Building a Knowledge-Driven Nonprofit Sector

Executive Summary

ABNN
Alberta Nonprofit Network

Policy Wise
for Children & Families

Alberta

The Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy was launched in 2018 to enhance the nonprofit and voluntary sector's use of data. The Alberta Nonprofit Network (ABNN), took on the leadership role in the development of the Strategy in 2019, given its ability to connect with and represent the sector. Creating a data strategy is one of four province-wide collaborative efforts under the ABNN.

There are many data champions within the nonprofit and voluntary sector advocating for more strategic use of data. Stakeholders have expressly stated that having the right information at the right time better equips nonprofit and voluntary organizations to:

› Advocate for system-level changes;

› Better understand, measure, and communicate impact;

› Make evidence-based decisions;

› Drive program and organizational outcomes; and

› Answer key organizational, community, and sectoral questions.

Moving toward the strategic use of data and evidence in the sector requires coordinated efforts and stakeholder buy-in. The Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy brings together partners from government, funding organizations, and the nonprofit and voluntary sector to understand and improve the ways in which the sector leverages data.

This year, with direction and oversight from the ABNN Data Strategy Steering Committee, PolicyWise convened three topic-specific Task Teams. Along with our government partners 25 representatives from the disability, mental health, volunteer, technology and data, libraries, and immigrant and refugee sectors came together to collaborate on and advance the data strategy. The unique contributions from this diverse set of partners demonstrates the importance and relevance of this work.

From November 2019 to March 2020, each task team engaged the nonprofit sector and developed recommendations for action. The Data Hub Task Team researched national and international data platforms, and interviewed data hub moderators to develop a data hub model to best meet the needs of the Alberta nonprofit sector.

The Newcomer Task Team scanned for current data initiatives in the Immigrant and Refugee sector, and the nonprofit sector more broadly in Alberta to document learnings from exemplars and assess gaps. The Government of Alberta Data Task Team surveyed the nonprofit sector to better understand what the sector considered as high-value data, and matched those responses with data on the GoA Open Portal.

Eight projects of varying scale were developed through the work of Task Teams and key informant suggestions. Projects are intentionally designed to be developed further and launched by collaboratives and organizations big and small within this sector-wide effort. Leveraging existing projects and identifying additional funding opportunities are critical to the implementation of these projects as well. The projects proposed (see below) target data capacity building, data sharing, nonprofit organization data, Government of Alberta data, and the development of an Alberta Nonprofit Data Hub.

Demonstration User Stories partners nonprofit organizations with community data experts to support the nonprofit sector's use of available Government of Alberta data.

Open Data Capacity Building is a training series that supports nonprofits to work with data they identify as valuable. The creation of info graphics and creating intake forms for the organizational use of data are two examples that could be incorporated into training.

An Open Data Competition is modeled after projects advanced by Open Canada and Service Nova Scotia to enhance awareness and use of valuable open data.

The Knowledge Hub is the first stage in a two-stage data hub model. This online platform will bridge organizations with capacity building opportunities, , create opportunities to share data, and access data support.

Tip & Tricks partners nonprofit organizations with community-based data experts to create and disseminate tips on the specific uses of open data in the nonprofit context to build an engaged network of people that regularly use data together.

The Data Librarian is a data support and expertise mechanism supporting nonprofits to access timely information and data support.

Resource Sharing & Engagement will mobilize knowledge gained thus far in the Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy through sharing of known resources and tools.

Data Entry is Caring Campaign aims to shift the message of data collection from a bureaucratic burden to an action of care within nonprofit organizations.

Our 2019-2020 Final Report further details the Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy's progress, and informs our three-year strategy to sustain momentum. Collectively, partners will continue to come together to support and enhance the strategic use of data by the nonprofit and voluntary sector, and ultimately build a knowledge-driven nonprofit and voluntary sector.

Acknowledgments

The advancement of the Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy in 2019-2020 was truly a community effort.

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Government of Alberta Data Task Team:

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Newcomer Data Task Team:

> Sarosh Rizvi **Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies**, Sharon Yeo **Catholic Social Services**, Kirsten Mah **Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers**, Omar Yaqub **Islamic Family and Social Services Association**, Louise Ye **M.A.P.S. Alberta Capital Region**, Yvonne Cui **Multicultural Health Brokers**, Alex Draper **Social Enterprise Fund** and Cesar Suva **TIES**.

Data Hub Task Team:

> Shelly Sohi (**Alberta Data Institute**), Emma Potter **Canadian Mental Health Association Edmonton Region**, Paige Reeves **Skills Society**, Charles Buchanan **Technology Helps**, Aileen Burke **Volunteer Lethbridge**, and Ryan Burns **YYC Data Collective**.

Project Team:

> Rebecca Taylor, MA; Jason Lau, PhD.; & Xinjie Cui, PhD.

Project Sponsors

> PolicyWise for Children & Families, Government of Alberta Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism & Tourism.

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You can access the 2019-2020 Final Report and summary documents here