

Our vision for a home in government for the nonprofit sector

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What could the sector and our society look like after fifteen years with a federal home in government for nonprofits?

Serving communities: Canadian communities have better access to high quality nonprofit programs and services.

Respect: The nonprofit sector is better respected and valued for its economic and social contributions.

Decent work: More workers in the nonprofit sector have decent wages, stable work and benefits.

Problem solving: The nonprofit sector and the federal government have a stronger relationship and are working together effectively to tackle shared priorities like poverty reduction, the climate crisis and welcoming newcomers to Canada.

Why do we believe the nonprofit sector needs a federal home in government?

Intentionality: The nonprofit sector is often treated as an afterthought by the federal government and isn't supported by intentional policymaking the way so many other sectors are.

Reducing fragmentation: The government's current approach to the nonprofit sector is piecemeal and siloed, leading to inefficiencies, issues and miscommunication.

Improving understanding: The government doesn't have a good grasp of the sector's economic value, social impact, expertise, or its operating and financial models.

Unlocking potential: A better relationship between the federal government and the nonprofit sector could help unleash the sector's full economic and social potential.

Why does a strong nonprofit sector matter to society?

Serving communities: Virtually everyone in Canada is touched by or served by the nonprofit sector, whether they know it or not.

Democracy: The nonprofit sector is an important component of civil society, which is crucial to our economic, democratic and social structures.

Unique societal role: like the public sector, the nonprofit sector focuses on social and environmental good, but like the private sector, it has more freedom to be nimble, and innovative.

Diversity of offerings: The nonprofit sector provides basic and emergency services, cultural and educational programs, and works with the private and public sectors to address the root causes of complex societal problems.

Expertise: The nonprofit sector brings expertise and insight from community relationships which can be used to create better public policy.

What should it do?

Public Policy: Ensure public policy fosters a strong, accountable, diverse and innovative nonprofit and charitable sector.

Data: In partnership with Statistics Canada, collect and share data about the nonprofit sector to support evidence-informed policy making.

Collaboration: Promote understanding of the nonprofit sector within the federal government and collaboration across government on issues affecting nonprofits and charities.

Internal advocacy: Be an internal advocate for the nonprofit sector in general public policy decisions that may impact charities and nonprofits.

Equity: Address broad inequities within the nonprofit sector that fall within federal jurisdiction.

Potential public policy focus areas:

- Nonprofit sector labour force strategy
- Creation of equitable and effective federal funding practices
- Regulation of the disbursement quota
- Creation of policies that introduce anti-racism/anti-oppression training for funding officers
- Red tape reduction
- Supporting digital transformation within the nonprofit sector

What should it not do?

Create barriers: It shouldn't replace or interrupt relationships that the nonprofit sector has with other departments, agencies, or ministries.

Be responsible for all funding of the sector: The home in government may develop public policy to improve federal funding practices, but departments and ministries should still operate their respective grant and contribution programs.

Replicate inequities: It must't only serve the largest, national, most well-connected and well-funded charities and nonprofits.

What should it look like?

Staying power: It must not disappear after a change in government or after a few years.

Resourcing: It must have appropriate, ongoing budget and staffing to allow it to carry out its mandate effectively.

Authority: It must have the power to advance its mandate and make a meaningful difference for the nonprofit sector and the communities we serve. Its staffing should include officials with an adequate level of authority to fulfill its mission on the political and bureaucratic side.

Engagement: It must have regular, meaningful, equitable and accessible mechanisms for consulting and engaging the diversity and breadth of the nonprofit sector.

Sector experience: Its staff should include individuals with experience working in the nonprofit sector.

Advisory Committee: Its work should be informed by a diverse nonprofit sector advisory committee, whose members are compensated for their contributions.

How can we ensure it serves the sector equitably?

Legal status: It must serve all public-benefit, social impact community organizations, regardless of legal status (i.e. including unincorporated grassroots organizations).

Accessibility: It should make federal programs and services that serve the nonprofit sector more accessible.

Engagement: It must have open, equitable and accessible channels of communication and consultation.

Policy work: One of its public policy priorities should be to address inequities within the nonprofit sector (e.g. instituting anti-racism/anti-oppression training to funding officers or ensuring that legislation governing the disbursement quota is equitable).

What's your vision?

We want to hear from the sector to shape future detailed proposals on this issue.

Reach out to publicpolicy@imaginecanada.ca to have your say!