

FROM EMERGENCY TO OPPORTUNITY

**Building a Resilient Alberta
Nonprofit Sector After COVID-19**

July 2020



Acknowledgements

CCVO would like to recognize and thank the team of staff who worked diligently to create this report.

Authors

Marokh Yousifshahi, Policy Analyst

Maggie Easton, Policy Intern

Alexa Briggs, Director, Policy & Research

Editing

Karen Ball, Interim President & CEO

Editing & Design

Monique Sereneo, Communications Assistant

Marisa Barber, Manager, Marketing & Communications

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From Emergency to Opportunity: Building a Resilient Alberta Nonprofit Sector After COVID-19

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the traditional territories in Alberta of the many First Nations and Métis, whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
A Resilient Nonprofit Sector	2
Common Impacts of Emergencies on Nonprofits	3
Increased Service Demand	3
Decreased Revenue	5
Diminished Organizational Capacity	7
Transitioning Technology	8
Consequences of a Weakened Nonprofit Sector	11
From COVID-19 Emergency to Opportunity	13
Building a Strategy for Community Prosperity: Starting a New Conversation About The Sector	13
<i>Collaboration Among All Stakeholders</i>	15
Preparation and Response to an Emergency	16
<i>Workplace Preparations</i>	17
<i>Have an Up-to-Date Plan</i>	18
<i>Establish Partnerships</i>	19
<i>Inform and Empower Staff</i>	19
<i>Build Financial Resiliency</i>	20
<i>Fundraise and Build a Case</i>	21
<i>Communicate Effectively</i>	23
<i>Build Redundancy and Back Ups</i>	23
Conclusion	24
References	25

PREFACE

It is time for the nonprofit sector to lead a vital conversation. A conversation that considers the resiliency of our sector and the value that we offer as leaders on the front lines of this pandemic and leaders in our collective recovery. This is a conversation that needs to be had within the nonprofit sector and, most critically, with the private and public sectors to co-create a strategy that will ensure the future prosperity of our communities and our province.

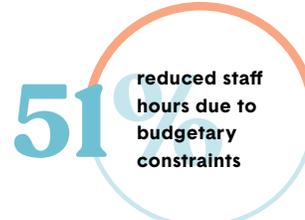
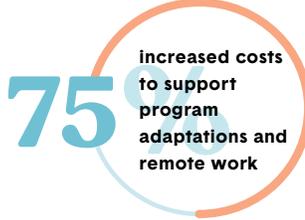
CCVO lays the foundation for this conversation for Alberta through an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the nonprofit sector drawn from data collected in our Alberta Nonprofit Survey, data from surveys by the Alberta Nonprofit Network, Imagine Canada, and partner organizations across the country.

The analysis in this report shows that the effects on the nonprofit sector have been magnified through increased service demand, decreased revenue, and diminished organizational capacity coupled by delays in support and inadequate recognition for the leadership role that the sector is being called upon to play.

In order to make this crisis an opportunity, the sector needs to continue to lead by rejecting a return to the status quo to emerge stronger, more robust, and more able to serve our communities into the future. We need a shared strategy for community prosperity that recognizes and supports the role of nonprofits in rebuilding the community and the economy.

Karen Ball
CCVO Interim President & CEO

Impact of COVID-19 on nonprofits



From emergency to opportunity



Community prosperity – a priority in recovery



Practical emergency planning resources

A RESILIENT NONPROFIT SECTOR

As the world continues to confront the COVID-19 global pandemic, nonprofit organizations are managing their response as providers of essential services to communities and individuals in a time of crisis, as well as managing the safety and security of their staff. Nonprofits play a pivotal and critical role both in a direct and indirect way. They face everyday challenges in society, such as food insecurity and poverty, while also creating thriving communities. However, during a crisis, their role and response are augmented. Nonprofits find themselves at the front lines of emergency response during a crisis, whether it is a natural disaster, an economic recession, or a global health emergency.

The nonprofit sector's immediate role and invaluable work have never been more visible than they are now. However, while organizations continue to deliver necessary services, a change in operations as a result of the pandemic, means that many nonprofits can no longer fill other essential roles, such as providing social cohesion and connection – which represents a significant loss for people who rely on these for social well-being. Physical distancing rules mean a change in operations for many organizations that can no longer provide the kinds of connections that they previously did, compounded by a decrease in various sources of revenues, such as event cancellations. As a result, not only are many nonprofits faced with revamping how they deliver services, they are also seeing an increase in demand for those services in a time when their revenues and abilities are decreasing.

Past experiences provide some understanding of effective ways that nonprofits can prepare and manage during an emergency. In Alberta, there are lessons learned from the Calgary flood in 2013 and the Fort McMurray wildfire in 2016. As natural disasters, neither of these are directly comparable to the current circumstances.¹ However, all three are emergency situations with similarities that can be examined.²

Many current issues are emerging for nonprofits that reflect these past crisis situations and give some guidance as to what actions the sector can take during these exceptional circumstances. A human resources crisis,³ a financial crisis,⁴ and the illumination of the inequities that are leaving some people more vulnerable to the effects of this pandemic are all issues that must be addressed.⁵

By necessity, emergencies send all organizations – including nonprofits – into crisis mode. During this time, it is also crucial to start thinking about the future prosperity of the sector once it is past managing a crisis and working toward recovery. The current pandemic and resulting public health crisis have illuminated gaps in the sector's social fabric, and all organizations can be part of advocating for a better future for all.

Not only are many nonprofits faced with revamping how they deliver services, they are also seeing an increase in demand for those services in a time when their revenues and abilities are decreasing.

COMMON IMPACTS OF EMERGENCIES ON NONPROFITS

No one will escape this pandemic unscathed – individuals, families, communities, and organizations feel the impact. The full impact on nonprofits will not be known for some time. Past experiences of emergency situations, in addition to recent reporting on the effects of the pandemic, give insight into challenges that nonprofits are experiencing now and will likely experience in the future.

Drawing from the 2020 CCVO Alberta Nonprofit Survey (ANS) results coupled with existing research conducted by organizations within Alberta and across Canada, this report identifies four areas where nonprofits are expected to feel the most impact of the pandemic:

1. increased service demand without timely recognition and support;
2. decreased revenue;
3. diminished organizational capacity; and
4. transitioning technology and the impact of remote work.

Increased Service Demand

In times of crisis, when nonprofits are needed most by their communities and their clients, they face compounding challenges that put them in a near-impossible position to be able to address the needs of not only their clients, but also their staff. Even though many nonprofits have expertise, education, and experience working through times of crisis, nonprofits are not always recognized and supported as primary responders. For example, in British Columbia, nonprofits have reported that their essential service workers do not have access to personal protective equipment (PPE), which is critical for keeping people working in the community safe.⁶ The same issue has been reported in Ontario, with nonprofits in the health subsector identifying access to PPE as one of their most pressing needs.⁷ Research from the Saskatchewan Nonprofit Partnership also identified increased funding for PPE and cleaning supplies as a major need of the sector.⁸ Alberta has seen significant efforts by front line organizations in protecting homeless individuals from contracting the virus.⁹

While relying on nonprofits to provide essential services – often to people who are most vulnerable and most affected when a crisis hits – it is vital to take steps to protect these organizations from impact and to pay special attention to their needs during recovery.¹⁰ Research conducted in Fort McMurray after the 2016 wildfires revealed that,

“Community-based organizations do not exist in a vacuum; they are themselves vulnerable to, and often victims of, the disaster which impacts their community.”

However, during recovery from the fires, several nonprofits indicated that their organizations were not engaged as participants in government decision-making to access their views or knowledge, or in financial planning for response and recovery.

For example, funding aid to small businesses was prioritized in the first year after the fires, while support for nonprofits was not distributed until year two. Furthermore, the application process was more straightforward for businesses.¹¹ Similarly, in the funding programs available in response to COVID-19, eligibility criteria for many of the programs were not made public for nonprofits as quickly as they were for businesses. For example, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) was available for businesses, but it did not take into account the nonprofit sector's unique operating realities when it was first announced.¹² Several organizations that responded to the ANS indicated uncertainty and challenges in regard to eligibility and applications for the programs available. As one respondent to a flash survey by the Ontario Nonprofit Network said, "I'm not sure if I qualify for anything, it feels like I'm invisible."¹³

From past crisis experience, research shows that nonprofits are likely to see an increased demand for services,¹⁴ all while facing funding shortages, layoffs,¹⁵ and heavier workloads.¹⁶ During the 2008-09 recession, a report in Ontario indicated that organizations delivering social services had an increase in clients and demand for services – including the need for more crisis intervention centres.¹⁷ As a result of COVID-19, 73% of ANS respondents reported an increase in demand for services to clients and communities.¹⁸ Nationally, one third of Christian charities reported increased demand.¹⁹ Additionally, in British Columbia, 78% of nonprofits surveyed indicated that there has been a disruption to services for clients and communities as a result of COVID-19.²⁰ In Ontario, 93% of social services organizations surveyed reported disruption in services,²¹ as did 77% of respondents in Nova Scotia.²² In a survey by the Alberta Nonprofit Network, 90% of nonprofits reported a similar disruption of service to clients and communities.²³ In Saskatchewan, tens of thousands of individuals have already been negatively impacted by disruption in services.²⁴

Throughout this crisis, it is clear that nonprofits can respond quickly, flexibly, and collaboratively. Within two weeks of the onset of the pandemic in Canada, 50% of nonprofits surveyed in Ontario had modified programming in response, largely by switching to virtual delivery.²⁵ Organizations have responded by enabling government efforts and filling gaps to address immediate critical needs. In Alberta, the nonprofit sector has added value to the COVID-19 response in various ways, including innovations from organizations that are using technology to identify organizations and businesses that are providing support and services during the crisis.²⁶ One respondent to the 2020 ANS said, "there are a lot of gaps around system navigation, now that programs have shifted so drastically. We're running a peer system navigator program to support filling these gaps." This response exemplifies the nonprofit sector's rapid response to address the needs of the community.



Alberta's nonprofit sector is continually asked to provide important programming and services, largely offered by unpaid, under-represented populations **for** those same populations. There needs to be more value placed on the human capital required to offer these essential services.

– ANS respondent



Decreased Revenue

Many organizations that responded to the 2020 ANS identified that their greatest need for support was related to funding. Even before the pandemic, the nonprofit sector faced challenges regarding funding models which have made them vulnerable to the current financial and economic downturn.²⁷ Nationally, the Canadian Council of Christian Charities found that 33% of nonprofits surveyed attributed current revenue loss to economic downturn.²⁸ For nonprofits in Alberta, the pandemic is an additional layer to the unstable economy, and reduced government investment in the nonprofit sector.²⁹

A recent article by Charity Village reporting on the impacts of COVID-19 notes that most nonprofits' revenue is a combination of fundraising, grants, and earned income. Respondents stated that due to the pandemic, all three sources of revenue have decreased.³⁰ CCVO's ANS results show that 85% of nonprofits are experiencing reduced revenue from fundraising, and 78% are experiencing reduced revenue from earned income. This finding is supported by emerging research from the Alberta Nonprofit Network; of those surveyed: 77% of nonprofits report reduced revenue from fundraising, 65% anticipate reduced income from earned revenue, and 75% are concerned about low financial reserves.³¹

Results from research on the effects of the pandemic on nonprofits across the country also show profound impacts. Of nonprofits surveyed in Canada, 69% have reported a decrease in revenues.³² Research on the

effects of the pandemic in British Columbia show that 74% of nonprofits are experiencing reduced revenue from fundraising, and 59% are seeing reduced revenue from earned income.³³ Similarly, a national poll of nonprofits by Imagine Canada found that 73% have seen donations decrease.³⁴ Additionally, the Canadian Council for Christian Charities found that due to physical distancing rules, 65% of ministries reported a loss in donations because they were no longer meeting physically to receive donations.³⁵ With regard to the long-term financial impact, the Canadian Council for Christian Charities also found that 71% of nonprofits surveyed anticipate revenue to continue to decrease for the next three months, with 23% anticipating permanent long-term negative impacts.³⁶ Similarly, 64% of organizations surveyed by Sustainability Network and Environment Funders Canada reported they

Among the ANS respondents, 23% indicated they were not eligible for major federal emergency funds, while 18% indicated they did not know their eligibility status.

were worried about revenue levels six months from now.³⁷ Added financial concerns due to the pandemic include unexpected costs for new technology and staff time, as well as paying rental fees for spaces that organizations are not currently occupying.³⁸

Qualitative research done in Nova Scotia indicated that most nonprofits interviewed say they do not have the funds to cover operational costs.³⁹ This reality was also expressed by respondents to the 2020 ANS, one of whom said "we need more funding support for the increased costs to operations caused by COVID-19 and as we try to adapt to alternative forms of delivery while experiencing a high demand for our services from vulnerable families and learners."

Due to the grave impacts of the pandemic, the federal government is providing funding programs for businesses – to which both nonprofits and charities are eligible to apply. However, several organizations stated that issues regarding COVID-19-related funding, such as a lack of timely delivery, are preventing organizations from paying their operational costs. One respondent to the 2020 ANS stated: "Crisis response funding had not reached community organizations in a timely way. Key communication channels are not well defined, which has caused additional crisis in a time of crisis." Additionally, the funding programs do not target the devastating impacts of the pandemic, such as reduced revenue to cover operational costs, and many organizations may not have access to federal bank loans such as the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA), due to eligibility criteria. Among the ANS respondents, 23% indicated they were not eligible for major federal emergency funds, while 18% indicated they did not know their eligibility status.

Research in Nova Scotia shows that nonprofits are confused by the changing rules of the major emergency funds, and are uncomfortable with taking loans such as CEBA.⁴⁰ One environmental nonprofit said, “as a charity, taking loans is not something our board is comfortable with.”⁴¹ Respondents to the ANS reported similar experiences, saying that the “process to access CEBA is unbelievably cumbersome.” They also indicated that the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy in particular is difficult to understand and has a confusing application process. Sustainability Network and Environment Funders Canada found that on a national level, 43% of nonprofits did not know how to demonstrate their financial need for CEWS.⁴²

Further, organizations that are not considered front line in combating COVID-19 are dismissed and ineligible for funds, or their funds have been extracted and redirected, as was the case with the reallocation of provincial government funds from the Community Initiatives Program (CIP) Project-Based grant to the CIP Operating grant. The arts, culture, and recreation subsectors have been particularly impacted by this unequal response. According to a flash survey done by the Ontario Nonprofit Network in early April, arts and culture organizations saw an 81% reduction in ticket and event sales.⁴³ One respondent to the 2020 ANS described the impact of this reduction by saying,

“ The performing arts sector faces a long runway to return to stability. Our reliance on revenue from mass gatherings has meant, as a sector, we were among the first to be impacted and will be among the last to recover. ”

This dramatic decrease in revenue is compounded by loss of program funding, such as the diversion of funds from the CIP Project-Based funding stream to the CIP Operating grants. Additionally, the Ontario Nonprofit Network flash survey found that 56% of arts and culture nonprofits had low financial reserves, more than any other subsector.⁴⁴ This disproportionate impact is especially important to address because arts and culture organizations are more likely to serve the populations who are shown to be impacted the most by the effects of the pandemic, with 34% of arts and culture nonprofits serving racialized communities and 26% serving Indigenous communities.⁴⁵

In response to the pressing need caused by COVID-19, investment in rapid response for organizations was needed, and several foundations and donors across the province have joined together to support nonprofits during the pandemic. In situations where government-funded programs took longer than expected, foundations and donors took action to support response initiatives by creating their own relief funds.⁴⁶ For example, the Rozsa Foundation introduced two new granting programs in response to COVID-19, providing \$400,000 of additional investment into the arts sector.⁴⁷ Further, Calgary Foundation created the Pandemic Recovery Program to support charities,⁴⁸ and the Edmonton Community Foundation invested \$500,000 to seed a COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund.⁴⁹

Diminished Organizational Capacity

Research after the fires in Fort McMurray identified impacts to nonprofits as: loss of staff – particularly at the leadership level, mental health ramifications for staff who faced burnout, increased workload, additional responsibilities in assisting with recovery, and staff having to acquire new skill sets and knowledge within a short time frame.⁵⁰

These findings are supported by recent research from the Alberta Nonprofit Network on the impacts of COVID-19 on nonprofits, which found that of respondents:

- 90% are affected by the challenges of staff and volunteers working remotely;
- 80% have experienced staff absences due to problems with child care;
- 86% have been affected by adjusting in-person events to a virtual platform; and
- 69% anticipate reduced hours for staff due to budget constraints.⁵¹

These findings are supported by similar research of nonprofit surveys across Canada. In Ontario, within two weeks of the pandemic, over 60% were experiencing challenges related to remote work.⁵² 50% in Nova Scotia reported similar difficulties,⁵³ as did 50% of respondents in Saskatchewan.⁵⁴ Additionally, 45% of social service organizations in Ontario reported staff absences due to issues with child care or fear of catching the virus, and 48% of education or research organizations had laid off, or anticipated needing to lay off staff.⁵⁵

Further, volunteer-run organizations are experiencing slightly different challenges. From the recent Alberta Nonprofit Network survey, 68% of respondents indicated they anticipate more difficulty in engaging volunteers compared to paid staff.⁵⁶ This issue is compounded by existing challenges for these organizations. For example, the State of the Alberta Nonprofit Sector report in 2019 found that volunteer-run organizations were already struggling to recruit and maintain volunteers, citing a perceived decrease in 'volunteer spirit.' According to Statistics Canada, the volunteers who contribute the most hours are over the age of 55 and may need to continue to self-isolate even as restrictions lift.⁵⁷ Respondents to the 2020 Alberta Nonprofit Survey indicated that even those volunteers who are not considered high-risk for contracting the virus may not feel safe returning to their positions and are less obligated to do so than paid employees.⁵⁸

The province has included volunteers in their definition of 'workers,' although volunteers are not the same as employees. Though many people are home during this time, health risks may prevent organizations from being able to recruit more volunteers to fill these gaps. Even if they can find volunteers, training will require additional resources from organizations that are already stretched thin from increased operating costs and decreased revenues.

Research in British Columbia found that volunteer support has dropped off, and layoffs are leading to extra hours being worked by remaining staff, often without compensation.⁵⁹ One ANS respondent reported, “our volunteer base has decreased, and the load on staff and remaining volunteers has increased.”

Further findings of nonprofits surveyed from British Columbia regarding organizational structure include:

- 15-19% have closed down or anticipate closing down;
- 23% do not think they can stay open for longer than six months;
- 40% have laid off or anticipate laying off staff;
- 68% are experiencing challenges related to staff and volunteers needing to work remotely; and
- 35% have reduced hours for staff because of budgetary constraints.⁶⁰

Nationally, a survey by the Canadian Council of Christian Charities found that 11% of respondents had temporarily closed, and 69% had significantly reduced services. Additionally, 20% had temporarily laid off staff, and 14% had implemented pay cuts. The time requirements of leaders in the subsector have also greatly increased.⁶¹ A national survey of environmental nonprofits found that only 2.8% of organizations were closed, 32% were operating with reductions in services, and another 55% were operating with modifications in place.⁶²

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are unquestionably impacting the organizational capacity of nonprofits – staff, volunteers, and leadership are all feeling the fallout as organizations cope with adjusting quickly to remote work, staff absences and challenges related to child care, increased workload and burnout, layoffs, and general uncertainty about organizational stability.

Transitioning Technology

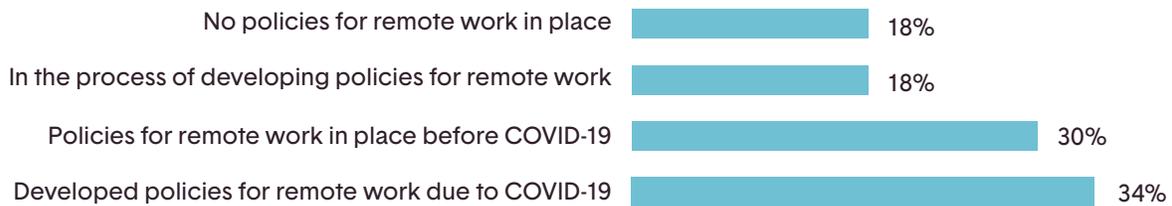
A theme that has emerged specifically related to impact of COVID-19 on the nonprofit sector is the dramatic and rapid shift that organizations have had to make on transitioning to new technology to support working remotely. The pandemic has forced many organizations to rethink their strategies for how they provide services. A survey of charities by Imagine Canada shows that 42% have created new programs and 54% have transitioned in-person programs to an online format since the beginning of the pandemic, while others have been forced to suspend or cease programs.⁶³ In Ontario, 50% of nonprofits shifted to online programming and remote work within two weeks of the beginning of the pandemic. An additional 70% anticipated needing to move in-person events to a virtual platform.⁶⁴ The transition to remote work, seen in Alberta as well, not only provides flexibility for workers and volunteers who may be having trouble finding child care, but is also the safest option as the economy begins to open.

Transitioning to remote work can be difficult and costly. It may also require strategic planning and adaptation of existing duties and services to fit a virtual platform (depending on the nature of the organization). As a result, 81% of respondents from the ANS indicated that they are facing challenges related to remote work. The Ontario Nonprofit Network survey of nonprofits found that 60% were facing similar challenges after only two weeks.⁶⁵ In Saskatchewan, their survey of nonprofits found 50% experienced similar difficulty within the same time frame.⁶⁶ These results indicate that the importance of remote work and technology can be expected to grow as organizations continue to adapt.

Only 30% of ANS respondents had a plan that allowed staff to work remotely in the event of an emergency before the pandemic; 34% developed a plan due to the pandemic, while 36% are creating a plan or still do not have a plan in place. Similarly in Ontario's results, 40% indicated they needed to establish or update their remote work policies.⁶⁷ The State of the Alberta Nonprofit Sector report from 2019 found that 54% of nonprofits were already offering remote work options.⁶⁸ These organizations are likely to have less trouble maintaining remote work, which bodes well for the survival of their organization as the pandemic continues.

FIGURE 1

Nonprofits with remote work policies



Further, the 2019 State of the Alberta Nonprofit Sector report also spoke of the 'digital divide' between nonprofits; 63% of nonprofits did not have a technology strategy in place, and some respondents noted that they live and operate in areas where even accessing high-speed internet remains a struggle. Those in rural and remote communities, including some First Nations, have been experiencing connectivity issues since before the pandemic.⁶⁹ This divide has been deepened by the involuntary shift to remote work, and makes survival even more challenging for such organizations. In Alberta, the digital divide is compounded by the lack of a provincial broadband strategy⁷⁰ and is evident when comparing organizations that have remained open across the province. 71% of nonprofits in Edmonton are open and operating, as are 70% of nonprofits in Calgary, but only 35% of organizations in rural areas of southern Alberta have been able to remain open, as have 33% in rural areas in the north of the province.⁷¹ One nonprofit leader in Nova Scotia captured the impact of this inequality in saying, "I haven't had internet at my home for three days, so I only have access to email when I drive to the parking lot of the library and am sending or downloading emails for the day. I've been doing Zoom calls but can only handle sitting in my vehicle for a few hours at a time."⁷²

The pandemic has been particularly devastating for the arts and culture, sports and recreation, and social enterprise sectors in terms of loss of earned income.⁷³ These organizations are unable to effectively meet their core mandate through remote work and virtual programming. This not only leaves many employees — including disadvantaged workers — unemployed, but it also leaves many who rely on services for their mental health and wellbeing without support.



The current situation illustrates the importance of being able to continue work remotely and if pandemics are a new norm, technology will play a big role and take a big chunk of our budgets.

– ANS respondent



Those organizations that have seen a rise in demand have subsequently altered the way they provide these services, with 39% of respondents to the 2020 Alberta Nonprofit Survey reporting that they are delivering their programming in a new format.⁷⁴ Innovative program delivery involves associated costs and challenges, including difficulty in adapting programs to a virtual platform.

Transitioning to entirely remote work so quickly is expensive, especially for organizations that did not already have the technology and skill in place prior to the pandemic. This extra cost can be prohibitive at a time when the majority of organizations are struggling with funding. One organization in Ontario said, There are no funds coming in but we have had to buy equipment for remote work and counselling totalling \$10,000.⁷⁵ In Saskatchewan, 28% of nonprofits surveyed in the first two weeks anticipated increased costs to support program adaptation and technology.⁷⁶ These difficulties can result in additional revenue loss.

Although some organizations have had a positive experience with the transition to remote work and feel confident in their ability to do so efficiently, the question of whether virtual services will be continually sufficient for nonprofits remains.

COVID-19 IMPACT ON NONPROFITS	IMPACT (%)
Reduced revenue from earned income	78
Reduced revenue from fundraising	85
Increased costs to support program adaptations, technology for program delivery, and remote work	75
Reduced financial reserves	73
Changing in-person events to virtual events	96
Increased demand for services/support	73
Disruption of services	86
Challenges related to remote work	81
Reduced hours for staff due to budgetary constraints	51
Temporary or permanent closure of organization	39

CONSEQUENCES OF A WEAKENED NONPROFIT SECTOR

The economic activity of the nonprofit sector in Canada is \$169.2 billion, representing 8.5% of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP).⁷⁷ In Alberta, the nonprofit sector's economic activity is \$10 billion in GDP contributions.⁷⁸ In terms of employment, the sector employs nearly as many people as the manufacturing sector in Canada, and more people than the construction, agriculture, and forestry sectors.⁷⁹ The social impact of nonprofits on the community is even greater than the economic impact, as they are a vital resource for communities and individuals. The pandemic has increased unemployment, food insecurity, and physical distancing restrictions have increased domestic violence and intensified individuals' vulnerabilities.⁸⁰ As a result, the demand for the nonprofit sector services will be even greater for years after the pandemic ceases.

Nonprofits may face dwindling revenues, but expenses remain, resulting in organizations needing to make difficult decisions such as cutting services, programs, and staff; and even permanently closing. Some organizations that have now closed their doors permanently include the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada in Edson, Alberta; the YMCA in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia; and as many as 124 Royal Canadian Legion branches across the country, who either do not have the resources to open or will not last longer than three months if they do.⁸¹ The closure of these nonprofits will have a lasting negative long-term impact on many communities and people who rely on them – which often include women, people with disabilities, and children. If fallout from COVID-19 continues for the nonprofit sector, these are some services that are at stake:⁸²

Child care services, after school programs, and day camps. These are vital to ensure parents are able to return to work. Nonprofits need to be in a position to offer these services, as their absence will disproportionately affect women and single-parent families.⁸³

Services to racialized populations and social justice support. Urban Indigenous, Black, and immigrant communities have been particularly affected by the pandemic.⁸⁴ The nonprofit sector is the primary provider of skills, language and literacy training, justice and social equity support, anti-racism resources and programs, as well as advocacy for these communities.

Mental health services. Whether by providing mental health services, or giving Canadians with a way to connect with each other (e.g. through amateur sports or arts), the nonprofit sector will be at the forefront of helping people cope with and recover from the current situation.⁸⁵

Services to people with disabilities. Nonprofits ensure people with disabilities have a voice through advocacy efforts and a valuable place within society through career support, social activities, training, accessibility workshops, and more. Nonprofits are essential in advocating for people with disabilities through all forms of pandemic response.⁸⁶

Environmental sustainability. Nonprofits are crucial for creating the kind of recovery Canadians want. From the preservation of ecosystems, to the protection of threatened species, and the development of sustainable solutions for communities, their work needs to continue. As COVID-19 continues, environmental nonprofits are anticipating their work to be stalled or cancelled, and worry about loss of attention on environmental issues.⁸⁷

Services to seniors. Services provided by nonprofits help seniors deal with isolation imposed by the pandemic and the resultant deleterious mental and physical health consequences. One ANS respondent said that their organization has gone beyond its regular scope of work during this pandemic to further support seniors, who are struggling with loneliness and fear.⁸⁸

Health services and support. These organizations play an important role in preventative care, matching individuals to the right services, and providing support that enables individuals experiencing health problems to enjoy a higher quality of life.⁸⁹

Support for women. Charities report that domestic violence is intensifying under lockdown, with additional support needed to engage children who are experiencing violence at home.⁹⁰ Women and their families will need additional support to find safety and support.

Many nonprofits are now facing extinction.⁹¹ The reality is that the private and for-profit sectors will likely rebuild much more quickly after the pandemic ends. Although some businesses have now permanently closed their doors, and some will likely do the same in the near future, other businesses within the same sector will likely merge and take over. Unfortunately, this will likely not be the case for the nonprofit sector. As stated by Bruce MacDonald, President & CEO of Imagine Canada, the sector provides "vital services that communities rely on to thrive."⁹²

Often during a crisis, preexisting inequities and challenges in communities surface or are intensified. The consequences regarding the issues and problems society faces will be reliant on the programs and services provided by the knowledgeable and professional people within the sector. If the sector is allowed to falter, people who are most in need of their support will suffer.

Although some businesses have now permanently closed their doors, and some will likely do the same in the near future, other businesses within the same sector will likely remerge and take over. Unfortunately, this will likely not be the case for the nonprofit sector.

FROM COVID-19 EMERGENCY TO OPPORTUNITY

The pandemic has many people wanting to return to normalcy, given the impact on their lives and the economy. However, it is also a crucial time for the nonprofit sector to aim higher and take hold of the opportunities that are provided by the pandemic. Many of the issues and impacts on the sector are not new. Instead, the pandemic has exacerbated the existing challenges in the sector, as Bruce MacDonald notes that “the sector is not well constructed for this kind of massive disruption.”⁹³ The greatest concern now is whether this current situation will get worse. The nonprofit sector will have to not only avoid the situation getting worse, but it will have to make this crisis an opportunity. Our sector will need to build a strategy for community prosperity that will reject a return to the status quo to emerge stronger, more robust, and better able to serve our communities in the future. The sector will need to start a new conversation and prepare their organizations to better respond to future emergencies.

In addition to weighty conversations that this crisis opens up the opportunity for the sector to lead, there are some practical emergency planning and preparations considerations that remain vital. While the immediacy of the COVID-19 emergency has dissipated, epidemiologists do not rule out a second wave.⁹⁴ There is no telling when another crisis may hit, such as recession or another natural disaster, and nonprofits must take the time now to prepare emergency plans and take stock of their current response.

Building a Strategy for Community Prosperity: Starting a New Conversation About the Sector

The nonprofit sector is currently coping with the effects of COVID-19 on the people, communities and organizations it serves, and on the sector itself. As the nonprofit sector continues to face challenges resulting from the global pandemic, opportunities to build a more resilient nonprofit sector have presented themselves – now is the time to seize the chance to lead a new conversation about the sector.

The crisis has left an economic and societal shock that will change the current political system, as the pandemic has rapidly accelerated long-standing trends in labour markets and economies around the world – including income inequality, precarious work, and the digitization of the economy.⁹⁵ As the world looks ahead, there will still be an economic shock with which the nonprofit sector, the private sector, and governments must grapple with. This pandemic has forced all sectors to confront existing deficiencies and has given nonprofits an opportunity to lead a new conversation. A conversation that will see the sector evolve into something stronger and more resilient. Bruce MacDonald, President & CEO of Imagine Canada, states:⁹⁶

“The challenges Canadian charities and nonprofits face today are dire, but they highlight opportunities to revitalize the sector. Building financial stability and stronger infrastructure to weather future crises will ensure the sector’s ability to support Canadians from all walks of life during the recovery.”

The ramifications of COVID-19 will exist beyond the immediate impacts. In order to meet the greatest needs for the sector, nonprofits, business, stakeholders, and the government must collaborate and engage with each other. Nonprofits play a significant role in fostering a healthy democracy, fostering social cohesion, facilitating meaningful political dialogue, and mediating citizens' participation in the democratic process.⁹⁷ Vulnerable and marginalized communities are impacted the most in this crisis – nonprofits can give voice to groups who may be silenced or cannot raise their voice.⁹⁸ Nonprofits are ideally positioned to make space to understand inequities that exist among vulnerable groups – such as women, people of colour, immigrants, and people with lower-income status. This is the space needed to find solutions that can best level the playing field.

As past research on the large-scale disasters of the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires and the 2013 Calgary floods have shown, communities must collaboratively negotiate the recovery process and formulate policies with the government. Research from the Fort McMurray wildfires finds that factors related to reduced organizational capacity, such as staffing capacity, knowledge, and financial capacity during the recovery period, reduced organizations' ability to participate in recovery decision-making activities.⁹⁹ As we shift from response to recovery during the COVID-19 crisis, the capacity of organizations plays a large role in their ability to provide programs and services to the community, access equipment to keep employees and clients safe, and advocate on behalf of the sector and their organization to ensure recognition and support.

Many organizations have been advocating for their organizational needs, as well as the needs of the sector, while continuing to do their work.¹⁰⁰ It is an opportune time for nonprofits to engage to bring about real change for the nonprofit sector – change that will benefit all Albertans. This opportunity is referred to as “policy windows” – a term coined by John W. Kingdon, who argues that advocates can influence policy change by taking advantage of a favourable political climate, a problem definition, or a policy solution.¹⁰¹

Advocating during COVID-19 can be difficult to manage as nonprofits' resources and capacity have dwindled. It is even more difficult with the current physical distancing restrictions in place, as there are limited opportunities for people to come together and have purposeful or impromptu in-person conversations to discuss the development of policies and funding. To remain relevant and timely, nonprofits must be creative in their strategies and reach their intended audience through volume and frequency rather than the precision of direct, in-person appeals.¹⁰² For example, since the pandemic hit the country, Imagine Canada has mobilized nonprofits across the country to advocate for relief measures from the federal government. This campaign resulted in the inclusion of nonprofits and charities in the federal wage subsidies and loans. Additionally, Imagine Canada has been a leader in advocating for the sector with a letter campaign to the federal government in which thousands have participated.¹⁰³

Nonprofits in Alberta are essential in providing policy recommendations and innovations for how to limit the spread of the virus within communities. For example, nonprofits in Calgary coordinated and introduced self-isolation rooms for Calgary's homeless populations in order to limit the spread of the virus among this group.¹⁰⁴ This is only one example, but is a testament to the professional and knowledgeable work that nonprofits have been doing throughout the pandemic. Examples like this can be used to provide thoughtful feedback on the way policies and programs are experienced on the ground and bridge the public-government divide during a crisis.¹⁰⁵

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COLLABORATION AMONG ALL STAKEHOLDERS

The nonprofit sector is at the forefront as it works closely with those affected. Nonprofits will be essential in rebuilding the community and the economy. However, building future resilience will not be limited to the innovation and contribution of the sector.

Partnerships among diverse groups needs to be at the core of recovery. The nonprofit sector, the government, and the private sector, are all essential for recovery and must work together to ensure innovation and encourage improvement in all sectors.

Supporting Recovery Through Collaboration and Partnerships

The private sector is well-positioned to contribute:

- pro bono services without strings
- encouragement and support for staff to engage in employee giving and volunteerism
- access to emergency planning professionals
- access to corporate training opportunities
- technology access, training, and maintenance

Funders and other stakeholders can support the sector now by offering:

- funding for operational costs
- funding for organizations that are not fulfilling emergency services
- funding for emergency plan development and training
- support to help nonprofits innovate within their organization

The provincial government can support a resilient nonprofit sector with:

- flexible, stable funding that meets the needs of the nonprofit sector, now and as they shift into recovery
- ongoing meaningful dialogue with nonprofit sector leaders as part of recovery planning
- increased connectivity for organizations and individuals in rural and remote communities
- support for organizations to work remotely through provision of education, guidance, and funding
- regular and meaningful engagement with the nonprofit sector for the next two years to remain informed on the long-term impacts of the pandemic
- a commitment to using Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) on all future pandemic recovery planning to address the gendered division of impacts and ensure representation from marginalized groups and communities

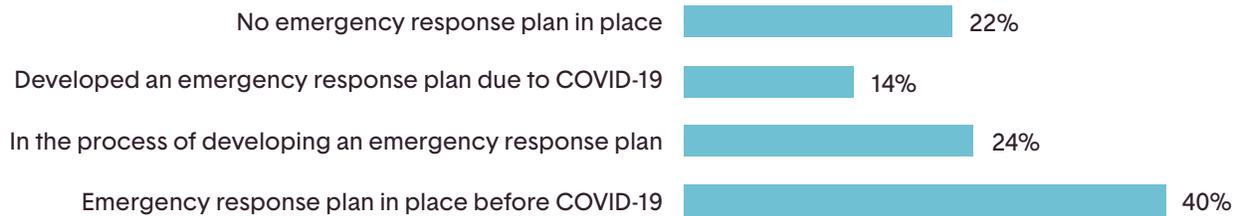
Preparation and Response to an Emergency

Planning for an emergency is an essential part of all organizations' risk management efforts to reduce the impact of unexpected events. Emergency preparedness is flexible and nimble, and meant to be catered to an organization's operations and programs. It provides nonprofits with tools to respond appropriately during times of uncertainty. Of the respondents to the ANS:

- only 40% indicated they had an emergency plan for health emergencies or natural disasters before COVID-19;
- 14% indicated they developed a plan due to COVID-19; and
- 46% are creating a plan or still do not have a plan in place [see figure 2].

FIGURE 2

Nonprofits with an emergency response plan



Organizations in Fort McMurray were better prepared to deal with COVID-19 and its impacts, as one ANS respondent stated, "I believe our sector is relatively strong in Fort McMurray and was better prepared with business continuity plans due to the fire." This sentiment highlights the importance of a strong emergency response plan being in place prior to a crisis.

The following sections of this report will help organizations with this planning and include recommendations for preparedness that you can implement within your nonprofit.

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WORKPLACE PREPARATIONS

All organizations will need to plan to adjust their workplaces to accommodate public health risks, like COVID-19, and the resulting public health orders, and take every precaution to create a safe workplace for employees and clients. Preparedness Consultant Thomas Appleyard says that nonprofits should “think carefully about the precautionary principle. With this in mind, precautions and prevention must take into consideration the mode of transmission of the virus, as well as opportunities to protect individuals from infection.”¹⁰⁷

Based on lessons learned from the H1N1 virus (Swine Flu) pandemic, Rick Blickstead, former CEO of the Wellesley Institute, recommends the following preparations for nonprofits:¹⁰⁸

- Create a culture that encourages people to stay home even if it means additional payroll costs
- Set up systems for employees so they can work from home
- Set up job-sharing programs
- Create (and budget for) a new pandemic sick policy
- Partner with other organizations to replace front line staff who can't work from home
- Mitigate client risks for those that need to come to your organization to access services
- Keep track of clients who go to your workplace regularly

In 2009, the Alberta government developed a checklist for nonprofit organizations to help prepare them to respond to a pandemic, which can be found [here](#). The list includes how to plan for the impact of a pandemic on your organization, including developing communication strategies and creating policies, among other resources that will help with how to respond to a pandemic.

HAVE AN UP-TO-DATE PLAN

As learned from the Calgary flood in 2013, having an emergency plan in place is vital for maintaining the safety and security of staff and clients, adapting quickly in a crisis, and continuing operations through the emergency and afterwards. These types of plans go beyond scenario planning to contingency planning, which considers the ‘worst-case scenario’.¹⁰⁹

The Calgary floods in 2013 demonstrated that, planning for an emergency “is broad and considers a variety of scenarios and how an organization can respond. It details what needs to happen when disaster strikes, how an organization can continue to provide services, and how it can get back up and running once the crisis is over. Ideally, the emergency response plan is ingrained in the strategic operations of the organization.”¹¹⁰

Nonprofit organizations are crucial contributors to the vitality and well-being of communities, and their services are needed both during a crisis and after. “Community sector organizations play an active role in providing response and recovery services, especially for some of the more vulnerable members of our community such as newcomers, seniors, and individuals with disabilities – so it is especially important for these organizations to have systems and strategies in place to continue delivering their important services during an emergency.”¹¹¹

As fallout for nonprofits continues due to the pandemic, planning becomes an essential part of an organization’s survival. SeaChange¹¹² has planning recommendations for nonprofits during the COVID-19 crisis, as summarized by LaPaina and MacIntosh:¹¹³

Refocus on the mission. All decisions should aim to advance the long-term mission of the organization, even at the short-term expense of vendors, partners, grantmakers, and staff.

Understand your type of organization. Are you a hibernator (for instance, a shuttered arts organization), a responder (such as a shelter or food bank, where demand is skyrocketing), or a hybrid (a group that can continue operating to some degree but does not deal directly with the pandemic’s effects, though it might adapt to do so)?

Shorten time horizons. Magical thinking leads to fatal delays. The executive director and board chair should speak daily, boards should meet at least monthly, and they should set up a committee to deal with COVID-19-related issues and get ready to make hard decisions.

Understand the nexus of mission, cash, and control. “Tough-minded,” “hard-nosed,” and “ruthless” are not adjectives that most nonprofit leaders usually embrace, but many will need to, and fast.

Get help. Get outside advice from people with relevant experience. Some boards might even consider an interim chief restructuring officer to support or temporarily replace, an overwhelmed leader.

Plan for the longer-term. Don’t weather the crisis only to ignore what will happen afterward. Stay in regular discussions with donors, and be realistic about the significant cuts in philanthropy and government support that are likely in the COVID-19 aftermath.

Finally, as nonprofits did after the 2013 Calgary flood, organizations should document what is being learned during the crisis and integrate it into formal plans.¹¹⁴

A useful resource with more in-depth information for nonprofits about planning for business continuity and disaster recovery can be found [here](#).

ESTABLISH PARTNERSHIPS

Nonprofits are known to be collaborators, and their strengths in partnering with other nonprofits, donors, businesses, and all orders of government are very valuable in an emergency.¹¹⁵ One step to withstanding the fallout from the pandemic may be to “explore mergers and other forms of collaboration, divestments, or even thoughtful dissolutions now; options will narrow as time passes.”¹¹⁶ Nonprofits should not only remain open to partnerships, but actively seek them out and work even more deliberately together during a crisis. The research from the Fort McMurray fires revealed that nonprofits with stronger partnerships – not only with orders of government but also with other nonprofits – were more likely to be involved in core decision-making processes during recovery.¹¹⁷

Lessons learned from the 2013 flood in Calgary also support that there is value in developing relationships with other nonprofits and all orders of government. As partnerships emerge, there’s also value in developing reciprocal agreements as part of the emergency planning process.¹¹⁸ Nonprofits need to work very closely with the communities and individuals who they serve. Community support is critical; existing relationships and partnerships are sources of volunteers, support, and cooperation.¹¹⁹

INFORM AND EMPOWER STAFF

As the sector moves past the initial shock of the pandemic emergency and enters a new state of operating in a long-term crisis situation, organizations will need to keep in mind that responding to a disaster is a team effort. Staff need to be informed, have a clear understanding of the organization’s mission, know their role during the crisis, and have the authority to make quick decisions.¹²⁰ Organizations need to make sure that

staff have the knowledge and the confidence to work at and contribute to the organization in a time of emergency. Effective organizational operations rely on staff being engaged, empowered, and informed. Difficult decisions may need to be made; transparency and honesty become very important in these circumstances.¹²¹ A practical method to incorporate this would be through a communication strategy for staff, clients, and stakeholders. The ANS results indicated that 75% of respondents have a communication strategy for staff and stakeholders related to COVID-19.

Ongoing orientation and testing for emergency preparedness are important to embed within the organization so that when disaster strikes, everyone is prepared with a common understanding of the organization’s response.¹²²

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BUILD FINANCIAL RESILIENCY

Financial resiliency is fundamental to any organization, and nonprofits are no exception. Financial resiliency is important to build at all times, and there are many strategies to do so.¹²³ It becomes even more important in an emergency situation to focus attention on building this resiliency and preparing for uncertainty by putting your organization in the best possible financial position.¹²⁴ One respondent to the Sustainability Network and Environment Funders Canada's flash survey highlighted the importance of financial preparation, saying, "If we did not have a contingency fund built over the past six years, we would not be able to survive."¹²⁵

The primary recommendation for nonprofits is to make sure financial policies are in place that allow for access to additional cash flow during a disaster, operating reserves to support rebuilding, and to secure fundraising expertise and advice.¹²⁶

First, organizations will want to:

- understand their cash position (the Federation of Calgary Municipalities has [created a video](#) to help organizations understand their cash flow position);
- assess revenue streams and damage; and
- look at the dual bottom line, which includes a conventional financial outcome and social impact outcome.¹²⁷

To fill the gap between operating needs and expenses, and revenues, and to conserve cash, organizations will need to:¹²⁸

- reduce expenses, delay payments, accelerate efforts to obtain cash and other revenue, and explore new fundraising opportunities;
- negotiate with the landlord or take advantage of local bans on evictions;
- pay only the most essential vendors;
- ask for the next tranche of a multipart grant or extra help from long-time donors and board members; and
- explore new COVID-19-related grant and loan opportunities.

Finally, an often overlooked part of ensuring financial resiliency in a time of crisis is the regular review and update of insurance policies. Even if this step has not been taken, it is important to discuss this with your insurance broker once a crisis hits to ensure you know what is covered under your policy and can access any and all support available.¹²⁹

FUNDRAISE AND BUILD A CASE

Fundraising is a core part of maintaining a financially healthy nonprofit, and it must continue during an emergency, with a quick pivot. As the priorities of donors and the community experience a drastic shift, nonprofits will benefit from building a compelling case to demonstrate the impact of the emergency on their operations. Recent reporting shows that organizations targeting their fundraising efforts specifically to the effects of the pandemic on their organizations and the people they serve are having success in their efforts.¹³⁰ Specific recommendations from Tom Iselin for managing fundraising efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic include the following:¹³¹

Inform your donors. Communicate to your donors about your direct impact on managing the response to COVID-19 and how you are keeping your staff safe while doing so. Keep these communications very succinct and to the point.

Empathize with your donors. Demonstrate that you understand these are trying times for everyone, and no one has been left untouched by the effects of the pandemic, economically, socially, or in health. Donors should know that you care about how they are faring in a unique circumstance that has seen a massive impact on the health and social systems, as well as the economy. Many people are facing uncertainty in their income status, their business ventures, and in family arrangements, such as school, childcare, or people with parents or other dependents in care.

Only ask for money now if you need it. General requests for donations are not likely to be well-received, but if you have a specific need, particularly because of the impacts of the virus, then make your ask very direct. This might include requests to help fund your particular cause or opportunities to support your organization's operations like utilities, rent, or other expenses.

Engage donors and volunteers. Communicate with your donors and volunteers with opportunities to support your organization by other means than solely financial, such as sending notes of encouragement to staff or clients, making phone calls, or other contributions of time. Your donors and volunteers are connected to your organization because they care about what you are doing, and you will want to keep them invested in your mission.

In addition to these fundraising recommendations specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, past experiences in difficult times – such as economic downturns – also have many lessons to offer nonprofits in managing fundraising efforts in a crisis. This list of suggestions from Mal Warwick is to help with managing fundraising in challenging times:¹³²

Strengthen your case for giving. A crisis is a good opportunity to reassess your case for giving, and communicate the urgent need for funds – as well as the specific need for those funds.

Stick with what works. While your messaging and funding requests will likely need to recalibrate, this is not a time to get rid of all strategies that work for your organization.

Cut costs with a scalpel, not an ax. All nonprofits will be looking at cost-saving measures as they enter the economic downturn as a result of the global pandemic. Fundraising efforts must continue to maintain financial health, and any cost-cutting in this area needs to be considered in the context of long-term planning.

“It doesn’t take long to destroy an effective fundraising operation – and then where will your programs be?”¹³³

Fish where the big fish are. This recommendation comes with the suggestion to segment your donors based on giving history so that fundraising efforts can yield a higher return for an investment of time and money. If your organization already has a segmentation plan, this is a good time to target donors with a greater history of giving.

Be attentive to your donors. Resist the temptation to assume that your donors will know your organization is working to address the needs of your clients and communities. Communicate regularly, with attention given to the current context and with an understanding that donors also have pressing needs in their own lives.

Do your due diligence. Research prospective donors and personalize your communications.

Step up your efforts online. With current limits on group gatherings and a shared respect for people’s health and well-being, online fundraising efforts are more important now than ever. If your organization does not already have it, now may be the right time to invest in technology to better support online fundraising efforts.

Break down the silos. It might seem like a counter-intuitive suggestion to coordinate fundraising with other organizations, but there is some precedent for that in Calgary. The RESOLVE campaign saw nine housing and homeless organizations collaborate to raise capital funds, which made it possible to provide housing support for more than 1,800 Calgarians. This initiative was prompted by funding organizations and saw a more efficient effort to raise funds for much-needed housing, without multiple agencies submitting multiple applications for the same dollars. In the current context, nonprofits might want to seriously consider how they can work together to raise support for their causes.

Fundraising is an essential function for nonprofits as they navigate very difficult circumstances that are likely to remain challenging for some time. Nonprofits will need to remain nimble and flexible in their fundraising plans while simultaneously staying invested and focused on the future.

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

When a crisis hits, nonprofits leap into action. They get to work making sure that the individuals and communities they are serving are looked after, and they start advocating for what they need. In this type of situation, it can be tempting to neglect communications in favour of getting tasks accomplished. However, it is important to create effective communications with staff, board members, volunteers, partners, and others during the crisis.¹³⁴ Organizations should communicate consistently even when – and maybe especially when – things are not going well or the future is uncertain.¹³⁵ Stakeholders are connected to nonprofits for a reason, and communicating honestly is important in maintaining trust and in reassuring others that they are all in this together. Communications strategies will need to adapt. Here are some specific recommendations from Vanessa Chase for doing so in 2020, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic:¹³⁶

Don't throw out what you've already planned. Plans will need to be adjusted, but there were good reasons for the ones that have previously been developed. Instead of completely starting over, cull through your nonprofit's communications strategy and divide what you had currently planned into three categories – essential “must-keep” communications, “maybe” communications, and communications to postpone. To decide how to categorize planned communications, consider the plans in the pandemic context and re-prioritize accordingly.

Determine what your community needs from your organization. In light of this new reality, and the fact that some of your communications plans will no longer be relevant, it will likely be advisable to find out what your community most needs from your organization. Find out what it is that you can communicate to stay relevant, topical, and helpful.

Plan for communications that reflect the environment and tone. Consider the current events and the impacts on your stakeholders very carefully when crafting communications. You want to be tuned in so that your communications are not tone-deaf and out of touch. You can find a good test to run your communications through [here](#), which details the 6 R's of message relevance.

Keep evaluating and stay nimble. Things are changing rapidly, and that is not conducive to making rigid plans that are not open to alteration. As more information becomes available, as circumstances continue to evolve on a near-daily basis, nonprofits must be ready to adapt.

Communication plans are going to be in flux in this rapidly changing environment. Nonprofits must stay engaged with all their stakeholders and communicate thoughtfully, responsibly, and usefully.

BUILD REDUNDANCY AND BACK UPS

Most nonprofits are expected to operate on thin margins, but this strategy does not lend itself to emergency planning. There is value in having back-up plans and built-in redundancy when crisis strikes.¹³⁷ Redundancy and back-up plans will have to be justified and should be a source of strength in funding requests when included as part of a robust emergency plan.

Data redundancy is particularly important in a digital age; so, too, is information redundancy.¹³⁸ Ask yourself: Do multiple team members have access to contact lists, banking information, and other data? What about the ability to update the organization's website and/or databases?

In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the discouragement for nonprofits to have cash reserves has been detrimental. Many nonprofits are laying off staff, some have closed permanently, and others are looking at the distinct possibility that they will have to do the same, due to financial stress.¹³⁹ There needs to be a shift in thinking about what constitutes a responsible approach to financial stability for nonprofits, particularly in the context of emergency planning.

CONCLUSION

It is not too late for organizations that do not already have one to develop an emergency plan, and for organizations that do have one, to take stock of how the plan is working and make adjustments if needed. The impact of the pandemic on every sector is unprecedented, and has shifted the way organizations, businesses, and governments operate. Within the nonprofit sector, many organizations have been forced to close their doors, numerous employees have been laid off, and programs and services essential to the community – especially for those in marginalized and vulnerable populations – have been suspended or ceased. The crisis has fostered new inequalities or heightened existing ones among vulnerable and marginalized communities. It has also shown the gaps within the nonprofit sector’s political structures. The uncertainty of when organizations will return to “business as usual” is still unknown.

However, amongst these gaps and inequities, there is a more significant opportunity for the nonprofit sector to reimagine and rebuild how they engage with their communities, the government, other sectors, and other nonprofits. This will require engagement with the government and other sectors, commitment to the nonprofit’s mission, redefining the role of the nonprofit sector, and constructing a positive narrative moving forward. This is an opportune moment to create a Community Prosperity Strategy. CCVO will host multiple discussions in the coming months, starting a new conversation about the nonprofit sector and working to create a more equitable, prosperous, and vibrant future for all.



Recovery conversation tends to focus on the economy and jobs. But we also need to focus on the things that are on the street and down the corner from us...how our neighbours are able to put food on the table, where we go for our child care, who cares for our seniors, and how we get served when we are sick.

We need a strategy for community prosperity. The nonprofit sector is poised to lead a conversation about a strategy that works cross-sectorally with the private sector and with government that is about resiliency, and is also about recognizing what we can do for the vibrancy of this province moving forward.

– Karen Ball
CCVO Interim President & CEO



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