

LOCALIZATION ACCELERATOR FUND

By Ralph Haddad, Head of Advocacy,
Basmeh & Zeitooneh Relief & Development

OCTOBER 2025

About the Big Ideas Series

The world needs bold, forward-looking ideas to meet today's complex global challenges. As part of a 2025 *Call for Big Ideas*, Cooperation Canada invited changemakers to propose catalytic concepts that reimagine the future of Canadian international cooperation.

The views expressed in this concept are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Cooperation Canada or its members. Big Ideas are published to spark dialogue and inspire innovation across the sector.

Summary

The *Localization Accelerator Fund* is a pooled funding mechanism that enables Canadian philanthropic foundations to deliver **flexible, multi-year financing directly to civil society organizations in the Global South**. Designed to move funding faster, more equitably and with local leadership at the center, the Fund combines **private capital, shared technical services** and **locally led networks** into one streamlined platform.

With a goal to cut average funding cycle times by 35% and ensure that most decisions and dollars reach **refugee-, women- and youth-led organizations**, the initiative reimagines how trust-based partnerships can scale. The Fund also embeds **accountability through community scorecards and real-time learning**, offering a model that not only strengthens local institutions but also informs broader aid policy and practice.

In the next 24 months, the Localization Accelerator Fund will demonstrate how Canadian philanthropy can shift power, reduce transaction costs and deliver lasting impact through locally led change.

The Big Idea

The Localization Accelerator Fund is a pooled vehicle for Canadian philanthropic foundations to deliver flexible, multi-year financing directly to civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Global South - more effectively, efficiently and equitably. It serves as a simple mechanism to move flexible funding to local leaders—fast. The Localization Accelerator Fund is urgently needed because today's global challenges demand faster, fairer and more locally driven responses. Traditional funding models are slow, costly and often bypass the very organizations closest to the communities in crisis. This fund reimagines Canadian philanthropy by pooling private capital into a streamlined mechanism that

delivers flexible, multi-year financing directly to Global South civil society organizations. By cutting funding cycle times, prioritizing refugee-, women- and youth-led groups, and embedding community accountability, it shifts power to local leaders while ensuring efficiency and transparency. At a time when crises are escalating in speed and complexity, this model demonstrates how philanthropy can reduce bureaucracy, strengthen local institutions and drive durable, community-led change.

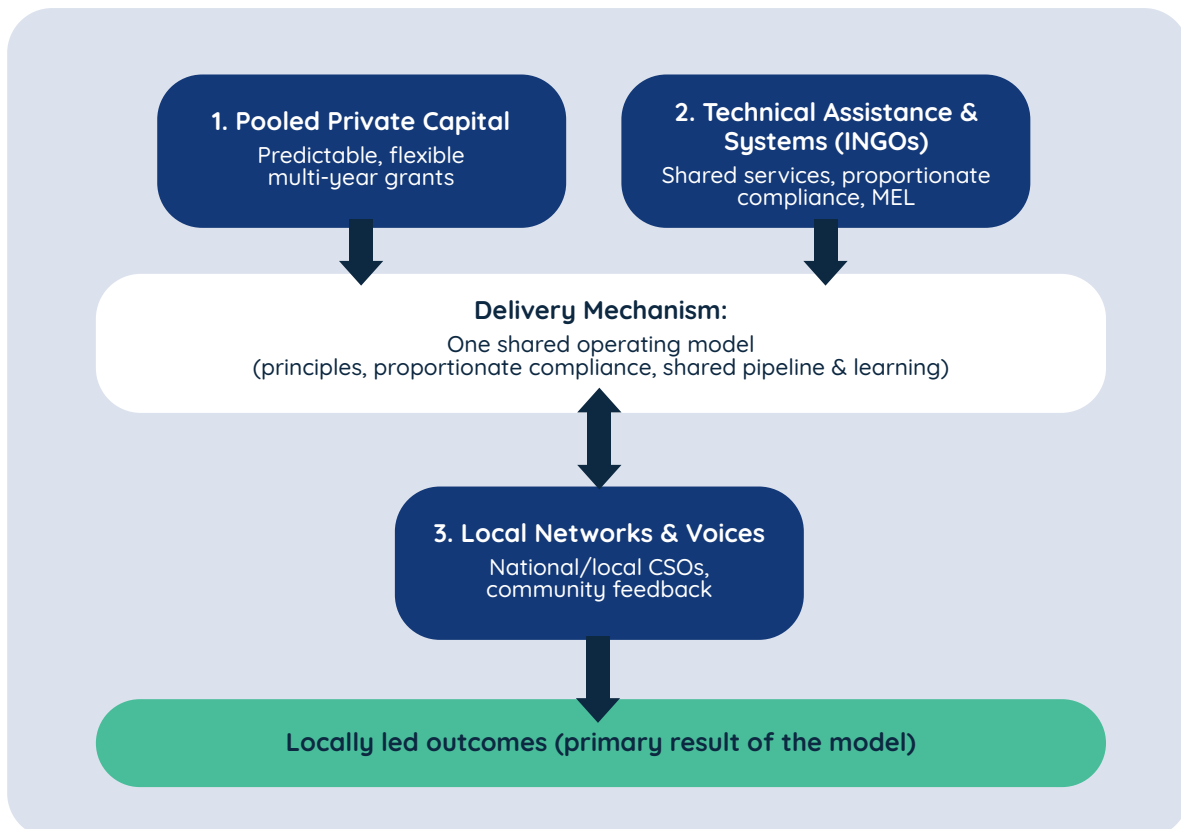
In the next 24 months, the Fund aims to move flexible, multi-year funding and decision-making directly to local CSOs so they can act faster and more fairly in crisis and recovery. The approach is simple: one delivery mechanism with three mutually reinforcing components that cut time-to-funding, build durable local capacity and keep communities in the lead.

The Fund’s intended results are clear:

- **Faster funding:** From green-light to first disbursement in ≤10 business days with a 35% reduction in average concept-to-contract cycle time.
- **Local leadership and decision-making:** Most decisions made by Global South panels with the majority of grants to refugee-, women- or youth-led organizations.
- **Accountability with learning:** Community scorecards, open learning briefs and evidence that informs procedural updates among all stakeholders.

The Delivery Mechanism

One clear delivery mechanism built from three components that work together from day one.



Component 1:

Pooled Private Capital (philanthropic foundations)



WHAT IT DOES: Provides predictable, multi-year core-plus grants that fund people, systems, and adaptive programming—not just activities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Foundations pool resources; adopt proportionate diligence; allow equitable overheads (15–20%); permit reserves; set decision service level agreements (SLAs) and quick disbursement standards; keep a small preparedness/shock window per grant.

WHY IT MATTERS: Deploys flexible capital immediately while signaling trust in local leadership.

Component 2:

Technical Assistance and Systems (international non-governmental organization (INGO)-led shared services)



WHAT IT DOES: Offers optional finance, audit prep, safeguarding, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), and digital tools; co-designs simple, reusable due-diligence profiles; right-size reporting (by grant size/risk).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Canadian INGOs act as capacity and compliance partners—not gatekeepers—funded within grants, not by starving overheads.

WHY IT MATTERS: Makes accountability and speed co-exist and strengthens institutions for the long term.

Component 3:

Local Network and Voice (national/local CSOs)



WHAT IT DOES: Mobilizes locally led consortia; defines priorities and outcomes; runs community feedback and grievance channels; shares learning openly.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Local organizations design and deliver; lead on context analysis and adaptation; hold seats on decision panels (with transparent conflict management and paid community representation).

WHY IT MATTERS: Ensures relevance, dignity, and durable change.

How the Components Work Together in Delivery

The Localization Accelerator Fund is guided by a unified principles charter—grounded in local leadership, proportional compliance, equitable costing and transparency—which is applied consistently across all actors and processes. A shared due diligence baseline ensures all partners operate from a common standard, with a reusable “passport” system that eliminates the need for organizations to re-enter the same information repeatedly. Funding pipelines and calls for proposals are coordinated around shared priority geographies or themes and collaboration is incentivized: consortia are prioritized over competition. To support real-time learning and transparency, the Fund also includes process telemetry—tracking cycle times, identifying bottlenecks and producing public learning briefs each quarter. Together, these elements form a cohesive and responsive delivery mechanism that prioritizes speed, accountability and local ownership.

Timeline

Months 0-4 | Design & Mobilization

Convene partners; adopt principles; define diligence/data model; commission two geographic scans; secure initial pledges.

Months 5-10 | Launch & Early Wins

Issue two calls (e.g., refugee-hosting context and a climate-conflict hotspot); select 5-10 consortia; stand up shared-service hubs; disburse first tranches within SLA.

Months 11-18 | Learn & Scale

Top up strong consortia; scale successful process improvements; publish baseline vs. post-innovation efficiency metrics.

Months 19-24 | Consolidate

Lock the operating manual (diligence, indirects, AAP minimums, SLAs) and prepare for long-term pooled growth.