

For immediate use

April 27, 2020

Recovery & Rebuilding the Region: Design Challenges launch in response to COVID-19

Three prominent southwestern Ontario organizations have come together to harness the power of great ideas in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Libro Credit Union, Pillar Nonprofit Network and **TechAlliance** have combined to launch Recovery & Rebuilding the Region: Design Challenges, which seek to put vital ideas into action in southwestern Ontario.

The challenges empower and support innovators in addressing two critical problems:

- responding to the immediate health and social issues of COVID-19;
- revitalizing and rebuilding our communities.

The challenges are open to individuals or teams of people, who are involved in encouraging startups or growth for enterprises and nonprofits. They seek to mobilize people with great ideas that are needed now, during this crisis. Applicants are encouraged to design with empathy for those most affected by COVID-19, and to be mindful of diverse perspectives as they create their solutions. The challenges are co-presented by Communitech, in Waterloo Region, and WEtech Alliance, in Windsor Essex.

The Design Challenge (stage one) will focus on immediate COVID-19 issues.

- Applications open on Thursday, April 30.
- Applications close on Saturday, May 2
- The successful applicant will be announced on Tuesday, May 5.

Along with \$20,000 in funding, the successful applicant will work with coaches from each of the Design Challenge partners to develop a final product, service, process or collaboration. Time is essential in combating COVID-19, so all partners will work collaboratively to move the project swiftly to completion by engaging further community resources and networks.

The second stage of the Design Challenges will focus on recovery and rebuilding and revitalizing the community, post-COVID-19. It will follow a similar challenge process.

Jill Brush, Libro Credit Union Regional Agriculture and Commercial Manager, said: "This is an exciting opportunity for the best minds in southwestern Ontario to address directly the once-in-a-generation threat that is affecting all our lives.

"Since the pandemic began, everyone in our society has been clamouring for solutions to so many problems. Now we want to create a chance to find those solutions. Libro is committed to playing its part and we call on everyone in the community to promote and discuss The Design Challenge, and to join it if they can."

Michelle Baldwin, Executive Director of Pillar Nonprofit Network, said: "Along with crisis comes creativity, and we are seeing countless acts of selflessness, resourcefulness and resilience in our community.

"The Design Challenges will inspire and amplify those efforts by sharing stories from across the region and providing resources to one innovation. We know that now more than ever we need to find solutions that address our most pressing challenges and focus on those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. "



Christina Fox, Chief Executive Officer, TechAlliance, said: “In response to unprecedented challenges, southwestern Ontario innovators are creating bold, technology-driven solutions through the Design Challenges to address our region's needs. Now more than ever, it's crucial to enable them with resources and guidance as they take the initiative to preserve our economic prosperity.

“Compassionate and decisive action to help innovators launch and accelerate growth for their ventures will be essential as we rebuild post-COVID-19.

“We're grateful to be leading this call for ‘made in southwestern Ontario’ solutions in partnership with two organizations devoted to social responsibility, and with the commitment of two other Regional Innovation Centres. This initiative truly embodies the collaborative Ontario spirit.”

For more information or interview opportunities, please contact:

Libro Credit Union

The largest credit union in southwestern Ontario and a registered B Corp, Libro Credit Union serves 106,790 Owners – the customers who all own a piece of the company, including 9,566 businesses. Libro has more than 700 employees, 36 locations and a wide range of digital services, all supporting Owners as a full-service financial institution.

In existence for more than 75 years, Libro is also run as a cooperative, in which the customers are the shareholders, electing the Board of Directors. All of Libro's profits stay in southwestern Ontario and everything Libro does is aligned with its social purpose of growing prosperity for everyone in the region.

Liz Arkinstall, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager

519-984-7599

liz.arkinstall@libro.ca

Pillar Nonprofit Network

Pillar Nonprofit Network strengthens individuals, organizations and enterprises invested in positive community impact.

We support more than 610 nonprofits, social enterprises and social innovators by sharing resources, exchanging knowledge and creating meaningful connections across the three pillars of nonprofit, business and government.

Pillar Nonprofit Network believes that a connected network sparks collaboration and a willingness to lean on each other to help build an engaged, inclusive and vibrant community.

Michelle Baldwin, Executive Director

519-433-7876 x210

mbaldwin@pillarnonprofit.ca

TechAlliance of Southwestern Ontario

TechAlliance is the place for dreamers, innovators, and world-changing ideas. We launch new startups and accelerate growth for established tech companies through our Venture Growth & Corporate Innovation, early-stage incubation, and GROW Accelerator.

We create an entrepreneurial culture across Southwestern Ontario that attracts, connects, and retains the next generation of tech talent, building community through experiences, and creating access to capital.

We advocate for startups and fast-growing technology companies, connecting all levels of government and industry to create an environment for businesses to start, grow, and innovate.

Christina Fox, Chief Executive Officer

519-615-2369

christina.fox@techalliance.ca