

The Government/Non-Profit Initiative

The BC Story: Building Better Outcomes & Stronger Communities



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Whether it is providing supportive housing, active living programs for seniors, employment advice for new immigrants or literacy programs, the government and non-profit sector are working collectively to meet the needs of citizens and communities across British Columbia. This shared conviction – that government and the non-profit sector can achieve more to improve the collective well-being of British Columbians than either can realize by working alone – led to the formation of the Government/Non-Profit Initiative (GNPI) in 2007. The GNPI is a vehicle to strengthen the way the partners work together to support stronger communities and better outcomes for British Columbians.

This is the story of the GNPI's genesis. It is about mutual efforts to increase understanding about the needs, requirements and interdependence of the two sectors and build a foundation for collaboration. It is about celebrating accomplishments to date and recognizing that the journey to establish an equal and effective partnership between government and the non-profit sector has only just begun.

GNPI AIMS

- Shared understanding and mutual trust between the sectors.
- Long term commitment to collaborate on complex shared issues.
- Forums for collaboration to shape the services British Columbians need.

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca

Recognizing the Need for Collaboration

The creativity, energy and capacity of BC's non-profit sector is increasingly critical to the province's ability to ensure the delivery of high quality public services – services that enrich our communities and help us meet pressing social challenges such as homelessness, illiteracy, addiction and obesity. Yet as has been the experience in other developed countries in recent years, increasing service demands, limited funding, difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff and providing for adequate succession planning have challenged both government and the non-profit sector. Additional pressures such as worldwide economic volatility, a changing labour market, shifting demographics and the need for diverse

resources to address increasingly complex socio-economic problems have created uncertainty.

The non-profit sector still faces unique sustainability challenges due to project-based and shorter-term funding and variable skills and resource capacities. Government is challenged with maintaining consistency in social policy directives brought about by the electoral process and changes in leadership. Together, these difficulties make it more complicated for government and non-profits to meet public needs.

This changing environment means that strengthening the working relationship between government and the non-profit sector is essential to meeting the tough challenges ahead. The 'old relationship' model in which government was 'in control' and the non-profit sector came to the table 'looking for support' is quickly disappearing. We are moving into an age of understanding the mutual interdependence of these two sectors. There is growing recognition that neither sector can achieve its goals without the support, commitment and sustainability of the other. The crux of the relationship now centres on how government and the non-profit sector can best work together to achieve all that we want to achieve for a better British Columbia.

The GNPI Journey

The GNPI blossomed from a simple but powerful idea: bring together leaders from government and the non-profit sector to explore the state of the current relationship, share perspectives and ideas, and find opportunities to work collaboratively to improve the relationship. The timeline shows the intensity of activity that took place during the GNPI's early years as a new path for our association was forged.

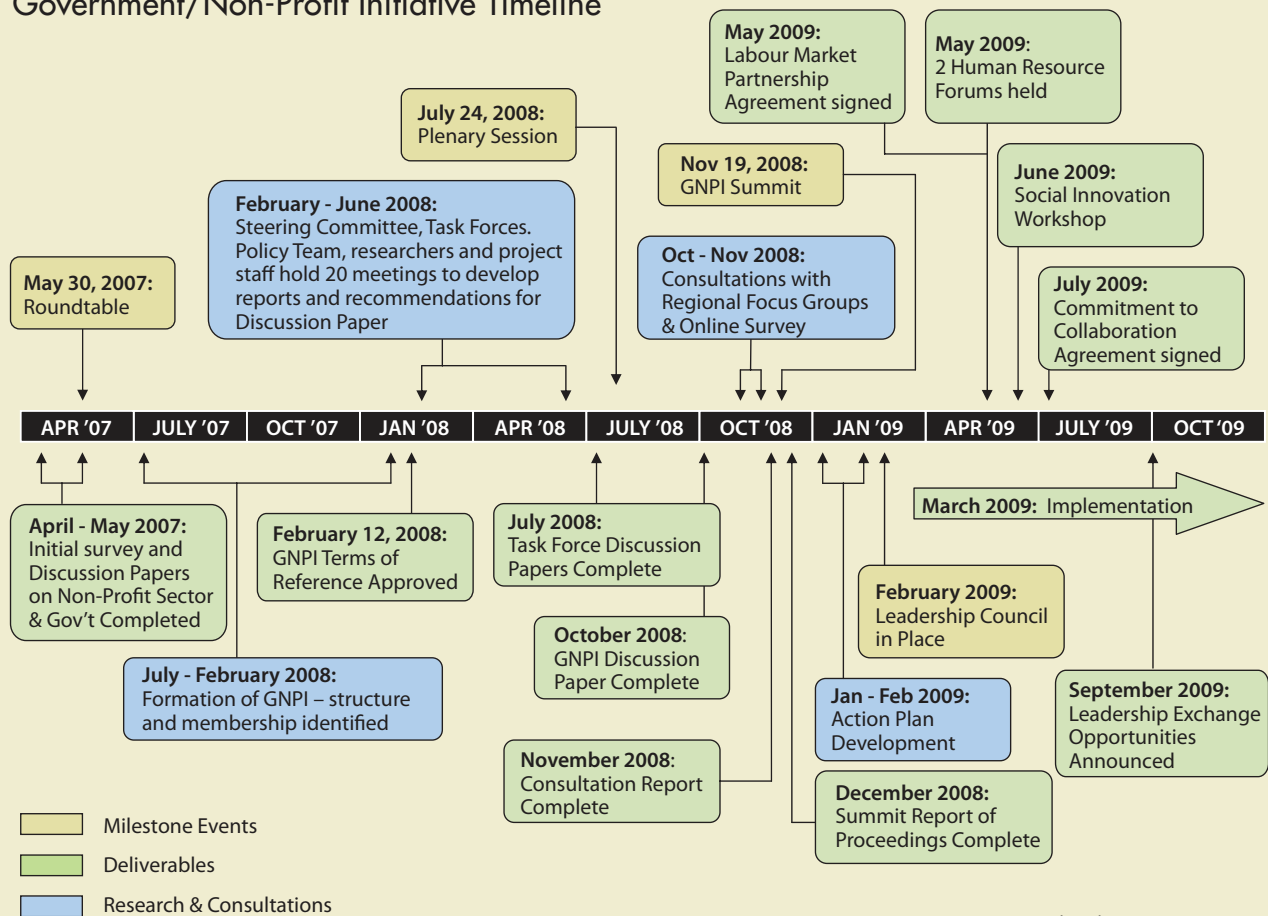
This timeline offers a glimpse of the richness and productivity of the GNPI's early days. To get a flavour for the work undertaken, some of the most critical events and milestones are briefly described below with web links connecting readers to further information.

May 30, 2007:

The first Joint Roundtable on Government/Non-Profit Sector Relations brought together 84 attendees from across BC including senior leaders from government, non-profits, funding agencies, foundations and non-profit sector support centres. Held at Dunsmuir Lodge in Victoria, three key issues were raised requiring attention in order to enhance the relationship:

- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Working Together
- ▶ Capacity-Building

Government/Non-Profit Initiative Timeline



Last updated Sept. 10, 2009

The Roundtable elicited a high level of enthusiasm and engagement for finding joint solutions. There was palpable will from stakeholders in government and from the non-profit sector to work towards strengthening the relationship.

"I believe we are at the tipping point in working together collaboratively. There is growing recognition that neither sector can address these issues independently and therefore, we need to begin to develop a stronger relationship."

– Faye Wightman, President & CEO, Vancouver Foundation

"Dialogues between government and the non-profit sector such as these are critical because there are never going to be enough dollars to do everything we aspire to, therefore it is important to talk about how to prioritize what we want to do."

– David Morhart, Deputy Solicitor General

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/docs/rt_proceed_strengthening_relationships.pdf

July 2007 - February 2008:

The Government/Non-Profit Initiative is created, led by a Steering Committee and three Task Forces:

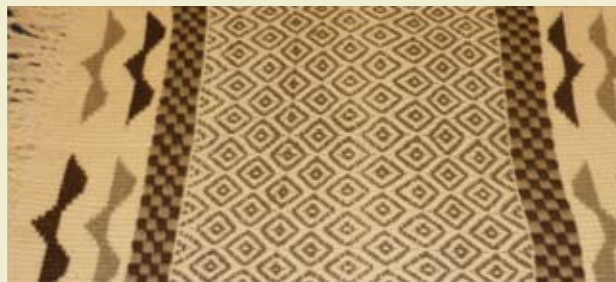
- ▶ Capacity Building
- ▶ Working Together
- ▶ Procurement, Funding, Performance Measurement

The Steering Committee was charged with guiding the Initiative's direction while the Task Forces consulted, researched and put forth recommendations on their areas of concern. At this point, the GNPI was guided by a Terms of Reference, with the Steering Committee and Task Forces supported by a secretariat of researchers, policy leads and project staff. Of utmost importance to the Initiative's success to date has been the fact that as a partnership initiative, the Steering Committee, Task Forces, support staff and all GNPI endeavours have equal member representation from government and the non-profit sector.

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/docs/terms_of_reference.pdf

The GNPI Cowichan Nation Blanket

Honouring and recording the work of the Government/Non-Profit Initiative is a blanket, made of sheep's wool, woven by three generations of women from the Coast Salish Territory: Rebecca Campbell (Elder), Ann-Marie Rice (daughter), Sarah-Ann Rice Louis and Angelina Rice-Louis (grand-daughters). The weavers created



the blanket for the Initiative, offering participants a visual representation of what was needed to make the relationship most successful. Its motifs include geese, a checker-board pattern, and diamonds and stars and symbolize inspirational leadership, structure, process and opportunity.

The blanket was first presented to the GNPI at the July 24, 2008 GNPI Plenary Session. It has since become an integral part of the Initiative. It serves as a 'record keeper', absorbing the dialogues amongst stakeholders into the fabric of the blanket. It has travelled around the province during consultations, Steering Committee meetings, and the annual summit. The blanket helps to keep the conversations focused and honest, and reminds Initiative participants that we are all working towards a common goal.

July 24, 2008:

A Plenary Session involving the GNPI Steering Committee, Task Forces, policy team, project staff and researchers meets in Victoria to review the GNPI Discussion Paper, the research findings and recommendations of the three Task Forces and suggest the next steps. During the recognition ceremony, the GNPI co-chairs were presented with a Cowichan blanket which has since become an integral part of the Initiative. The blanket serves as a record keeper that absorbs the dialogues amongst stakeholders and reminds participants how we are all working towards a common goal.

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/docs/cb_recommendations.pdf

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/docs/wt_recommendations.pdf

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/docs/procurement_recommendations.pdf

October - November 2008:

The GNPI Discussion Paper is circulated and province-wide community consultations solicit input on the Paper's recommended strategies and goals. Approximately 670 individuals participated, either through an online survey or regionally-based focus groups, with the consultation providing stakeholders the chance to identify areas of opportunity and/or concern, additional priorities and give input on the GNPI's strategic implementation. Participants represented the breadth and depth of the non-profit sector (the health and social services fields in particular) and regional and small agency representation was high. Government representation provided critical input. Two key concepts emerged from the consultation:

- ▶ The desire for a concrete, meaningful Action Plan; and
- ▶ A broadening of scope and representation to be more inclusive of the non-profit sector, government and the private sector, including better acknowledgement of regional and community uniqueness in strategic implementation.

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/docs/Discussion_Paper.pdf

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/docs/GNPIConsultationReport-Nov2008.pdf

November 19, 2008:

The first annual GNPI Summit brings together 120 stakeholders, representing a diversity of leaders from BC's non-profit sector and government. The goal was to develop an action plan to implement the recommendations outlined in the Discussion Paper. The Summit work focused on progressing the Initiative from one of information gathering and discussion to action and commitment.

Through café-style discussions and plenary sessions, examining the five GNPI goals put forth in the Discussion Paper, participants decided on 10 short-term (one year) and 8 medium-term (two years) priority actions for implementation to support a stronger

relationship between the sectors. The goals and actions identified through the work of Summit participants provided direction for the GNPI's activities and strategic implementation for the following two years. This was strengthened through pledges made by government and non-profit sector representatives respectively to undertake efforts within their own sectors to make the relationship stronger and ensure the Initiative's priority actions received the support they needed for success.

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/docs/GNPISummitProceedings.pdf

February 2009:

The Steering Committee approves the GNPI Short-Term Action Plan for the fiscal year 2009/2010. The Action Plan concentrates on five key theme areas:

- ▶ Government/Sector Relationships
- ▶ Business & Finance
- ▶ Human Resource Capacity
- ▶ Integration, Inclusion & Innovation
- ▶ Aboriginal Relations

The Action Plan is the result of a collaboration with hundreds of government and non-profit participants who shared their time, energy, intellect and ideas to identify strategies and define actions that will strengthen the partnership between the two sectors and improve quality of life for British Columbians.

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/documents.html

March 2009:

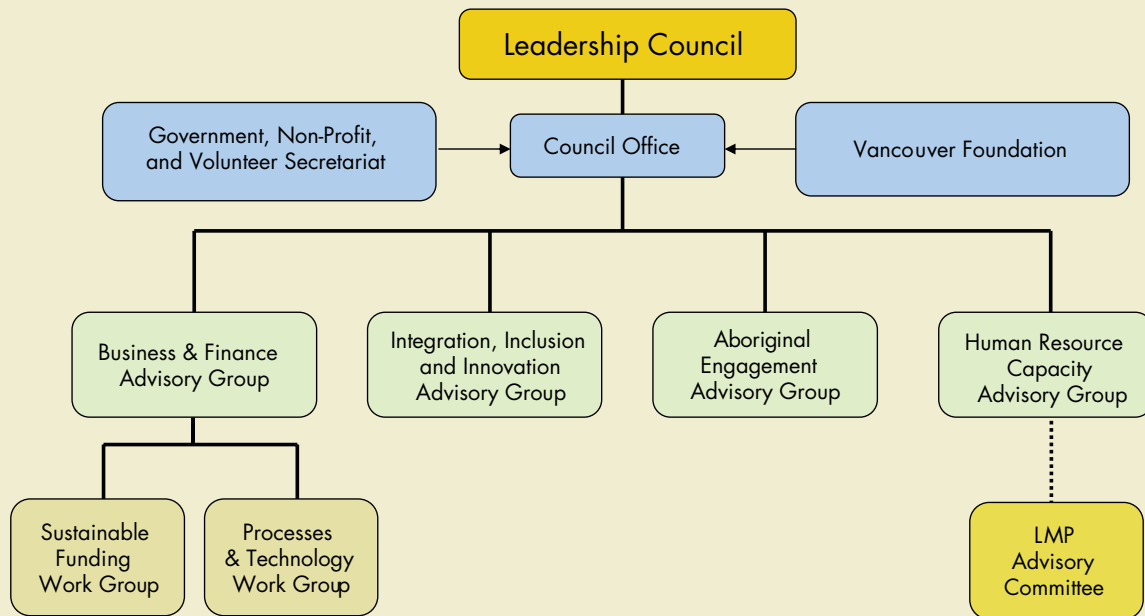
The GNPI Leadership Council is established, comprised of an equal number of senior leaders from the government and the non-profit sector, with some continuity from the former Steering Committee as well as new members from across the province

www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/documents.html

The GNPI's organizational structure is revamped to support implementation of the Action Plan. Four advisory groups are created:

- ▶ Business & Finance;
- ▶ Human Resource Capacity Building;
- ▶ Integration, Inclusion & Innovation; and
- ▶ Aboriginal Relations & Engagement.

Government Non Profit Initiative Organizational Structure



Fall 2008 - Present

In the midst of these fruitful and positive events moving the relationship forward, there was a cataclysmic shift in the worldwide economy. New realities began emerging for BC's government and the non-profit sector. Some of the original premises (particularly those regarding the availability of new resources) on which the GNPI was founded changed and everyone from funders to foundations, the non-profit sector to government had to revise expectations, given the new environment. The result has been the need to shift the GNPI's longer-term plans and activities to be more consistent with the changing times. Fortunately, the overall spirit and commitment on which the GNPI was founded remains strong and the partners continue to move forward to realize the GNPI vision.

GNPI Key Players

Government

- The Ministry of Housing and Social Development is the GNPI's lead government ministry with the active support and participation of Cairine MacDonald, Deputy Minister.
- Deputy Solicitor General David Morhart is the government co-chair and critical GNPI champion within government.
- Other ministries providing staff and associated support include:
 - Ministry of Children and Family Development
 - Ministry of Community and Rural Development
 - Ministry of Finance
 - Ministry of Citizens' Services
 - Ministry of Education
 - Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
 - Ministry of Attorney General
 - Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
 - Ministry of Health
 - Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
- GNPI Government Staff Team:
 - Mark Medgyesi, Team Lead
 - Carol Loski, Senior Project Manager
 - Amanda Louie, Project and Administrative Coordinator

Non-Profit Sector

- Vancouver Foundation has been the GNPI's non-profit sector leader, providing funding, staff and logistical support.
- Vancouver Foundation President & CEO Faye Wightman is the non-profit sector co-chair and key sector champion.
- Non-profit organizations from across the sector have contributed leadership, cash and in-kind support.
- GNPI Non-Profit Sector Staff Team:
 - Barbara Grantham, Team Lead
 - Allison Prieur, Project Coordinator

- Additional funding has been provided by the Law Foundation of British Columbia and the McConnell Foundation.

GNPI Leadership Council*

The GNPI Leadership Council consists of representatives from government and the non-profit sector:

- Janet Austin, CEO, YWCA of Vancouver
- Tim Beachy, Board, Centre for Sustainability
- Tung Chan, CEO, SUCCESS BC
- Robin Ciceri, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
- Mary Collins, Director, BC Healthy Living Alliance Secretariat
- Maureen Duncan, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Victoria
- Lois Fraser, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services
- Karin Hunt, Executive Director, Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment and Training Association
- Paul Lacerte, Executive Director, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centers
- Cairine MacDonald, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Housing and Social Development
- Michael MacDougall, COO, Ministry of Health
- Grant Main, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
- David Morhart, Deputy Solicitor General, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
- Mark Sieben, COO, Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Cheryl Wenezenki-Yolland, Comptroller General, Ministry of Finance
- Faye Wightman, President and CEO, Vancouver Foundation

*As of October 2009.

A comprehensive list of GNPI members and participants can be found on the GNPI website at: www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/who_is_involved.html

Factors in our Early Success

A number of key factors enabled us to build a strong foundation from which the GNPI has blossomed. Equality in participation, the recognition of each partners' unique strengths and capabilities, and a commitment to inclusivity have all helped to realize the Initiative's initial success.

1. Joint Leadership and Funding

From the beginning, both partners have been equal players in all aspects of the Initiative, from its leadership and decision-making authority to its funding and use of resources. Instrumental to the GNPI's early success has been its joint leadership structure, from the co-chairing of the Steering Committee and the Task Forces, to the parity in representation from both sectors on all committees. Equality in leadership has been backed by joint funding from both sectors to support the work of the GNPI. This level playing field supports critical trust building and fosters a positive cultural shift in the relationship between government and the non-profit sector.

2. Broad-Based Consultation

Input from stakeholders in both sectors on the GNPI's actions and direction has enabled the Initiative to be as inclusive as possible of all perspectives. For example, senior leaders were surveyed for their thoughts on the relationship prior to the first Roundtable on Government/Non-Profit Relations. The Task Forces sought input from experts and stakeholders to inform their recommendations. The GNPI undertook community consultations through an online survey and regional focus groups to understand the different needs of urban and rural non-profits and to solicit input on the Initiative's recommended strategies and goals. The Roundtable and first GNPI Summit were critical forums for soliciting feedback to move the Initiative forward. The GNPI reached out to the Aboriginal community to explore opportunities to further Aboriginal engagement and inclusion. All of these examples demonstrate how broad-based consultation has been critical to the GNPI's initial success, giving voice and extending choice to stakeholders to ensure the Initiative is grounded in a shared vision and commitment.

3. Champions

The GNPI's success depends on champions within government and the non-profit sector promoting the benefits of a stronger partnership. High level champions within government have worked across ministries and departments to increase understanding about how a better working relationship with the non-profit sector supports the delivery of better public services. Such leadership has helped to raise awareness and drive government commitment for the Initiative. Key non-profit sector champions have been critical in bringing the diverse voices of this traditionally 'siloed' sector together to create a basis for meaningful dialogue between government and the sector. Such leadership has helped to create cross-sector support for the building of a new relationship.

4. Non-Profit Sector Labour Market Partnership

The Non-Profit Sector Labour Market Partnership (NPS-LMP) marks the first significant commitment of funds to support non-profit sector capacity building. Signed between the Employment and Labour Market Service Division (ELMS) within BC's Ministry of Housing and Social Development (HSD) and Vancouver Foundation, this is a \$5 million investment in non-profit sector human resource capacity building. The three-year partnership provides financial assistance to non-profit organizations to support labour force development and human resource planning. The NPS-LMP provides the non-profit sector with a critical opportunity to tackle issues like recruitment, retention and leadership succession which have challenged the sector's stability.

Key Challenges

Challenges are often opportunities in disguise and the difficulties faced by the GNPI in its early days have required both sectors to find innovative approaches to improving their working relationship. While we have overcome some of our key challenges, there are others in which we continue to search for solutions.

1. Finding a Model to Fit the BC Context

BC's diverse geography and demography meant it was a challenge to find an appropriate model on which to base our new working relationship. Other jurisdictions have created government secretariats or legislated compacts delineating relationship rules and regulations. BC stakeholders voiced concerns that legislated partnership would create an inflexible arrangement that would not work for all communities or would lack the ability to meet unforeseen future public needs. After extensive research and debate, we developed a unique made-in-BC model for the relationship based on a formal Collaborative Agreement. The GNPI is led by a Leadership Council and supported by Advisory Committees. The Council, made up equally of representatives from government and the non-profit sector, provides strategic direction, leadership and accountability to ensure the short and long-term success of the GNPI.

2. Lack of a Unified Non-Profit Sector Voice

With more than 20,000 non-profit organizations in BC and only a handful of umbrella organizations representing different aspects of the sector, one of the biggest challenges in strengthening the relationship with government has been the lack of a unified non-profit sector body to speak on behalf of the sector. A unified entity would give voice to the sector's concerns and priorities, acting as a conduit for government/sector relations and provide the sector with needed information and support. While the GNPI has helped coalesce various components of the sector, the challenge remains to find effective ways to cooperate and collaborate.

3. Challenge of Continuity

The challenge of continuity is an ongoing issue for the GNPI. From maintaining the initial momentum for the Initiative to weathering changes in a shifting economic, social and political climate, moving forward with relationship building is a journey with many curves in the road. Funding continuity is a significant issue as the GNPI is currently dependent on annual funding from both government and the non-profit sector, making the long-term unpredictable.

Succession planning is another aspect of the challenge of continuity as government and non-profit organizations face changes in leadership. Finding individuals with the right mix of skills and knowledge for key positions is difficult for both sectors. This leads to another challenge, that of maintaining meaningful engagement between players given leadership changes, the transitional nature of government ministers and public servants and the turnover of leaders within the non-profit sector. Keeping the enthusiasm and commitment to the work of the GNPI alive while maintaining the foundational knowledge about the Initiative's purposes and aims amongst its leadership is an ongoing issue.

Lessons Learned

Since the GNPI began, both partners have learned a great deal about how to build a positive relationship. These are just a few of the key lessons we've learned to date.

1. Build Trust and Understanding

Good working relationships are built on a foundation of mutual respect and trust. We realized that prior to moving forward with the work of developing an action plan and creating a new model on which to base a relationship, we needed first to take the time to hear each others' stories, learn about each others' culture and realities, and develop a respect for the work and contribution each partner makes to supporting strong communities.

Our early stakeholder gatherings and forums provided a place where there was freedom to name the issues honestly, to reflect on previously held assumptions and to develop a better understanding of each others' contexts. These initial dialogues helped all players to recognize our commonalities and differences and to begin to see each other as equal counterparts. It was from this place of respect and understanding that both sectors were able to begin the work of building a better relationship.

Critical to trust building has been the sharing of responsibility for moving the GNPI process forward. From joint leadership to staffing to resourcing, government and the non-profit sector have shared equal responsibility for each and every aspect of the Initiative. Some of the previous attempts at improving government/non-profit relationships in Canada have failed in part due to one partner having final say in resourcing and implementation. Based on this spotty history, our premise from the beginning has been that trust between government and the non-profit sector could not be built unless the relationship was based on equality.

2. Create Capacity and Build Leadership

One of the critical lessons we have learned is that participating in a collaborative relationship requires adequate capacity in a variety of areas from leadership and human resources, to finances and basic infrastructure. Whether in the non-profit sector or government, the Initiative's success depends on having the ability and resources (e.g., staff, communication vehicles, leadership, funding) to keep the process moving forward to support fruitful collaboration. While challenging to secure dedicated resources, they are necessary to ensure the Initiative and the new partnership is seen as a permanent and ongoing commitment to positive change rather than a short-term venture

3. One Size Does Not Fit All

BC's experience in government/non-profit relationship building has taken a different course than that of other Canadian provinces. We recognized early on that we could not wholeheartedly adopt a model from another jurisdiction. At the same time, we did not want to 'reinvent the wheel' and sought to glean best practices that would work within the BC context. For example, some provinces have created lead ministries or departments with a mandate to collaborate with the non-profit sector. In BC, the Ministry of Housing and Social Development is taking the lead in championing the GNPI, however unlike other jurisdictions, there is no designated Minister responsible for the non-profit sector. We learned that what works best for BC is to ensure the GNPI is an independent initiative where both partners are equal players at the table.

In many jurisdictions, leadership organizations, networks and councils in the non-profit sector are growing both in number and strength with the common purpose to bring together diverse organizations to tackle cross-sector issues and speak with a unified voice. In BC, our non-profit sector continues to seek ways to collaborate and give voice to our collective strengths.

4. External Shifts Require Constant Adaptation

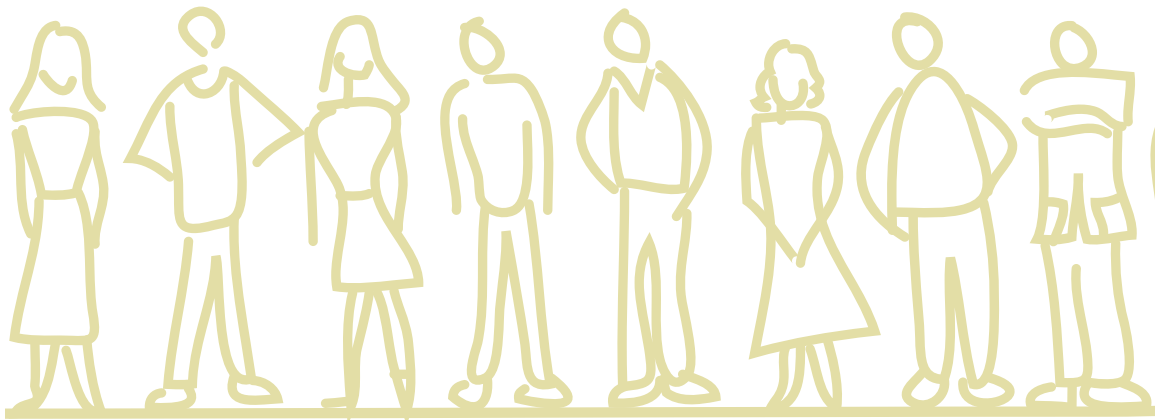
One of the hallmarks of the GNPI's success has been the degree to which the Initiative adapts to changing external realities. The changing worldwide economy and shifting environment means the relationship between government and the non-profit sector needs to remain fluid and flexible, with goals and objectives shifting in light of new requirements and new realities. These are challenging times for both partners. By remaining committed to the GNPI's overall vision while understanding that some actions and plans may need to change, we can realize our ultimate vision of a better working relationship between government and the non-profit sector.

Looking Ahead

It takes hard work and commitment from both parties to make our shared ambition of better outcomes and stronger communities for British Columbia a reality. We have already made huge leaps in recasting the government/non-profit relationship and are proud of the work done to make this happen. We have already made huge leaps in recasting the government/non-profit relationship and are proud of the work done to make this happen. Yet we know that real change takes time and the GNPI requires a multi-year and multi-pronged effort on the part of all players. With our Leadership Council in place and the action plan being implemented, we are committed to forging ahead and undertaking the challenging but invigorating work of deepening our relationship to effect lasting change.

We are moving forward to improve service delivery by working with government and non-profit agencies to streamline contract management and coordination, and broaden the use of multi-year funding. The GNPI is also facilitating leadership exchanges to support greater understanding between the sectors.

While there are many challenges ahead, from affecting substantive policy changes to obtaining meaningful engagement between the sectors to securing needed human and financial capacity, the GNPI is a solid foundation on which to grow. Drawing on the energy, creativity and experience of both the non-profit sector and government, the GNPI is poised to make a significant difference in the lives of British Columbians in the years ahead.



Government Non Profit Initiative

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