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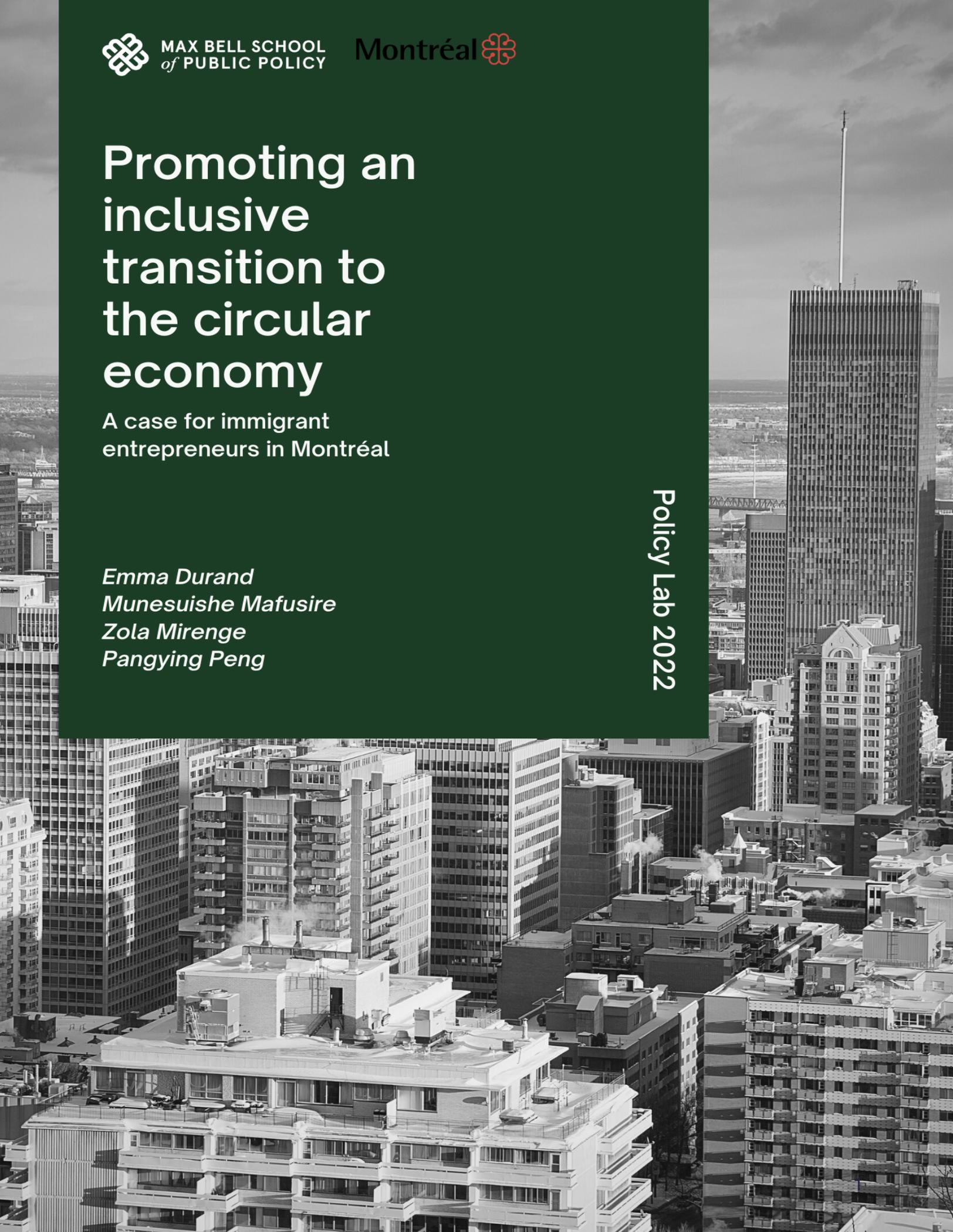
Montréal 

# Promoting an inclusive transition to the circular economy

A case for immigrant  
entrepreneurs in Montréal

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**Policy challenge question:** How can the City of Montréal inform and mobilize its diverse entrepreneurs and include them in the ecological transition? More specifically, how can the city ensure their participation in the transition from a linear economy to one that is more circular?

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the policy lab team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the City of Montréal, the Max Bell School of Public Policy, or the stakeholders consulted during the process.

## Executive Summary

- As part of its ecological commitments, Montréal has the ambition to implement a circular economy transition. Contrary to the traditional linear economy—which features a take-make-waste line of materials for production and consumption—a circular economy model promotes the reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling of existing materials and products.
- The circular economy agenda in Montréal has yet to place a focus on the participation of diverse entrepreneurs. This is an issue prevalent globally in current circular economy research and practice. For Montréal, it is a missed opportunity given the high potential of its diverse population, and the imperative of mobilizing this audience for a successful transition.
- The development of the circular economy agenda has furthermore been dominated by a technical approach that focuses mainly on the industrial processes in large firms. There is a need, globally and also in Montréal, to further include small and medium-size businesses in the transition.
- This report seeks to address these two issues by adopting the lens of a *just transition*. This concept is broadly understood as a transition that brings together both social justice concerns and the ecological transition to build a sustainable society. A *just transition* also aligns the circular economy transition with the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), which the city of Montréal is seeking to achieve through its various policies.
- In the context of Montréal, this report argues that focusing on “immigrant entrepreneurs” in the circular transition is a good starting point toward a *just transition*.
- Existing desk research, insights from stakeholder interviews, and policy case studies were consulted to develop this report and propose actionable recommendations for the municipal government of Montréal to mobilize its immigrant entrepreneur in the transition.
- Immigrant entrepreneurs need targeted support from the municipal government due to their unique challenges. Data indicates that immigrant entrepreneurs are mostly concentrated in the service sectors and are more likely to operate small-scale or micro firms compared to native-born entrepreneurs. These types of businesses are sidelined by the current circular economy ecosystem in Montréal.
- A successful circular economy transition requires a particular set of business enablers to be in place. In the case of immigrant entrepreneurs, financial opportunity is the most powerful enabler towards circularity.

- Immigrant entrepreneurs face heightened barriers to adopting circularity, which include understanding the complexity in the regulatory environment, financial obstacles and the lack of local networks.
- While the municipal government has taken considerable steps to accelerate the circular transition, a few gaps remain for immigrant entrepreneurs to successfully engage in this transition:
  1. **Funding:** The existing funding system does not accommodate the unique needs of immigrant entrepreneurs. Targeted circular economy funding that is specific to SMEs (smaller sized firms) and the service sector will provide greater inclusion of immigrant entrepreneurs in the funding ecosystem.
  2. **Knowledge:** Insufficient awareness of relevant information on circular business models and circular economy strategies is a significant impediment to transition for entrepreneurs. Having the appropriate knowledge brokers and knowledge dissemination tools can alleviate the information asymmetries for immigrant entrepreneurs.
  3. **Agenda setting:** So far, a few actors have played a central role in the development of the circular economy agenda in Montréal. Bringing together diverse actors in Montréal's ecosystem will help the municipal government develop an inclusive circular economy ecosystem. In addition, improving diversity data collection can enhance the municipal government's understanding of their circular initiatives and the inclusiveness of the transition.
- The recommendations presented by this report focus on addressing the three aforementioned gaps.

## **Recommendations**

### **Funding Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1: A Circular Economy Microcredit Loan**

Microcredit lenders offer a more inclusive and alternative source of funding, as they tend to have fewer requirements on credit history or firms with low annual revenues.

#### **Recommendation 2: Launch of 'Go Circular!' competition for Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

A circular economy competition will provide greater visibility and financing opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs. A competitive environment will help foster the creation of innovative ideas among Montréal's immigrant entrepreneurs.

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## Knowledge Recommendations

### ***Recommendation 3: A Consumer-facing website showcasing circular products***

Providing a tech-based platform for circular businesses will allow immigrant entrepreneurs to gain visibility, and potentially capture a new market of environmentally sensitive customers.

### ***Recommendation 4: A Circular Transition training program led by diversity-driven incubators***

Diversity-driven incubator services can address the knowledge gap faced by immigrant entrepreneurs by providing accessible and practical knowledge of circular business models and strategies.

## Agenda-setting Recommendations

### ***Recommendation 5: A Circular Economy Business Working Group***

A multi-stakeholder approach, facilitated through the 'circular economy business working group' will ensure that the municipal government is well-informed on the diverse needs of the business community.

### ***Recommendation 6: Establish a data collection practice capturing diversity within Montréal's circular initiatives***

The collection of disaggregated data will allow the municipal government to comprehend the underlying state of diversity in existing circular initiatives and set an inclusive agenda within Montréal's circular economy.

## **Section 1. Setting the scene**

### **1.1. Introduction**

In its strategic plan “Montréal 2030”, the municipal government of Montréal has identified the acceleration of ecological transition as one of its top four priorities as a city.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this ecological ambition, the post-pandemic economic recovery has also required the municipal government to reinforce the resilience of businesses.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the concept of “circular economy” has emerged as a pathway to reconcile the need for ecological transition with a sustainable, prosperous business environment. In pivoting away from the linear economic model of ‘take-make-waste’, the circular economy model proposes that resources should remain in circulation for as long as possible in these stages.<sup>3</sup> This is made possible through actions such as reusing, sharing, recycling, or prolonging the life of a product.<sup>4</sup> Given the necessary changes in production processes, it is clear that a transition from a linear to a circular economy necessitates the mobilization of all parts of society, in particular businesses.

The inclusion of diverse entrepreneurs in circular economy initiatives remains a significant challenge worldwide.<sup>5</sup> This report seeks to address this issue by identifying the obstacles to inclusion in the current circular economy ecosystem and proposing actionable solutions. In doing so, this report addresses the intersection between the circular economy and social inclusion. The *just transition* is the overarching framework adopted for this report. A *just transition* captures the idea that an ecological transition should ensure both environmental sustainability and the fulfillment of social justice objectives.<sup>6</sup> Applying a *just transition* framework to the circular economy speaks to broader social justice and equity objectives, but also underpins the success and long-term sustainability of the circular transition.

In Montréal, the move towards a more *just transition* can start with the inclusion of immigrant entrepreneurs. So far, there have been no targeted efforts by the circular economy ecosystem to include immigrant entrepreneurs in this transition. Given the large and growing immigrant population in Montréal and their considerable contributions to Montréal’s economy, providing support for this community will unlock Montréal’s potential to accelerate its ecological transition. By committing to this framework, Montréal could emerge as a trailblazer internationally in building an inclusive circular transition.

This report sheds light on the ways in which immigrant entrepreneurs might be inhibited in fully participating in the circular transition in Montréal. In addition, it will identify policy levers that the

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<sup>1</sup> “Plan Stratégique Montréal 2030.” Ville de Montréal, 17.

<sup>2</sup> “Plan Stratégique Montréal 2030.” Ville de Montréal, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Walter R. Stahel, *The circular economy: a user’s guide* (London ; New York: Routledge, *Taylor & Francis*, 2019), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Walter, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Schröder, . *Promoting a just transition to an inclusive circular economy*. Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank, 2. (2020, December 11)

<sup>6</sup> Schröder, 10.

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municipal government of Montréal can use to further mobilize its immigrant entrepreneurs in the circular transition.

The remainder of this report will be organized in the following way. Section 1 of this report is dedicated to outlining the scope of the project: the mandate of the project and its sponsor, and the definition and scoping of the key terms. Section 2 presents the current circular economy performance of Montréal, a brief overview of relevant policy and legal frameworks, and details the development of Québec's circular economy ecosystem which lacks the inclusion of entrepreneurs with diverse backgrounds. Section 3 delves into the *just transition*, by dissecting the concept and discussing the opportunities that it can bring to the human and economic development of an ecological transition. Section 4 introduces the methodology adopted for this report and the limitations of its research. Section 5 makes a case for Montréal's *just transition*. Specifically, the section details the economic potential that immigrant entrepreneurs may bring to the circular transition; simultaneously, it outlines the barriers they encounter in establishing their businesses; the sectors where they are concentrated, and the average sizes of their enterprises. Section 6 explores barriers and enablers faced by Montréal's immigrant entrepreneurs in adopting circular transition. Section 7 identifies the three major gaps in Montréal's existing programs that support immigrant entrepreneurs who have adopted or wish to adopt circular practices. These include funding, knowledge sharing, and agenda-setting. Lastly, Section 8 will provide the recommendations designed to address the three major gaps.

## 1.2 Mandate

### Sponsor Mandate

This project's sponsor is the *Service du développement économique* (SDE) (Translation: Economic Development Department), which is part of the municipal government of Montréal (also referred to as Ville de Montréal in French). The mandate of the *Service du développement économique* includes:<sup>7</sup>

- guiding and supporting Montréal businesses;
- collaborating with partners in the business ecosystem to accelerate Montréal's economy through a sustainable, innovative and inclusive approach;
- making Montréal a leader in the field of economic development through innovation, talent and entrepreneurial development that is social, sustainable and international.

In the rest of this report, the terms "municipal government" will be used to refer to the sponsor of the project, the *Service du développement économique*, unless stated otherwise.

### Policy Lab Mandate

This report seeks to offer recommendations to the municipal government to inform and mobilize its diverse entrepreneurs in its circular economy agenda.

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<sup>7</sup> "Service Du Développement Économique." Ville de Montréal.

More specifically, this report was tasked with addressing the following issues:

- Identifying how the municipal government can assist diverse entrepreneurs in adopting circular economy business principles;
- Providing policy levers that are necessary for the transition of entrepreneurs in Montréal toward the circular economy;
- Determining whether a specific target group should be identified;
- Identifying international best practices which bridge the gap between diversity and entrepreneurship.

### 1.3. Definitions & Scoping

#### Defining the “Circular Economy”

Generally, there are numerous terms and concepts used to describe the circular economy. In this section, the report provides a wide scope of definitions and concepts that are commonly cited by policy actors operating in the circular economy ecosystem.

##### *Ellen MacArthur Foundation*

- The following definitions provided by Ellen MacArthur Foundation are among the most commonly used definitions across sectors.
- Linear Economy: this concept describes the high consumption of finite resources across the economy, which follows the current “take-make-waste system”.<sup>8</sup> The linear economy can be defined as a process where, “materials flow in a straight line—from the extraction of finite, natural resources via manufacturing, to over consumption and eventually—landfill.”<sup>9</sup>
- Circular economy is defined as “an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design. It replaces the ‘end-of-life’ concept with restoration, shifts towards the use of renewable energy, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals, which impair reuse, and aims for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, systems, and within this, business models.”<sup>10</sup>

##### *European Parliament*

- This definition is adopted in this project given its simplicity and readability for a non-expert audience.
- Circular economy is defined as a “model of production and consumption, involving sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Circular Economy Introduction.” Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Accessed July 5, 2022.

<sup>9</sup> “Why Our Current Economy Will Not Work Long Term.” Ellen MacArthur Foundation. Accessed July 5, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Julian K., Denise R, and Marko H. “Conceptualizing the Circular Economy: An Analysis of 114 Definitions.” *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 127 (December 2017): 221–32.

<sup>11</sup> “Circular Economy: Definition, Importance and Benefits.” European Parliament, April 26, 2022.

## Ville de Montréal

- For the purpose of policy making, the municipal government considers the definition created by the Institut de l'Environnement, du Développement Durable et de l'Économie Circulaire (EDDEC).<sup>12</sup>
- Circular economy is defined as “a production, exchange and consumption system aiming to optimize resource use in every stage in the life cycle of a product or service through a circular approach, reduce the environmental footprint and contribute to the well-being of individuals and communities.”<sup>13</sup>

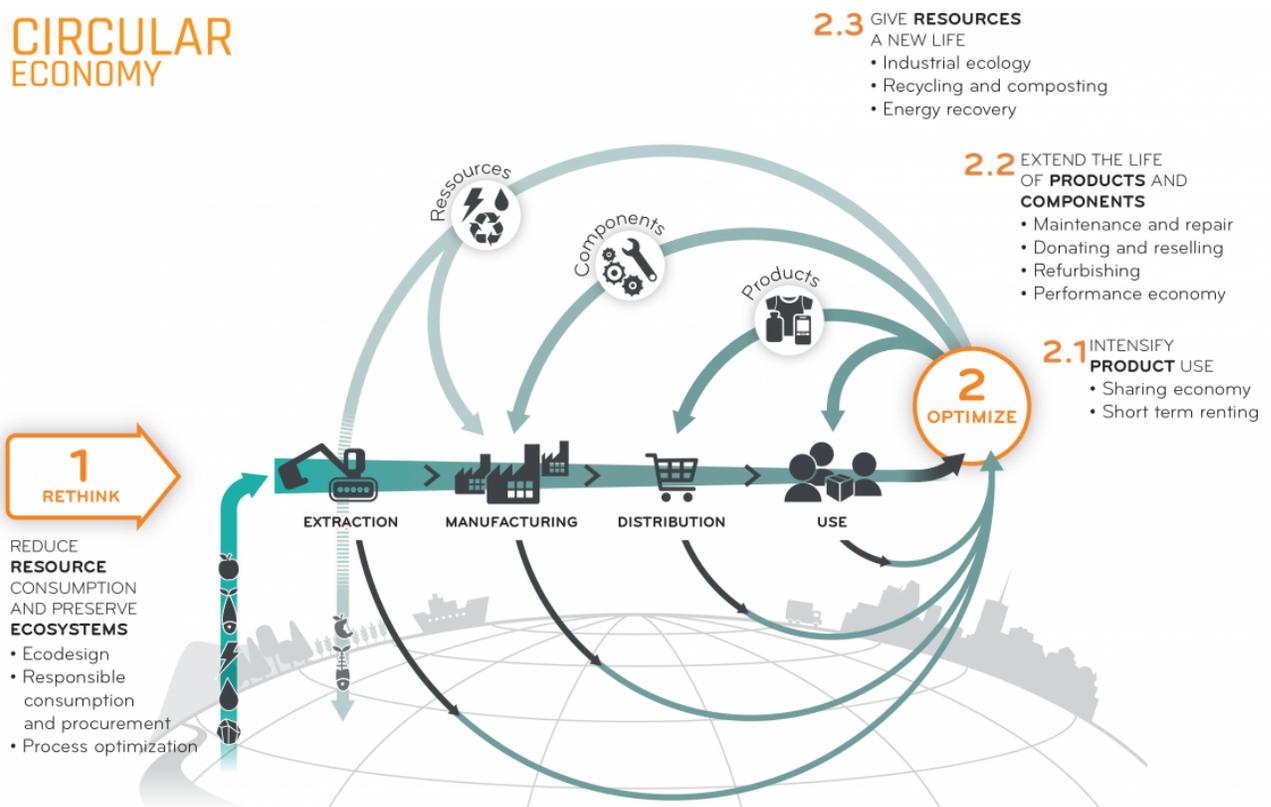


Figure 1: Visualization of Circular Economy<sup>14</sup>

## The “12 Strategies”

- In order to practically present the concept of “circular economy” to the business community, the “Pôle québécois de concertation sur l'économie circulaire”, a Québec multi-stakeholder roundtable, drafted 12 strategies which represent practical applications of circular

<sup>12</sup> “L'économie Circulaire, Un Modèle Économique D'avenir.” Ville de Montréal, May 6, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Centre d'études et de recherches intersectorielles en économie circulaire.

principles.<sup>15</sup> These strategies are particularly important because they are used by government actors in identifying how businesses could adopt circular practices.

- The 12 strategies are: ecodesign, responsible consumption and procurement, optimizing operations, collaborative economy, rental, servicing and repair, giving away and reselling, reconditioning, functional economy, industrial ecology, recycling and composting, and recovery.<sup>16</sup>

### **Scoping and defining the target population: immigrant entrepreneurs**

The mandate of this project is to identify ways in which the municipal government can include its diverse entrepreneurs in the circular economy transition. Diversity is a very broad concept, spanning from diversity in gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to culture. To recommend actionable policies, it was thus necessary to reduce the scope of the mandate to a defined target population.

Based on these considerations, immigrant entrepreneurs emerged as a possible starting point for building an inclusive circular transition in Montréal. Immigrants constitute over one-third of Montréal's total population and contribute significantly to Montréal's economy. The importance of including immigrant entrepreneurs is further discussed in [Section 5](#).

Given the jurisdiction of the municipal government, it is relevant for it to focus on working with small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In Québec, small and medium enterprises are firms that have less than 500 employees and less than \$50M in annual revenues.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the wider range of conceptions of what constitutes an 'entrepreneur' and an 'immigrant', this report takes a more focused approach to defining an immigrant entrepreneur. For the remainder of the report, the following definition is adopted:

**"Immigrant entrepreneur refers to any individual who is or has been a landed immigrant or permanent resident and who owns and operates a SME in Montreal"**

### **Conceptualizing entrepreneurship**

Defining entrepreneurship can be a challenge given the various definitions that exist. Despite the lack of a common approach in defining 'entrepreneurship', this report considers the following:

<sup>15</sup> "La Démarche Québécoise - Étapes Clés." Québec Circulaire. Accessed July 5, 2022.

<sup>16</sup> "Stratégies De Circularité." Québec Circulaire, October 19, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Allan Lance Riding and Barbara Orser, "Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Quebec," Ottawa, Ont.: SME Financing Data Initiative, 2007.

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*Government of Canada*

“A process that starts with someone, the entrepreneur recognizing an opportunity to create something new.”<sup>18</sup>

*Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)*

“Any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organization, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business.”<sup>19</sup>

It is important to note that the Canadian government and GEM definitions overlook key nuances such as the type of business created by an entrepreneur. Other key thinkers, such as Schumpeter, suggest that entrepreneurship is based on innovation and high-growth firms, whereas the previously mentioned definitions are high-level.<sup>20</sup>

### **Conceptualizing ‘Immigrants’**

Immigrant communities cover a wide range of individuals in Canada. For simplicity, this report considers the following definition:

*Statistics Canada*

“Immigrant” refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group.<sup>21</sup>

This report focuses on first-generation immigrants, who are recently landed (five years or less), or have been naturalized in Canada which corresponds with the StatsCan definition. Second-generation immigrants relatively understand the local context more than the first-generation immigrants, hence this report focuses on first-generation immigrants. By adopting the Canadian government’s legal definition, it is easier for the municipal government to take a more focused approach.

Despite the target population of this report being “immigrants”, it is important to stress again that this is only a starting point. Immigrant entrepreneurs can also have overlapping<sup>22</sup> identity markers

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<sup>18</sup> Eileen Fisher and Allison Rebecca Reuber, “The State of Entrepreneurship in Canada,” Industry Canada, Small Business and Tourism Branch. 2010

<sup>19</sup> “How GEM Defines Entrepreneurship.” GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Accessed July 5, 2022

<sup>20</sup> Joern H. Block, Christian O. Fisch, and Mirjam van Praag. “The Schumpeterian Entrepreneur: a Review of the Empirical Evidence on the Antecedents, Behaviour and Consequences of Innovative Entrepreneurship.” *Industry and Innovation* 24, no. 1 (2016): 61–95.

<sup>21</sup> “Immigrant.” Statistics Canada, July 22, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Olena Hankivsky and Julia S. Jordan-Zachery. “Introduction: Bringing Intersectionality to Public Policy.” *The Palgrave Handbook of Intersectionality in Public Policy*, 2019, 1–28.

which can include gender, race, religion and sexual orientation. An intersectional approach that considers the complexity of identity should be further explored by the municipal government to consolidate its inclusive approach.

## **Section 2. Where does Montréal stand in circular transition?**

### **2.1. Montréal's circularity metric**

The “circular metric” is a widely used metric developed by Circle Economy which aims to capture the degree of circularity of different economies around the world.<sup>23</sup> This common metric allows for cities and countries to evaluate their progress in comparison to other geographical areas in the world. To assess circularity, the metric captures the share of cycled materials as part of the total material inputs into a certain economy.<sup>24</sup> Cycled materials can be understood as materials that were formerly waste but have been reintroduced into the production and consumption process, including both technical (e.g., plastics, metals) and biological (e.g., wood, manure) materials.<sup>25</sup>

In Québec, the majority of resources its residents use to satisfy their needs and wants are not cycled materials.<sup>26</sup> On average, one resident in Québec currently consumes 32 tonnes of resources and materials per year, higher than the Canadian and European average.<sup>27</sup> Based on the circularity metric, only 3.5% of the total material inputs in Québec are cycled materials, signifying a circularity gap of over 96.5%.<sup>28</sup> This number is lower than the world average of 8.6%.<sup>29</sup> This percentage suggests that Québec is lagging behind with regards to the circular transition.

That being said, this metric, like any other, does not perfectly capture the reality on the ground in each country. One of its shortcomings is that it focuses on cycled materials, when there are in fact many other relevant forms of circular activities, for instance prolonging the life cycle of a product or using cleaner production alternatives in the production of a product. Additionally, this report targets the City of Montréal, whereas this metric has only been used to assess the level of circularity on the provincial level.

### **2.2. Current policy and legal framework of the city of Montréal**

The municipal government has to act in accordance with a set of existing policy and legal frameworks. It is therefore important to consider some relevant constraints in making further recommendations.

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<sup>23</sup> “Global Circularity Gap Report: Measuring the Circular State of the World, Year on Year.” Circularity Gap Reporting Initiative. Circle Economy.

<sup>24</sup> The Circularity Gap Report Quebec 2021. Circle Economy, 2021, 15.

<sup>25</sup> “The Circularity Gap Report Quebec 2021,” 17.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> “The Circularity Gap Report Quebec 2021,” 11.

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## Policy Framework

### *Montréal 2030*

Montréal 2030 is currently the highest-level citywide strategic plan. This report aims to echo the following: (a) Develop a greener and more inclusive economy by supporting the circular and social economy; (b) Advance toward a zero-waste, more sustainable and clean future for the generations to come via reduction at source and recycling and recovering waste; (c) Combat racism and discrimination within the society to ensure inclusion, economic integration.<sup>30</sup>

### *Énoncé d'Achat local et responsable*

The municipal government has instituted the “Statement of Local and Responsible Purchasing Montréal,” which upgrades its procurement policy to prioritize local, responsible and social purchasing of goods and services. This policy aims to make Montréal’s public contracts more accessible to SMEs, which represent 99 percent of the city’s businesses. It also declares the municipal government’s will to promote the business of responsible companies that reduce their ecological footprint, without excluding current suppliers.<sup>31</sup>

### *Plan Climat 2020-2030*

This plan declares Montréal's roadmap to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and a circular economy is recognised as a key policy lever towards achieving this goal. The specific actions that this report would like to highlight include: (a) support for companies wishing to adopt emission-free delivery service; (b) stimulate and consolidate the circular economy by creating networks among businesses, merchants and community organizations (an innovation pole in bio-foods focused on the circular economy will be established); (c) launch a strategy to reduce food waste and facilitate textile donation and recycling in collaboration with the governments of Québec and Canada.<sup>32</sup>

## Legal Framework

### *Réflexe Montréal*

In 2017, Montréal was recognized as a metropolis following the signing of the Réflexe Montréal framework agreement with the Government of Québec. This recognition gave Montréal greater autonomy in several areas of policy-making, including economic development and immigration.<sup>33</sup> Two key departments in the municipality responsible for these mandates are the SDE—the sponsor of this report—and the BINAM (Bureau d’intégration des nouveaux arrivants à Montréal), which oversees the integration of newcomers in Montréal. Some of the recommendations in this report would be best implemented through a collaboration between the two departments, in order to deliver a comprehensive program for immigrant entrepreneurs.

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<sup>30</sup> “Plan Stratégique Montréal 2030.” Ville de Montréal.

<sup>31</sup> “Énoncé d'Achat local et responsable” Ville de Montréal.

<sup>32</sup> “Plan Climat 2020-2030” Ville de Montréal.

<sup>33</sup> Le “Réflexe Montréal” – Entente-cadre sur les engagements du gouvernement du Québec et de la Ville de Montréal pour la reconnaissance du statut particulier de la métropole (2016).

Under this framework agreement, the Quebec National Assembly later enacted the legislation *Loi augmentant l'autonomie et les pouvoirs de la Ville de Montréal, métropole du Québec* which gave the municipality the power to develop programmes or collaborate with non-profit organizations to provide support to the businesses in Montréal.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Municipal Aid Prohibition Act (Loi Sur l'Interdiction de Subventions Municipales)*

In making recommendations concerning financial assistance, this report also recognizes that the Quebec law prohibits the municipality from directly or indirectly assisting any industrial or commercial establishment by owning its shares, granting or lending it money, renting the municipal property and granting tax exemption.<sup>35</sup>

### **2.3. Development of the circular economy ecosystem in Montréal and Québec**

It is within the above policy and legal framework that the transition to a circular economy is happening in Québec. The idea of “circular economy” started emerging in Québec in the early 2000s, making it a relatively new concept. To effectively adopt this transition, a few key players have since emerged in Québec and these actors still interact presently in a large ecosystem.

#### *RECYC-QUÉBEC*

Among the key actors in the circular economy ecosystem is Recyc-Québec, a crown corporation supporting circular initiatives with the goal of reducing waste.<sup>36</sup> For instance, Recyc-Québec provides financial support to Québec’s industrial symbiosis actors.<sup>37</sup> These actors are grouped under regional networks under the name of Synergie Québec, and managed by the Centre de Transfert Technologique en Écologie Industrielle (CTTÉI).<sup>38</sup>

#### *Institut EDDEC*

The Institut EDDEC (Institut de l'environnement, du développement durable et de l'économie circulaire) was created in 2014 in Montreal.<sup>39</sup> In 2015, the Institut EDDEC formed the *Pôle québécois de concertation sur l'économie circulaire*, a multi-stakeholder roundtable that seeks to develop the province’s circular economy by engaging actors in academia, government and industry.<sup>40</sup> This roundtable was designed in order to include the voices of different sectors in Québec’s approach to circular economy. As stated in Section 1.3, the “Pôle” developed the definition of circular economy for Québec and the model of twelve strategies of circular economy mentioned above, which have been used by the city of Montréal until now to assess circularity of businesses.

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<sup>34</sup> “Adoption Du Projet De Loi No 121 - Montréal, Officiellement Reconnue Métropole Du Québec.” Gouvernement du Québec. Cabinet de la ministre des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation, September 21, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> “Loi sur l'interdiction de subventions municipales.” Gouvernement du Québec.

<sup>36</sup> “RECYC-QUÉBEC - Notre mission, vision, mandat et nos valeurs”, RECYC-QUÉBEC. Accessed 16th June 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Industrial symbiosis: a process by which one company’s waste becomes another’s input.

<sup>38</sup> “À propos” Synergie Québec. Accessed 16th June 2022.

<sup>39</sup> “La Démarche Québécoise - Étapes Clés,” Québec Circulaire. Accessed July 5, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

## CERIEC

In 2019, the mandate of the Institut EDDEC expired.<sup>41</sup> It was then replaced by the Centre d'études et de recherches intersectorielles en économie circulaire (CERIEC) in 2020, hosted within the École de Technologie Supérieure (ETS).<sup>42</sup> The CERIEC is currently a key actor of the Quebec circular economy ecosystem, especially in circular economy knowledge production. Moreover, it moderates both the multi-stakeholder roundtable (*Pôle québécois de concertation sur l'économie circulaire*) and the implementation committee. The CERIEC also manages Québec Circulaire, a platform that works to compile all circular economy-related initiatives, tools and expertise that are currently dispersed and will be multiplying in the coming years across Quebec.<sup>43</sup> At the city scale, Montréal Circulaire was created under the platform Québec Circulaire to compile the same types of activities.<sup>44</sup> These platforms are created to foster knowledge-sharing between different circular actors. Appendix 2 maps out all the members of the *Pôle québécois de concertation*, which is a good representation of the circular economy ecosystem in Québec.

### **Section 3. The missing piece in the circular economy: a “just transition”**

On the global scale, the development of a circular economy in the policy arena has been criticized for lacking social and humanistic perspectives. In addition, the circular transition has been predominantly tackled as a technocratic and managerial issue.<sup>45</sup> Given that the prominent actors of Québec's circular economy ecosystem are mostly technical experts, and their diversity has not been considered in the development of this ecosystem, this critique also depicts the Montréal context. The *just transition* will be used in this report as a guiding framework to demonstrate the value of including diversity, and in particular immigrant entrepreneurs, in Montréal's circular transition.

#### **3.1. What is a *just transition*?**

The term *just transition* was first used by trade unions in North America in the late 20th century to defend the need for social considerations about labor impacts in the energy transition<sup>46</sup>. Presently, the concept of *just transition* is broadly understood as a transition which brings together both social justice concerns and the ecological transition to a sustainable society. Although the term is currently used in discussions on the net-zero transition, it is also applicable to the circular transition.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> “La Démarche Québécoise”

<sup>43</sup> “La Plateforme.” Québec Circulaire. Accessed July 6, 2022.

<sup>44</sup> “Montréal Circulaire.” Québec Circulaire. Accessed July 6, 2022.

<sup>45</sup> Nanna Rask. “An Intersectional Reading of Circular Economy Policies: Towards Just and Sufficiency-Driven Sustainabilities.” *Local Environment*, 2022, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2022.2040467>.

<sup>46</sup> Patrick Schröder, (2020, December 11). Promoting a just transition to an inclusive circular economy. Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank.

<sup>47</sup> Schröder, “Promoting”12.

For the purpose of this report, one particular aspect of a *just transition* is relevant: the need for *procedural justice* in the transition.<sup>48</sup> Procedural justice refers to the inclusion or exclusion of actors from decision-making processes. In the case of the circular economy transition, this means that inclusion of diverse actors at each step of policy making (agenda-setting, policy decision, implementation and evaluation) is a determining factor in the *just transition*.

The commitment to reinforcing “solidarity, equity and inclusion” has been expressed by the municipal government in its Strategic Plan “Montréal 2030”.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, implementing a *just transition* does not only address the social imperatives of the city, it also ensures the long-term sustainability of the circular transition.

### 3.2. The social opportunities of a just transition

Despite frequent framing of the circular economy transition as a technical transition, it is important to note that the transition can also be pursued with a focus on advancing broader social goals.<sup>50</sup> For instance, the circular economy transition could influence the acceleration of human development frameworks such as the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Circular economy initiatives work to reduce global waste and advance the creation of employment, which are both current global development challenges, particularly highlighted in the SDG framework (SDG 8 and 11).<sup>51</sup> Additionally, the circular economy can be understood as a shift from an efficiency-oriented to a sufficiency-oriented approach.<sup>52</sup> With an efficiency-oriented approach, the economy focuses on producing in the most efficient way possible, whereas the sufficiency-oriented approach aims to answer to human needs and wellbeing<sup>53</sup>. This aspect is particularly salient in “Strategy 9” in Québec’s ecosystem: the functional economy. This promotes the creation of a less extractive economy, and focuses on ensuring basic needs are fulfilled first and foremost.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, adopting a *just transition* framework can also unlock new areas of opportunities for the circular transition. For instance, more attention could be devoted to the impact of circular economy and gender equality (SDG 5: Gender Equality) or the impact of circular economy and inequalities (SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities).<sup>55</sup> In sum, using a *just transition* approach allows the municipal government to not only achieve its environmental targets but also to do so in a way that advances its broader social and development objectives.

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<sup>48</sup> Schröder, “Promoting”, 15.

<sup>49</sup> “Plan Stratégique Montréal 2030.” Ville de Montréal.

<sup>50</sup> Schröder, “Promoting”, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Schröder, “Promoting”, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Rask, “An Intersectional”, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Schröder, “Promoting”, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Patrick Schröder, Alexandre Lemille, and Peter Desmond, “Making the Circular Economy Work for Human Development,” *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 156 (2020).

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### 3.3. The economic opportunities of a just transition

While the circular economy is set to increase innovation in various industries and create new jobs, there is a growing concern that this transition may crowd out certain business sectors that are unable to employ the necessary innovation to successfully adopt the circular economy<sup>56</sup>. Implementing a *just transition* to the circular economy will ensure that the contributions of these sectors are accommodated through this transition.

In addition, applying a *just transition* approach to the circular economy is imperative, as it promotes the inclusion of diverse communities, which introduces numerous economic opportunities. Various studies have indicated how diverse teams are more likely to foster business innovation and better anticipate shifts in consumer needs and consumption patterns.<sup>57</sup> Based on this idea, including diverse stakeholders in the circular economy would create heightened economic opportunities for the city, as more people would integrate innovative practices and contribute to the economy's growth. Similarly, given that diverse communities understand their needs best, using a *just transition* framework leads to more effective circular economy policies for all target populations.

## **Section 4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Research and Data Collection**

#### *Desktop Research*

Literary research was conducted on peer-reviewed articles and gray literature, through a keyword search on McGill Library's portal. Keywords for the search included: "circular economy", "entrepreneurship", "SME" and "immigrant entrepreneurship". Statistical data on enterprises and demographics were consulted from the following platforms: Québec en statistiques, Montréal en statistiques. In the timeframe dedicated to this project, there were no academic articles or data sets identified that directly address the intersection of immigrant entrepreneurs and the circular economy. Thus, most literary research used to support the findings of this report only incorporated two out of three of the relevant themes.

#### *Stakeholder Consultations*

Insights were also obtained through stakeholder consultations. A total of eighteen organizations were represented in this consultation. Data was collected in the format of oral interviews of between thirty minutes to an hour in duration. The organizations consulted ranged from organizations representing immigrant communities, chambers of commerce, research institutes and notable scholars, as well as relevant public policy actors of the circular economy ecosystem.

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<sup>56</sup> Schröder, "Promoting", 13.

<sup>57</sup> Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle et al., "Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters," McKinsey & Company, April 6, 2022.

These consultations supplemented the literature review in two ways. Firstly, they allowed for insights into all of the main themes. Secondly, the stakeholder interviews provided a nuanced understanding of Montréal's context - in particular the ground-level interactions between actors of the ecosystem.

Stakeholders insights have been incorporated into this report and will be explicitly cited as obtained through "stakeholder consultation". However, in order to protect the identity of the interviewed experts, direct quotations will not be provided when their insights are used.

### *Policy case studies*

When providing recommendations to the municipal government, this report makes reference to existing case studies, obtained from all over the world. These case studies are consulted to assess the feasibility and potential success of recommendations. These case studies have been selected based on their performances and also for their applicability to the context of Montréal. These applied case studies also provide a concrete example which could be useful to the municipal government in the implementation phase of these recommendations.

## **4.2. Data analysis**

In collecting and analyzing data, two research questions were used:

- Why is there less participation of immigrant entrepreneurs in circular economy initiatives?
- How can the participation of immigrant entrepreneurs in circularity be increased?

These two questions guided both literary research and stakeholder consultations. The first question consists in understanding the current context: how does the circular economy ecosystem function in practice, and what are some of the barriers for immigrant entrepreneurs to be active participants. The second question consists in coming up with solutions that the city could implement to increase this participation.

In answering these two questions, it became clear that the research leading up to the recommendations should follow a step-by-step approach.

- In the first step, it is important to understand the enablers and barriers of why a certain business would adopt circular practices, and how these enablers and barriers might be different for an immigrant entrepreneur.
- In the second step, the existing assistance programs would be evaluated on their suitability to incentivize immigrant businesses to adopt circularity, and potential gaps in current assistance would thus be identified.
- In the third and last step, creative recommendations will be provided to close these gaps and enable immigrant entrepreneurs to become active participants in the circular economy transition in Montréal.

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### 4.3. Limitations

#### *Limitations in desktop research*

Literary research was limited to articles available in English and French, and available free of charge through the McGill library portal.

#### *Limitation in stakeholder consultations*

Due to logistical constraints, the authors of this report were not able to collect data from the target population: immigrant entrepreneurs. A consultation with immigrant entrepreneurs would have required a review and approval by McGill's Research Ethics Board Office. Given that only eight months are allotted for this project, seeking approval would have significantly reduced the amount of time the authors could have devoted to obtaining insights. The collection of data was thus limited to subject matter experts who may not have personal stakes in this question.

In addition, due to public health concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors of this report were only able to hold interviews through video calls.

#### *Limitation in analysis methodology*

The mandate given to this project rests on an observation that immigrant entrepreneurs are not well represented in circular economy initiatives supported by the municipal government. An assumption has thus been made that immigrant entrepreneurs participate less in circular economy initiatives than non-immigrant entrepreneurs, without any data to support this observation. Due to the fact that this project is not suitable for the collection of personal and sensitive personal data, it was not possible to measure the accuracy of such an observation. It would be extremely valuable for another project to undertake the data collection, so that the city can enact precise, evidence-based policies to produce more inclusive circular initiatives.

## **Section 5: A targeted approach for mobilizing immigrant entrepreneurs**

### **5.1. Immigrant entrepreneurs bring great economic potential to the Quebec economy**

Immigrant entrepreneurs significantly contribute to Québec's economy. Data from the Quebec Entrepreneurial Index indicates that immigrant entrepreneurs express a higher intention to become an entrepreneur, compared to their native-born counterparts.<sup>58</sup> This is consistent with Canada-wide data, which indicates that immigrant entrepreneurs have higher rates of intentions to open a business, as well as higher business ownership and self-employment rates, compared to native-born entrepreneurs.<sup>59</sup> In addition, research has indicated that country-wide, immigrant-owned SMEs invest more in innovation than native-born owned firms, particularly in process (17.0% of all immigrant entrepreneurs versus 14.1% of all native-born entrepreneurs) and market innovations

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<sup>58</sup> Mihai I, and Azoulay A. "L'entrepreneuriat immigrant : un propulseur au futur de l'entrepreneuriat québécois." *Indice entrepreneurial québécois* (blog), 2018.

<sup>59</sup>Garnett Picot and Yuri Ostrosovsky, "Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Canada: Highlights from Recent Studies," Statistics Canada, September 2021.

(19.2% of all immigrant entrepreneurs versus 15.6% of all native-born entrepreneurs).<sup>60</sup> These findings are consistent with a study conducted in Québec in 2016 which found that immigrant owned firms have a higher intention to invest in innovation than native-born firms.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, one out of three Montréalers is currently an immigrant and the provincial government has committed to continue welcoming a fixed quota of immigrants each year to address its aging population issue.<sup>62</sup> Montreal also has the second-highest proportion of immigrant business owners in North America (33.0% of business owners in Montréal are immigrants), second only to Silicon Valley.<sup>63</sup> It is likely that immigrant entrepreneurs will continue to play a considerable part in Montréal's economy.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, it is imperative for the municipal government to include its immigrant entrepreneurs in its circular economy transition, as they offer economic contributions that have the potential to accelerate the city's transition.

## **5.2. Immigrant entrepreneurs face challenges in realizing their business ambitions**

The gap between the intention to start a business (the percentage of people who intend to open a business relative to the total population) and the actual ownership of business (the percentage of people who launch and actually own a business relative to the total population) could be interpreted as a proxy for the ease for the entrepreneur to transform a business idea into ownership of a business. For immigrant entrepreneurs in Quebec, according to the Quebec Entrepreneurial Index, their rate of intention to open a business surpasses that of native-born entrepreneurs—represented by 28% of the total immigrant population vs. 14.7% of the total native-born population.<sup>65</sup> However, at the ownership phase, the proportion of businesses ownership among immigrant entrepreneurs as native-born entrepreneurs is almost the same, that is—5.9% of immigrants have their own business versus 5.5% of native-born Quebecers, even though immigrants have a much higher intention to launch a business.<sup>66</sup> The gap between intention and ownership is thus larger for immigrant entrepreneurs than for native-born entrepreneurs. This could be interpreted as an indication that it is generally harder for immigrant entrepreneurs to translate their business ideas into business ownership.<sup>67</sup>

Another noteworthy measure is the gap in the rate of closure between immigrant entrepreneurs and native-born entrepreneurs. In Quebec, businesses established by immigrant entrepreneurs have experienced a higher rate of closure than the ones established by native-born entrepreneurs in recent

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<sup>60</sup> Picot and Ostrosvsky, "Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Canada", 4.

<sup>61</sup> Mihai and Azoulay, "L'entrepreneuriat immigrant", 5.

<sup>62</sup> "Census Profile, 2016 Census- Montréal," Census of Population.Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, June 2016.

<sup>63</sup> "Action Plan for Entrepreneurship" Ville de Montréal. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

<sup>64</sup> Jean-Guy Côté et al, "Le Vieillissement De La Population Et l'Économie Du Québec," *Institut Du Québec*, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> "Le Québec Entrepreneurial, Un an Depuis Le Début De La Pandémie," *Indice entrepreneurial québécois*, November, 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Luis, Cisneros et al, 'Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Quebec: An Entrepreneurial Ecosystem that Catalyzes or Inhibits?,' *Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub*. December 2021.

<sup>67</sup> Luis, Cisneros et al, "Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Quebec," 18.

years.<sup>68</sup> One reason could be that immigrant entrepreneurs generally encounter unique obstacles not experienced by their native-born counterparts, particularly with respect to access to external financing, the general precariousness of their financial situation and less access to networking circles.<sup>69</sup>

This data suggests that while immigrant entrepreneurs in Quebec have a high economic potential, they struggle to fully realize their entrepreneurial ambitions. Given that the risk of closure is higher for immigrant entrepreneurs, immigrant entrepreneurs may find it more difficult than native-born entrepreneurs to adopt a circular approach.

It is important to note that this report did not find Montréal-specific data on the topics above. Nonetheless, given that Montréal’s economy accounts for more than 50% of Quebec’s economy, this report assumes that the Quebec data is largely representative of the situation in Montréal.<sup>70</sup>

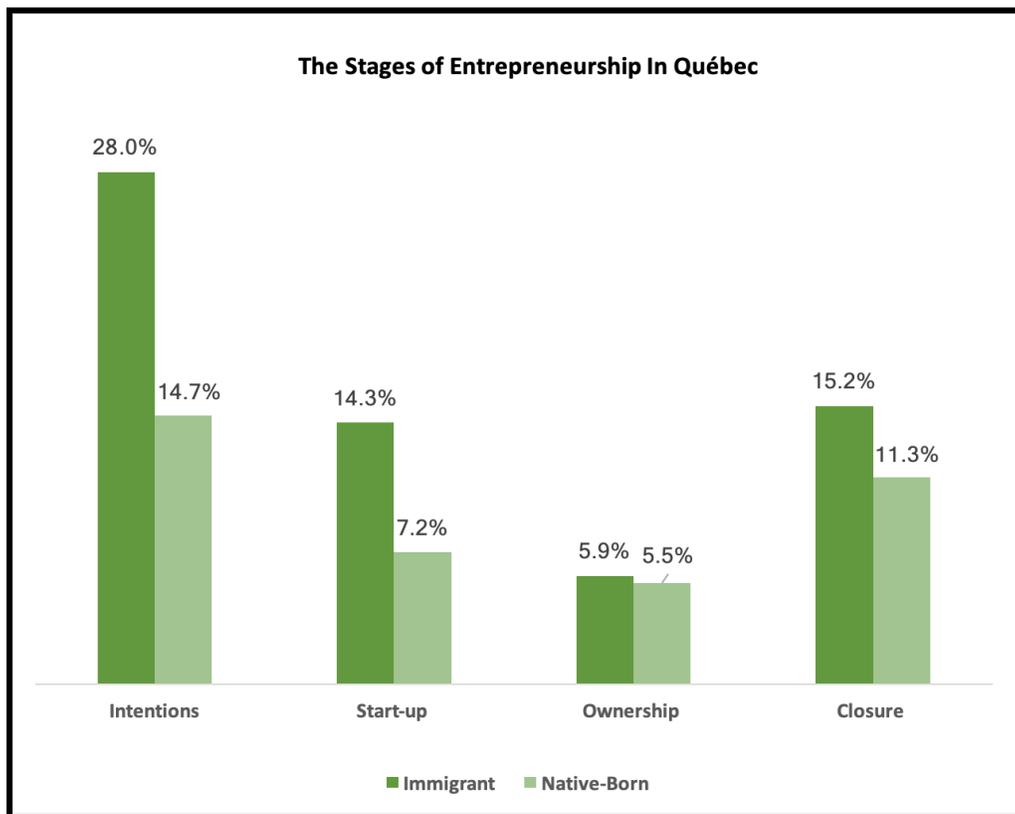


Figure 2: Illustration of the data from “l’Indice entrepreneurial québécois 2018”<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Luis, Cisneros et al, 22.

<sup>69</sup> Luis, Cisneros et al, 22.

<sup>70</sup> “Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at Basic Prices, by Census Metropolitan Area (CMA),” Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, December 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Mihai and Azoulay, “L’entrepreneuriat immigrant”, 5.

### **5.3. Immigrant entrepreneurs are concentrated in sectors that are sidelined from the current circular ecosystem**

As discussed in [Section 2.3](#), the circular economy development in Québec has focused on industrial processes relevant to large enterprises. In particular, a study published by the CERIEC on the economic impact of the circular economy has highlighted the following as priority sectors: agro-food, energy, construction, and metals.<sup>72</sup> However, immigrant entrepreneurs are mostly concentrated in small enterprises in the service sector, for which circular economy applications remain under-researched so far.

#### **Concentration in the service sector**

On the Canadian scale, immigrant entrepreneurs were the most largely represented in service sectors, according to the 2016 Census. In the following sectors, immigrant entrepreneurs constituted an equal or larger share than non-immigrant entrepreneurs: restaurants (50% of all entrepreneurs owning a business in this sector are immigrants), computer systems design and services (51%), grocery stores (53%) and truck transportation (56%).<sup>73</sup> In Québec, according to an analysis conducted by the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub in 2021, immigrant entrepreneurs were mostly concentrated in professional, scientific and technical services (28.9% of all immigrant entrepreneurs), health care and social services (13.3%). These two categories alone represent over a third of all immigrant entrepreneurs surveyed (42.2% of all immigrant entrepreneurs).<sup>74</sup> In Montréal, stakeholder consultation has pointed to restaurant, retail, and other services (such as hair salons) as being prominent sectors for immigrant entrepreneurs.

#### **Concentration in small size firms**

At the national level, immigrant-owned firms have been found to be usually smaller than firms owned by Canadian-born entrepreneurs.<sup>75</sup> In Québec, data also shows that immigrant entrepreneurs are more likely to own a “micro-firm” (firms with less than five employees) than native-born entrepreneurs.<sup>76</sup> It is also important to note that due to the relatively young age of the firms established by immigrant entrepreneurs, these firms contribute significantly to the net job creation each year in Canada.<sup>77</sup> Stakeholder consultation in Montréal has confirmed that a considerable number of immigrant entrepreneurs in Montréal run micro-firms.

Given the existing data on the prevalent size and sectors, it becomes clear that the municipal government should pay special attention to including immigrant entrepreneurs in the circular economy.

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<sup>72</sup> “Économie Circulaire Au Québec: Opportunités Et Impacts Économiques,” Éco Entreprise Québec, March 2018.

<sup>73</sup> “Immigration Matters in Business,” Government of Canada (Gouvernement du Canada), 2022.

<sup>74</sup> Luis, Cisneros et al, “Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Quebec,” 17.

<sup>75</sup> Picot and Ostrosvsky, “Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Canada,” 1.

<sup>76</sup> Mihai and Azoulay, “L’entrepreneuriat immigrant,” 6.

<sup>77</sup> Picot and Ostrosvsky, “Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Canada,” 4.

## **Section 6. Integrating circularity: barriers & enablers for immigrant entrepreneurs**

In order to find the necessary policy interventions to increase participation of immigrant entrepreneurs, it is important to first understand what the circular economy entails for businesses. In particular, it is crucial to identify the barriers and enablers for immigrant entrepreneurs to adopt circular practices.

### **6.1. Circularity for SMEs**

#### **Circular Business Models**

Entrepreneurs can participate in the circular transition by adopting a circular business model (CBM). The idea of a circular business model has been developing very intensely in recent years, but there is no consensus in the existing literature on a single approach.<sup>78</sup>

Circular business models differ from other sustainable business models in that they incorporate “solutions for the circular economy” by: closing, slowing, narrowing, intensifying, or dematerializing resource loops.<sup>79</sup> In other words, they abandon a “cradle-to-grave” flow and adopt a “cradle-to-cradle” flow<sup>80</sup>, where resource use is reduced as much as possible for the creation of a product. A circular business model can also be accompanied by a circular supply chain to fully implement a circular approach.<sup>81</sup>

#### **Circularity by firm size, age, and growth**

Current literature suggests that green technology is better implemented by mature and large companies. That is to say, large companies are more likely to transform green technology into firm growth. This could possibly be due to their greater firm capabilities and financial resources given that they are more established firms.<sup>82</sup>

Another interesting finding in the current literature is that the superior effect of green technologies does not extend to the extreme percentiles of growth rate distribution. This means that green technologies do not improve growth for struggling firms and rapidly growing firms. It is thus advisable, based on these findings, to exercise caution when advising low-growth SMEs to adopt circular practices.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Marek Jabłoński, “The Use of Sustainable Business Model Archetypes in the Design of Circular Business Models in the Digital Economy,” *Advances in Finance, Accounting, and Economics*, 2020, pp. 1-18.

<sup>79</sup> Martin Geissdoerfer et al., “Business Models and Supply Chains for the Circular Economy,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 190 (2018): pp. 712-721.

<sup>80</sup> Nancy M. Bocken et al., “Product Design and Business Model Strategies for a Circular Economy,” *Journal of Industrial and Production Engineering* 33, no. 5 (2016): pp. 308-320.

<sup>81</sup> Nancy M. Bocken et al., “Product and Business Model Strategies”, 312.

<sup>82</sup> Mili Shrivastava and Jagannadha Pawan Tamvada, “Which Green Matters for Whom? Greening and Firm Performance across Age and Size Distribution of Firms,” *Small Business Economics* 52, no. 4 (2017): pp. 951-968.

<sup>83</sup> Shrivastava and Tamvada, “Which Green Matters for Whom?,” 962.

## 6.2. Enablers for adopting a circular business model

Enablers describe the reason that prompts entrepreneurs to adopt a circular business model. The following enablers have been identified through a review of existing literature on the adoption of circularity by SMEs in particular.<sup>84</sup>

### Enablers for SMEs

- Networking (building partnerships, being part of industrial clusters, involvement of stakeholders)<sup>85 86</sup>
- Environmental culture or commitment<sup>87 88</sup>
- Financial capability (increased profitability or value capture)<sup>89 90</sup>
- Political or legal incentives<sup>91</sup>
- Social (exposure, recognition<sup>92</sup> community awareness and expectations)<sup>93</sup>
- Support from the demand network (customer demand for the circular product)<sup>94</sup>

### Heightened enablers for immigrant entrepreneurs in Montréal

The stakeholder consultations of this report suggests that larger financial resources are the most effective enabler for immigrant entrepreneurs to adopt CBM. This is consistent with the review of existing literature and data for a few reasons. Firstly, immigrant entrepreneurs are more likely to own smaller firms, therefore financial viability is a priority (Section 5.3.). Secondly, immigrant entrepreneurs have a heightened risk of closures, suggesting that keeping their businesses afloat is a concern (Section 5.2.). Therefore, presenting the circular economy as a financially lucrative opportunity can increase the participation of immigrant entrepreneurs.

## 6.3. Barriers in adopting a circular business model

For all entrepreneurs, the barriers to adopting circular practices are generally: a lack of time, a lack of information, or a lack of funding. These three barriers were mentioned by multiple stakeholders as being considerable obstacles for entrepreneurs in the Montréal context. In the existing literature, the following barriers are laid out.

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<sup>84</sup> Csongor, Bajnóczki et al., "The Perspective of SMEs on the Challenges of the Circular Economy in the 21st Century Hungary," *Progress in Agricultural Engineering Sciences* 17, no. 1 (August 2021): pp. 101-132.

<sup>85</sup> Vasileios Rizos et al., "The Circular Economy: Barriers and Opportunities for SMEs," *CEPS Working Document*, 2015.

<sup>86</sup> Zhejun Min et al., "Proposing Circular Economy Ecosystem for Chinese Smes: A Systematic Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 5 (January 2021): p. 2395.

<sup>87</sup> Rizos, "The Circular Economy," 10.

<sup>88</sup> Min, "Proposing Circular," 6.

<sup>89</sup> Min, 6.

<sup>90</sup> Rizos, "The Circular Economy Economy Ecosystem," 14.

<sup>91</sup> Min, "Proposing Circular Economy," 6.

<sup>92</sup> Rizos, "The Circular Economy," 16.

<sup>93</sup> Min, "Proposing Circular Economy Ecosystem," 6.

<sup>94</sup> Rizos, "The Circular Economy," 16.

## Barriers for SMEs

- Lack of human resources (lack of time);
- Lack of technical expertise;
- Lack of financial capability (no prospect of profitability or value capture);
- Political or legal barriers (too complex or disincentivizing regulations);
- Economic barriers (inadequate funding mechanism or market structure).<sup>95 96</sup>

## Heightened barriers for immigrant entrepreneurs in Montréal

Immigrant entrepreneurs face a particular set of challenges that heighten some of the barriers to circularity mentioned above. Stakeholder consultation in Montréal has pointed to the following barriers as being particularly challenging:

- Understanding the local regulatory environment, especially for newcomers. Montréal has complex, overlapping regulations. Language barriers can also be an issue.
- Financing on low or no credit history in Canada due to their recent arrival. With financing being a real challenge, immigrant entrepreneurs often do not have the extra funding and level of comfort necessary in their business to take risks and invest in innovations such as more circular practices.
- The lack of local networks and connections is a known obstacle for immigrants. Integration into the broader business community can be particularly challenging for immigrant entrepreneurs.

## **Section 7. Gaps in Montréal's circular economy programs for immigrant entrepreneurs**

### 7.1. Funding

#### *Existing funding opportunities*

There are various funding opportunities available for circular businesses in Québec. Fonds économie circulaire<sup>97</sup> is particularly relevant in the funding ecosystem - and this was created through a collaboration between *Recyc-Québec*, *Fondaction*, and the municipal government. The fund's objective is to finance and assist young businesses that have adopted circular economy business principles in their business models and practices. The targeted sectors for the fund are: agri-food; eco-transition; recycling and recovery of resources. In addition to receiving funding, SMEs also receive mentorship from experts, along with a large network of similar businesses or potential financial partners that guide them through developing their businesses.

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<sup>95</sup> Rizos, "The Circular Economy," 16.

<sup>96</sup> Min, "Proposing Circular Economy Ecosystem," 6.

<sup>97</sup> "Fonds Économie Circulaire." Fondaction. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

Furthermore, there are other funding streams that exist within Montréal's circular economy ecosystem, such as Fonds Éco Leader,<sup>98</sup> Le Fonds Moins c'est plus,<sup>99</sup> Fonds Développement industriel et durable,<sup>100</sup> but the municipality does not have full discretion on the operation and distribution of these funds.

### *Gaps*

While the circular economy funding ecosystem has created financing opportunities for various enterprises, they are not well-tailored for the specific needs of the immigrant entrepreneurs in Montréal. As highlighted previously ([Section 5.3.](#)), immigrant entrepreneurs mostly operate in the service sector. The current funding options allows any business to apply; however, the service sector is not identified as a priority sector.

Finally, the *Fonds Économie Circulaire* targets large businesses, making it difficult for SMEs to qualify, and this observation extends to other funds available in Québec. Research and stakeholder consultations also suggest that there are limited efforts in place to communicate these funding opportunities to immigrant entrepreneurs. While funding exists, many immigrant entrepreneurs remain unaware of the available funding options that are relevant to their business. This has resulted in missed opportunities.

### *Policy levers*

- Having the appropriate type of business financing is important for building high-growth and innovative SMEs. Funding that is accessible and accommodating to the specialized needs of immigrant entrepreneurs will unlock their potential in building a successful circular business.
- Funding streams that are tailored towards mobilizing SMEs would be an important policy lever. Beyond firm size, service-sector financing would be a targeted approach.
- Developing a comprehensive plan around the promotion of existing funds within immigrant communities will address the existing information gaps. Improving awareness of funding requires better outreach and communication to inform immigrant entrepreneurs of the different streams and the eligibility criteria.

## **7.2. Knowledge**

### *Existing knowledge-sharing mechanism*

Currently, the CERIEC is a key driver of the CE knowledge-sharing system in Montréal: the organization offers various annual workshops, training, and academic courses to numerous actors in the circular economy ecosystem. These activities also serve as a platform for the actors to connect with one another, and learn from each other's best practices.

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<sup>98</sup> "Adopter Des Pratiques Écoresponsables Et Des Technologies Propres.," Fonds Éco Leader, March 2022.

<sup>99</sup> "Le Fonds Moins c'est plus : Moins d'empreinte, plus d'impact!," La Ruche, July 2022.

<sup>100</sup> "Fonds Développement Industriel et Durable." PME MTL. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

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Insights from the stakeholder consultations revealed that many immigrant entrepreneurs have not considered adopting circular practices, because their primary focus is to manage their day-to-day business operations and keep their businesses afloat. Given their short-term focus, immigrant entrepreneurs are less likely to spend their resources to research and integrate circular economy practices into their businesses. Considerable efforts should be put into communicating the benefits of adopting circular economy strategies while accounting for the realities of immigrant businesses.

### *Gaps*

There has been no initiative so far that aims at communicating the benefits of a circular transition to immigrant entrepreneurs. Within the knowledge-sharing apparatus itself, diverse representation matters as diverse experts can serve as role models, assist with networking, and provide mentoring to a more diverse audience.<sup>101</sup> Stakeholder consultations have confirmed that diverse knowledge disseminators are crucial, as they are able to speak to the lived realities of diverse entrepreneurs. There is a missed opportunity in reaching out and appealing to immigrant entrepreneurs' businesses in the current knowledge-sharing mechanisms in place.

### *Policy Levers*

- To encourage more immigrant entrepreneurs to adopt a circular business model, the municipal government should aim to present the concept of circularity to entrepreneurs in an actionable way. In particular, this includes creating information sources that guide the transition of businesses that include all size firms and non-conventional sectors such as the service sector.
- To facilitate the dissemination of information on the circular economy to immigrant entrepreneurs, the municipal government could collaborate with organizations that already have an established relationship with immigrant communities and/or experience in working with immigrant entrepreneurs. Immigrant entrepreneurs can then receive the information from a source that they trust, visualize circularity for their business, and be incentivized to adopt a circular business model.
- The municipal government could also engage in creating opportunities for consumers and the overall community to learn about the value of circular products. This would lead to more awareness and demand among consumers for circular products or services, and incentivize entrepreneurs to adopt a circular business model to satisfy the demand of their consumers.
- Building on the circular business model, digitalization and digital technologies have also been identified in literature as key enablers for upscaling the circular economy.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Dorceta Taylor, "The state of diversity in environmental organizations," Green 2.0 Working Group, 2014.

<sup>102</sup> "Intelligent Assets: Unlocking the Circular Economy Potential," Ellen MacArthur Foundation, August 2016.

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### 7.3. Agenda-setting

#### *Existing consultation and data collection mechanism*

Currently, the voice of immigrant entrepreneurs in the development of the circular economy ecosystem in Montréal is only indirectly present through the “Pôle de concertation”. In this multi-stakeholder roundtable, *Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec* is present, and this organization represents some ethnic chambers such as the Italian and Lebanese chambers of commerce.<sup>103</sup>

Montréal Circulaire—managed by the CERIEC—serves as a platform that compiles all circular economy-related initiatives being implemented by a variety of actors in Montréal. Its compiling efforts help policymakers and researchers gain insights into the trends and focus in the circular economy ecosystem, and assess the city’s circularity. Most importantly, the platform can help the municipal government set its agenda for the circular transition. The municipal government has had a close working relationship with the CERIEC through many projects and has been its main funding partner for Montréal Circulaire.

#### *Gaps*

In the current ecosystem, many ethnic chambers of commerce are left out because they are not part of the *Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec*. Including more chambers of commerce directly in the Pôle presents opportunities to include different ethnic chambers of commerce in the consultations and institutionalize their participation. This speaks to the need for procedural justice mentioned in [Section 3.1](#), as all relevant stakeholders should be included as much as possible in the decision-making process. Even so, as of the timing of this report, the “Pôle de Concertation” is not systematically consulted for all circular economy initiatives undertaken by the city.

Moreover, stakeholder consultation has also indicated that communities of immigrant entrepreneurs feel excluded from the outreach of the municipality to develop its circular economy agenda. They have also pointed to a mismatch between the circular economy agenda and the priorities of most immigrant entrepreneurs. Lastly, stakeholders also indicated that they were under the impression that there is a lack of immigrant representation within the municipality's staff, which they feel has contributed to the city’s lack of understanding of their lived realities.

On the platform Montréal Circulaire, the lack of data collection on the state of diversity among the people who work in the field of circular economy hinders the municipal government from assessing the inclusivity of Montréal’s circular transition. Without collecting this data, it is difficult to assess

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<sup>103</sup> “Répertoires Des Chambres De Commerce,” *Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec*. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

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how involved immigrant entrepreneurs really are in adopting circular practices, making it harder to create policies that promote their participation in a *just transition*.

### *Policy levers*

- As the municipal government initiates stakeholder consultations for its next circular economy roadmap, the inclusion of diverse actors should be a priority.
- This includes more efforts to include stakeholders who are not currently included in the city's close network. In this particular context, the municipal government could work to provide a space for discussion to occur between municipal officials, academics, and businesses for future decision-making relevant to the circular agenda. In this process, the municipal government should also ensure that diverse perspectives are represented.
- Additionally, to better serve its diverse entrepreneurs, the municipal government needs to engage in meaningful data collection to assess the effectiveness of its current policies. The collection of personal demographic data can be a difficult endeavor but the municipal government is currently building up capacity in this regard. For instance, the *Service de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion Sociale* (SDIS) of the municipal government is currently engaged in the building of a digital data exchange platform capturing Montréal's diverse population. Collaboration with this department could ensure best practices to improve the use of diversity data for shaping better policies.

The two aforementioned approaches would give a chance to less connected entrepreneurs, such as immigrant entrepreneurs, to have their voices heard in the process of agenda-setting.

## **Section 8. Recommendations**

In making the following recommendations, the report provides the rationale and details for each recommendation, as well as a case study. Additionally, a high-level cost-benefit consideration is provided. Time horizons are provided as either short-term, medium-term or long-term, describing when each recommendation would start having a positive impact on the circularity of Montréal. Given that each "Economic Development Strategy" for the SDE Department is set for a timespan of 4 years, the time horizons are described in the following way.

Short-term refers to a time horizon of 2 years or less. Medium-term is understood as anything between 2 and 4 years (a longer process but which can be realized within one cycle of development strategy). Lastly, the long-term refers to any time horizon of 5 years and above, which would span over several consecutive development strategies.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> "Montréal Geared Up For Tomorrow: 2018-2022 Economic Development Strategy," Ville de Montréal. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

## 8.1. Funding Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: A circular economy microcredit loan

#### Rationale:

- Immigrant entrepreneurs face heightened barriers ([Section 6.3](#)) in adopting circularity due to unique financial challenges (no credit history; low annual revenues) preventing them from accessing the circular funds presently available.
- This program seeks to promote the adoption of a circular business model among immigrant entrepreneurs by offering a funding option which is more accessible and accommodating to immigrant entrepreneurs that do not qualify for the funding in traditional financial institutions.
- The recommendation favors a microcredit loan versus a grant, as loans are in general less competitive and they offer recipients the autonomy to choose which aspects of their businesses they want to invest in.<sup>105</sup>

#### Details:

- The municipal government would launch a call-for-project to identify an impact-oriented investor interested in funding a circular economy transition loan. The intention of the loan would be to persuade smaller, diverse entrepreneurs to adopt circularity.
- The municipal government would also be involved in selecting the appropriate microfinancing organization in charge of managing and distributing the circular economy loan.
- Some non-for-profit micro-financing organizations to consider include *Montréal Microcrédit*; *Micro Entreprendre*; *Le Moulin Microcrédits*.
- The recommended criteria for eligibility for the loan would be developed by the selected microcredit and emphasize the following:
  - (1) Detailed breakdown of the allocation of funds (e.g portion x is dedicated for innovation; portion y is dedicated to adopt CBM, etc);
  - (2) The entrepreneur is excluded from conventional funding options; or belongs to a modest income group.
- An evaluation and monitoring report would be produced quarterly to assess the progress of the project.

#### Cost Benefit Analysis:

- *Costs: Low.* The costs for this recommendation are predicted to be low, as the municipal government will mainly have to coordinate the establishment of a partnership between the impact-orientated investor and the micro-financing organization.
- *Benefits: High.* Immigrant entrepreneurs will have access to an alternative source of funding that facilitates their transition into the circular economy. In addition, this funding will incentivize more immigrant entrepreneurs to pursue a circular business model, given that there is a funding opportunity easier to qualify for.

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<sup>105</sup> "Grant vs Loan: What's the Difference?," Ownr Blog, June 8, 2022.

### Time horizon: Medium Term

The projected timeline for this recommendation is the medium-term. This is because it would take some time to create a relationship between the municipal government, the impact-oriented investor, and the micro financing organization to successfully develop the program.

### Case study: Village Finance

The partnership between the city of Brussels and Village Finance can serve as a template for this initiative.<sup>106</sup> Village Finance is a non-profit microfinancing organization that works to promote CE and social equity, by financially supporting self-employed entrepreneurs and micro-enterprises that do not qualify for loans and reside in the city's poorer neighborhoods. In addition to providing financial assistance, Village Finance also focuses on informing the local population about the businesses and encourages the beneficiaries to hire local talent. Since its creation, Village Finance has helped grow hundreds of ecological businesses, as well as created more than 181 jobs in sustainability.<sup>107</sup>

## **Recommendation 2: Launch of 'Go Circular!' competition for immigrant entrepreneurs**

### Rationale:

- While several competitions exist in Montréal such as the "Circular Initiative Awards", few of them address the intersection of diversity and circular economy.
- The 'Go Circular' competition will be tailored toward early-phase immigrant entrepreneurs as opposed to established SMEs. This will be an opportune time for younger immigrant entrepreneurs to get involved in the development of the circular economy in Montréal.
- For the winner of this competition, a financial award will be granted and their business can be used as a role model for others.
- For those who participated, but did not win, the benefit will be an opportunity to test and receive feedback on integrating circular business principles. In particular, immigrant entrepreneurs can learn and exchange with their peers about closing the resource loops, and gain benefits associated with the circular model.
- It is recommended to also give a smaller prize to all participating contestants. This will incentivize immigrant entrepreneurs to participate even if they do not yet feel confident about their business idea.

### Details:

- A call for a project can be launched by the municipal government to identify a third party organization to organize the 'Go Circular!' competition.
  - Third-party organizations that have demonstrated their commitment to sustainability, climate change and diversity are preferred. An example could be YES Montréal.
- Eligibility requirements will be:
  - early-phase entrepreneurs,

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<sup>106</sup> "Brussels' Village Finance: Grants to Create Jobs and Improve the Local Environment," Urban Sustainability Exchange. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

- immigrant entrepreneurs (as defined by the municipal government).
- The competition will last over a 2-day period. The schedule will include a combination of workshops and seminars.
  - Day 1: Workshops will have focus on pitching which helps immigrant entrepreneurs with presentation skills. Business professionals or organizations can assist entrepreneurs with writing business proposals.
  - Seminars will be led by circular economy experts to provide knowledge on integrating circular economy strategies in their business models. The intended outcome is that immigrant entrepreneurs gain practical knowledge that can be applicable to their businesses.
  - Day 2: Immigrant entrepreneurs get the opportunity to pitch their businesses. The winners will be selected by a panel of judges composed of circular economy experts and business magnates.

#### Cost Benefit Analysis:

- *Costs: Moderate.* Depending on whether the competition is held virtually or in-person, this will determine the venue costs. The 'Go Circular!' competition requires prize money for the winners of the competition and in-kind funding for volunteers & judges. Lastly, there will be a cost for incubators or private consulting services offered to all participants of the competition.
- *Benefits: Moderate.* The 'Go Circular!' competition will allow early-phase immigrant entrepreneurs to test and validate their circular business models. In particular, immigrant entrepreneurs can learn more intensively about closing the resource loops and the benefits gained from using circular business strategies. The individual entrepreneurs participating in the competition can receive publicity and potentially have more access to funding in the future. Similarly, the municipal government will gain recognition for bringing inclusive competition.

#### Time horizon: Short term

This recommendation can be achieved in the short-term with minimal resources. Once the municipal government develops the call for offers, a third-party organization can organize the competition thereafter. Corporate sponsors will be the favored source of funding, especially for the awards, and incubator services. Following the initial call for project the municipal government can continue partnering with the same organization to launch the competition in the following years, which makes their costs negligible in the long-run.

#### Case Study: Government of Nova Scotia

- The Government of Nova Scotia has launched a program for women immigrant entrepreneurs. It aims to provide them with the relevant support to become successful in their entrepreneurial ventures. Moreover, all the participants receive a 'one-year membership to

the Center for Women in Business,' which allows women immigrant entrepreneurs regardless of their placement in the competition.<sup>108</sup>

- While the competition is not a circular economy competition, it provides clear eligibility criteria for entrants. The eligibility requires the entrepreneur to be a newcomer 'having been in Canada for less than 5 years,' and be replicated in Montréal.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, entrants in the competition are provided a one-year membership to a local incubator, which prevents winners-take-all outcomes. This makes overall competition attractive to a wide range of women immigrant entrepreneurs. The annual competition has successfully attracted over 40 immigrant women as participants.

## 8.2. Knowledge Recommendations

### **Recommendation 3: A consumer-facing website showcasing circular products**

#### Rationale:

- Given that the financial argument has been identified as the most convincing argument for immigrant entrepreneurs to transition, there is a need to show the financial advantages of adopting a circular economy.
- In order to incentivize businesses to adopt circular practices, the municipal government could promote more awareness and interest in circular products among consumers by giving more visibility to circular businesses and increasing overall demand for circular products.
- The objective of this interface (or website) is to compile circular products and services so that businesses can reach their target consumer base. This website, supported by the municipal government, aims to show immigrant entrepreneurs that there is consumer support for circular practices.

#### Details:

- The municipal government launches a call for project to identify a third-party organization to develop and maintain the interface. This interface should be open to all and free of charge, preferably in the form of a website and it should have a consumer-friendly layout.
- When the website is launched, the municipal government will promote it to the greater public, beyond the current circular ecosystem actors. When communicating with entrepreneurs, this website should be communicated as a way to promote their services or products to a broader consumer base.
- The website should have a search bar, product categories and also potentially a map for consumers to identify the product or service they are looking for. Businesses can sign up to be featured on the application, and have some freedom as to how they want to be presented and how they want to market their products.

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<sup>108</sup> "The Nova Scotia Start Up Challenge," Digital Nova Scotia – Leading Digital Industry. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

- This authentication can be done by a competent organization such as Synergie Montréal or RECYC-Québec (refer to [Section 2.3](#) for a description of RECYC-Québec). This would be a one-time authentication.

#### Cost Benefit Analysis:

- *Costs: Moderate.* The most significant cost is for the development of the website (one time) and then for the maintenance of the website (recurring). The launching of the application could also create some marketing and advertising costs. There will also be a cost associated with authenticating circularity of firms that join the interface (recurring).
- *Benefits: High.* Consumers will benefit in that they can easily identify circular businesses and products of Montréal. Circular businesses will benefit from the increased visibility and enhanced reputation from being featured. The city will benefit in that more businesses will be incentivized in participating in the circular transition.

#### Time horizon: Medium term

In the short term, this project has high costs for the design of the website. However, in the long run, the costs will be smaller (maintenance costs) and the benefits will be considerable, given that it will support the circular transition.

#### Case study: Mercato Circolare

Mercato Circolare (Circular Market) is an example of applying digitalization to enable the transition to a more circular economy. Mercato Circolare is a free-of-charge smartphone application founded by an innovative start-up “Mercato Circolare Srl Società Benefit (Mercato Circolare Benefit Corporation)” in Italy in 2018. It enables consumers to search for circular economy products, services, and events in Italy and elsewhere and is recognized by the EU as a successful circular economy initiative.<sup>110</sup> It works as a platform that showcases companies, products, and events and to date has featured over 400 activities. Its main goal is to build bridges between citizens and businesses that are interested in the practice of circular economy.<sup>111</sup>

Mercato Circolare takes the idea presented in this recommendation to a further degree by adopting the format of an application, rather than a website. Thanks to the use of the mobile application, the service uses a geo-referenced map and uses the user’s location to recommend circular economy initiatives in close proximity. Mercato Circolare also goes beyond just showcasing services and products for consumers, to including circular business development, citizens engagement and training opportunities, as long as they relate to the topic of circular economy.

The recommendation made in this report envisions a more targeted project for the time being, in the format of a website and tackling circular products and services only. However, the Mercato Circolare

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<sup>110</sup> “Mercato Circolare - a smartphone app searching for circular economy products, services and events,” EU Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

<sup>111</sup> “Mercato Circolare: Home,” Mercato Circolare, March 2022.

case study goes to show that there is an opportunity to expand this project beyond the current limits such as broadening the connections facilitated (eg. adding business-to-business connections) or the kinds of items featured (eg. expanding to events).

#### **Recommendation 4: A circular training program led by diversity-driven incubators**

##### Rationale

- This recommendation calls for a specialized program that promotes capacity-building and training among immigrant entrepreneurs seeking to adopt a circular business model (CBM). The program will also serve as a knowledge-hub that transmits information to immigrant entrepreneurs about funding and networking opportunities.
- The curriculum of this program will be designed based on the needs of immigrant entrepreneurs. For instance, if the service sector is highly represented, the sessions' content will focus on topics relevant to the service sector such as the sourcing of eco-friendly products.
- The program facilitators from the incubator will have the practical business knowledge to assist immigrant entrepreneurs in adopting circular business strategies. Lastly, program facilitators from diverse ethnic backgrounds are preferred in delivering the program.

##### Details:

- The municipal government launches a call for projects to diversity-driven incubators to develop a program that aims to train and educate immigrant businesses on the circular economy. The curriculum will include an array of topics such as building a CBM; acquiring funding from investors for circular businesses; marketing circular businesses and many more. Potential bidding incubators may include: *BridgeMTL; Entreprendre Ici or Group 3737*.
- The curriculum will also incorporate information on existing funding opportunities and host matchmaking sessions between large businesses and the participating businesses.
- An evaluation and monitoring report would be produced quarterly to assess the progress of the project.
- This pilot project would last 16 weeks and begin with a cohort of immigrant businesses from different boroughs in Montréal. These would mainly focus on small and medium businesses in different sectors and businesses would apply to join the first cohort.

##### Cost-Benefits Analysis:

- *Costs: Moderate.* The municipal government would need to allocate time and resources to oversee the development of a comprehensive curriculum for the first year. Additionally, resources would need to be allocated for the research necessary to determine the appropriate monitoring and evaluation (MNE) tools to employ for the quarterly reports.
- *Benefits: High.* The project will create a space in which immigrant entrepreneurs can actively engage with the circular economy, in ways that are most comprehensible and practical for them. In addition, businesses that participate in this project will create networks, which they can leverage to exchange knowledge and ideas; help build their brand; and widen their sphere

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of influence. Furthermore, the duration of the program will allow both the municipal government and the incubators to assess the applicability of the classes; the businesses' initial reactions to the classes; and which aspects of the classes are most useful to immigrant entrepreneurs.

Time horizon: Medium term

This recommendation is envisioned to be short-term, given that it will start out as a pilot program and then be assessed on the impact it has created. If successful, a full program can be enacted in the medium term.

Case study: Activate Circular Accelerator

The Activate Circular Accelerator program was established to help innovative companies grow and scale their circular economy businesses, through funding, mentorship, education and access to global CE networks.<sup>112</sup> As part of the Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad, the Activate Circular Accelerator program is a product of a partnership between the Government of Canada, FedDev Ontario, the City of Guelph and Innovation Guelph (a business accelerator) which delivers the program. The program's focus sectors are food and sustainability and businesses receive a non-repayable grant of \$20,000; 16 weeks of classes focused on business scaling; 24 hours of targeted support and expertise; and a large network of alumni.<sup>113</sup>

### **8.3. Agenda-setting Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 5: A Circular Economy Business Working Group**

Rationale:

- In order for knowledge transfer to occur between city officials, academics and businesses, a working group composed of diverse business leaders can be built to facilitate dialogue and allow for input. The business leaders can also play an integral role as knowledge disseminators to other business owners in their professional and personal networks.

Details:

- The municipal government facilitates a discussion forum for diverse stakeholders. The municipal government arranges a meeting once every two months, touching on important topics in the development of circularity in the city of Montréal.
- Meeting minutes will be kept, and subjects discussed should be taken into account in city-level policy making. The working group could support the city in developing and improving the circular economy initiatives in Montréal.

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<sup>112</sup> "Activate Circular Accelerator," Circular Opportunity Innovation Launchpad. Accessed on June 16, 2022.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

- There should be an important focus on including diverse entrepreneurs, and specific targets of diversity can be set. This could include quotas of business leaders representing: different sectors, sizes and ages of enterprises, immigrant entrepreneurs and other markers of gender or ethnocultural diversity.

#### Cost-Benefit analysis:

- *Costs: Low.* This recommendation presents low costs as it will probably only be necessary to take into account the logistical costs of reaching out and holding the meetings. If multiple departments collaborate on this project, cross-department coordination should also be taken into account.
- *Benefits: Moderate.* The businesses will benefit because their interests will be captured in the agenda-setting for the circular economy, and it will provide an opportunity to network with other businesses. The city will benefit in that it will be able to devise a circular roadmap that successfully mobilizes its diverse entrepreneurs.

#### Time horizon: Long term

This recommendation will produce short and medium term benefits for a more inclusive and effective agenda-setting. Most importantly, it will carry out long term benefits through the creation of proximity and networks between the city and businesses, which can continue to be used even for future topics outside of the circular economy.

#### Case Study: Toronto Circular Economy Working group

Representatives from local businesses and community groups from various sectors across Toronto met periodically throughout the years 2019-2020 to provide input and feedback on Toronto's circular economy policies.<sup>114</sup> The organization of this working group was organized directly by the City of Toronto, and the topics were directly relevant to upcoming policy decisions that the City would have to make.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, member-to-member networking was an important part of this working group.<sup>116</sup> Despite the fact that the working group is no longer active, the emphasis on networking between group members generates long-term benefits through a better connected ecosystem.

### **Recommendation 6: Establish a data collection practice capturing diversity within Montréal's circular initiatives**

#### Rationale:

- As mentioned previously in this report, the municipal government lacks information on the state of diversity among circular initiatives on the ground. Without accurate data, the

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<sup>114</sup> "Working Towards a Circular Economy," City of Toronto, August 2018.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

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municipal government will find it harder to implement effective and targeted policies to improve diversity.

- In order to bridge this gap, it is recommended that the municipal government capture the state of diversity within the known circular initiatives as a starting point. The established platform Montréal Circulaire—managed by CERIEC—can be leveraged, as it already currently captures more than 1,000 circular initiatives.<sup>117</sup> Using the platform as a base to incorporate diversity-related data is an efficient starting-point as the municipal government does not need to spend more resources to start from scratch.

#### Details

- The municipal government launches a call for projects for a third-party organization to collect demographic data among circular initiatives displayed on Montréal Circulaire. This is to complement CERIEC’s work in compiling circular initiatives taking place in the city by incorporating the diversity-related data in each initiative.
- One possibility would be to investigate the proportion of visible minorities and immigrants working for each circular initiative registered on Montréal Circulaire by the participating organizations and enterprises.
- A guideline on how to collect the data should be established by the municipal government. The purpose and methodology behind this data collection should be adequately explained to the participating organizations and enterprises. These organizations and enterprises can choose to report the data voluntarily. The data collection process should comply with all relevant government regulations on data and privacy rights.
- Within the municipal government, the *Service de la diversité et de l’inclusion sociale (SDIS)* is currently collaborating with the *Centre de recherches interdisciplinaires en études Montréalaises (CRIEM)* to build a digital social data exchange platform that aims to help policymakers and researchers learn more about issues and needs specific to each Montréal community. The SDE can potentially look to SDIS’s digital social data exchange platform as an example of best practices for demographic data collection.

#### Cost-Benefit Analysis:

- *Cost: Moderate.* The collection of data in this project will not have to start from scratch as the Montréal Circulaire platform already compiles circular initiatives in Montréal. The costs would mostly go to the commissioning of the third-party organization for the data collection process. If applicable, there might be costs associated with the storage of the data as well.
- *Benefit: Moderate.* This recommendation does not address the challenge question of this report directly, but instead aims to look at the structural problem of assessing Montréal’s circularity. Montréal can become the global pioneer in incorporating diversity-related data in its database that compiles circular economy initiatives.

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<sup>117</sup> “Montréal Circulaire,” Québec circulaire. Accessed on May 16, 2022.

### Time horizon: Short-term

- This recommendation is envisioned to be short-term given that Montréal Circulaire has established the practice of collecting the data of the circular initiatives in the city, and the municipal government would urgently need the demographic data to assess how involved Montréal's diverse entrepreneurs really are in adopting circular transition.

### Case study: European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform

The EU has already established the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. Similar to Montréal Circulaire, this is a mapping platform where one can easily locate good practices, events, strategies and networks in the EU circular economy. It uses purpose-oriented labels such as “strategies,” “best practices” and “events” to enable participating or interested parties to efficiently identify the information they wish to know in the initiatives.<sup>118</sup> However, it is unknown whether the diversity-related data has been collected, or any diversity consideration has been taken by the EU circular economy ecosystem.

## **8.4. Summary of recommendations and comparative table**

	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>Circular economy micro loan</b>	Coordination of costs for the establishment of partnerships	Low	Increased circular economy funding for immigrant entrepreneurs	High
<b>'Go Circular' Competition</b>	'Call for project' 'Awards' Subsidized cost for incubator membership	Moderate	Business innovation Publicity and social networks for entrepreneurs Publicity for the City	Moderate
<b>Consumer-facing website</b>	R&D for website development Marketing costs Authentication costs	Moderate	Increased visibility for immigrant entrepreneurs products and services Higher incentives for businesses to adopt circularity	High
<b>Circular transition training program in incubator</b>	Resources for curriculum design	Moderate	Mentorship and training for businesses	High

<sup>118</sup> “Map View,” European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. Accessed on July 5, 2022.

<b>Circular economy business working group</b>	Logistics and coordination of meetings	Small	Greater inclusion of businesses in circular initiatives	Moderate
<b>Collecting diversity data</b>	Resources for 'call of project' Storage of data	Moderate	Better representation of circular economy initiatives in Montréal	Moderate

Figure 3: A visual representation of the cost-benefit analysis performed for the recommendations

Short Term (0 to 2 years)	Medium Term (2 to 4 years)	Long Term (> 5 years)
Rec. 2: Circular economy competition  Rec. 6: Diversity Data Collection	Rec. 1: Micro-credit loan  Rec. 3: Consumer Website  Rec. 4: Training in incubators	Rec. 5: Circular Economy Business Working Group

Figure 4: A visual representation of the time when recommendations will start having a positive impact on the circular transition

### 8.5. Closing Remarks

To close off this report, the authors would like to highlight both the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead as Montréal makes a transition towards a more circular economy. Over the course of this project, we have come to recognize the challenging task of mobilizing key actors to achieve a circular transition. This has given us a glimpse of the complex work done by the SDÉ and the broader municipal government to build a more sustainable city.

In recognition of these complexities, this report provides recommendations which are the product of careful analysis and hours of discussions with diverse stakeholders. It is in our sincere belief that their implementation (whether in part or in full) would help build a more inclusive transition and place Montréal as a global leader in building an inclusive circular economy.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: List of consulted experts

Organizations represented by the consulted experts
Association des Femmes Entrepreneures Immigrantes du Québec (AFEIQ)
Centre Québécois de Développement Durable
CERIEC, Québec Circulaire Platform
CERIEC, Research (HEC Montréal)
Circular Glasgow
Climate Launchpad
Concertation MTL
Diversity Initiative at Ryerson University
Éco Entreprise
Entreprendre Ici
Jeune Chambre de Commerce de Montréal
Jeune Chambre de Commerce Haïtienne
McGill Dobson
Milani ESG Consulting
Nordic Sustainability
PME Montréal
Recyc-Québec
Young Chinese Professionals Association

## Appendix 2: Circular Economy Ecosystem in Montréal and Québec



Source: CERIEC (Pôle de Concertation en Économie Circulaire)