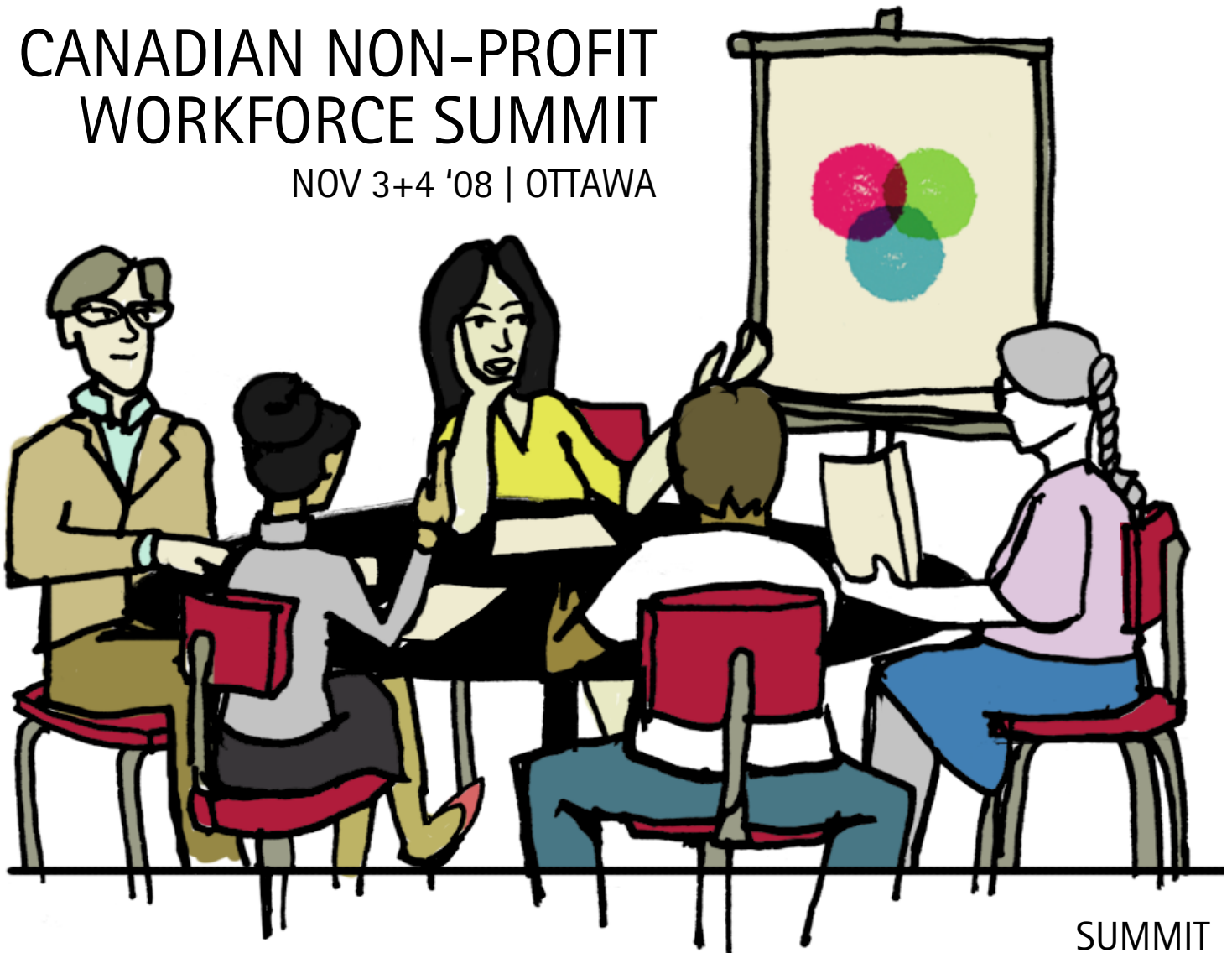


HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector

CANADIAN NON-PROFIT WORKFORCE SUMMIT

NOV 3+4 '08 | OTTAWA



SUMMIT
SUMMARY

HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector

The HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector works with organizations, educators, labour and government to identify and address issues related to paid employment in the voluntary and non-profit sector.

Our priorities are to:

- Build and share knowledge
- Promote good HR practices
- Foster training and learning opportunities
- Provide leadership on HR issues
- Engage voluntary and non-profit organizations

Ce document est aussi disponible en français.

201-291 Dalhousie Street | Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7E5
613.244.8332 | TF: 866.594.8332
info@hrcouncil.ca

The HR Council is funded through the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Canada

hrcouncil.ca
connect | share | learn



Overview

The Canadian Non-profit Workforce Summit (the Summit) was a national conversation held November 3 and 4, 2008 about our sector's most important asset: its people.

While the sector traditionally defines itself by the programs and services it delivers, we are also employers. The voluntary and non-profit sector includes 69,000 workplaces and 1.2 million employees.¹ It is important to start talking about the voluntary and non-profit sector from a labour force perspective because there are clear signs that organizations are less and less able to recruit the talent they need in today's tightening labour market. At the same time, retaining employees is also a challenge. An effective labour force equals an effective sector. That means a deliberate focus on labour force issues is integral to ensuring Canada has a vibrant voluntary and non-profit sector to effectively deliver programs and services.

The HR Council for the Voluntary and Non-profit Sector (HR Council) hosted the Summit in Ottawa to facilitate an exploration of the critical workforce and human resources issues that impact our organizations,

citizens and the communities that we serve. Approximately 40 key decision makers from national umbrella and network organizations came together. They learned more about the trends and issues affecting the sector's workforce and discussed how to best address these issues to ensure the viability and resiliency of the sector.

The first day (November 3, 2008) started with the 'big picture' - an overview of the labour force situation in general - followed by a presentation

of findings from the HR Council's recent Canada-wide surveys of Voluntary and Non-profit Sector Employers and Employees. Based on these presentations, Summit participants broke into small groups to discuss the implications of the changing labour force for their own organizations.

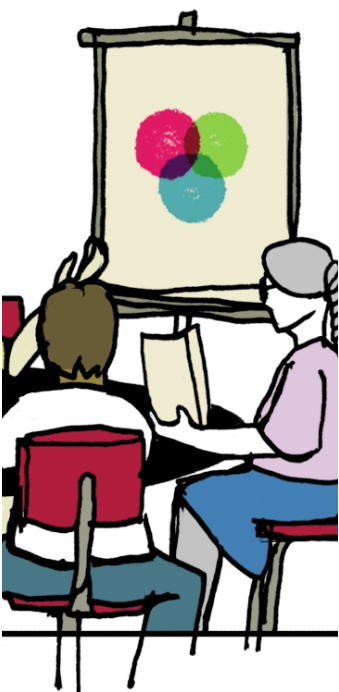
[SUMMIT GOALS]

- » PUT A SPOTLIGHT ON LABOUR FORCE ISSUES
- » DEVELOP STRATEGIES LEADING TO ACTION
- » INFORM THE HR COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

1. The HR Council includes what the Satellite Account of Nonprofit Institutions and Volunteering refers to as the "core non-profit sector" which excludes hospitals, colleges and universities.

Summit participants benefited from ten years of experience in the United Kingdom with a presentation by Janet Fleming, head of the UK Workforce Hub. Much of the UK work on labour force issues in the voluntary and non-profit sector has focussed on skills gaps and shortages which led to small group discussions focused on the Canadian experience. Participants discussed the skills gaps in their organization or sub-sector and steps they were taking to address these gaps.

The focus of Day 2 (November 4, 2008) was to turn ideas and research into strategies and action. The day started with a focus on promising practices. Bruce MacDonald, President and CEO, of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada highlighted the change in his organization's culture as they committed to focussing on HR issues and developing strategies to ensure they have the right staff, with the right skills. Joanne Linzey of the HR Council then presented the proposed directions for a sector Labour Force Strategy which led into a discussion of gaps or other directions to consider and related initiatives needed to pursue the proposed directions. The Summit concluded by exploring a collective approach: areas of common interest, practical next steps and roles for Summit participants and the HR Council.



[SUMMIT REPLAY]

- » Audio recordings of Summit presentations by Bruce MacDonald and Janet Fleming are available on hrcouncil.ca.
- » You can also download copies of the slides for the presentations by Ron Saunders and Bonnie Shiell.

hrcouncil.ca
connect | share | learn

Emerging Themes

The Summit involved lively and important conversations and interactions between presenters and participants and within small group discussions. At the end of the two days, five important themes emerged.

The Canada-wide Survey of Employers found that almost one in five employers strongly agreed that their organization had difficulty meeting its objectives because employees do not have sufficient skills. Based on their own experiences, Summit participants itemized a list of the gaps in skills. Topping their list was the question of leadership; however, Summit participants also recognized that it is a challenge to identify what “leadership skills” really means. The group identified that skills in areas like managing mergers, negotiation, cultural understanding and awareness as well as change management are key skills. Some organizations are actively taking steps to develop these skills with emerging leaders programs and partnerships with universities and executive coaches. The notion of “dispersed leadership” was raised as another approach to addressing the leadership challenges.

Skills gaps

The question of leadership skills is an issue for today and for the future because it is tied to planning for leadership succession and knowledge transfer – identified as key labour force issues that cut across the entire non-profit sector.

Governance by volunteers is a distinguishing feature of the voluntary and non-profit sector and brings a unique complexity to labour force management. Boards of directors need to view labour force management as a critical activity for successful organizations. Yet many boards – particularly at the local level – are

Role of the Board

focused on “keeping the doors open” and focus much of their time and energy reacting to funding issues. Educating boards of directors will be critical to addressing labour force issues in the sector. Similarly, recruiting board members with HR expertise will also be important.

Emerging Themes

Participants felt that governments, funders and the general public greatly underestimate the role of the voluntary and non-profit sector. There was also a feeling amongst some Summit participants that the sector needs to stop contributing to its own problem – if we don’t value our work, who will?

Participants agreed that the sector does not receive funding that reflects the real costs of delivering programs and services. To encourage funders to value the work of the voluntary and non-profit sector and to contribute to core costs, the UK Work-

Perceptions about the sector

force Hub created a guide specifically for funders that documents the costs associated with operating a well-run organization. Full cost recovery is a big part of the

UK Workforce Hub’s work. The more enlightened funders understand the message and their perceptions and approach to the sector have changed.

Summit participants recognized the low profile and negative image attached to working in the sector. An important part of recruiting future employees will be changing perceptions of the sector as a viable career choice.

One of the benefits of a gathering like the Summit is the sharing of ideas and resources between participants. This was a major theme throughout both days and many of the solutions proposed by Summit participants involved a collaborative approach. These included pooling resources as well as creating systems to make collaborative work more possible and included:

- Investigating shared service models
- Sharing tools
- Pooling training dollars and/or creating shared learning opportunities
- Creating a pool of “shared” volunteers to provide HR management expertise
- Joint buying power to lower costs of HR-related services including HR consultants or HR management information systems
- Creating a collective sector workforce brand and having a visible presence at career fairs
- Developing a community of practice for board members
- Mapping careers across the sector and identifying skills that are transferable to make it easier for lateral shifts between organizations

Sharing & collaboration

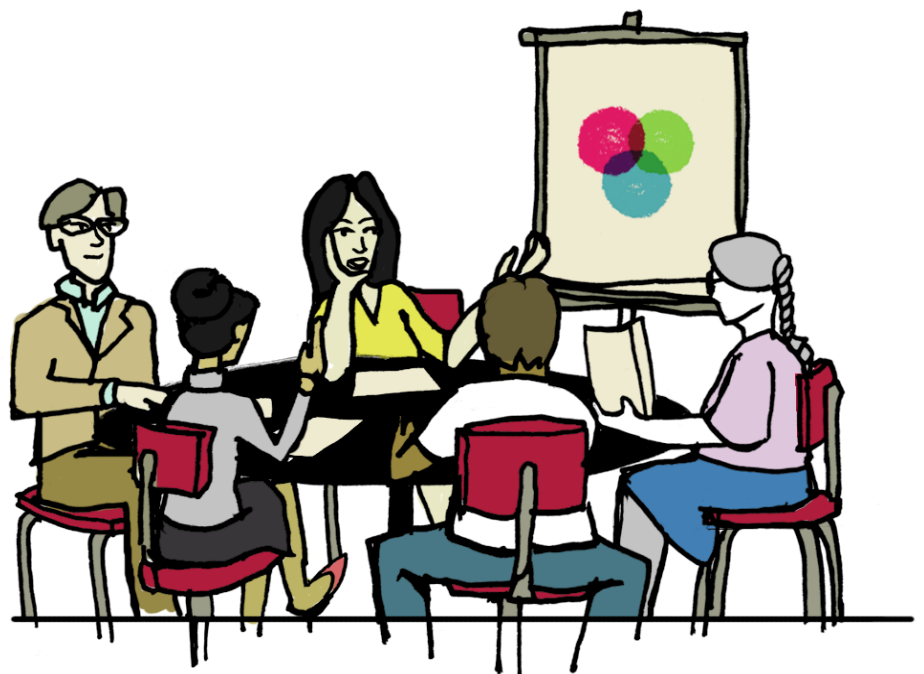
Emerging Themes

Enacting the strategies identified during the two day Summit means changing how organizations think about themselves (as employers as well as deliverers of services and programs) and how they might work together. It is a cultural shift. Long held ideas will be challenged and there will be resistance. Transformative change takes time and we will need champions along with a clear reason for the change. The case for labour force management will need to be communicated well... and frequently.

Transformational change

Next Steps

At the end of the Summit, HR Council Executive Director Lynne Toupin remarked that the Summit participants have produced a wealth of information that the HR Council will have to sift through, reflect on and analyze. Recommendations from the Summit will be considered by the HR Council Board of Directors as part of their strategic planning in February 2009. All participants will receive a copy of the proceedings of the Summit. Lynne encouraged Summit participants to help build the case with their own boards that human resources issues are important and to spread the word to other voluntary and non-profit sector organizations and to the government.



HR Council_{for the}
Voluntary & Non-profit Sector