



Institute for Community Prosperity

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROFILE

Mountain Equipment Co-op

Making a splash for Canada's freshwater

Background

Industry: Retail

Company founded: 1971

Headquarters: Vancouver

Customer: Business to Consumer

Legal Type: Cooperatively Owned Company

Owned: Canadian owned

Years dedicated to Community Investment (C.I.): Since 1987¹

Region of Focus: Canada

Investees/ Partners include:

- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
- Avalanche Canada
- Association of Canadian Mountain Guides
- Canadian Fresh Water Alliance

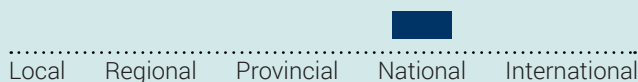
Community Investment Strategy:

Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) exists to inspire and enable people to be active outdoors, by selling great gear and by organizing events and meet ups. MEC's community investment strategy is about adventure, it's about supporting being active outside, pushing boundaries, and reaching for goals and dreams. To pursue this vision, MEC's community investment strategy provides conservation and outdoor activity organizations with funding and product donations. MEC's application-driven granting falls into six categories, Land Acquisition, Capacity Building, Advocacy and Awareness, Access and Activity, Grassroots Product Donations, and Expedition Support. All six of these categories support MEC's primary mission to inspire Canadians to play outside and ensure the future of recreationally and ecologically important spaces. MEC's community investment has evolved significantly since it began in the 1970's. Since then, it has progressed from ad hoc giving in its early days to the creation grant committees in the 90's to more strategic grant committees in the 2000's.

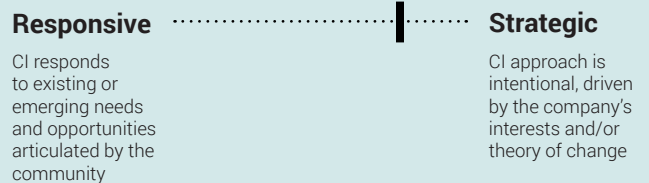
Staff at MEC are involved in community giving through a staff choice community giving program. The program allows staff to nominate and vote for non-profits to receive funding from MEC. Giving employees the opportunity to choose who should be funded is a good way for staff to get involved with the community and perhaps be introduced to a new cause. MEC encourages community involvement through a volunteer program, allowing eligible staff to be paid for up to 16 hours of volunteer work (per year) aligning with MEC's mission.

CI Dashboard: This dashboard is one way to illustrate how companies invest in community, providing a tool to compare across different company CI profiles. It is important to note that no category is privileged over another.

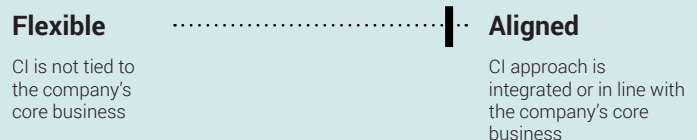
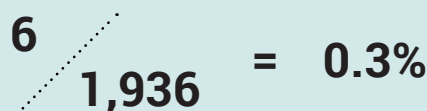
Geographic scope



Granting or sponsorship approach



CI staff ratio (Presented as percentage of total staff)



FOCUS Investment: Homewaters

Issue:

Canada is home to 20% of the world's freshwater supply.² However, because so much of it is held underground or in glaciers, only 7% is renewable freshwater.³ Though abundant and generally clean, Canadian freshwater is threatened by industrial, municipal, and agricultural wastes. Many of these chemicals cannot be broken down by natural processes and can cause a lot of damage, even in small amounts. Pollution in lakes, rivers, and streams puts ecosystems out of balance. In addition to environmental harm, contamination can also cause bodies of water to become unfit for human activities such as swimming, and fishing.

Solution:

Ensuring the future of freshwater in Canada is a huge task, but by collaborating with partner organizations, MEC believes it can make a significant difference. MEC created Homewaters in 2010 to increase awareness about freshwater issues and inspire Canadians to protect this natural resource. Since then, MEC has donated \$2 million to the Canadian freshwater community.⁴

The 2015 Homewaters campaign is focused on celebrating water. To help customers celebrate water, MEC collaborated with Etsy to create limited edition T-shirts, all profits going to the Canadian Freshwater Alliance. This summer, MEC will be the platinum sponsor of Water's Edge, a public art exhibition commissioned by The Pan Am games to be shown in Toronto. The exhibition will feature six leading photographers' work, highlighting human impacts on freshwater. Thirteen of the photographs have been donated by the artists for auction, 100% of the sales will go to the Canadian Freshwater Alliance.⁵ Money is also being raised through social media. For every picture on Instagram hashtagged #myhomewaters, MEC will donate \$5 up to \$20,000 to the Canadian Freshwater Alliance.⁶ This year's Homewaters campaign allows people to choose their level of involvement, from hash tagging a photo to volunteering with a local freshwater organization.

Impact and Evaluation:

In 2007, as part of their commitment to the environment, MEC joined 1% for the Planet, pledging 1% of its sales to environmentally minded Canadian non-profits, nearly \$3.26 million in 2014.⁷ 1% for the Planet ensures that member businesses reach their donation commitments and that organizations receiving funds are pursuing worthwhile goals for the betterment of the environment.

MEC strives to be transparent with its successes as well as its failures. Annual CSR reports show where it has met its goals and where it has fallen short. By sharing both sides of its sustainability efforts, MEC increases its transparency.

Endnotes

1. Mountain Equipment Co-op, "1% for the Planet" para.1, Mountain Equipment Cooperative, 2015, <https://www.mec.ca/AST/ContentPrimary/Community/PartnershipsAndAffiliations/1ForThePlanet.jsp>.
2. Environment Canada, "Frequently Asked Questions" para. 5, Government of Canada, February 16, 2012, <https://www.ec.gc.ca/eau-water/default.asp?lang=En&n=1C100657-1#ws2BC2F093>.
3. Ibid.
4. Stegemann, interview.
5. Homewaters, "Art That Matters" para. 1, Mountain Equipment Cooperative, 2015, <http://homewaters.mec.ca/>.
6. Homewaters, "To Raise \$20,000" para. 1, Mountain Equipment Cooperative, 2015, <http://homewaters.mec.ca/>.
7. Ibid.