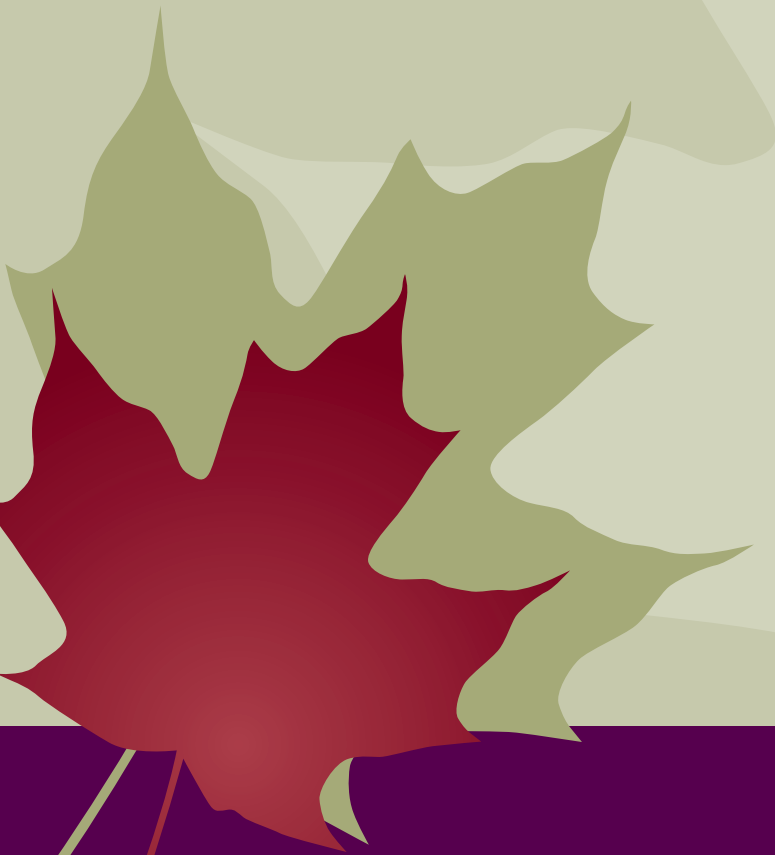




**GREATER
THAN
THE SUM
OF OUR PARTS**

DISCUSSION PAPER



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:

Imagine Canada

www.imaginecanada.ca

Canadian Council on Social Development

www.ccsd.ca

Canadian Council for International Cooperation

www.cci.ca

Canadian Conference of the Arts

www.ccarts.ca

The Sport Matters Group

www.sportmatters.ca

The Canadian Environmental Network

www.cen-rce.org

Volunteer Canada

www.volunteercanada.ca

**Sharon Baxter of the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association is bringing a health sector perspective to the project in volunteer capacity*

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This document is also available in French.

Ce document est aussi disponible en français.



On behalf of the Project Partners of the Voluntary Sector Awareness Project I am pleased to introduce this discussion paper as a first step to initiating a dialogue within the voluntary sector in Canada.

We have been given the opportunity and the challenge to think about—and adopt—a public awareness campaign about our remarkable sector. We have come together, as national organizations that work with and for a broad range of the sector, because we believe the time is ripe for this development.

The voluntary sector in Canada is made up of 161,000 organizations, it employs 1.2 million people in paid positions and more than 6.5 million volunteers. More importantly it drives, supports and anchors quality of life in this country.

And yet, for many, the breadth and impact of our collective contribution is relatively unknown. It is for this reason that the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) included from the outset an element designed to consider this issue and suggest a response. The VSI's Awareness Table did so and ultimately put forward a project opportunity that we, as a collective, responded to.

The project, as we are overseeing it, will start with a process of discourse, feedback and reporting and move into the development of an awareness campaign in 2006. All of this is described in detail in this paper.

We thought long and hard about how best to generate interest and get people in the sector thinking about the benefits of a shared awareness campaign. We asked our project manager

Paddy Bowen, a long time leader from the sector to start us off with a discussion paper that would get the process underway. We believe you will find the paper informative and stimulating.

We hope you will participate—react to the ideas in the paper, provide feedback, support a collective campaign.

So that together we can continue a true voluntary sector tradition—to always find new and better ways to engage individuals and build communities.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Getting to this point	2
Thinking about thinking about an integrated voluntary sector	4
How does having a whole-voluntary-sector approach contribute to advancing the purposes of the different parts?	5
Change, Change, Change... ..	6
Let's give 'em something to talk about... ..	7
Setting the Stage for Dialogue	8
Name barriers, understand barriers, leap barriers.	8
A short list of big reasons to proceed	11
Where to from here?	12
Conclusion	14
A Picture of the Voluntary Sector in Canada	15
Taking a slightly closer look at the major sub sectors	16
Other Facts and Findings	18
Sources	18
Feedback Form	19



INTRODUCTION

A COUNTRY OF DREAMERS...

From the first settlers of this magnificent country to the latest immigrant Canada has always represented a place where dreams can come true. The dream of plenty and beauty given by nature and of opportunity and prosperity created for ourselves and our children. The dream of true democracy where civility and kindness will hold sway and society will care for its vulnerable, envelope its people in the idea of place where all are supported without consideration of wealth, race, language or status. A country whose people have always been, and continue to be, determined to care for each other, the land and the future. To build the place where dreams can indeed come true.

A VOLUNTARY SECTOR TO CONTRIBUTE...

As Canadians have steadily and steadfastly built on the history of those who came before and have slowly and painstakingly created the institutions, laws, culture and mores of the country we experience today, they have never lost sight of the 'Canadian way'. It encompasses the intent to care for those who need it, to provide opportunity for each, and includes an expectation that many will participate. A vitally important result has been the emergence over time of a web of formal, informal and grass roots responses.

You would have to look pretty hard to find a sector as diverse in form and in function as that of what we call the 'voluntary sector' in Canada.

Comprising 161,000 charities and non-profit organizations, the sector encompasses tens of thousands of organizations with no paid staff

and budgets under \$30K, as well as thousands of large, multi jurisdictional monoliths with annual budgets in the ten million-dollar-plus range and hundreds of staff people, and every organizational iteration you can imagine in between.

The reach and kinds of work undertaken by the sector is also incredibly broad; from sport clubs to environmental organizations, international aid to disease prevention, from arts to social development, from hands-on care to advocacy, research and training.

YOU WOULD HAVE TO LOOK PRETTY HARD TO FIND A SECTOR AS DIVERSE IN FORM AND IN FUNCTION AS THAT OF WHAT WE CALL THE 'VOLUNTARY SECTOR' IN CANADA.

Despite this diversity there are three key factors held in common by this amorphous collection of organizations:

1. Our regulatory status. We are incorporated as not-for-profit entities. Almost half (76,000) are registered as charities.
2. We all involve volunteers—as our governors via Boards of Directors and in a myriad of active positions.
3. Finally, and most importantly, we all exist, in some way or another, to achieve a purpose that is "other serving". We are all engaged in work that seeks to provide service, generate ideas, challenge the status quo, help people or communities in need, fix problems, bring to fruition a vision for something more, better, best. In short every organization in the voluntary sector exists to reach dreams.

THE LIGHT UNDER THE BUSHEL?

For many in Canada the true breadth and impact of the voluntary sector is a best kept secret. While many experience the sector in some way, they rarely get exposed to the whole picture. And voluntary organizations are partly responsible for this lack of awareness.

We are, most of us— and understandably so— primarily focused on our own work. Whether we're coaching a hockey team, organizing an arts festival, recruiting oversees volunteers, participating in an advocacy campaign or working in a health charity or social service agency we tend to look inward, hoping to generate pride and support for the contribution we are making.

We tend to feel more defined by the specifics of our unique involvement than by the more generic and shared impact of all charities and non profits writ large. Most people involved with the voluntary sector are more likely to feel defined by the sphere in which they work (health, sport, arts, environment, etc.) and the kind of work they do (providing service, identifying and fighting for changes at a systemic level, research, etc.) than by a sense of connection to the sector as a whole.

The fact is, it's not common for the voluntary sector to speak with the proverbial "one voice" or to act in concert.

It is true that sometimes we pause, as a sector, to acknowledge and celebrate the amazing work of volunteers. And every now and then groups of voluntary organizations will come together to

speaking with funders, or to the public on an issue of shared importance. But the times our sector steps forward to present a cohesive vision for itself, for community and for citizens, are arguably rare.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to unpack the idea of finding a voluntary sector 'whole' that is greater than the sum of its parts. In turn this paper is primarily intended to generate a discourse *within* the sector. Because until the benefits and challenges of pursuing—when it makes sense—a collective, even unified, vision for ourselves are fully explored by those who ultimately need to take them on, the latent potential in this dynamic will stay unrealized.



GETTING TO THIS POINT

Let's take a brief scan of some of the developments that brought us to this point in time.

In 1995 a group of national organizations came together to begin thinking about a few common issues and to identify strategies for working together more effectively on them.

One of the key drivers behind that effort was the sense of threat that many voluntary organizations were feeling at the time. The federal government had launched "Program Review". There were frequent, and worrying, references to voluntary organizations as "special interest groups." Walter Stewart had written a damning

book about what he characterized as fraud and mismanagement within the Canadian charity sector and a federal Member of Parliament often, and publicly, decried the sector with similar accusations.

Galvanized by our sense of outrage, tempered with real concern about our survival, and determined to build on our legacy of contribution and strength, the Voluntary Sector Roundtable was born¹. Although discussion at the VSR was rich and far ranging, and many similar challenges were being experienced within the sub-sectors present at the table, in the end only three common issues were identified that all could agree were shared, urgent and would benefit from a multi-lateral and integrated response by the sector (rather than the usual bi-lateral, sub-sector and issue specific approaches we usually employed).

The three issues were:

1. Our “relationship” with government,
2. The regulatory and legislative framework within which we operated (having significant impact on fund development)
3. What we characterized as “accountability” but in retrospect could have just as easily been described as the diminishing of trust in the sector.

Work ensued: the gentle lobbying of politicians and bureaucrats; setting up the Broadbent Panel on Accountability and the Task Force on Charitable Giving. Each of the national organizations began to raise awareness among their stakeholder groups—about the issues and about the efforts underway.

In 1998 the early fruits of our labours were harvested. The final report from the Broadbent Panel created a buzz both inside the sector and in government. The 1999 Speech from the Throne made overt mention of the importance of the

voluntary sector to Canadian life and the interest of the federal government in working with the sector to enhance its capacity.

A HISTORICAL NOTE

The Voluntary Sector Roundtable and all of the work being described were consciously and overtly focused on national/federal relationships and issues. As the work began to unfold, and as community-based organizations and provincial associations and governments became aware of it, rumblings of interest were heard at those levels. It’s important to concede that the vast majority of the work, and the impact, of the VSR and later the Voluntary Sector Initiative, were felt at the national level. For some this was a source of frustration—“where’s the emphasis on the ground, where it counts?” But for many the understanding was that grappling with issues like a healthier relationship with government, or systemic changes to how the sector is funded, held accountable and supported, would ultimately affect all levels in a positive way.

In 2000 the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) was announced. A \$94 million multi-faceted program, jointly overseen and managed by representatives from the sector and federal government. A great deal of the history and output of the VSI has been carefully itemized and for those that are interested it can be reviewed at www.vsi-isbc.ca.

It is interesting to note a theme that emerged both during and even before the VSI got underway; that although so much of the effort was targeted to increasing understanding and support of the voluntary sector among government, the general public and to some degree the corporate sector,

¹ The Voluntary Sector Roundtable was made up of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, National Voluntary Organizations, Volunteer Canada, United Way/Centraide Canada, Community Foundations of Canada, the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Canadian Conference for the Arts, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation and the Canadian Environmental Network—later joined by a representatives from the sport and faith sectors.

over and over again it became clear that voluntary organizations themselves had a limited understanding of the breadth and scope of their own sector.

ALMOST BY DEFINITION, PEOPLE WHO VOLUNTEER AND WORK IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR ARE DRIVEN BY THEIR DEEP DESIRE TO ADDRESS THE THING THEY CARE ABOUT.

Although cohesive vision and networks were clearly evident in sub-sectors such as health organizations or groups engaged in social development, international aid, environmental work or the arts, it was rare to find instances where widely disparate organizations referred to themselves, or acted, in an integrated fashion.

It was for this very reason that some of the resources of the VSI were allocated to the issue of increasing public understanding about the voluntary sector. The Awareness Table gave a great deal of thought to whether and how we could generate a better understanding, within the Canadian public, of the contribution made by the voluntary sector.

In 2004 the Awareness Table of the Voluntary Sector Initiative released a Request for Proposals seeking to fund a major project to do so. Eight national organizations, convened by the newly formed Imagine Canada (from the merger of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations) proposed to do more than go directly to the Canadian public with a message about the voluntary sector. "Shouldn't we" we asked ourselves as we prepared the project proposal, "go first to

our colleagues, to the thousands of organizations in the sector, and get them to think about, act upon and buy in to this idea—before going public?"

And that's exactly what has happened. The Voluntary Sector Awareness Project has ultimately been designed as a two step process:

1. Raise awareness, generate discussion, and explore the possibilities of a 'whole of voluntary sector' approach *inside* the sector itself, and then...
2. Raise awareness, communicate, inform and influence external stakeholders, including the public, about the importance of the voluntary sector to Canadian society and well-being.

THINKING ABOUT THINKING ABOUT AN INTEGRATED VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The challenge in thinking about the voluntary sector as a single, interconnected and seamless sector has less to do with this being a complicated idea—it's not—and more to do with it being an idea that just isn't that vital for many of us. And the reason for that has to do with passion and energy—probably the two most important resources that feed the voluntary sector and, ironically, the very factors that actually create the cohesion being discussed here as missing.

Almost by definition, people who volunteer and work in the voluntary sector are driven by their deep desire to address the thing they care about. And hardly ever is it organizational or sectoral or procedural. It is almost always a thing of purpose and urgency, about change and well-being and cause: hungry children, broken homes, beautiful

art, protected places. Of running the race, teaching the skill, fixing the problem, healing the wound, assessing the damage, touting the cause, building the response...

Truth to tell it can seem a bit rarified to spend time and energy thinking about the architecture of the voluntary sector when what we really need Canadians to understand is the issue... the cause...the need.

There are, of course, a number of organizations among our 161,000 who are more naturally inclined to think systemically. Associations, obviously, whose mandate to convene others lead them to develop interests and skills around process and organization. Funders like United Ways or Community Foundations, capacity builders such as Volunteer Centres or academic and training bodies, leadership organizations like Chambers of Charity or Social Planning Councils—these kinds of organizations have proven to be more likely to engage in systems thinking, and to follow with interest the whole-of-voluntary-sector work that has been emerging in the last years.

However the vast majority of charities and non-profits in Canada mostly think about *why* they exist (the cause they espouse, the problem they want to fix, the issue they care about) and *how* they are going to achieve their specific goals.

The challenge presumably is to connect these two seemingly disparate approaches by thinking though the relationship between ‘presenting ourselves as a unified sector’ and each organizations ability to achieve their unique set of goals and objectives.

BECAUSE THE VERY EXISTENCE OF A VOLUNTARY SECTOR INCREASES QUALITY OF LIFE IN CANADA, BUILDS SOCIAL CAPITAL AND TRUST, ENGAGES AND SERVES CITIZENS, AND REPRESENTS THE BEATING HEART OF A DEMOCRATIC AND FREE SOCIETY.

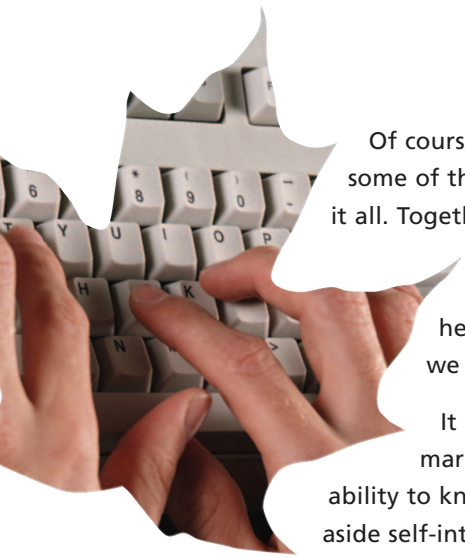
HOW DOES HAVING A WHOLE-VOLUNTARY-SECTOR APPROACH CONTRIBUTE TO ADVANCING THE PURPOSES OF THE DIFFERENT PARTS?

So what is the connection between achieving the viscerally important goals that each organization, and the people in them care so deeply about, and the idea of raising awareness about Canada’s voluntary sector?

The answer couldn’t be simpler. The connection lies in the fact that the whole is indeed greater than the sum of the parts. The “whole” not only achieves what its parts do (addressing and advancing on the thousands of challenges and issues tackled by charities and non profits every day in this country) it reaches even further. Because the very existence of a voluntary sector increases quality of life in Canada, builds social capital and trust, engages and serves citizens, and represents the beating heart of a democratic and free society.

The sociologist, and current Clerk of the Privy Council, Alex Himelfarb, once summarized the role of the voluntary sector in this way:

- It provides a myriad of services that government can’t, or prefers to see done by non-government agents, or that citizens themselves want to see happen.
- It gives voice—to constituencies and issues and concerns and ideas. A voice that keeps government, corporations and society on their toes, accountable. A voice that needs to be heard.
- It engages people: as volunteers, as activists, as voters, as participants.



Of course each organization does some of this but collectively we do it all. Together, through our different purposes and our passion to make a difference, we help to shape the society that we live in.

It has been said that it is the mark of an evolved sector—this ability to know when and how to put aside self-interest in order to advance a larger purpose.

It's interesting to ponder the analogy of an individual. As anyone who has raised (or been!) a child knows, one of the markers of immaturity is a mistaken sense of individual importance. Children and teenagers believe, and act on the belief, that they are the centre of their own universe. They are incapable of doing otherwise. Though it can feel like a curse for those around them, this stage of total self-absorption is a natural part of the maturing process and a necessary precursor to the later stage of learning to see and experience oneself in a broader context. Of learning to think about the other, to understand that our well being is inextricably linked to that of those around us. Until the day arrives that we look at someone we love, we hold our child for the first time, we see our parent as an individual person, we feel a stab of pure compassion for another, and our self-centered reality shifts.

Extending this analogy to the voluntary sector, the basic premise of this discussion paper is that we have before us an opportunity to move into a more mature stage of our existence. To consciously, and strategically, decide to put our respective individual realities into a collective context. And to present out, to a broad audience, a picture and

a message that celebrates this shared vision, and with it our commitment to, and impact on, quality of life in Canada.

CHANGE, CHANGE, CHANGE...

The reasons people, organizations, systems and sectors resist change are myriad. Some of it has to do with anxiety or capacity around change in general. Some of it is a natural desire to maintain the status quo under the old rubric of "better the devil we know". And some of it is rooted in real or perceived reasons that can become barriers to moving forward.

Perhaps it's easier to think about change at the individual or single organization level? It does seem that change is often more difficult for large organizations than it is for small ones, more difficult for networks than for single organizations. There is no question that thinking about a sea-change within a whole sector is pretty daunting. On the other hand, the change being explored here would be more a matter of adding to a repertoire of activities than of replacing existing approaches—the creativity of 'and,' not the tyranny of 'but.'

Put any group of people together to talk about change and you get a wide range of ideas brought to the table—both about change and how to manage it, as well as, of course, about the thing that you're thinking about changing in the first place.

For some, the best way to proceed is to get right to operational questions of how to change. For others, it makes sense to spend time pondering the drivers behind change, and the reasons why things are not working. At a minimum any good process of change should begin with an in-depth discussion.

LET'S GIVE 'EM SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT...

As the Project Partners for the Voluntary Sector Awareness Project have thought through how to generate a discourse about how/why/when it makes sense for the voluntary sector in Canada to present itself more cohesively, we've had some good conversations about how best to spearhead that dialogue. We've had lively debate about whether it's better to focus on the challenges and threats that face the sector (because, let's face it, these are the kinds of things that do encourage people to open up to the idea of change) vs. inciting a discussion building on the positive—all the good reasons why engaging in a shared awareness campaign makes sense and will help us all.

We have also pondered the fact that what might be even more helpful than a theoretical discussion of the barriers to moving ahead, or the good reasons for moving forward, is to get right to the "how to's". To get people planning, committed to action. Give them concrete and tactical approaches to consider and unleash a practical and focused process.

In the end, in classically Canadian fashion, we think it's best to do it all; provide the space for an open dialogue about the concerns that exist in the sector and how heightened public awareness might be able to contribute to alleviating them, acknowledge the individual and systemic barriers that get in the way of pursuing a single-sector awareness campaign, allow people to own these, ask them to suggest ways to overcome them, ignite people's sense of the possible, their interest in participating in a campaign, their own awareness of the part they play—and could play—in telling a larger story, painting a bigger picture, invite ideas for proceeding.

There is a sleeping tiger in all of this of course. Because although the idea of a collective awareness campaign that tells Canadians about how important the voluntary sector is seems pretty straightforward, the achievement of it could set the stage for a new era.

In order to create momentum for the campaign, representatives from voluntary organizations need to be given the opportunity to think about the ideas laid out in this paper, provide their input into what a campaign could say, and get persuaded as to the benefits of their participation. To wit—the process now underway.

But there is another quiet but palpable opportunity underlying this dynamic that could come to fruition if we succeed in generating interest and awareness inside the sector of our collective power, influence and contribution.

WE'VE HAD LIVELY DEBATE ABOUT WHETHER IT'S BETTER TO FOCUS ON THE CHALLENGES AND THREATS THAT FACE THE SECTOR VS. INCITING A DISCUSSION BUILDING ON THE POSITIVE—ALL THE GOOD REASONS WHY ENGAGING IN A SHARED AWARENESS CAMPAIGN MAKES SENSE AND WILL HELP US ALL.

We know that the ideas and energy that this process unleashes could trigger changes in thought and behaviour in the sector that move us into a phase where we—when it's appropriate—find ways to think, work and communicate in a more cohesive fashion than before, thereby increasing our ability to achieve both individual and collective ambitions.

There may well be a time in the future when the sector (or parts of it) will want to explore leveraging the greater sense of cohesion that this project may accrue, and find more times and places when shared advocacy could be possible. For now, however, those discussions, and those choices, lie outside the preview of the work at hand. For the moment it will be enough if we can succeed in capturing first the buy-in of voluntary organizations, and later the awareness of the public, about the incredible resource that the voluntary sector is to Canadian society.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR DIALOGUE

In order to enable the discourse discussed above, the following two sections explore the barriers that challenge efforts to generate whole-sector awareness raising, and put forward a set of arguments for pursuing that course of action.

It will be important and informative to hear back from the sector on all of the ideas in this paper, but in particular these matters of barriers and opportunities. To get a more complete picture of how these influences manifest in different parts of the country, different sub sectors, in different types of organizations. We need to know if there are other factors, not itemized here, that may be having an influence. By thinking through the reasons we don't pursue a whole sector perspective as much as we could, and the reasons why it makes sense to do so, we can position ourselves better for moving forward.

NAME BARRIERS, UNDERSTAND BARRIERS, LEAP BARRIERS.

COMPETITIVENESS

It's odd in a way that a dynamic that is considered a positive in the corporate sector, and a hurdle requiring political finesse for government, often causes so much anguish in the voluntary sector. Because of our primary interest in achieving good things for others, and our collective passion for justice, health, peace, equity and quality of life, we tend to be ambivalent about even naming, let alone dealing with, the potential of inter-organizational competition.

A longtime (and very savvy), national-level voluntary sector leader recently remarked that perhaps the best way to deal with this issue is to characterize it as the obvious thing it is and just move on.

"Let's face it," she said, "charities and non-profits compete with each other, for money and for profile. They are almost forced to do so by virtue of the environment in which they operate. An environment of too few resources, a scandal mongering media and difficult funders. So we're competitive? Does that mean we can't rise above that, when it makes sense?"

Seated beside her another extremely experienced colleague chimed in "Look at the business world—banks for example. They are fierce competitors and yet behind the scenes they utilize all the same support systems and often speak together with government, regulators and internationally on issues of shared concern—and no one in that world thinks these are mutually exclusive approaches."

Perhaps the answer lies not so much in replicating the way the corporate or public sectors have learned to deal with competitiveness, but rather to find our own way, a voluntary sector way. Our colleague is right, competition—the desire to be the best—is an integral part of our sector. Getting stuck on it as a barrier to moving forward on a collective vision doesn't make sense and won't allow us to just accept the reality of competitiveness, deal with it as necessary, and find ways and times to work together.

THREAT

On any given day some part, some organization, some group of individuals in the voluntary sector in Canada, feels under threat. Threat that is often very real.

The threat of losing funding is pervasive for many. The threat of not being able to recruit or retain enough volunteers or volunteers with the skill set, time and capacities required to do the job. The threat of loss of credibility that can come with unfair (or even fair) criticism or a mistake made, or a failed attempt at something.

A sense of threat can provide a strong incentive to join with others, to speak and act collectively. It can also create a barrier to cohesion. The challenge of an environment where people feel threatened is that:

- a) basic survival becomes paramount and trumps almost all other possible activities, including working with others to advance a bigger picture;

- b) in times of threat, almost by definition, trust is diminished and it requires huge amounts of trust to make the decision to work collectively rather than just go it alone; and,
- c) while for some the inclination when facing a threat is to just put their head down and keep plodding, for others, it engenders something more aggressive in them. For people who seek to battle a threatening situation head-on, working with others can feel dangerous, competitive or even undermining.

Spending a lot of time talking about, or trying to avert threat can be unproductive. We can certainly agree that threat is a double edged sword. It is indeed a negative and potentially destructive factor in our voluntary sector existence. It is also a major reason why it makes sense to pursue the suggested course of creating a shared vision, voice and trajectory. For what better way could there be to challenge the forces that would threaten our existence than to band together "all for one and one for all"?

CULTURE

There are a variety of norms and attitudes within and across the voluntary sector that relate to how we think we should communicate out—in efforts to promote awareness, influence policy or engage citizens. In some parts of the sector the approach will depend upon a sound, research defined presentation of "the facts". In others the preference is to use harder line tactics to shock an audience. Some organizations will gladly take to the streets in demonstration,



while others eschew a public strategy and seek to influence from inside the system. Each and every method has merit and the breadth and depth of communications expertise inside the voluntary sector is remarkable.

FOR WHAT BETTER WAY COULD THERE BE TO CHALLENGE THE FORCES THAT WOULD THREATEN OUR EXISTENCE THAN TO BAND TOGETHER “ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL”?

Clearly it is more difficult to create single approaches when it comes to substantive issues and concerns. It is in these instances that the vastly different styles and expectations that reflect the cultural diversity in the sector will be illuminated.

However the proposition that underlies the Voluntary Sector Awareness Project is that our first goal is simply to let Canadians know that we’re here, that we are a sector, and that we make a significant contribution. Given this fairly benign purpose it is doubtful that significant barriers will result from differences in culture, evolution and opinion that are so important, but also so likely to make finding consensus difficult.

DISTRACTION AND QUIET RESISTANCE

When time and energy are totally focused on delivering on mission, other possibilities can get lost (and oftentimes are not affordable). For example, taking the time to think about the ideas put forward in this discussion paper can be time taken away from writing the latest proposal, preparing

for the Board meeting, or serving the client. Or later on, when the time comes to adopt the awareness campaign and allocate resources to doing so, how will that decision line up against all the other possible ways that money could be spent?

No matter how understandable the sources of this kind of “distraction”, it does manifest a real barrier to moving ahead and can result in a kind of quiet non-participation that can be more powerful in the end than dealing with overt resistance.

Consider this very possible scenario. Summer of 2006 arrives and the Voluntary Sector Awareness Project produces a nicely designed set of campaign materials—posters, html banners, a trust mark for use on documents, a great slogan and an attractive look-and-feel.

Some organizations in the sector will overtly state that they won’t adopt the campaign, in some instances telling us why—likely in no uncertain terms!

Some (we hope many) of the organizations will adopt the use of the campaign and integrate it into their communications efforts.

But undoubtedly there will be others who will quietly just not participate—either because they’re not convinced it’s a good thing to do, or because they just don’t get around to doing it.

Unlike the first group mentioned, they won’t make a big deal of this non-participation. Regardless, if there are enough of them, their passive resistance, born of ambivalence or neglect, will be just as, if not more, destructive to the goal of delivering a single awareness campaign than if they had called up and yelled at us.

A SHORT LIST OF BIG REASONS TO PROCEED

1. IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO

No matter how understandable it is that voluntary organizations sometimes compete for attention, resources or credibility, the fact is that all of our work has one over-arching purpose: to make things better. In that context it is absolutely the morally right thing to work alongside, and in concert with, all of those with whom we share this vision, no matter the ways we make it come true.

2. A SINGLE SCHOOL OF FISH IS MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN A BUNCH OF LITTLE FISH ALL SWIMMING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

Our numbers are noteworthy. Just look through the data at the back of this paper. Our sector makes an economic contribution equivalent to 8% of the Gross Domestic Product. More importantly we employ over a million people, engage more than six million volunteers and we serve just about every person who lives in the country. Our combined contribution defines quality of life in Canada. Something not one of us can say as a single entity. How could it not be good to attach at least a part of our individual identity to such a powerful phenomenon?

3. THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR OFTEN LEADS THE WAY

How often have voluntary organizations or citizens groups or grassroots projects illuminated an issue, pointed the way for policy makers or the corporate sector, set a new course later adopted across the board? Too often to describe. The voluntary sector acts and thinks differently than other sectors.

We have a remarkable opportunity to show a different way to communicate about what are seen to be disparate components, competing organizations and multiple visions. And in so doing we will once again display leadership and innovation.

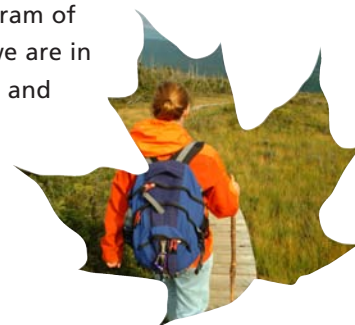
4. A UNIFIED SECTOR HAS MORE INFLUENCE

There is still a lot to be done in Canada. Every person reading this paper could itemize multiple small and large hurdles that compromise a better quality of life for many Canadians. We have problems in virtually every sphere—environmental, social, security, health, community life. We have untapped potential for more sport, art, volunteerism, giving. We have people who are marginalized, at risk, sick, disabled or hurting.

We have outstanding ideas for good ways to fix things. Great ways to enrich lives. Wonderful ways to make our communities stronger, healthier, more beautiful, more diverse, more safe. We want all of this to happen, and more.

We need to get a lot of people's attention to get there. We need to persuade decision makers and funders and politicians and bureaucrats and volunteers and donors and supporters of all kinds.

And we can succeed in that program of influence far more easily when we are in full sail, when we come together and speak with power and passion about what can be done, what dreams can come true.



WHERE TO FROM HERE?

As noted earlier the Voluntary Sector Awareness Project has two main purposes. First, to generate interest inside the voluntary sector about engaging in a pan-Canadian, pan-sector public awareness campaign, and second, to create that campaign.

In terms of the first of these goals the release of this discussion paper is meant to kickstart a sector-wide discourse and feedback process.

The paper isn't meant to be either definitive or comprehensive but will, we hope, stimulate ideas and invite reaction.

In order to further enrich the process of thinking about the role and contribution of the voluntary sector—and how we can best raise awareness about that among the public—we suggest that you review the summary of recent data included in this paper which gives an excellent statistical overview of the sector in Canada. We also encourage those who wish to delve deeper to check out the following two web sites where more resources and research documentation can be found: www.nonprofitscan.ca and www.vsi-isbc.ca

Taken together all of these can provide the basis for a dialogue in and about the importance of the voluntary sector to Canadian life and society, as well as some of the challenges and opportunities that exist around pursuing the vision of the “whole that is greater than the sum of the parts”.

Over the next year the two major elements of the project will be brought to completion.

FEEDBACK AND DIALOGUE

It is hoped that the paper will encourage reaction and feedback from a wide range of people representing many different parts of the voluntary sector.

That feedback can be completely poetic—just write a letter or make a phone call—or can follow a more standard format by answering the three sets of questions posed in that feedback form below.

In addition to inviting input directly from individuals, the project will host 100 Community Conversations over the fall of 2005, giving groups of organizations the opportunity to discuss and feed in answers to the same questions.

Early in 2006 a report will be produced summarizing the input received through that process, providing us with a remarkable opportunity to summarize the opinions and inputs of thousands of people.

CREATING AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

During the winter and spring of 2006 the Project Partners will select a communications firm to work with them to develop a set of campaign materials.

The spirit and message of the campaign will be based on what we hear from the feedback process as above.

The public awareness campaign will be designed to be *about* the sector, *for* the sector and *of* the sector.



From the outset there were two possible ways to achieve the goals articulated in the Voluntary Sector Initiative (and even before that by the Roundtable) to “raise awareness about the importance of the voluntary sector”.

One option was to create a campaign designed and delivered directly to the selected audience (the public, or perhaps “opinion leaders”) by a lead voluntary organization, through government, or even directly by a P.R. firm.

The benefit of this approach would be nimbleness and efficiency—it could be designed and delivered quickly, would avoid the pitfall of never being able to get consensus in the sector, and all the financial resources could be allocated to the promotion effort rather than internal processes.

However the downsides of this approach are pretty compelling:

- The campaign could only be delivered once and it’s unclear what kind of impact a one-time message to the public could achieve.
- It could surprise or annoy the very organizations it was meant to promote by not involving them.
- Most importantly it could compete with the hundreds, even thousands, of existing communications efforts undertaken by voluntary organizations to promote their respective causes and organizations.

The second design option is the one that has been selected.

The voluntary sector awareness campaign will create a communication platform (via a slogan, logo or “trustmark” and a visual look and feel) that voluntary organizations will be invited to adopt.

With this approach it will be the sector itself, that delivers the campaign, about itself.

Also by providing art work and messaging that can be added to promotional materials and efforts already underway, the campaign should add value to—not compete with—the stellar work that goes on every day within the sector to communicate out to stakeholders, supporters, donors etc.

There is one downside to this method of course. What if voluntary organizations don’t participate? If no one uses the trustmark or adds the web banner to their website, or utilizes the art work? The Project Partners and our federal funder (Social Development Canada) have decided that the risk of this occurring is far outweighed by the benefits and power that a shared campaign would net.

By depending upon the sector to deliver the campaign we open up the possibility that the campaigning can extend for a long time—years even. That the sector can build upon this first initiative and continue to find ways to unify their voices and reach out as a whole sector to Canadians. And most of all this approach respects and recognizes the balance that must be protected between the need for voluntary organizations to address their discrete communication goals and objectives, with our desire to deliver a shared campaign.

In keeping with this approach the campaign will be launched over the summer of 2006, within the sector. In the early fall a public launch will occur, orchestrated across the sector as much as possible.

CONCLUSION

The voluntary sector in Canada represents one of the most impressive illustrations of our shared humanity; that there are millions of people who choose—as volunteers, as staff people, as donors, as administrators—in thousands of different ways, to commit their time and effort to making our world a better place. And in turn a vibrant community of 161,000 organizations has been formed, each dedicated in their own way, to make a difference to quality of life in our country.

What could be more meaningful than to pause and celebrate this remarkable achievement? Maybe to even shout it off a rooftop or two?

Time and circumstance have opened up an opportunity for voluntary organizations in Canada to do exactly that. Of course the Voluntary Sector Awareness Project is not the end all and be all. It won't address many of the challenges facing voluntary organizations. It won't fix community problems that keep us awake at night. But it does have the potential to generate pride—in the sector and among the public. To create momentum and energy that augments what we do now, by gently propelling us to a more collective vision for ourselves, our communities and our society. And on the basis of that vision and energy, much can be accomplished.

There are those who would say that spending resources on anything but direct service doesn't make sense. We don't agree. Amortized across the full spectrum of the voluntary sector the per-organization investment of this project is \$8.70. Not very much for an initiative that will stimulate new ideas, invite the interest and participation of the whole sector, help to position

us all, and most importantly give us the framework to speak with, and to, Canadians about how we help them build the communities and country they want.

We hope that you will participate. Read the discussion paper. Take a few minutes to check out the data and statistics that illuminate the breadth of our work. Send in your thoughts on the questions below. Be a part of delivering the upcoming voluntary sector awareness campaign.

And join in a process that rests upon one simple, compelling idea. That the Canadian voluntary sector makes a difference in so many different ways because there is need. And where there is need, we are determined to respond. And so we do, with Canadians and for Canadians, with passion, and for change.



A PICTURE OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN CANADA

- Canada has the 2nd largest voluntary sector in the world
- There are 161,000 non-profit and voluntary organizations in Canada
- With revenues totaling \$112 billion, non-profit and voluntary organizations play a substantial role in the Canadian economy
- The voluntary sector draws on 2 billion volunteer hours, the equivalent of 1 million full-time jobs
- The 161,000 organizations employ 2 million people and depend on 19 million volunteer positions (filled by more than 6.5 million individual volunteers)
- 54% of organizations in the sector are run entirely by volunteers
- Canadians have taken out a total of 139 million memberships in the non-profit and voluntary organizations, an average of 4 memberships per individual
- The 1% of organizations that have revenues of \$10 million (1,610 organizations) account for more than 59% of all the revenues, 46% of paid staff and 20% of volunteer positions
- Just over half of all organizations are operated solely by volunteers, and nearly two-thirds report annual revenues less than \$100K
- Organizations with larger revenues are generally more likely than others to depend on government funding (49%); those with relatively smaller annual revenues depend more on earned income from non-governmental sources, and gifts and donations



TAKING A SLIGHTLY CLOSER LOOK AT THE MAJOR SUB SECTORS

ARTS AND CULTURE

- A total of 13,800 organizations in this sector
- 72,800 paid employees work in arts and culture
- This sub-sector accounts for 5% of all volunteers
- Accounts for over \$3 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 50% of the revenue in arts and culture comes from earned income from non-governmental sources

SPORTS AND RECREATION

- A total of 33,650 organizations in this sector
- 130,900 paid employees work in sports and recreation
- This sub-sector accounts for 28% of all volunteers
- Accounts for \$6 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 65% of the revenue in sports and recreation comes from earned income from non-governmental sources

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- A total of 8,300 organizations in this sector
- 100,600 paid employees work in education and research
- This sub-sector accounts for 8% of all volunteers
- Accounts for over \$6 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 46% of the revenue in education and research comes from governmental sources

UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

- A total of 500 organizations in this sector
- 212,600 paid employees work in universities and colleges
- This sub-sector accounts for 0.2% of all volunteers
- Accounts for over \$12 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 56% of the revenue in universities and colleges comes from governmental sources

HEALTH

- A total of 5,300 organizations in this sector
- 192,800 paid employees work in health organizations
- This sub-sector accounts for 4% of all volunteers
- Accounts for \$9 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 70% of the revenue in health comes from governmental sources

HOSPITALS

- A total of 780 organizations in this sector
- 483,200 paid employees work in hospitals
- This sub-sector accounts for 2% of all volunteers
- Accounts for over \$24 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 82% of the revenue in hospitals from governmental sources

SOCIAL SERVICES

- A total of 19,100 organizations in this sector
- 297,300 paid employees work in social services
- This sub-sector accounts for 19% of all volunteers
- Accounts for \$11 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 66% of the revenue in social services from governmental sources

ENVIRONMENT

- A total of 4,400 organizations in this sector
- 14,900 paid employees work in environmental organizations
- This sub-sector accounts for 4% of all volunteers
- Accounts for \$1 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 44% of the revenue in the environment sector comes from earned income from non-governmental sources

DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

- A total of 12,300 organizations in this sector
- 182,300 paid employees work in development and housing
- This sub-sector accounts for 2% of all volunteers
- Accounts for over \$6 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 50% of the revenue in development and housing coming from earned income from non-governmental sources

LAW, ADVOCACY AND POLITICS

- A total of 3,600 organizations in this sector
- 15,900 paid employees work in law, advocacy and politics
- This sub-sector accounts for 2% of all volunteers
- Accounts for over \$1 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 47% of the revenue in law, advocacy and politics coming from governmental sources

GRANT-MAKING, FUNDRAISING AND VOLUNTARISM PROMOTION

- A total of 15,900 organizations in this sector
- 28,600 paid employees work in grant-making, fundraising and voluntarism promotion
- This sub-sector accounts for 9% of all volunteers

- Accounts for over \$8 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 35% of the revenue in grant-making, fundraising and voluntarism promotion coming from earned income from non-governmental sources

INTERNATIONAL

- A total of 1000 organizations in this sector
- 5,100 paid employees work in international organizations
- This sub-sector accounts for 1% of all volunteers
- Accounts for over \$1 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 42% of the revenue in the international sector coming from governmental sources

RELIGION

- A total of 30,700 organizations in this sector
- 109,300 paid employees work in religion-based organizations
- This sub-sector accounts for 11% of all volunteers
- Accounts for nearly \$7 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 64% of the revenue in the religion sector coming from gifts and donations

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND UNIONS

- A total of 8,500 organizations in this sector
- 150,200 paid employees work in business and professional associations and unions
- This sub-sector accounts for 5% of all volunteers
- Accounts for nearly \$11 billion of the total revenue generated by the voluntary sector
- 85% of the revenue in business and professional associations and unions coming from earned income from non-governmental sources

OTHER FACTS AND FINDINGS

- In 1997 (the last year full data was available) the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the voluntary sector was 57.5 billion (6.9% of the total economy of Canada). With the value of volunteer contribution added to this, the GDP equivalent is \$71.5 billion (8.6% of total economy).
- This makes the voluntary sector four times larger than the agriculture sector, twice the size of the mining, oil, and gas extraction industry and 11 times larger than motor vehicle manufacturing.
- Consultations held by the Voluntary Sector HR Council Feasibility Study found that, “Among possible remedies [for sector-related problems], participants suggested that the voluntary/non-profit sector needs a stronger voice to educate the public and promote the sector’s accomplishments and strengths.”
- In 2005 a “Sector Council” for the voluntary sector was established to provide leadership to and among charities and non-profits on a wide range of issues related to the paid workforce of the sector. The creation of the Sector Council and the significant amount of work that has gone into generating interest and support for it speaks to the evolution of the voluntary sector and a readiness to work collectively on the very important issue of human resource development.

SOURCES

Cornerstones of Community: Highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations, 2004

Satellite Account of Nonprofit Institutions and Volunteering, 2004

Report on the Voluntary Sector Human Resources Feasibility Study, Community Foundations of Canada and United Way of Canada, February 2002

2000 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating

FEEDBACK FORM

The Project Partners Committee has identified three question categories within which a number of sub-questions are posed. We are aware that for every question asked there could be ten others and we acknowledge the impossibility of getting this part of the exercise completely right. Through all our discussions we keep coming to the same thing; the knowledge that we can't possibly predict what such a diverse group of possible respondents would want be asked, what they might want to tell us about their response to the ideas in this paper, about their understanding of the role, scope and function of the voluntary sector, all based on their unique mix of wisdom and experience.

The best that we can do is provide you with these questions as a guide, knowing that they are more about establishing a basis for feeding in thoughts and suggestions than an effort to constrain or delimit input.

We hope that we will hear back from a rich diversity of people and organizations. That if you are a staff person that you will encourage volunteers to read the paper and proffer input. That if you are connected to a large organization that you might share information about this project with those you know involved with smaller organizations—there are so many of those who often don't get found in processes that try to reach out to the sector. We encourage you to ask young people or new Canadians or even your clientele to consider the ideas put forward here.

Don't hesitate to contact the Voluntary Sector Awareness Project team if you have comments or questions about any of this. Alternatively you can get in touch with any of the Project Partners.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU.



QUESTION #1 THINKING ABOUT BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The paper outlines four major barriers to greater voluntary sector cohesion: competitiveness, the impact of threat, cultural differences and, the undermining effect of distraction.

The paper also identifies four reasons that might persuade us to proceed with a public awareness campaign and to accept a greater sense of ‘whole sector-ness’: the moral imperative, the power of many, the opportunity to take leadership and, the potential to increase influence.

1. Which of both of these strikes you as most relevant to your own perspective on the overall thesis of the paper i.e. that a collective public awareness campaign makes sense?
Which barrier? Which opportunity?
 2. In what way do the barrier and opportunity you have selected play out in your organization, community or sub-sector?
 3. Is there something particularly unique about the sphere in which you work and the challenge of taking a more whole-of-sector approach?
 4. Can you suggest ways to overcome the barrier you see as most significant, and to lever the positive energy of the opportunity you are most taken by?
-

QUESTION # 2 THINKING ABOUT YOUR POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION

The Voluntary Sector Awareness Project is in the end much more about process than it is about outcome. Our primary purpose is to try and engage our colleagues across the sector in thinking about, and ultimately taking the step to act upon, the idea of a “whole voluntary sector” approach—in this instance with the ultimate shared deliverable being a public awareness campaign. Success or progress against this process goal will be measured by the levels of participation the project achieves. More importantly success for the sector, in moving toward the goal of greater cohesion, will depend upon the choice of individuals and organizations to engage, or not.

1. What would make you want to participate in efforts to strengthen the perception of the voluntary sector as a whole in Canada?
 2. What could you, and others you work with and alongside, contribute to this goal?
 3. What could be provided to help you engage (beyond more financial resources—we accept as self-evident that this is a need among most voluntary organizations). What tools, learning, leadership, or structures would you like to see in place?
-

QUESTION #3 THINKING ABOUT A PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

As noted in the discussion paper the Voluntary Sector Awareness Project will develop and provide to voluntary organization a basic awareness campaign platform that will be built around a key message/slogan and have a visual brand. Voluntary organizations will have the option to adopt these by adding them to letterhead, communication materials, websites etc. The recipients of the campaign therefore is the audience the sector already speaks to i.e. donors, volunteers, clients, funders, media, students, new Canadians, the whole public in effect.

1. Do you think it is important for the broader Canadian public to understand the nature and breadth of the voluntary sector? Why, why not?
2. What would you want Canadians to know about the voluntary sector in Canada?
3. What do you want them to know about your organization vis a vis the whole sector?
4. Do you have any experience with this kind of campaigning? If so can you share with us any lessons learned?
5. What are your thoughts about how we can best paint a single picture of such a diverse sector?
6. What conditions would be needed to make a public awareness campaign about the sector be most likely to succeed?
7. What do you think the added value to your organization would be of the existence of a public awareness campaign? How—if at all—could it help your organization?

QUESTION # 4—OPTIONAL ANY FURTHER INPUT?

In case we haven't asked you the "right" question we are more than happy to receive any other thought you might have.

1. Was there anything in the discussion paper that particularly grabbed your attention?
 2. Was there anything in the data from the NSNVO (National Survey on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations) that leaped out at you? What do think the implications are, if any, of those results?
-

Thank you for taking the time to respond.

We would appreciate it if you would send your answers—and any other thoughts you might have—in the following ways:

By e-mail to:

ccroteau@imaginecanada.ca or
mroy@imaginecanada.ca or to

Paddy Bowen at *paddy.bowen@magma.ca* or to any of the Project Partners as per the front cover of the paper.

By mail to:

Voluntary Sector Awareness Project,
suite 1105, 85 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario

By fax to:

613-238-9300

If you need to get in touch please call
1-800-821-8814.

We would also very much appreciate it if you could provide us with a small amount of demographic information although this isn't mandatory at all.

Name *(optional)*

Organization name *(optional)*

Sub sector affiliation *(sport, environment, arts/culture, social development, health, faith, international aid, other—please note)*

Geographic location *(city, area, province etc.)*

Size of your organization: annual budget, number of paid staff, number of volunteers, number of people served *(if applicable)*

Type of services/work you provide

If you would like a copy of the Summary Report based on the feedback process please provide your mailing and/or e-mail address. **Thank you!**

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