

# ***What We Heard***

## **Findings From Discussions in Communities About a Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council**

**Prepared for:  
The Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council Feasibility Study**

The Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council Feasibility Study is a joint effort of Community Foundations of Canada and United Way of Canada - Centraide Canada. It is supported by the Government of Canada.

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## A. Some Background

### ■ Context

The voluntary sector has an opportunity to establish a national council with a mandate to identify and act on the sector's human resources needs. With developmental assistance from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Community Foundations of Canada and the United Way of Canada - Centraide Canada have embarked on a Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council Feasibility Study. The aim of the study is to determine whether a Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council is feasible and, if so, how it can best work to strengthen the sector.

One of the major inputs to the Feasibility Study is a series of discussion groups that were recently held across the country with people from the voluntary sector. The findings from these groups, together with the results of an electronic survey and input from selected stakeholders from both inside and outside the voluntary sector, will be instrumental in shaping the vision for a new Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council.

This fall, the Feasibility Study Project Advisory Committee, comprised of 17 members from a broad range of voluntary sector and other stakeholder organizations, will consider this input as it shapes the development of the proposed Council. A "next steps" report, setting out broad directions and priorities for action, will serve as the basis for discussions with HRSDC, beginning in January 2005.

### ■ The Discussion Groups

Held in small and large centres across the country during May and June 2004, the discussion groups were designed to gather the opinions and insights of leaders from a broad cross-section of Canada's voluntary sector (see sidebar on this page). The project team relied on local and regional organizations to engage participants and organize the 43 sessions (including two test groups), supporting their efforts with essential background information and materials.

Each half-day session brought together about 8-12 people from the voluntary sector to reflect on current and emerging human resources issues, and to look at how a Human Resources Council could address them. In most groups, participants also provided some "local colour," sharing their insights on the unique social and economic characteristics of each centre or area. Although the discussions focused on human resources issues relevant

#### Who participated?

One of the principles guiding the selection of participants was the need to reflect the sector's complexity. Following is a brief profile of the discussion group participants:

- a total of 417 people from small and not-so-small organizations
- almost a third of organizations have annual budgets of less than \$250,000; two out of ten have budgets of more than \$2 million
- more than half have fewer than 10 permanent full-time employees; one out of ten have more than 50 employees
- four out of ten are executive directors or CEOs
- 16% are from organizations whose employees are unionized
- the highest representation was from the social services sector

to the voluntary sector's paid workforce, many participants also took the opportunity to comment on concerns about volunteering, as well as on some "big picture" issues affecting human resources challenges in the sector.

Project leaders, Lynne Toupin and Bonnie Shiell, facilitated the majority of sessions, while Advisory Committee members Rick Hutchins (New Brunswick) and Penelope Rowe (Newfoundland) led sessions in their own provinces and Martin Itzkow of the Voluntary Non-Profit Sector Organization of Manitoba Inc. facilitated a group in Manitoba. To ensure consistency across groups and facilitators, the findings from each session were recorded on a standardized template, which served as the basis for later in-depth analysis of the study results.

### ■ About This Report

This report sets out the major findings from the discussion groups. The following section, "What We Heard: The Findings" summarizes participants' input on a number of overarching issues affecting the sector's human resources environment, as well as their specific concerns in five key human resources areas. This section also provides a synthesis of participants' comments and suggestions on how the proposed Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council should work.

The last section of this report, "Next Steps," briefly describes how the discussion group findings will be distributed and used, while the report's appendices provide information about the size and location of the groups, a list of the host organizations and samples of some of the materials used.

It should be noted that findings about the sector's volunteer workforce – a topic outside the scope of the current study – were summarized and submitted to Volunteer Canada. Input on funding challenges was shared with the Canadian Council on Social Development and the Voluntary Sector Forum; the latter organization also received participants' comments and suggestions on government policy and government-voluntary sector relationships.

## B. What We Heard: The Findings

As with any synthesis of this kind, it is impossible to fully capture the richness of the discussions or the unique perspectives brought to them by diverse organizations, each working in a specific local or regional context. With these limitations in mind, the following is a summary of what we heard from voluntary sector organizations across Canada.

### 1. Overarching Issues

Many participants commented on broad-based issues that have a substantial impact on human resources concerns. As participants made clear in their discussions, these overarching issues must be taken into account in any realistic assessment of the voluntary sector's human resources environment.

#### ■ **Funding is Key**

Discussion group participants delivered a strong message that issues related to funding and “fallout from funding” affect all aspects of their organizations’ activity, including human resources capacity. In fact, participants regarded funding as such a high priority that more than half of the groups (25/43) added a “funding” category to the list of five human resources issue areas suggested by the project team. Participants identified issues related to funding levels, the terms and conditions attached to funding and the processes for accessing it, challenges that have forced many organizations into “survival mode.”

Insufficient funding is clearly a major constraint for the many voluntary sector organizations that are struggling to make ends meet. According to participants, the lack of funding for core operations and processes (including human resources) is particularly difficult, impeding their ability to plan, make long-term commitments and decide how best to allocate limited funds. These challenges are exacerbated by short-term funding horizons, the move to program and project-based funding and the investment of time and effort required by funding application procedures and accountability requirements.

The impact of funding on human resources is also apparent in participants’ discussions on the five key issue areas: pay and benefits; attracting and keeping the right people; perceptions of work, managing people; and employee development (see Section B.2 *Human Resources Issues*, below).

#### **Community Voices:**

*“People can’t count on raises because budgets are always subject to freezes or cuts.”*  
(Prince Albert)

*« On passe beaucoup de temps sur les demandes de financement. »* (Gatineau)

*“Short-term funding doesn’t support long-term positions.”*  
(Saskatoon)

*“Unless the issues of core funding are dealt with, everything else is irrelevant.”*  
(Toronto)

## ■ **Board Governance and Working with Volunteers**

In addition to funding, other “big-picture” issues relate to Board governance and volunteering. Boards of Directors don’t always understand their responsibilities for employment conditions and human resources management; some need orientation or training. The latter issue involves: clarifying the relationship between paid work and work done by volunteers; managing relationships between employees and volunteers; and conducting activities dedicated to recruiting and managing volunteers, including identifying the skills paid employees need to do this task.

## ■ **A Complex Sector**

Although participants came from a wide range of sub-sectors, there was general agreement about the pressing human resources challenges facing the sector, as well as enthusiasm for shared strategies to address them.

That being said, participants underscored the influence of jurisdictional and geographic context on organizations’ human resources needs and their capacity to deal with them. For example, jurisdictional differences affect local employment standards, human rights legislation, and government funding and contracting requirements.

Organizations serving small or rural communities contend with special circumstances as well, including a small talent pool, limited training opportunities and blurred lines between paid and volunteer work. Participants from Northern communities emphasized the area’s diversity and noted the unique problems of people working in isolation from their peers.

Participants also underscored the difference that organization size makes, noting that human resources challenges are more “concentrated” in smaller organizations. For example, small organizations:

- are less likely to have employee benefits
- often have limited human resources “infrastructure” and therefore little capacity to deal with specific issues and situations (e.g., a human rights complaint)
- face challenges as a result of staff size – for example, managing vacations and other absences, and the major impact of staff arrivals or departures
- require that each staff member have a broad mix of skills

### **Community Voices**

*“Take into account that large organizations’ issues tend to overrun the issues of small organizations”*  
(Whitehorse)

*“In small organizations, changing one staff member can change the culture.”*  
(Saskatoon)

*“Il y a un plus petit bassin pour aller puiser du personnel”* (Moncton)

*“In small, rural communities, it can be hard to find people with the right combination of skills.”* (Truro)

*“Be very aware that voluntary sector organizations are the backbone of rural communities.”* (Cornwallis)

*“Be deliberate about dedicating attention to remote/Northern concerns. Recognize that remote areas have contributions to make, not just needs to be met.”*  
(Yellowknife)

- often rely on one person for comprehensive knowledge about the organization and can isolate managers
- generally have a short “career ladder”
- often have a more active, hands-on Board, whose members need to understand and be involved in human resources issues

Participants suggested some ways of dealing with these “size” challenges, for example, by:

- offering collective benefit plans
- providing relevant and accessible management training
- instigating formal mentoring programs between large and small organizations
- promoting best practices for small organization

## 2. Human Resources Issues

The discussions focused on a range of human resources issues, some of them contextual, others relating to specific human resources concerns.

### ■ **Human Resources Context**

Participants raised a number of broad concerns affecting the sector’s human resources environment.

- *A diverse workforce*

Although not a dominant theme in most of the groups, the challenge of diversifying the voluntary sector workforce was raised in the discussions. It was a particular concern for participants with disabilities or those who work for organizations serving people with disabilities, and for members of visible minorities or those who work with organizations serving immigrants/members of visible minorities. These participants urged the sector to become more deliberate and forward looking in developing practices that welcome people with disabilities, immigrants and members of visible minorities. Some organizations – particularly those in the West – focused on the need to integrate people from Aboriginal communities, as they represent a growing component of the population and the labour force in these regions.

- *The gender dimension*

A number of groups commented on gender-related issues in the sector, focusing primarily on the connection between the prevalence of women and the generally low levels of pay.

### **Community Voices**

*“Organizations’ capacity to accommodate staff with disabilities is hampered by the lack of core funding.”*  
(Halifax)

*“There is an assumption that women will work for low wages because they have the opportunity to ‘make a difference’.”* (Niagara)

*“We need to ask ourselves why we aren’t attracting and retain men in our sector.”*  
(Medicine Hat)

*“Men wouldn’t work for the low pay.”* (Nanaimo)

▪ *Unions*

About one-sixth of discussion group participants worked in organizations with unions. Participants commented that building a good relationship with a union takes time, effort and specific skills. According to some participants, being unionized works well, usually bringing higher wages and better benefits for employees. In addition, a union can help to clarify work roles and responsibilities by providing mechanisms for dealing with conflict and limiting the demands organizations can make on employees. At the same time, some organizations on “fixed budgets” find it difficult to live up to collective bargaining agreements that promise better wages and benefits without laying people off, or cutting programs or services. As well, several participants said they have less flexibility to make management decisions as a result of the union.

**Community Voices**

*“Organizations are guilty of asking employees to do more and more. The union made it possible to say “no” to the Board.” (Victoria)*

*“Unions make for more honest management; set out fairer, clearer management-employee relationships and can be a good partner in advocating for adequate salaries.” (Toronto)*

■ **Key Human Resources Issues**

Following an open-ended discussion about human resource issues, participants were asked to organize their specific concerns into five main categories: pay and benefits; attracting and keeping the right people; managing people; employee development; and perceptions of work. An overview of the issues raised under each of these categories is provided below. A summary table showing how participants rated these categories as priorities for the sector appears in Appendix A.

**a) Pay and benefits**

*“People can’t afford to work for the salary they get.”  
(Charlottetown)*

**Top-rated concerns:**

Pay and benefits was an important issue in virtually all of the discussion groups held across the country.

Among participants’ major concerns were:

- salaries in the voluntary sector are lower than those in other sectors
- benefits (including paid sick leave, vacations and maternity leave) and retirement plans generally meet only minimum standards, especially in small organizations

**On the priority list ...**

“Pay and benefits” was ranked as **Priority #1** by **32%** of participants.

***How organizations are affected:***

The impact on organizations of low salaries and poor/no benefits is pervasive. Participants highlighted the effects in their own organizations, commenting that they result in:

- the inability to attract and retain qualified staff
- more employee stress and burnout, and a burden on families
- a difficult context for union-management relationships
- pressure to use time off in lieu of pay for overtime, resulting in heavier workloads for the remaining staff

***Links to other priorities:***

In their discussions, participants made strong connections between pay and benefits challenges and funding issues – specifically, the amount of funding available to voluntary sector organizations and the constraints imposed by program and project-based funding. As well, participants linked pay and benefits issues to poor perceptions of work in the sector, expectations that voluntary sector employees will work for less, and the gender wage gap.

***Moving forward:***

Relatively few specific suggestions were offered as solutions to the pay and benefits issues raised during the discussion groups – presumably because participants felt that these solutions lay primarily in improved funding and funding practices. That being said, participants thought it would be helpful to:

- examine flexible employee benefits as part of the compensation package
- raise awareness about the impact of short-term funding on organizations’ capacity to make commitments to employees
- raise awareness with Boards and funders about the value of work in the sector

**Community Voices:**

*“Wages, pensions and benefit plans are a huge issue in our community.”* (Thompson)

*“There is so much work to do, we try to get three people for less money rather than pay one person more.”* (Vancouver)

*“Unionization means fair salaries.”*(Ottawa)

*“Young people these days are asking more about pay and benefits.”* (Portage La Prairie)

*“We need more flexibility in compensation to meet organizations’ and employees’ needs.”* (Kelowna)

*“Some employees hold more than one job to make ends meet – and that contributes to burnout.”* (Whitehorse)

## b) Attracting and keeping the right people

*“It’s hard to attract qualified professionals who’ll come and stay.”*  
(Prince George)

### ***Top-rated concerns:***

Participants raised a variety of concerns related to recruiting and retaining staff with skills appropriate to the work their organization does.

Most often mentioned were concerns about:

- retaining current employees and dealing with employee turnover
- attracting, finding and recruiting new employees
- succession planning

### **On the priority list ...**

“Attracting and keeping the right people” was ranked as: **Priority #1 by 17%** of participants.

### ***How organizations are affected:***

These issues affect organizations in important ways, for example:

- voluntary sector organizations are often used as a stepping stone to other employment – particularly in government and funding organizations
- high staff turnover is time consuming and costly, and results in the loss of institutional memory
- it is difficult to find people with the appropriate mix of skills for complex jobs, as well as professionals/specialized workers (e.g., psychologists, social workers)
- organizations in different parts of the country have unique human resources challenges, for example, finding Aboriginal workers (in Saskatoon and Victoria) and bilingual workers (in New Brunswick)

### ***Links to other priorities:***

Recruitment and retention issues are closely linked to other concerns and priorities, including:

- short-term funding, which interferes with organizations’ ability to retain employees
- other funding-related issues such as low pay, fixed wages, lack of benefits and job insecurity, as well as job stress, overwork and burnout
- the increasing complexity of voluntary sector work, requiring that one person have a wide range of skills
- the erosion of middle management positions, which limits supervisory capacity and compromises opportunities for advancement
- the need for training and training resources
- the image of the voluntary sector and the work it does

***Moving forward:***

Participants focused on a number of key directions, including the need to:

- market the strengths of the sector and the rewards of the work
- improve recruitment and hiring systems and processes
- manage new recruits' expectations by improving orientation practices
- be flexible/creative in rewarding employees
- pursue staffing diversity – for example, by actively seeking out and hiring more immigrants, older workers and people with disabilities
- develop/use collaborative mechanisms and shared services to access human resources expertise
- improve succession planning

**Community Voices:**

*“Recruitment and retention are major issues for most organizations.”* (Fredericton)

*“Front-line service workers are burned out.”* (Winnipeg)

*“Organizations in the rural regions have a hard time funding and keeping employees.”*  
(St. John's)

*“University graduates don't see the sector as a career option.”* (Gander)

*“There's no succession planning – if the Executive Director leaves, the Board is sunk.”*  
(London)

**c) Perceptions of work**

*“Staff perceptions are that they are not valued.”*  
(Cornwallis)

***Top-rated concerns:***

While working in the sector is viewed as an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution and to use a wide range of skills, a number of concerns were raised. Participants spoke about how they themselves, as well as members of the public, Board members and volunteers, and funding agencies perceive the voluntary sector. Among the concerns most commonly mentioned were:

**On the priority list ...**

“Perceptions of work”  
was ranked as **Priority #1**  
by **9%** of participants.

- participants feel the sector as a whole - organizations, staff and the work they do - is generally undervalued
- the prevailing image of the sector is one of long hours for low pay
- voluntary sector jobs are often seen as a stepping stone to work in other sectors

Participants focused primarily on the negative impact these perceptions have on voluntary sector organizations. For example: organizations often undermine their own work and “under-reward” their employees; organizations are unable to attract employees, particularly young people; and relationships at all levels are affected (e.g., between Boards/other volunteers and paid staff; between government funders and staff).

In their discussions, participants raised a number of important concerns about the wider connections and implications of the sector’s negative image. These included:

- a “perverse” attitude in the sector that “being paid too much” is inconsistent with “working for the cause”
- a general attitude that voluntary sector employees should work for less pay and contribute unpaid hours
- ambivalence and confusion about appropriate roles for volunteer and paid staff
- the sense that governments – both in their role as funders and contractors – are not respectful of the sector and its work

***Moving forward:***

In putting forward their ideas for enhancing perceptions of the sector, its organizations and workforce, discussion group participants focused on the importance of establishing and communicating positive images. More specifically, they are looking for:

- a strong voice in educating the public and promoting the sector’s accomplishments and strengths
- managers to set a good example regarding work hours and expectations
- clearly defined roles for Boards, staff and volunteers

**Community Voices:**

*“We need to manage workloads and the expectations we have of people.” (Niagara)*

*“There is a growing sense of disillusionment among employees who came into voluntary organizations to help people, but who are now doing mainly paperwork and fundraising.” (Lethbridge)*

*“Are we our own worst enemies? We keep working the extra time to ‘do it all.’ We perpetuate the problem by not saying ‘no’.” (Charlottetown)*

*“Government organizations don’t show any respect for staff in voluntary sector organizations – they have a lot of unreasonable expectations.” (New Waterford)*

## d) Managing people

*“Most organizations – especially the small ones – just don’t have the time, people skills and resources to manage their people effectively.”*  
(Toronto)

### ***Top-rated concerns:***

Discussion group participants focused on a range of topics related to managing people. A dominant theme was the increasing incidence of stress and burnout in the face of overwhelming work/time demands. Other issues raised included:

- managers’ lack of time to supervise and support employees, due to workload
- inconsistency in employment relationships (e.g., contract terms and conditions) and the resulting administrative burden and negative impact on work dynamics
- limited awareness about Board roles and responsibilities in human resources management
- the need for enhanced management practices/tools, including performance appraisals, job descriptions, succession planning and risk management
- the challenge of keeping current on employment legislation and regulations
- managing in a unionized environment – e.g, the limitations on management flexibility vs. the benefits of firmly defined responsibilities
- the need to focus on organizational development and managing change

### **On the priority list ...**

“Managing people” was ranked as **Priority #1 by 8%** of participants.

### ***Links to other issues:***

In their discussions, participants connected concerns related to “managing people” to a number of other important issues, such as:

- the negative impact of insecure funding on employee morale
- governance issues – including: the relationship between the Board of Directors and management; the need for clarity about the roles of the Board, management and staff; the impact of Board decisions on workload; and the Board’s responsibility for human resource management, particularly the Executive Director’s or CEO’s performance appraisal
- the need for management skills training, including the time required to do it
- the need for effective recruiting practices that ensure a good “fit” between the organization and an employee’s values, skills, talent and experience

### ***Moving forward:***

Participants offered a variety of suggestions for addressing the challenges voluntary sector organizations experience in managing people – for example:

- enhance tools, resources, support and training for human resources management (in particular, for performance management and issues with legal implications)

- explore innovative ways to strengthen human resources management (e.g., by sharing expertise, accessing external expertise and building middle management)
- collaborate with unions on solutions to human resources problems
- strive for diversity in recruitment practices

**Community Voices:**

*“Human resource issues fall off the table because there is no time. We do mostly crisis management.”* (Calgary)

*“It’s a challenge for organizations to be ‘family friendly’ and still manage work effectively and the get the work done.”* (Peterborough)

*“There’s not enough administrative infrastructure to support good human resource practices.”* (Red Deer)

*“Human resources needs to move from being reactive to being proactive.”* (Edmonton)

**e) Employee development**

*“On ne peut pas garantir une sécurité d’emploi, pourquoi donner la formation?”*  
(Saint Boniface)

***Top-rated concerns:***

In general, participants focused on building skills that would help organizations and employees in doing their work, rather than on those designed to help employees develop their careers. The most frequently mentioned training and skill areas were: management training; fundraising skills; and new skills for addressing clients’ changing needs.

***How organizations are affected:***

Although most organizations recognize employee development as important, it is generally perceived as less pressing than other areas. As a result, organizations provide relatively few training and development opportunities, opting to allocate limited resources to other priorities. Participants identified other challenges to effective employee development, including:

**On the priority list ...**

“Employee development” was ranked as **Priority #1** by 7% of participants.

- the limited relevance, accessibility and affordability of existing training
- the complex mix of skills required to work in the sector
- the difficulty of functioning while staff are on training (especially in small organizations)

***Links to other priorities:***

As demonstrated in the discussions, employee development in the sector is closely linked to a range of other issues, including:

- recruitment, orientation and retention
- employee career advancement
- compliance with legal/regulatory requirements, such as health and safety, privacy
- meeting program requirements/goals (e.g., fundraising, managing funding streams)
- meeting requirements for accountability (e.g., tracking and evaluation)
- organizational development and change

***Moving forward:***

Participants mentioned specific needs for management skills (e.g., financial, human resources, performance), leadership development, skills for using technology effectively and proposal writing.

They also suggested a number of strategies to support employee development, including: collaboration with organizations both in and outside the sector; mentoring/coaching; improved access to a variety of learning opportunities, including Web-based training; and university/college curricula to prepare students for work in the voluntary sector.

**Community Voices:**

*“Most courses are offered in Toronto and we don’t have the funds to pay for travel.”*  
(Sudbury)

*“Organizations need diverse new skills to manage multiple revenue streams.”* (Halifax)

*“Training my not be available or it may not keep up with new ways of working.”* (Regina)

*“Staff need new skill sets because clients’ needs are changing and becoming more complex.”* (London)

### **3. How a Human Resources Council Should Work**

Along with the discussion on human resources issues, participants were also asked to share their vision for a Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council – specifically, what was needed to make the Council relevant to the needs of voluntary sector organizations. Summarized below, their comments provide an important perspective on how the proposed Council should work – including its underlying principles, objectives and activities, and structures and processes.

It should be noted that a minority of participants expressed reservations about the viability and usefulness of a Human Resources Council for the voluntary sector. Their concerns/questions focused on issues such as:

- the lack of knowledge/information available (for example, about the costs and benefits of a Council)
- whether establishing a Council should take precedence over other priorities, such as sustainable funding
- the limited capacity of many – particularly small – organizations to participate
- the challenge of “reflecting a collective interest,” given the sector’s complexity

### ■ *Underlying principles*

In their discussions, participants commented on key principles that should underpin the work of a Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council. Some of these principles – i.e., that it reflect the size and complexity of the sector, build on what already exists, and connect to the sector’s grass roots – also provide ideas for the Council’s structures and processes, and are described more fully in the relevant section, below.

Participants urged that a Human Resources Council address the needs of a diverse workforce, acknowledge the role/presence of unions, and address the gender dimension of paid work.

### ■ *Objectives and activities*

As described earlier in this report, participants identified a range of pressing human resources issues in the voluntary sector, many of which might be the focus of the proposed Council. In their discussions about how a Human Resources Council should work, participants also suggested a number of useful activities, including:

- act as a clearinghouse for practical information, resources and tools, including best practices
- elevate the sector’s profile as a desirable place of employment, and raise awareness and advance issues related to paid staff
- provide access to specialized expertise on human resources management issues and legal matters
- create opportunities for organizations to exchange expertise and information, and to collaborate on shared problems
- identify research and monitor trends
- provide training in human resources management

### **What should the Human Resources Council do first?**

Individual participants received a list of six examples of possible activities for the new Council and were asked to prioritize them. Their responses generally reinforce the discussion group findings.

Participants ranked the six sample activities in the following order (from most to least important):

1. provide practical human resources tools and resources
2. improve access to training
3. provide organizations with networking opportunities
4. conduct research on human resources needs and skill gaps
5. hold a major learning event
6. launch a campaign to promote careers in the voluntary sector

As well, participants called for the proposed council to work on “big-picture” issues that have an impact on, or are affected by, human resources concerns. These include advocating for funding improvements and building capacity in voluntary sector organizations.

A few of the suggestions made fall outside the scope of a Human Resources Council – specifically: bringing federal and provincial governments together to coordinate their funding programs; and assisting with group access to liability insurance.

### ■ *Structures and process*

Discussion group participants made suggestions about how the Human Resources Council might be organized and run. Summarized below, their comments fall under four main themes:

- *reflect the sector’s complexity*, by including organizations of varying sizes from rural and urban centers, from various geographic regions (including the North), and representing different languages, subsectors and stages of development
- *work with what already exists*, by collaborating with and strengthening existing networks and organizations at the provincial, regional and community levels, as well as umbrella organizations in sub-sectors and outside the voluntary sector
- *connect to the grass roots and have a community presence*, by communicating regularly and efficiently through a variety of channels, delivering workshops locally and making the Council accessible through provincial, local and/or regional collectives
- *limit costs to organizations*, by making products affordable, not requiring a financial contribution from organizations and covering out-of-pocket costs of participating in the Council

### **Community Voices**

*“Nous désirons que le conseil puisse répondre à des besoins ponctuels qui se vivent dans les communautés et non seulement fournir de l’information.” (Caraquet)*

*“It shouldn’t be a centralist organization dominated by big city voices.” (New Waterford)*

*“Don’t reinvent the wheel.” (Sudbury)*

*“It shouldn’t cost us money to participate.” (Prince Albert)*

*“Understand that the North is unique – there are differences even from small organizations in the South.” (Whitehorse)*

## C. *Next Steps*

The findings from the discussion groups provide critical input on the issues currently facing voluntary sector organizations across the country and suggest a range of possible directions and activities for the proposed Council. With this in mind, the following steps will be taken to make the findings accessible across the voluntary sector and to ensure they are given thoughtful consideration in further deliberations on the feasibility on a Voluntary Sector Human Resources Council:

- an electronic copy of this report is available on the Feasibility Study's Web site at [www.hrvs.ca/hr\\_council](http://www.hrvs.ca/hr_council)
- a highlights version of the report will be distributed to participants in the discussion groups and is available on the Feasibility Study's Web site at [www.hrvs.ca/hr\\_council](http://www.hrvs.ca/hr_council)
- the findings in this report will help the Advisory Committee shape proposed directions for the Council
- a "next steps" report will be the basis for discussion with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada in January 2005

## APPENDIX A: How Participants Ranked Human Resources Issues (1)

Issue Category	Percentage of Respondents Ranking the Issue as Priority #1
Pay and Benefits	32%
Attracting and Keeping	17%
Other - Funding (2)	11%
Perceptions of Work in the Sector	9%
Other issues added by participants (2,3)	9%
Managing People	8%
Employee Development	7%

### Notes:

- (1) This does not include participants in Gatineau, Halifax, Winnipeg, Thompson, Vancouver and Peterborough, as these groups did not complete the priority-setting exercise.
- (2) Groups used the “Other” category to capture issues they did not put into the categories provided. Some groups used the “Other” category as a catch-all, while others created new sub-categories for “Other” issues. Notably, 25 groups added a category to capture issues they raised with respect to organizations’ funding, including level of funding, access to funding and the impact that funding arrangements have on their operations. In 16 of these groups, at least one participant identified funding issues as the first or second priority for attention. Because of the importance participants attached to it, “Other - funding” is shown here as a separate category.
- (3) Groups categorized the remaining “Other” issues as: organizational change, operational matters and internal management challenges (n=8); governance and Boards (n=7); external context (policy, rules and regulations) (n=3); collaboration across the sector (n=3); equity/diversity (n=3); local realities (n= 2); unions (n=2); and leadership development (n=1).

## APPENDIX B: Discussion Group Participants by Location

Province/Territory <sup>(1)</sup>	Number of participants (% of total)	Location	Number of participants		
Newfoundland & Labrador	26 (6%)	St. John's	14		
		Gander	12		
New Brunswick	36 (9%)	Fredericton	6		
		Caraquet (French)	16		
		Moncton	7		
		Moncton NB (French)	7		
Nova Scotia	31 (7%)	Cornwallis	5		
		New Waterford	7		
		Halifax	15		
		Truro	4		
Prince Edward Island	7 (2%)	Charlottetown PEI	7		
Quebec <sup>(2)</sup>	7 (2%)	Gatineau QC (French)	7		
Ontario	78 (19%)	Toronto 1	10		
		Toronto 2	13		
		Toronto 3	7		
		London	6		
		Niagara	8		
		Ottawa	12		
		Sudbury	15		
		Peterborough <sup>(3)</sup>	7		
		Manitoba	48 (12%)	Portage la Prairie	9
				Ste Boniface (French)	13
		Winnipeg	8		
		Brandon	11		
		Thompson	7		
Saskatchewan	24 (6%)	Regina	9		
		Saskatoon	10		
		Prince Albert	5		
Alberta	66 (16%)	Calgary 1	11		
		Calgary 2	11		
		Medicine Hat	12		
		Edmonton	11		
		Lethbridge	11		
		Red Deer	10		
		British Columbia	74 (18%)	Kelowna	12
		Vancouver 1	9		
		Vancouver 2	10		
		Vancouver 3 <sup>(3)</sup>	5		
		Victoria	16		
		Prince George	15		
		Nanaimo	7		
Yukon	13 (3%)	Whitehorse	13		
Northwest Territories	7 (2%)	Yellowknife	7		
<b>Total</b>	<b>417</b>				

### Notes:

(1) No discussion groups were held in Nunavut.

(2) On the advice of "Conseil sectoriel de main-d'oeuvre – Économie sociale et action communautaire (CSMO-ÉSAC)," which addresses the human resources needs of organizations in Quebec, a discussion group was convened in Gatineau, Quebec.

(3) The discussion process was tested in March with groups in Peterborough and Vancouver. Input from these groups is included in the findings.

## **APPENDIX C: Host Organizations**

- Community Services Council (Newfoundland & Labrador sessions)
- PEI Council for Disabilities
- United Way of Halifax Region
- PolicyLink NB (New Brunswick sessions)
- Centre de bénévolat de la péninsule acadienne inc.
- Centraide Outaouais (Gatineau, Quebec)
- Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development - Carleton University (Ottawa, Ontario)
- United Way of Peterborough & District
- MicroSkills Community Development Centre (Toronto, Ontario)
- United Way of Greater Toronto
- Pillar V (London, Ontario)
- Centre for Community Leadership – Niagara College (Niagara, Ontario)
- United Way of Sudbury
- Social Planning Council and Marquis Project (Manitoba sessions)
- United Way of Regina
- Canadian Red Cross North Central Saskatchewan Region (Prince Albert, Saskatchewan)
- United Way of Saskatoon
- Medicine Hat Community Foundation
- Volunteer Lethbridge
- Calgary Coalition of Voluntary Organizations
- Red Deer Community Foundation
- Grant MacEwan College (Edmonton, Alberta)
- Volunteer BC
- United Way of the Central & South Okanagan/Similkameen (Kelowna, British Columbia)
- Volunteer Prince George
- Arts and Culture Alliance (Vancouver, British Columbia)
- Volunteer Nanaimo
- Volunteer Victoria
- Yellowknife YWCA
- Yukon Volunteer Bureau