

Pre-Budget Submission in Advance of the 2024 Budget

By: The National Alliance for Children and Youth



Laura Kathler, Executive Director
202-2148 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, ON | K2A 1H1
Ph: 204-979-4872
lurakathler@nacy.ca
www.nacy.ca

Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1: In consultation with the children and youth serving sector, ensure funding is accessible and sustainable.**
 - Increase multi-year funding opportunities, reducing funding gaps and increasing opportunities for long-term employment opportunities.
 - Create consistent application, reporting and audit systems across Government.
 - Mandate all project-based funding allow a minimum of 30% of funding to be used for core operating costs.
 - Allow greater ease and flexibility in moving fundings between cost categories.
 - Commit to funding all full-time positions at a living wage.

- **Recommendation 2: That the government invest \$5 million over four years to map the children and youth sector and \$1 million ongoing annually for this purpose.**

Background

The National Alliance for Children and Youth (NACY) is a diverse network of people and organizations that make up the children and youth sector (“the sector”). A member-driven organization, NACY works to strengthen the children and youth sector by addressing shared priorities that lead to positive impacts for children and youth. With a reimagined mission to come together to work with government partners, strengthening a key sector that not only makes up part of the 8.3% GDP contribution of the non-profit sector broadly¹, NACY is committed to building a stronger, more connected, informed, coordinated, respected sector and a Canada in which all young people can thrive.

With support from NACY members and the broader non-profit sector, NACY continues to expand its reach and impact by bringing the sector together to engage in dialogue around sector priorities and how best to support changing needs of young people. Through these discussions a few things have been clear:

- The needs of young people are outweighing the capacity of the sector.
- The sector is unable to keep up with the demands of the labour market.
- There is a significant gap in data on the sector, preventing us understanding how best to use our resources to support young people.
- The children and youth serving sector provides essential services to communities, while also having a positive impact on our economy.

Amidst the growing demands, the sector continues to provide essential services and support for young people and their families adjusting strategies to meet the needs of every young person that walks through the door. This, while workers are faced with low wages, limited access to benefits, precarious employment, burnout, and workplace trauma², organizations are struggling to keep the lights on due to raising organizational costs and reduced funding opportunities.

For a sustainable future, economically, socially, and environmentally for future generations, we need to reimagine what partnership looks like. Investment in relevant and appropriate data projects, funding mechanisms that embrace and assess risk through an equity lens, long-term projects that create space for meaningful relationships and ongoing consultation are just some ways we can build that future.

¹ Imagine Canada (2022). Diversity is Our Strength. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/diversity-is-our-strength.pdf>

² BGC Canada. The Burnout Crisis: A Call to Invest in ECE and Children and Youth Workers. <https://www.bgccan.com/en/the-burnout-crisis-a-call-to-invest-in-ece-and-child-and-youth-workers/>

Recommendation #1 – In consultation with the children and youth serving sector, ensure funding is accessible and sustainable.

While growing economic pressure continues put strain on the sector, it continues to go above and beyond to meet the changing and growing needs of young people. Not only are organizations a place for added support and inspiration beyond, or sometimes instead of, home or school, in many cases they are also their first job, access to training and skills development and the safe place needed to transition into adulthood. The world has changed, and with it comes need to reimagine government partnerships and funding mechanisms. The reality is current funding systems are preventing organizations from accessing critical funds required to ensure sector sustainability.

In consultation with NACY members, it became clear that the current systems have created barriers to accessing the funds needed to sustain organizations. For most organizations those applying for and reporting on funding are the same individuals delivering services, in some cases reporting up to 11 times per year³. Today's frontline workers are being asked not only to be frontline workers, but also to be administrators, researcher, systems navigators, and grant writers. Workers are coming to the table with an incredible wealth of knowledge and expertise that need to be honoured through living wages, sustainable and permanent employment, opportunities for professional development, benefits, mental health supports and consistent wage increases⁴.

A continued shift to short-term, issue-specific, and project-based funding that emphasizes pre-determined outcomes places strain on organizations, detracting from the work of organizations and are found to be time-intensive and challenging to navigate. The decentralized approach to children and youth programming across multiple government departments is a barrier to many organizations without the administrative capacity to navigate the complexity of grant application processes, and yet, service delivery and outcomes for most of these programs could be more efficient by accessing the broader network of locally run agencies. Long-term core funding allows organizations to focus their energy on measurable, long-term impacts for the programs they are offering by ensuring rents are paid, lights are on, organizations have the appropriate and relevant technology, there are enough staff available to do the work, and those working are paid a living wage with access to physical and mental health benefits.

For organizations, this means programs are built on long-term and sustainable funding that delivers results and creates capacity to anticipate and design innovative programs to efficiently respond to government priorities and the changing needs of the next generation.

³ Participant feedback. July 2023 NACY pre-budget submission member consultations.

⁴ Ontario Nonprofit Network. 2019. Decent Work Overview. <https://theonn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Decent-Work-1-pager.pdf>

Since 2006, multiple reports^{5 6} have been presented highlighting and documenting the issues with federal granting systems. While many steps have been taken to address these issues, the inability to adapt funding systems to align changing economic and social landscape has resulted in:

- Increased administrative costs due to burdensome applications, reporting, evaluation, and audit systems.
- Decreased trust in federal funding systems and partnerships.
- Reduced capacity to deliver appropriate and on-time services.
- Workers fleeing the sector for better paying more sustainable employment in the public and private sectors.
- Inability for young people to build meaningful long-term relationships with trusted and caring adults.⁷

To address these challenges we recommend that through consultation with the sector, you ensure funding is accessible and sustainable by:

- Increasing multi-year funding opportunities, reducing funding gaps and increasing opportunities for long-term employment opportunities.
- Create consistent application, reporting and audit systems across Government.
- Mandate all project-based funding allow a minimum of 30% funding be used for associated core operating costs⁸.
- Allow greater ease and flexibility in moving fundings between cost categories.
- Commit to funding all full-time positions at a living wage.

⁵ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (2006). From Red Tape to Clear Results.

<https://publications.gc.ca/site/archivee-archived.html?url=https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/BT22-109-2007E.pdf>

⁶ Report of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector (2019). Catalyst for change: a roadmap to a stronger charitable sector.

https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/CSSB/reports/CSSB_GovResponse_Charitable_e.pdf

⁷ Learn more about stakeholders' perspectives in [Core Funding Impact Stories: 8 nonprofits and charities across the country explain what a lack of core funding means for their communities, workers and long-term viability.](#)

⁸ Endorsement of Imagine Canada 2024 Pre-budget submission in advance of the 2024 budget.

Recommendation 2: That the government invest \$5 million over four years to map the children and youth sector and \$1 million ongoing annually for this purpose.

Over the past several years, children and youth serving organizations from across Canada have been investing their time, money, and expertise into building a better, strong, and more informed sector to address the growing needs of young people in Canada. Together we have kick-started a movement where organizations come together to better understand our impact on young people and the role(s) we play in strengthening the social and economic futures of the next generation.

From Canada's Youth Policy⁹ and the commitment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals¹⁰ (SDGs), it is clear where we want Canada's children and youth to be, and from UNICEF's Report Card 17¹¹ measuring child and youth well-being in wealthy countries, where Canada was ranked 28th (of 39) it is clear we have a long way to go. What is not clear is the aggregate of how Canada's children and youth sector is currently contributing to this vision, our impact on the economy and the role we play in enhancing community's capacity for broader civic engagement.

To create benchmarks for success, an investment of \$5 million over four years is needed to map the children and youth sector. How, where, and how many resources are being invested, the number of young people served and employed, where exemplary programs and expertise may already exist, opportunities for collaboration, its economic impact, return on investment and what gaps exist in meeting Canada's targets are just a few questions to be answered. A \$1 million-dollar ongoing investment (adjusted for inflation) will allow the work to extend past four years by creating a national database, identifying opportunity to address the gaps needed to meet Canada's vision for a stronger, bright futures for generations of young Canadians.

The sector has a strong role to play in leading initiatives to raise awareness of the SDG's and the Youth Policy, contributing in the mission to meet these goals, and creating space for young people to engage more fully in the decision-making. In tandem with collecting invaluable data on the sector, a national mapping project will help raise awareness and support for the 2030 Agenda and Canada's Youth Policy. This will lead to increased opportunities for civic engagement and dialogue for young people and the community at-large. It will inform the community and the sector about Canada's commitments and inspire greater collaboration to realise new ways we can work together to better support young people and to identify under-resourced areas that should be prioritised to ensure we remain on track to meet our goals.

To ensure a high level of engagement, the sector should be involved at all levels, from the development and data collection to data analysis and maintenance. This project would create a

⁹ Canada's Youth Policy (2020). <https://www.canada.ca/en/youth/programs/policy.html>

¹⁰ Canada and the Sustainable Development Goals. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/agenda-2030.html#sdg>

¹¹ UNICEF Canada (2022). Report Card 17: The future is now. The environment and children's well-being in Canada. <https://www.unicef.ca/en/unicef-report-card-17>

national survey of children and youth programs, determining how they contribute to the UNSDGs and Canada’s Youth Policy. Data would be used to create a national database, providing baseline measurements for how much time and resources are being invested in specific goals or objectives and the number of young people benefits from them. Often operating in silo’s this project provides rational and purpose to bring the sector together, fostering strong networking, collaboration, and broadening community’s understanding of the role of the sector in our country.

NACY would like to take this opportunity to endorse the following recommendations:

- In accordance with discussions with other non-profit organizations serving the interests of different communities in Canada, the government must prioritize funding reform measures, establishing a home in government for the non-profit sector, greater data collection, and a labour and workforce strategy for the non-profit sector in Budget 2024.
- UNICEF Canada’s recommendation to reform parental leave benefits to ensure that every newborn in Canada has the right to protected time with a parent or caregiver in the first 6 months (26 weeks) of life.
- BGC Canada’s recommendation to invest in a thriving community service sector.
- Recommendations from the Federal Nonprofit Data Coalition.

NACY is a member-driven organization, our current membership includes:

BGC Canada	Kids Help Phone	FRAYME
Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada	Shad Canada	Pathways to Education
Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada	Junior Achievement	UNICEF Canada
Experiences Canada	TakingItGlobal	Plan International Canada
Students Commission of Canada	Starlings Community	United Nations Association in Canada
Muslim Association of Canada	YWCA Canada	YMCA Canada
Wayfinders Manitoba	Wisdom2Action	Voices: Manitoba’s Youth in Care Network
LiveDifferent	United for Literacy	Children First Canada
	Young Canadians Roundtable on Health	