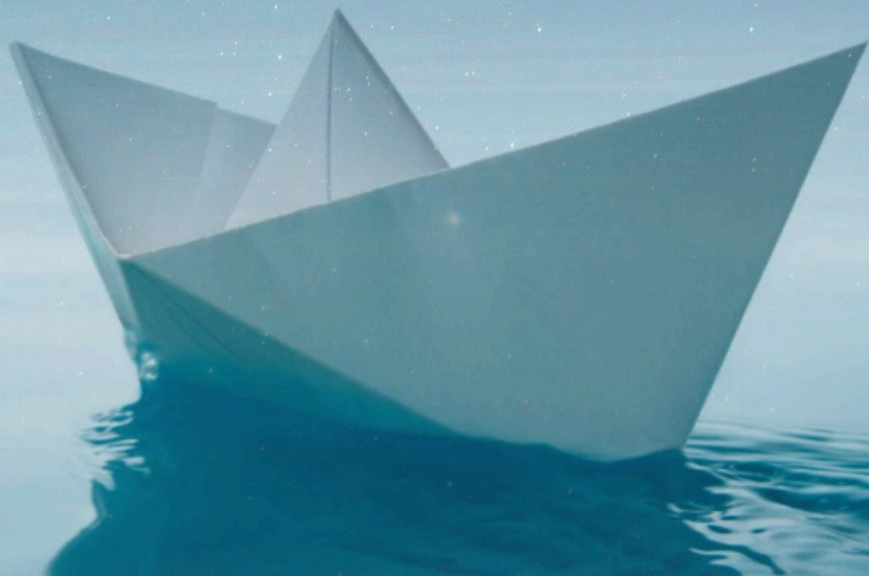
Environmental funders are exploring a wide array of solutions as we work to create a sustainable future. In doing so, we are collectively navigating the confluence of five interconnected landscapes that are shifting with unprecedented volatility:

- **Ecological** – climate and ecosystem collapse
- **Political** – a rollback of landmark climate wins coupled with a new version of “Canadian sovereignty” that threatens to speed up extraction at the expense of the environment and Indigenous sovereignty
- **Social and Cultural** – increased polarization and politicization of a range of environmental issues against a backdrop of rising authoritarianism and dismantling of democratic norms and institutions, ever widening income inequality, an affordability crisis, war, and disinformation
- **Communications** – the proliferation of AI and an information landscape that has become faster and more fragmented, making it more difficult than ever to deliver clear, effective, targeted, emotional communication
- **Funding** – limited overall funding dedicated to environmental issues, despite a massive generational transfer of wealth and growing desire among younger generations to address environmental crises

While each of these landscapes currently act as barriers to implementing the environmental solutions we are attempting to advance, they also point us toward critical realms where new possibilities and opportunities exist to accelerate progress. We recognize that environmental funders are uniquely positioned, and therefore hold unique responsibility for deploying capital in catalytic and transformational ways. We aim to institutionalize the habit of regularly reflecting on how shifts in the political, social and communications terrain are affecting our work.

Our North Star

Our North Star is clear: a future where environmental funders act as a courageous, connected force, working on root causes, shifting systems, and supporting solutions that are durable, widely supported, and grounded in Indigenous sovereignty and economic models that best serve people and nature.



Compass Bearings: Our Guiding Directions

Our compass points us toward a world in which people and planet thrive together, and where Environment Funders Canada (EFC) serves as a **strong** and **catalytic** network that is both a **navigator** and a **safe harbour**.

By facilitating learning, connection, and collaboration, our efforts are bolder, smarter, and stronger.

These are the orientations we hold — even as the winds shift.

[a] Nurture Network Fitness (EFC as a Safe Harbour)

- Deepening relationships of trust within our community.
- Spotlighting thought leadership from members, staff, and community partners for shared intelligence and learning in the environmental funding space.
- Creating space for candour, honest dissent and generative conversation across a pro-environmental spectrum of conservative to progressive values and theories of change, that leads to better solutions.
- Facilitating opportunities for environmental funders to zoom out of their individual areas of focus and sense-make together, so that new innovations and collaborations may emerge.
- Hosting cross-sector dialogues and partnerships with government, international funders, environmental organizations, private sector, Indigenous leaders and other philanthropic networks.
- Aggregating and disseminating environmental grants data to inform member strategies.
- Administering pooled, flexible, streamlined funds on behalf of select environmental funder collaboratives.
- Facilitating collective reflection on opportunities to improve funding behaviours and practices as environmental funders.

EFC is member-led and staff-scaffolded. We provide the connective infrastructure for our members to drive a myriad of innovative initiatives within the environmental funding community.

[b] Shift Systems, Not Just Symptoms (EFC as a Navigator)

EFC is uniquely positioned within Canada's environmental movement to hold an extremely wide vantage point, and we therefore have a responsibility to identify strategic opportunities to shift systems, and not just symptoms. In this context, we can offer our members spaces for shared learning, sense-making, curiosity, anticipating headwinds, and steering toward deeper impact.

We support our members to:

- Position environment within economic and social agendas by funding initiatives that:
 - catalyze widespread Canadian public support to ensure durability,
 - are grounded in economic models that serve wellbeing and regeneration,
 - decolonize funding to enable funders to better support Indigenous-led work and uphold Indigenous leadership and sovereignty,
 - are grounded in diversity, equity and inclusion, and
 - advance justice.
- Join with other funders to track environmental giving and explore how we can work together to grow from 2021 funding levels (as presented in EFC's most recent analysis).
- Achieve greater impact by leveraging investment assets in ways that complement grantmaking objectives.

EFC's work is values-based and inherently intersects with politics, not political parties. Our work is strictly non-partisan, in accordance with Canada Revenue Agency guidelines on allowable charitable activities.

[c] Model Integrity in Governance and Operations

We foster alignment between board, staff and members by:

- seeking input and feedback in an inclusive manner
- providing transparency around the rationale behind our decisions and actions
- balancing our ambitions with available resources and capacity, and
- continuing to invest in strengthening internal infrastructure to sustain courageous, strategic work.

How We Navigate Priorities

We navigate inherent network tensions with the following intentions:

Inclusivity vs. Alignment

We welcome a broad tent of funders working to advance environmental solutions without compromising transformative goals.

Convening vs. Influencing

We are both a member-responsive space and a field-shaping actor.

Holding Space vs. Breaking Ground

We provide opportunities for members to feel nourished in EFC spaces, while also encouraging honest reflection about our failures as funders so that we can be even more strategic going forward.



Our Operational Values in Motion

These are not static. They are practiced by our staff and Board, imperfectly, in the flow of real decisions and day-to-day activities:

- **Courage** – we choose truth over comfort
- **Inclusive Relationship-Building** – we move at the speed of trust
- **Reciprocity** – we give and receive with integrity
- **Curiosity** – we always start by asking questions and learn by doing, reflecting, adjusting
- **Accountability** – we hold power responsibly and transparently
- **Evidence-based** – we identify solutions for climate and nature by considering data and evidence over ideology
- **Effectiveness** – we are a small team with big ambitions, made possible by our efficiency, facilitation and competence



Signs We Are On Course

Ultimately, we will know that our movement is on course if environmental progress is made!

As a network, we will know we are aligned with our compass:

As a safe harbour – if members experience EFC as a trusted, connected home – a place of deep trust, honest dialogue, and shared learning that strengthens the fabric of environmental funding.

As a navigator – if members demonstrate greater clarity, confidence and capacity to fund in ways that shift systems and we see evidence of coordinated funder action and collaboration.

As a field – if total environmental funding in Canada (and our corresponding membership numbers) are steadily growing.

As an influencer – if we are invited to co-create with other movements, sectors, and partners.

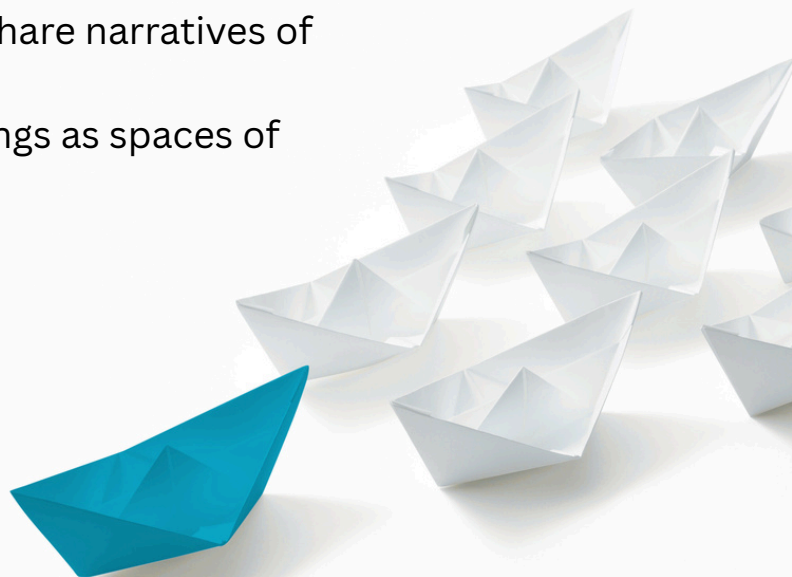
To stay oriented, EFC will hold itself and its members in active reflection:

Annual Compass Check-ins (Board & Staff) – are we still heading true north?

Pulse Surveys (Members) – assess trust, alignment, and readiness across the network

Story Harvesting (Staff) – surface and share narratives of bold experimentation

Reflection as Practice – design convenings as spaces of reflection, not just information



Environment Funders Canada is a national network of philanthropic foundations and other funders working individually and collectively to advance a healthy environment and a sustainable future for Canada.

EFC catalyzes funders to respond to environmental crises with ambitious and innovative solutions. EFC members work with non-government organizations, community groups and other charitable organizations to support the development and delivery of programs that can make our communities healthier and more resilient, while protecting vital ecosystem services and the natural world.

www.environmentfunders.ca

