

National Alliance on Children and Youth: Taking Stock



National Alliance on Children and Youth



By bringing diverse not-for-profit organizations together in a collaborative network dedicated to enhancing the well-being of children and youth in Canada, NACY provides leadership and knowledge dedicated to mobilizing and linking practice and research to policy development on a pan-Canadian basis.

Challenges

- Member agencies in the sector across Canada are experiencing:

A front line sector--with families on their doorsteps--struggling with capacity, delivery and sustainability challenges;

Community agencies reliant on volunteers, community donations and goodwill, trying to survive on inconsistent and patchwork funding;

Documented evidence that increased numbers of Canadian families are at risk, as evidenced by increased child and family poverty statistics, educational and health thresholds not being met and increased homelessness.



Taking stock project goals

1. Take stock of current economic realities impacting our member organizations in the child and youth sector in the areas of: capacity building, knowledge acquisition/mentorship and sustainability,

2. Identify the best crisis management models and/or approaches available or being practiced by organizations





Taking Stock Project Goals

- 3. Share, germinate ideas, solutions and approaches in the child and youth sector to:**
 - a. build increased capacity and/or more efficiencies;**
 - b. gain more knowledge/mentorship abilities to support organizations facing crisis;**
 - c. support and strengthen organizations to achieve greater sustainability.**

Information gathering through various methods:

- Cross-Canada think tanks
- Focus groups
- Key informant interviews
- Case studies

What have been some of the project's findings to date?

Heavy reliance in Canada on the work done by the non profit sector

- Canada has one of the largest charitable and non-profit sectors in the world. More than 160,000 charities and non-profits deliver services and contribute to community, economic and social development in a variety of areas.

Yet the sector is under a lot of stress

- Funding and financial issues are the most common stressors.
- Staff issues were the second highest challenge identified by organizations, including issues such as accreditation, board representatives of population served, board participation/interest, retention of, burnout, turnover, finding volunteers, no succession planning, retirement in key positions
- A theme also mentioned as a challenge, is the change (and in some cases, the lack thereof) in government or government priorities and policies, as well as the reporting/accountability requirements of funders.
- Organizational capacity was also a common theme.

Yet the sector is under a lot of stress

- Lack of diversity in funding sources (Half of our surveyed organizations have 4 different sources of funding or less ; and close to 80% rely on 3 sources or less for 70% of their annual budget)
- By far, the source cited the most frequently as providing the highest percentage of funding, alone or along with other sources of equal value, is the provincial government, followed by fundraising, fee for services, and the federal government.

Addressing the issue of innovation

- Nonprofit organizations are experiencing increasing pressures to be more business-like and to focus on financial outcomes for sustainability and growth. There have been questions whether this attention on performance might come at the cost of serving an organization's mission.

A nonprofit organization's mission can facilitate innovation.

- The findings indicate that a clear, motivating organizational mission helps an organization to focus its attention on those innovations that will most likely support the accomplishment of that mission. Such a mission also creates a climate in which innovations are given a fair chance to succeed. As a result, organizations with clear, motivating missions tend to be more innovative.

Collaboration

- “Collaboration” has become a key term, and while in principle there is widespread agreement that there needs to be greater collaboration in the sector, how we collaborate is still something the sector is struggling with.
- In particular, sharing credit for the development and running of initiatives, can be a contentious issue between organizations.

There is no “one size fits all” approach to collaboration

- The ‘one size fits all’ approach to creating, maintaining, supporting and evaluating collaborations doesn’t work. Collaborations form organically and therefore different supports and measurements are required at different stages in their development.
- Many respondents talked about the importance of funders enabling rather than mandating collaboration. There may be a perception that collaboration is being mandated even when the intent of the funder is simply to avoid duplication or to encourage the achievement of more significant impacts.

A new view on leadership?

- Is there a leadership deficit?
 - Most nonprofits (even the larger ones) are too small to provide meaningful career development opportunities for next-generation leaders, however. Nor can they afford to make the investment in recruiting and human resources that such development requires—especially in an environment that tends to view such expenditures as wasteful overhead.
 - Consequently, nonprofits are often forced to search outside their own organizations for new senior managers. The best available data indicate that, whereas businesses fill 60 to 65 percent of senior management positions through internal promotions, nonprofits seem to average much closer to 30 to 40 percent.

Leadership training

- Yet there is a real sense that the sector is filled with great talent. Training leaders – and effectively placing them in organizations -- is the greater challenge.
- Succession planning, while on the radar of many organizations, is mainly focused at the senior level, meaning they are working to fill only 4 or 5 positions largely shifting senior managers around. But more and more organizations are taking a longer view of succession planning ...5, 10, 15 years, and including front line workers as part of the discussion.

Where do we go from here?

Hosting another think tank in Vancouver in March 2012

We will be posting a first series of case studies on the website by end of November

Monthly updates in our newsletter

Final report and recommendations in September 2012

Where do you go from here?

Consider joining NACY!

Join Supersearch

Contribute documents to our resource centre

Join our listserve

Contribute to our case studies



THANK YOU!
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.NACY.CA

MICHELLE DAGNINO, TAKINGSTOCK@NACY.CA