

# MAIN OUTCOMES & REPORT HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY

## **What Difference Did the Project Make**

The *New Directions for British Columbia's Non-Profit Sector Project* set out to create a foundational BC non-profit narrative informed by research and focused on non-profit impacts in BC communities; a narrative that could be shared across the sector and on which non-profits could build their own unique stories. With the contributions of non-profits across BC, this project presents a picture of the BC non-profit sector, identifies key ideas like the importance of “working together”, and highlights BC non-profit impacts. These are the resources for a foundational BC non-profit narrative.

## **Summary of Results**

### **Shared Understanding of Non-Profit Key Strengths and Core Values**

Through the project survey research and conversations across communities, we have a picture of the non-profit sector in BC, its characteristics, strengths and challenges, and a rich description of how non-profits see their organizations impacting their communities. The project identifies the key supports non-profits need— to continue advancing their work in community, to build a shared understanding of the non-profit sector, and to communicate their vast and diverse contributions.

### **Increased Non-Profit Connections and Communication**

Overall the project helped to increase BC non-profit connections and open routes of communication among non-profits in all regions. Communicating across and within the many different non-profit subsectors is a challenge, but non-profits of all types and sizes worked together in the project's community events, and were engaged in the survey.

### **A Legacy to Continue to Move Forward**

The project attracted support and raised awareness of non-profits throughout BC. It sparked local, regional and provincial actions that are on-going, and that will help to increase the understanding of the BC non-profit sector, and strengthen the contribution and impact of the sector going forward.



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This project was completed by the New Directions Partners with funding support provided by the BC Centre for Non-Profit Management and Sustainability

***Building a Shared Narrative for BC's Non-Profit Sector***

# About the

## ***New Directions for British Columbia's Non-Profit Sector Project***

Funded by the BC Centre for Non-Profit Management and Sustainability, the New Directions Project was shaped by the many community voices contributing to it, enriched by the advice and guidance of a Sector Reference Group, and enhanced by the Next Steps Non-Profit Network, which provided invaluable input along the way. The New Directions Project partners consulted with Imagine Canada and linked this project with the national initiative to develop a Foundational Narrative for the charitable and non-profit sector. The New Directions Project included:

- **a broad-based survey of the BC Non-Profit Sector** which was completed in two waves, and which received 1,865 responses from non-profits across more than 170 communities, and
- **15 community events** with close to 350 participants held throughout BC.

### ***Every aspect of the project was guided by these principles:***

- **Inclusivity** – Welcoming all BC non-profits to be part of this project.
- **Diversity** – Reflecting non-profits of all types, sizes and regions in BC.
- **Bottom-up Approach** – Recognizing that community engagement and input is fundamental and essential to the success of this project.
- **Working Together** – Building a shared understanding and informed sector perspective to promote the development of a shared BC non-profit narrative.

### ***The project outputs, findings and recommendations are highlighted in this summary and presented in the three project reports:***

- 1) Survey of Non-Profit Organizations & Voluntary Associations in British Columbia,
- 2) Collectively Speaking, and
- 3) Community Conversations.

Together these reports provide a detailed picture of BC non-profits and begin to tell the story of the BC non-profit sector's impact in community.



## Highlights

### **Survey of Non-Profits Organizations & Voluntary Associations in British Columbia Report Findings**

The 1,865 respondents to the survey (Waves 1 and 2) provided insight into the core strengths and values of the non-profit sector, the challenges and pressures faced by the sector, as well as strategies for moving forward. The survey also included information on the different resources available to support and sustain the work of the sector, including changes reported over time. The role and contribution of volunteers was also explored, as well as critical social development and social infrastructure needs across communities. The key findings to emerge through the report highlight the need to find and keep talented people within the sector, as well as the need to continue to work to leverage new opportunities and relationships. “Building and maintaining support for the non-profit sector” was the challenge most often cited.

## Highlights

### **Collectively Speaking Report**

Generated through the survey findings, this report demonstrates the enormous range and diversity of the non-profit sector in BC. “Collectively Speaking” details how non-profit organizations enrich the lives of people and communities as expressed through hundreds of impact messages. These messages are the voices of BC’s non-profit sector responding to the survey statement “Because of my organization, my community has ...”.

## Highlights

### **Community Conversations Report**

The 348 participants in 15 BC communities told us non-profits engage with British Columbians in many different ways and many different places, from farms to nature reserves, to theatres and cultural centres, to sports fields and facilities, to restaurants, offices and homes. “Community Conversations” participants told us how the work of their organizations enriched their communities, and how much they valued the opportunity to meet and discuss “ways to make the non-profit sector visible, and its impact understood”.

To help build awareness they recommended ways to support networking – by developing umbrella groups, regional or provincial organizations, or networks of networks that are facilitating not controlling. They also identified the need for communication and media training, and training in demonstrating value and impact. “Community Conversation” participants recommended that non-profits reframe how they think of themselves, and promote their strengths. They discussed ways to help advance a broad understanding of the impact of non-profits, emphasizing that “working together is better”.

## **How Can We Build on this Project and Move Forward Together**

The ideas sparked by this project are inspiring and supporting wide-ranging initiatives. We all have a role to play - working together, building understanding, and communicating impact.

### **Here Are Some Examples of What Is Happening So Far**

- Twenty-four BC non-profit umbrella organizations, including partners in this project, have established a provincial network, to be known as the Third Voice Society.
- Non-profits in communities are working to establish local and regional networks, like those developing in Abbotsford and Vernon.
- A workshop to advance community conversations and community capacity building around the role and contribution of the non-profit sector, developed by Volunteer BC, has been added to SPARC BC's Community Development Education Program and LIRN (Learning Initiatives for Rural and Northern BC).

### **Invitation and Commitment to Take Action**

We welcome your thoughts and feedback and invite you to join your colleagues in continuing to build understanding about the work and impact of BC non-profits. Please—

- Visit our website, [bcnonprofits.ca](http://bcnonprofits.ca) to check for updates and see who you recognize from your community. Call them up and find out more.
- Subscribe to our e-bulletin to learn what is happening and to take part in opportunities.
- Participate in our Next Steps Network's meetings in person, on the phone or SKYPE.
- Sign up for a LIRN workshop through SPARC BC or Volunteer BC.
- Share your ideas; ask questions; inform us of your issues and events. The Community Conversation events will continue, and new links between groups will grow with your help.

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### **Thank you for your participation. We look forward to hearing from you.**

If you have any questions about this project or would like additional information, please contact one of the project partners.



people. planning. positive change.

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**Reference Group Members:** BC Centre for Non-Profit Management & Sustainability; Board Voice; Realize BC; StepUpBC; The Federation of Community Social Services of BC; University of Victoria, School of Public Administration; and Vancouver Foundation.

Links to the complete Reports can be found on the New Directions website ([www.bcnonprofits.ca](http://www.bcnonprofits.ca)) as well as on the SPARC BC website ([www.sparc.bc.ca](http://www.sparc.bc.ca)).