

The reason for AIRO

The province of Nova Scotia needs to build a new economy or it will go bankrupt. This was essentially the finding of the One Nova Scotia Coalition in its 2014 report “NOW or NEVER – an Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians”.

http://onens.ca/wp-content/uploads/Now_or_never_short.pdf

The follow-up report of October 2015 – “We Choose Now” – was written as a playbook for Nova Scotians. It identifies how we all might “step up” to help our province, using the collaborative action plan approach.

<http://www.wechoosenow.ca>

AIRO – Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity – is a private company founded by Jane Nicholson in 2016 as her personal “stepping up” investment in the economic development of the place she knows best – Annapolis Royal and its surrounding communities. **AIRO’s lending opportunities ended in December 2021, it has now shifted into a consultancy that is focused on helping existing clients through their individual pandemic recovery plans and become even more deeply rooted in their communities.** Additionally, AIRO now targets helping other regions or potential philanthropreneurs to establish their own version of AIRO – creating opportunity and change throughout other rural communities. If you – or someone you know – is interested in forming your own version of AIRO, just [connect with AIRO](#).

What is AIRO’s focus?

1. To promote economic development in Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County.
2. To encourage, and collaborate on, the promotion and marketing of the assets of Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County in an effort to grow the population, close the asset gaps and ensure a sustainable community.
3. To empower others to create their own version of AIRO in their own communities by sharing AIRO’s information and methodologies freely with others in rural Canada.

AIRO has a bias for action.

AIRO encourages innovation and collaboration to meet economic challenges.

AIRO is responsible, respectful, efficient and effective.

Mission Statement

We believe in the potential of our region and have been dedicated to stimulating entrepreneurial activity in Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County through microlending, business advisory services and consulting. We also believe that the AIRO model can be replicated successfully anywhere in rural Canada.

Vision Statement

We want what you want – to make Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County the place to work, live, play, and thrive in Nova Scotia. We also want to help others to establish their own version of AIRO in their own communities.

The Source of AIRO’s Mandate

To work wisely, we believed we needed a better understanding of how the people of our community saw their opportunities and their challenges. So, we asked them. In July and August of 2016, AIRO confidentially interviewed people between the ages of 14 and 80 – a wide cross-section of community members. What they contributed were their visions of our future, their ideas of success, and how they thought that growth might happen. That consultation resulted in our landmark report *Local Logic: How to get there from here*, reprinted in May 2018 – [report available for download on our website, http://ruralopportunity.com](http://ruralopportunity.com). A follow-up to this report will be released in 2022.

AIRO’s Statistics as at January 6, 2022	
Total Dollars Directly Invested to Date	\$722,877
Businesses Funded / Applicants	71 out of 137 applications
Community Projects Funded / Applicants	19 out of 27 applications / proposals
Job Creation (total of approved & pending applications)	183 full, part time, and seasonal jobs
Cost Per Job Created	\$3,950
Total Number of Loan Defaults to Date	1 out of 90 projects funded

The AIRO Team

Jane Nicholson, Founder & Chief Executive officer

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Jane Nicholson is the founder and CEO of AIRO – Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity – a private angel investor and community development hub that works to promote and support entrepreneurial activity in Annapolis Royal and Annapolis County. She is also the president of Mrs. Nicholson Inc., a one-woman company founded in 2003 to work on the restoration of heritage buildings in Annapolis Royal, and the founder of Mrs. Nicholson Home, a vintage home décor store that operated from 2012 to 2017.

Jane spent 30 years in the corporate communications business in Halifax, Toronto and Montreal. An accredited member of the Canadian Public Relations Society, she has been a community volunteer since the age of 16. Jane has sat on countless boards and committees, including the Pier 21 Advisory Committee, the boards of Héritage Montréal, the Annapolis Heritage Society, Community Foundation of Nova Scotia, Rural Innovation District Advisory Committee, and Chaired the Municipal Effectiveness Advisory Committee of the Town of Annapolis Royal.

Adele MacDonald, Chief Operating Officer

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AIRO's COO, Adele MacDonald, was born and raised in Alberta choosing Nova Scotia as her home after spending 15 years on the West Coast. Living in three distinctly different parts of Canada it's clear that Canadians have much more in common, from one end of the country to the other, than they often realize.

As an Internet marketing and communications consultant, Adele ran her own company for 14 years. Nationally and internationally, she aided hundreds of small and medium sized businesses, non-profits and NGOs with their Internet and social media marketing and communications strategies. In addition to operating AIRO, she does speaking engagements and writes for blogs, newsletters, articles and is working on two books. She has sat on non-profit boards, the Town of Annapolis Royal's Marketing and Economic Development Committee and on its Waterfront Development Committee. Currently, Adele is the Secretary for the Annapolis Climate & Ecological Research Centre (ACERC) Coalition. Recently, Adele successfully completed the MBA Essentials program with the London School of Economics. Adele uses her optimism and wisdom to cultivate and support the personal growth of people – leading them to build vibrant and creative lives, businesses and communities.

The AIRO Team



Image 1: Jane Nicholson, Founder & CEO (right) and Adele MacDonald, COO (left) of AIRO | Annapolis Investments in Rural Opportunity

Photo by Andrew Tolson

(to request a high-resolution photo email connectwith@ruralopportunity.com)