

NOTES – COMMUNITY CONVERSATION: NOVEMBER 12, 2008

As a result of the economic crisis voluntary sector organizations will see:

Decrease in:	Increase in:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteers• Members• Donations• Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demand• Need

MAJOR THEMES

1. **Now: Organizations are starting to experience effects immediately**

- Change management – this change is not temporary
- This is not an “early warning”. It is happening now and much quicker than we thought
 - Foundations: no \$\$
 - City cuts
 - Donations decreasing
 - Membership decreasing
- There is a need for an immediate response
- Again, now problem: volunteers leaving to return to work

2. **Organizations need to respond together intelligently, strategically**

- This will continue for a 2-5 year period – we can’t go back. What can we do to mitigate these challenges?
- There is not only a financial impact; volunteers, infrastructure, staff attrition. Respond by being more strategic, i.e. volunteer resources.
- Need to be strategic in responses re: Resource Development i.e. need safety valves for membership dues.
- Can’t tap out current donors.

3. **All sizes of organizations will be affected**

- Better use of volunteer base is required
- Concern re: increase demand for service. Need to respond to this by promoting existing services.
- Board leadership through change including financial leadership and community influence
- Integration of: (underused potential):
 - New Canadians (men & women)
 - Adults with disabilities (sensory, etc.)

4. **Sharing resources: all sizes of organizations have something to offer**

- All organizations need to come together to explore ideas
- Building response through a community fair for organizations to get together to explore the sharing of opportunities.
- Pooling resources, sharing skills/services
- Consider non-financial resources that can be shared.

- Create strategic partnerships: reach out to others, combine efforts
- Time for creativity and new alliances and redefinition
- Community fundraising on a partnership basis. Organizations get together to share resources to do the fundraising and share the revenue. This is often difficult to coordinate, determine revenue sharing and find resources (people, \$) to devote to regular collaborative efforts

5. How can others contribute?

- Suggested the creation of an NGO services directory “clearing house”. For example: Use of Krackers Katering.
- Connect personally
- Messages for the sector:
 - Be optimistic
 - We will weather this storm, work with us
 - Pay attention to youth
 - Educate
 - Inspire

SUGGESTED OCVO WORK

- It is still early days. OCVO is encouraged to take a quarterly pulse and provide feedback on the results to its members
- OCVO encouraged to coordinate a strategic communications plan for the sector “Call to Action” re: needs of the sector
- Send out media message taking advantage of the holiday interest to explain year round challenge. Messages to individual citizens are:
 - Do more – help out
 - Start helping if you aren’t
 - Continue to give
 - Give more
 - Spread the word, use your networks
 - Make sure they know that their generosity matters at any level so they should do whatever they can
- Support for role of OCVO in bringing organizations together

FUNDERS AND GOVERNMENTS

There is a general fear of the unknown. Representatives of the sector want to know:

- What is the federal, provincial, municipal government doing to respond – what is their sense of what will happen? (funders too)
- Are they responding together? We need them to help too.

SUGGESTIONS/QUESTIONS

- Engage organizations that are smaller and include them into services of larger. Work in partnerships, economies of scale, shared services
- Need to look at leadership structure (boards) and financial role and provide training to existing boards. Should be addressing skills/gaps.
- Volunteer hours could come with a tax exemption to encourage volunteering
- Focus on your mission

- Recognize this is cyclical, plan for the recovery phase - after the storm we can be stronger if we build/plan to be stronger
- Look to see how can commercialize what we are doing. Social enterprises, e.g. distributors of adaptors
- Need to diversify funding base in general
- Invest energy into applying small grants
- Look to tap into planned giving

SOME EXAMPLES OF IMPACTS:

- The economic situation has the greatest impact on vulnerable citizens
- Major gifts cancelled
- Lost volunteers from delayed retirement
- Grants not available
- Increased costs also impact the voluntary sector: volunteer drivers have increased gas costs, transporting materials
- More demand for services results in increased costs and increased need for volunteers: shelter for homeless, food, employment services
- Holding back from donating or renegeing on pledges made
- Decrease in number of volunteers coming into the city from the rural area due to increased transportation costs
- Foundations are offering fewer grants and subsidies
- Corporate support is decreasing
- Staff salaries supported by grants which may not be renewed will mean loss of staff
- Projects that are no longer funded can no longer run