

The Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy Story

Building a
Knowledge-Driven
Nonprofit Sector

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PolicyWise
for Children & Families



Toward an Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy

A number of initiatives at local, national, and international levels over the past ten years have created the conditions for an Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy. Throughout the 2010's, new data platforms like [Community View Saskatchewan](#) and [Data Driven Detroit](#) indicated a growing interest in the uses and benefits of data. The global open government movement continued to snowball, bringing increased attention and opportunities for the availability and use of government data. In 2015, the Mowat NFP published its seminal report [*An Open Future: Data priorities for the not-for-profit sector*](#), which suggested that it was time for the Canadian nonprofit sector to take action.

[The Ontario Nonprofit Network \(ONN\)](#) was an early data champion. In 2015, they published their framework, [*Towards a Data Strategy for the Ontario Nonprofit Sector*](#). In it, the ONN discussed the ways data can support the nonprofit sector to learn and communicate its impact, deliver more responsive initiatives, collaborate more efficiently and effectively, and diversify and stabilize its funding. The ONN further identified how data standards, policies, skills & resources, and leadership are necessary to advance the data strategy.

It did not take long for both Ontario's data strategy framework and their nonprofit network model to gain traction in Alberta. [Volunteer Alberta](#), the [Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations \(ECVO\)](#), and the [Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations \(CCVO\)](#) met with then-[Alberta Culture and Tourism](#) in 2016 to discuss an Alberta nonprofit data strategy¹. While work would not begin until 2018, this meeting represented the "tangible first step" toward a provincial data strategy².

At the same time, key organizations were also planning an Alberta nonprofit network, which was launched in June 2018.

By 2019, the [Alberta Nonprofit Network \(ABNN\)](#) had over 700 members and were advancing four sector-wide strategic priorities on behalf of the Alberta nonprofit and voluntary sector: workforce development, government relations, sector value & impact, and the development of a nonprofit data strategy.

The CCVO began leading Phase I of the Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy in April 2018, with funding from Alberta Culture and Tourism. Province-wide engagements sessions in Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton identified the data opportunities and challenges experienced by the nonprofit sector. Over 100 stakeholders identified how they used data, [*the datasets the sector is interested in*](#), areas in which to focus data capacity-building efforts, and opportunities to leverage. From these engagements, a high-level [*Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy Roadmap*](#) was developed to move the nonprofit sector from the current to future state.

The *Roadmap* was formally adopted by the ABNN in 2019 and oversight for the strategy transitioned to the ABNN Data Strategy Steering Committee. [PolicyWise](#) and the Ministry of Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism, and Status of Women funded 2019-2020 work.

¹ Calgary Chamber of Organizations (CCVO), *Building a Foundation for an Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy – Project Whitepaper* (2018)

² CCVO 2018, p.1



A Community Initiative

Sector engagement has been key throughout the Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy. CCVO's provincial engagements in 2019-2020 resulted in the Roadmap. PolicyWise continued stakeholder engagement at the 2019 ABNN Sector Gathering, qualitative interviews with key informants, and the creation of three project-focused task teams. Each task team supported the development of a sustainable data ecosystem for the nonprofit and voluntary sector. Rather than focusing on creating a one-size fits all strategy, teams instead:

- › **Created strategic alignment** between existing initiatives across the sector, government, and academia;
- › **Identified priorities and opportunities** for funding, networking and collaboration; and
- › **Engaged stakeholders** and made new sector connections.

The Government of Alberta Data, the Newcomer Data, and the Data Hub Task Teams brought together nonprofit data champion

from government, community-based funding organizations, and the nonprofit sector. Each task team leveraged their networks and volunteered considerable hours toward environmental scans, creating and distributing a survey, and interviewing experts to inform responses and strategies.

Our 2019-2020 Final Report documents the progress made on the Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy. Smaller, nimble "proof of concept" projects were planned by Task Teams to support the identification of priorities, system readiness, and data champions within and beyond the sector.

PolicyWise is dedicated to maintaining our coordinating role to bring partners and champions together to continue advancing the data strategy until 2023. This is made possible through the generosity of an anonymous donor and the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF).

[Read our Final Report and Summary documents here.](#)

The Alberta Nonprofit Data Strategy Journey

