

## **Social Enterprise Demystifies Carbon Market**

Image



Community Carbon Marketplace simplifies carbon credit purchases online

When one hears carbon offsets, what might come to mind is an opportunity for a business or individual to purchase credits, which mitigate the total carbon output for running their business or taking a flight. Where this money goes hasn't always been clear. People increasingly want to know it's going to good projects with real social and environmental benefits.

Brian Roberts spotted this need and helped to pilot a solution — an online marketplace that matches those interested in purchasing carbon offsets while also bringing revenue into the local green economy with community-based carbon-offsetting projects that need funding in order to materialize.

The referenced media source is missing and needs to be re-embedded.

*Four steps involved in using the Community Carbon Marketplace online platform.*

“We like to think that the most accountable projects are those being done right in the communities where you live and do business,” says Brian, executive director of [Cowichan Energy Alternatives Society](#) (CEA). “Many local green projects often do not know that they are eligible to sell credits, or how to do it. At the same time, municipalities and other buyers can’t find or access local credits even if they want to.”

Carbon offset projects can range from a company that invests in bio-fuels instead of fossil fuels to an organization involved in forest conservation, other forms of alternative energy or even preventing organics from decomposing in landfills, which releases methane, a significant contributor to global climate change.

The [Community Carbon Marketplace](#) (CCM), developed by CEA, is now expanding throughout Vancouver Island and beyond after an award-winning year piloting the project in the Cowichan Valley.

“We’re energized with how well it’s been received by local governments,” Brian says. “It seems that it was really well-timed.”

Most of B.C.’s local governments have signed the Climate Action Charter, making a commitment to measure and report on their community’s greenhouse gas emissions. Many municipalities buy carbon credits as part of this pledge.

A significant learning for Brian and his team over the last year has been around the need for education about the carbon marketplace.

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*Island Biodiesel Co-op receives  
cheque for carbon credits from the  
Community Carbon Marketplace.*

“One of the things we’ve learned is just how complicated the carbon market is and how misunderstood it is,” he says. “We find it takes a lot of one-on-one time to explain how this can work.”

Supplementary to the marketplace, CEA offers carbon footprint assessments to businesses that want to better understand their energy use and emissions.

The team is also producing a video to shed light on the carbon market and how businesses and community groups can now access its benefits through the CCM.

“It’s like recycling — it took a while for it to get through to the critical mass needed to make it an accepted way of life,” Brian says.

The grand hope for the initiative is to expand the marketplace throughout B.C. and other parts of Canada. Anyone can purchase community carbon credits from the online CCM, from governments, businesses, organizations and individuals. For businesses that want to be carbon neutral but cannot because of the nature of their business, the marketplace offers a means for them to mitigate their greenhouse gas output by supporting carbon-offsetting projects with local benefits.

The Social Enterprise Portfolio Program, a partnership between the Vancity Community Foundation, Vancity credit union and the City of Vancouver, extended its funding for the project after its successful first year. The program supports 10 social enterprises through financial and other forms of support.

“We support groups that have a strong business plan that lays out a social enterprise with a strong and needed impact in the community,” explains manager of strategic programs Emily Beam.

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*Vancouver Island's first B.C. Biofuel  
Network biodiesel blending pump.*

The program supports initiatives with strong business plans designed to make significant impact by providing early-stage equity so that organizations can grow into achieving their goals and running self-sustainably.

Brian is energized by the enthusiastic reaction the marketplace received from governments and other interested buyers.

“We had more demand for community carbon credits than supply. Now we have to get the word out to businesses that they can generate a whole new revenue stream by making sustainable business decisions that also reduce emissions,” he says.

“I think there’s been an awakening and I think we’re at the forefront of it. More and more companies are demonstrating social and environmental responsibility and being rewarded for this by a public that is increasingly aware of the issues and voting with their dollars. The CCM is just another way of facilitating this shift to a local, green economy.”

*A version of this article was originally written for the [Enterprising Non-profits Canada news service](#). This repost, for which we received permission, follows the style guidelines of the original post. To learn more about generative newsroom options for your organization or community, please contact [peter\(at\)axiomnews.com](mailto:peter(at)axiomnews.com).*