Developing an engagement strategy to strengthen community and regional collaboration through the Government Non-Profit Initiative

Patricia Pearson, MPA candidate
School of Public Administration
University of Victoria
July 2013

Client: Rachel Holmes, Executive Director of Innovative Partnerships, Ministry of Social Development and Innovation and Government Lead, Government/Non-Profit Initiative (GNPI); and Ginger Gosnell-Myers, Non-Profit Sector GNPI Team Lead, Vancouver Foundation

Supervisor: Dr. Evert Lindquist
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

Second Reader: Dr. James McDavid
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

Chair: Dr. Kimberly Speers
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government Non-profit Initiative was created in 2007 to “strengthen the well-being of British Columbians by providing an ongoing forum that builds the joint and complementary capacity of government and the non-profit sectors, resulting in stronger, healthier communities” (GNPI, 2010). The GNPI is jointly staffed and funded by the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation and the Vancouver Foundation. This report is focused on the GNPI’s commitment to “create policy and programs that are responsive to the unique regional, cultural, and community needs across the province” (GNPI, 2008). More specifically, the report explores the possibility for GNPI to engage with government and non-profit stakeholders in communities across British Columbia B.C. The project examines the GNPI’s previous provincial and regional engagement strategies, and assesses opportunities, challenges, and methods to successfully expand engagement in the future. The project is also the final requirement in the Master of Public Administration program at the University of Victoria.

The research approach included a literature review as well as interviews and focus groups with government and non-profit leaders from across B.C. The literature examines the outcomes of GNPI regional roundtables and annual summits, and highlights promising practices and principles of successful engagement from similar initiatives throughout the province and country that could be applied by the GNPI. Findings from both the review of GNPI documents as well as the interviews indicated there are a number of significant barriers to engaging at the regional level including time, human and financial capacity, the capacity of the GNPI, and a lack of trust and mutual understanding. Yet they also highlighted existing regional networks that the GNPI could leverage as well as a variety of tools and methods to develop and implement regionally effective engagement. Lastly, the findings demonstrated the need to integrate regional engagement within the GNPI’s structure prior to implementing regional engagement.

The report provides three high-level options to integrate regional representation into the GNPI: ensure regional representation on the GNPI Leadership Council, develop regional GNPI Leadership Councils, and support the creation of regional non-profit associations. Integrating regional representation within the GNPI Leadership Council, is the recommended approach, as it requires very little human and financial resources, and leverages the use of new Leadership Council members who are able to offer their time and expertise to the GNPI.

The three options for specific engagement tools are all layered approached with multiple tools. Each option however focuses mainly one specific tool. These are regional working groups, a regional roundtable toolkit, and an enhanced web-portal. The regional working group-led option is recommended as it allows for the most face-to-face engagement, helping to build trust, broaden representations, and strengthen relationships. Together the two recommended options could be implemented in five years given the GNPI’s current human and fiscal capacity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Evert Lindquist for introducing me to the GNPI and the invaluable work that they do, and for sharing his unique perspectives and experiences as someone who has been involved in the GNPI since its inception. Dr. Lindquist’s guidance and support have been extremely helpful throughout this process.

I would also like to thank the GNPI council office, the clients for this report. A huge thank you Kinwa Bluesky and Jennifer Walton for their constant encouragement, feedback, and accommodation. To Rachel Holmes and Ginger Gosnell-Myers for their insight and direction. Thank you also to Beth Brady for her administrative assistance in setting up meetings and interviews, and for making my time at the GNPI office comfortable.

To all of those who participated in the research, thank you for sharing your time, knowledge, and experiences. Your commitment and dedication to improving the relationships between government and non-profit sectors and to the British Columbians that you serve is incredible. This project could not have happened without you!

Thank you to my amazing friends and family. To my fellow MPAers, I am so thankful to have shared this journey with you! To Melanie and Arielle, I could not have completed this project without your encouragement, support, and helpful distractions. Most of all, thank you to my wonderful husband, Aaron, who supported me in so many ways throughout my masters program, and this project. Thank you for all of the wonderful meals, for taking on additional responsibilities, for listening to my rants, and for giving me the space and encouragement to get through this. I could not have done this without you and I am looking forward to the next chapter of our life!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .................................................................................................................. i
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. ii
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................... iii
1.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Project Objectives ........................................................................................................... 2
  1.2 Rationale ........................................................................................................................ 2
  1.3 Organization of Report ................................................................................................... 3
2.0 Background ......................................................................................................................... 4
  2.1 Recent History of Government Non-profit Relations: Canada and Beyond .................... 7
  2.2 Government Non-Profit Relations in B.C. ....................................................................... 9
  2.3 GNPI: Origins, Past Engagement Initiatives, and Ongoing Challenges ......................... 10
  2.4 Challenges Faced by the GNPI ...................................................................................... 12
  2.5 What is Engagement? .................................................................................................... 15
  2.6 A Strategic Approach to Regional Engagement ............................................................... 16
  2.7 Analytical Framework .................................................................................................. 16
3.0 Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 18
  3.1 Literature Review and Scan of Promising Practices ......................................................... 18
  3.2 Interviews and Focus Groups ......................................................................................... 18
  3.3 Methodology Strengths and Limitations ....................................................................... 20
4.0 Literature Review ............................................................................................................... 21
  4.1 Results of GNPI’s Regional Engagement Initiatives ......................................................... 21
  4.2 Comparing Canadian Initiatives – Promising Practices ................................................. 24
  4.3 Community Initiatives in B.C. – Promising Practices ..................................................... 27
  4.4 Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 29
5.0 Interviews and Focus Group Findings .............................................................................. 30
  5.1 Current Engagement ....................................................................................................... 30
  5.2 Barriers to Engagement ................................................................................................. 32
1.0 INTRODUCTION

Governments and non-profit organizations worldwide are faced with an increasingly challenging and complex environment. The need for government and non-profit sector services is increasing, yet both sectors are facing unprecedented financial constrains. Many governments are looking for ways to weather global economic downturns by downsizing and outsourcing services to the non-profit sector. At the same time, governments are decreasing funding to the sector, causing many to close or scale-back their services. It has never been more crucial for both sectors to work together and find more effective and efficient ways of meeting service demands with what little resources they have.

In 2007, government, non-profit, and academic leaders in British Columbia (B.C.) came together to create the Government/Non-profit Initiative (GNPI) - “a vehicle to strengthen the way the Government and the Non Profit Sector work together to support stronger communities and better outcomes for British Columbians” (GNPI website). Since its creation, the GNPI has engaged with hundreds of social service providers throughout the province to determine how to improve their relationships and build capacity to better serve British Columbians.

With some major successes under their belt, the GNPI is now exploring how they can build on these achievements and broaden the representation of the GNPI through a regional engagement strategy. The strategy would enable them to engage partners outside of the major cities and metropolitan areas (Vancouver, Abbotsford, Victoria), which have been the focus of their engagement. Implementing a regional engagement strategy will help highlight regional uniqueness, increase awareness of local needs and constraints, and build the joint capacity of the government and non-profit sectors so that they can provide the best possible services to communities throughout the province.

This report examines how the GNPI can capitalize on existing resources to obtain meaningful engagement that will strengthen the relationship between the government and non-profit sectors throughout B.C. and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of this relationship. The report considers the possibility of broadening the scope of the GNPI by engaging local and regional stakeholders, outlines important considerations that must be factored into the strategy such as the GNPI’s financial sustainability, limited human resources, and regional diversity, and explores a variety of approaches that could potentially be used by the GNPI to collaborate in various ways throughout the province.
1.1 Project Objectives

The objectives of the project are to research, analyze and recommend options for the GNPI to broaden engagement, strengthen the relationships, and build networks between the government and non-profit sector at the regional level. A literature review and scan of promising practices will provide an outline of previous and current engagement strategies within and outside the province as well as the challenges that regional engagement initiatives have faced. Consultations with academic, non-profit and government stakeholders will present opportunities for regional engagement through the GNPI and determine the options that best meet their needs, limitations, and available assets.

Recommended options will be chosen based on how well they align with the GNPI’s principles of engagement: capacity building, responsiveness, accessibility, manageability and strategic alignment (GNPI, 2012), as well as relevant principles identified through the literature review and consultations. Lastly, recommendations will be chosen based on their ability to address the barriers, limitations and motivations for engagement identified by those that have previously been or are currently involved with the GNPI. Options and recommendations suggested in the final report will focus on opportunities for increased engagement between government and non-profit organizations in the regions, however they may also indicate opportunities where it may be necessary for the GNPI to broaden this focus to include local government actors, non-profits in different sectors or specific groups. The hope is that these recommendations will lead to opportunities to increase networks and build the capacity of stakeholders to provide the best possible services for British Columbians.

Options provided in the report will not only offer practical and innovative solutions for the short, medium and long-term, but will also enable the GNPI to make the best use of human and financial its resources to help build the capacity of all entities involved. Therefore the project seeks to determine how the GNPI can capitalize on existing resources to obtain meaningful engagement that will strengthen the working relationship between the government and non-profit sectors across the regions in B.C. and improve the services they provide to British Columbians.

1.2 Rationale

British Columbia has an estimated 20,000 non-profit organizations with over 147,000 employees and 1.5 million volunteers.¹ The non-profit sector in B.C. is significant not only in size, but in its economic impact and the impact is has on B.C.’s citizens. Despite its significance, the non-profit sector faces numerous funding, human resource and administrative challenges,

¹ [http://www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/pages/about/facts_and_stats.htm](http://www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/pages/about/facts_and_stats.htm) These statistics include
and lacks an effective network to collaborate and facilitate dialogue with the government of B.C.

The GNPI’s previous engagement efforts have been successful in connecting executives from the provincial government and non-profit sector in major cities in B.C. However, a number of challenges including limited financial and human resources both for the GNPI and for regional non-profits, a lack of coordination within the non-profit sector, regional diversity, and a narrow focus on social service providers have prevented the GNPI from engaging smaller communities and providing them with a forum to voice their needs and concerns and develop collaborative solutions.

The GNPI’s Commitment for Collaboration indicates that the government of B.C. and the non-profit sector are committed to identify and act on mutual priorities, and working across silos to coordinate program efforts to address the multi-dimensional needs of people and communities. A regional engagement strategy will provide a structure to bring necessary stakeholders to the table to engage in ongoing dialogue and to develop a coordinated approach to deal with the on-the-ground issues identified through engagement. Systematic engagement throughout the province will also help the GNPI to meets its goal to honour diversity. Lastly, regional engagement can help the GNPI achieve its goal to invest strategically to promote and support stable, accountable and effective organization capacity by increasing communication between the two sectors, leveraging the GNPI’s networks, sharing best practices among sectors and service organizations, developing appropriate resources and training, and improving collaboration among stakeholders to improve the joint and complimentary capacity of the government and non-profit sectors to build stronger communities in B.C. The strategy will also allow the GNPI to capitalize on regional stakeholder’s knowledge and experience as well as promising engagement strategies to help focus the goals and strategies of the GNPI.

1.3 Organization of Report

This report is organized into ten sections. Section 2 provides contextual information relating to government and non-profit relationships in Canada, as well as background information regarding the GNPI, and important considerations for a regional engagement strategy. Section 3 outlines the four methodologies used in this report: a literature review, scan of promising practices, and semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Section 4 presents the findings of the literature review and scan of best practices, while Section 5 presents an overview of key findings from interviews and focus groups. Section 6 pulls together all of the findings in a discussion of key themes, considerations, and opportunities. The final four sections present options and recommendations for the GNPI, an implementation plan, as well as some final concluding remarks and opportunities for further research.
2.0 BACKGROUND

Important factors to consider in the development of a regional engagement strategy include the size, scope, and organization of B.C.’s non-profit sector, along with the size, layout and diversity of the regions in the province.

The Non-Profit Sector in B.C.

The B.C. Society Act defines non-profits as incorporated institutions such as voluntary, social, charitable, community, and philanthropic organizations that assist the government in providing services to citizens (1996). It is estimated that there are more than 20,000 non-profit organizations in B.C. with over 113,000 employees and 1.5 million volunteers (Murray, 2006). The majority (62%) of non-profit organizations operate locally, providing services within their community. These organizations also tend to rely heavily on community-based fundraising. Twenty percent provide services within a region, while only nine percent offered province-wide services.

In 2005, the non-profit sector contributed 9 billion dollars to B.C.’s GDP (Murray, 2006). A small group of organizations (18%) account for 92 percent of the sector’s revenue. The majority of organizations in B.C. average revenues of less than $250,000 annually (GNPI website). These organizations engage the majority (65%) of volunteers.

Non-profit organizations in B.C. have indicated that nearly half (46%) of their funding comes from government sources, 34 percent from earned income, 16 percent from gifts and donation, and 5 percent from other sources (Murray, 2006). The sub-sectors most dependent on government funding are health, education and research, and social services (Murray, 2006). According to the GNPI, the non-profit sector holds over one-third of government’s contracts in employment programs and 85 percent in housing programs. They estimate that in 2007-08, the provincial government transferred $1.7 billion to communities via grants and transfers under agreement.

The government also provides funding to non-profit organizations through funders such as the Vancouver Foundation, and United Ways who offer grants to non-profit organizations. In addition to providing funding to non-profit organizations, these entities often function as

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2 These stats exclude hospitals, colleges and universities. The largest percentage of non-profit organization’s are in the following sub-sectors: includes religion (19%), sports and recreation (17%), art and culture (10%), social services (9%), and development and housing (9%).

3 The remaining nine percent provide services to more than one province, the country or internationally.

4 This is the most recent data currently available, however the GNPI has recently contracted BC Stats to obtain updated information.
umbrella organizations, bringing non-profit organization together and advocating on behalf of the sector. The sub-sectors most dependent on grants and donations in B.C. are religion, international aid, and environment (Murray, 2006).

Community Gaming Grants are also an important source of funding for as many as 6000 non-profit organizations in B.C. (Lindquist and Vakil, 2012). Since 1988, the provincial government has used casino revenues to fund charitable groups across the province. Eligible organizations include those operating programs in the following sectors: arts and culture; sport; environment; public safety; and human and social services (Ministry of Energy, Mines and Responsible for Housing, 2013). Individual organizations are eligible for up to $100,000, and province-wide organizations up to $250,000.

Other funders include credit unions like VanCity and Coast Capital Savings, as well as philanthropic organizations such as Enterprising Non-Profits (ENP) and Lift Philanthropy Partners. LIFT was created in 2011 as a legacy to Legacies Now, which was originally created to “prepare and engage youth and communities across B.C. to get involved and support the Olympics and to promote both sport and recreational activity and development” (Lindquist and Vakil, 2012, p. 10). Now LIFT provides promising non-profit organizations in B.C. and elsewhere with business expertise to help them scale-up their services (Lindquist and Vakil, 2012). Similarly, ENP also promotes and supports non-profit organizations through the development and growth of social enterprise as a means to building healthier communities.

The Province of British Columbia

British Columbia is home to over 4.6 million people – 2.5 million of whom live in the greater Vancouver area (BC Stats). Eighty-nine percent of B.C.’s population lives in one of 161 different municipalities; the remaining 11 percent live in unincorporated areas within Regional Districts (Auditor General for Local Government, 2012). “Municipalities in British Columbia range in population from small villages of fewer than 250 persons to large cities approaching 6000,000 in population, with a median of about 4,800” (Auditor General for Local Government, 2012). Municipalities range in geographic size from 60 hectares to 155,000 hectares (Auditor General for Local Government, 2012).

Table 1 provides a breakdown of municipalities by population. Seven of the ten municipalities over 90,000 are in the Greater Vancouver region. The remaining three are Saanich, Kelowna and Abbotsford. Eight out of 20 municipalities with 25,000-90,000 people are in Greater Vancouver, five are on Vancouver Island (Campbell River, Langford, Nanaimo, North Cowichan, North

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5 Table 1 also includes Stikine, a regional distract that is managed which by the province (for a total of 162).
and Victoria), and six are in southern B.C. (Chilliwack, Kamloops, Mission, Penticton, Vernon and West Kelowna). Prince George is the only municipality over 25,000 people in Northern B.C.

### Table 1. Municipal Areas in British Columbia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Population Range</th>
<th>Number of Municipal Areas in BC*</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>0-2000 people</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns</td>
<td>2000-8000 people</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small City</td>
<td>8000-25000 people</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium City</td>
<td>25000-90000 people</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large City</td>
<td>90000 + people</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Municipal areas refer to cities, towns, villages, and district/regional/island municipalities*


British Columbia covers an area of 944,735 square kilometres and is Canada’s third largest province, occupying ten percent of the country’s land surface (geoBC.com). The province also has vast and varying geographic landscapes, including several mountain ranges. Geography is one of the main reasons for the high concentration of population in the southwestern corner of the province. Nearly all of the coast and Vancouver Island is covered by a temperate rainforest. The northern two-thirds of the province is largely undeveloped and mostly mountainous except east of the Rockies in the Peace River District.

The Province of B.C. has a number of ways of dividing the province into regions, the most common being the 29 Regional District boundaries, which are based on Statistics Canada’s 2011 Census Divisions (BCStats, n.d.). Others include health boundaries, school districts, and provincial electoral districts. This report defines regions according to B.C.’s Development Regions as shown in Figure 1. Development regions are aggregations of Regional Districts and have the same boundaries as the Economic Regions observed by Statistics Canada (BCStats, n.d.). They are also the same regions used by numerous provincial ministries including the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation and the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training.

As a result of demographic and geographic diversity throughout B.C., the needs of non-profit organizations in different regions also vary. These needs have been identified through studies from the Vancouver Foundation, the Federation of Community Social Services of B.C., and during the GNPI’s regional roundtables held in 2011. Three key types of issues were identified during the roundtables: administration, representation and engagement needs. Representatives from various towns and small and medium cities indicated that there was a need to connect community agencies and all levels of government more often to determine local needs.
To better situate regional engagement strategies and what may work for the GNPI, it is helpful to understand the history and nature of government non-profit relations in Canada and B.C, the origin of the GNPI, and some of the barriers that continue to challenge the GNPI. To narrow the scope of regional engagement opportunities that are explored and recommended, the background section also defines what is meant by engagement, describes the non-profit sector in B.C., and outlines key considerations for a regional engagement strategy in B.C.

Over the past few decades, jurisdictions throughout Canada and across the world have taken a keen interest in strengthening their non-profit sectors and their relationship with governments (Lindquist, 2008). While there are many reasons for this, three major shifts are impacting government non-profit relationships worldwide. I will review each of these in turn.
The first is a shift towards governance. Susan Phillips (2003) describes governance as a “more horizontal, embedded, and negotiated governance” concerned with “guiding, not controlling, and about working in partnership with other governments and with the voluntary and private sectors” (p. 25).

The second is a shift from a charity model to a civil society model. Whereas the charity model viewed the non-profit sector as fulfilling a moral obligation of helping those who are less fortunate, the civil society model is focused on “uncoerced association and active democratic participation” (Phillips, 2003, p. 24). The emphasis, Phillips says is on promoting active citizen participation in non-profit organizations and of organizations in societies (2003). As Susan Carter and Paula Speevak Sladowski (2008) emphasize, not only do these shifts open the way for more collaboration, “they highlight the importance of ‘getting these relationships right’ so that they can generate greater strength for both parties” (p. 9).

The third is a shift in government funding structures. Since the early 2000s, governments, including the B.C. government, have shifted the focus from grants to contracts for the delivery of social services, leading non-profits to compete for contracts (often short-term) through the procurement process to secure funding for their programs and services.

In addition to these broad global shifts, Peter Elson (2011) identifies three “drivers of change” that have led to increased interest in structured sub-national government-non-profit relationships in Canada since 2005:

- The Nation Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector, which was conducted in 2003 as part of the Voluntary Sector Initiative;
- The Canadian Volunteerism Initiative, which was launched in 2001 as part of the Voluntary Sector Initiative;
- Internal provincial public policy alignment, particularly with respect to human services, in the interest of building the management capacity of the sector in addition to structural and programme alignment and funding and contracting practices.

The Voluntary Sector Initiative, which included a $94.6 million investment from the federal government and ran from 2000-2005, was created to improve the relationship between the voluntary sector and the federal government; to build voluntary sector capacity; and to improve the regulatory and legal framework under which the voluntary sector operates (Human Resource and Social Development, 2009). The National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations provided the first comprehensive picture of the scope, composition, and economic size of the voluntary sector in Canada and each of the provinces (Hall et. al, 2005).
Elson’s (2011) research shows that the release of the survey brought about a new appreciation for the sector, both on the part of provincial governments and their respective voluntary sector constituencies. “British Columbia, for example, saw the extent to which the voluntary sector was the primary vehicle for the delivery of public services and the billions of dollars invested by the province in this delivery” (Elson, 2011, p. 142). According to the GNPI, “nearly half of government’s total expenditures ($17.6 billion) goes towards health and social services” (GNPI website). In 2007-08 eight Ministries transferred $1.7 billion into communities via grants and transfers under agreement. Realization of the size of the contractual relationship led provincial government to realize that they had a vested interest in seeing that the relationship was well managed, funds were allocated appropriately, and that the government was receiving the best value for their contributions. Since then, there have been various attempts to ‘get the relationship right’ in Canada and more specifically in B.C.  

2.2 Government Non-Profit Relations in B.C.

In B.C, shifts towards governance, a civil society model, and funding structures have been accompanied by increasing expenditures and deficits that have led to various policy changes, downsizing, budget-cuts, and the outsourcing, reduction or elimination of numerous social programs. This has not only changed the way that non-profits acquire funding for services, but it has also changed the structure of their relationships. The more formal and coordinated government non-profit structure in B.C. was replaced by individual relationships between non-profit organizations and various Ministries. Such changes “have resulted in significant burnout of organizational leadership and the loss of relationships among agencies, as well as between organizations and government” (Amyot, 2013, p.22).

In response to these changes, the non-profit sector in B.C. began to organize, and established a number of associations to help build the capacity of the sector including the Voluntary Organizations Consortium of British Columbia (VOC-BC), the Centre for Sustainable Development in Vancouver (CFS), a Centre for Non Profit Development (CNPD) at the University College of the Fraser Valley, and the Centre for Non-Profit Management (CNPM) on Vancouver Island (Lindquist and Vakil, 2012, p.6). Today only VOC-BC remains, with a goal of creating and sustaining a body that will unite and promote voluntary organizations.

Current efforts to coordinate the non-profit sector tend to be organized by sector or type of agency. For example, the Federation of Community Social Services of B.C. (The Federation) represents over 130 member agencies that serve the needs of children and youth, women,

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6 http://www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/pages/about/facts_and_stats.htm
7 For more details on previous and current initiatives, see Carter and Speevak Sladowski, 2008; Elson, 2012; and Lindquist and Vakil, 2012.
people with disabilities and families. The Federation has three meetings a year that provide the opportunity for networking, training, and identifying issues. They also convene regional meetings, a private members HUB website, working committees, cooperative projects and policy engagement.

Board Voice is a non-profit organization comprised of boards of community-based social service agencies from across B.C. The organization, which grew out of a Federation meeting, aims to organize thousands of citizens who volunteer as non-profit board members and provide avenues for them to speak directly to politicians and government representatives (personal communication with Doug Hayman, 2013). Board Voice’s goals include advising governments about the aspirations and concerns of the sector from a community perspective; promoting collaborative cross-sectoral thinking, innovation, and planning; and promoting community social services to the general public as critical to the social fabric of communities (Board Voice, 2013). Board Voice has begun to engage with social service organizations at the community level through the Roundtable of Provincial Social Services Organizations of B.C. (The Roundtable). The Roundtable “is a network of like-minded umbrella organizations, whose role is to enhance the capacity of the social services sector to influence public policy and improve collaborative efforts on common goals” (The Federation, 2012).

Organizations such as the United Way are aimed at engaging citizens and connecting people and resources throughout the community to address pressing social issues. While the United Way’s core function is to fundraise for community organizations, they also convene stakeholders to collaborate on various initiatives. Similarly, the Community Social Planning Council of B.C. engages community members, and organizations, businesses and governments to research social issues and create sustainable solutions. The Council has convened multi-sector coalitions on poverty reductions, community economic development and housing affordability, among others.

Although there are numerous initiatives to coordinate the non-profit sector in B.C. and develop innovative ways to improve services and strengthen communities, few focus on increasing engagement between government and the non-profit sector. As a result, the relationship between the two partners remains fragmented, and there has yet to be a systematic approach to engage with non-profit organizations outside of major cities in B.C.

2.3 GNPI: Origins, Past Engagement Initiatives, and Ongoing Challenges

The GNPI was a unique, made in B.C. attempt at ‘getting the relationship right’. The GNPI was developed out of the 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” (GNPI, 2009). The creators of the GNPI were aware of previous attempts to formalize
the relationship and sought to incorporate lessons learned about what worked and did not work in the past. As a result, they focused on building equity, transparency and mutual responsibility and benefit into the GNPI structure.

The GNPI journey began in 2007 when the Centre for Non-Profit Management and the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria surveyed leaders from the public and non-profit sectors to determine opportunities to strengthen the relationship between the two sectors (GNPI, n.d.). The survey results informed a discussion paper and a subsequent joint roundtable on building a stronger relationship between the sector and government, with 84 representatives including senior officials from government, non-profits, funding agencies, foundations, and non-profit support centres. The roundtable, which was co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor-General and the CEO of the Vancouver Foundation, revealed a will on all parts to learn more about the challenges facing stakeholders on both sides, to build their capacity, and improve service delivery for British Columbians.

Government and non-profit representatives then worked together to identify members to form a Steering Committee and Task Force – each with a government and non-profit co-chair, as well as policy and research teams, and to secure joint funding (GNPI, 2009). The GNPI was formalized in July 2009, when representatives from the Government of B.C. and the non-profit sector signed the Commitment for Collaboration, committing to “meaningful action to enhance the way the sectors collaborate” (GNPI, 2009). The Commitment for Collaboration (GNPI, 2008) outlined specific actions that both sectors committed to in order to enhance the way the sectors collaborate, one of which was to create policy and programs that are responsive to the unique regional, cultural and community needs across the province. The document also outlined shared goals and the following guiding principles: citizen-focused; cooperative and collaborative; results-oriented; inclusive and diverse; innovative, sustainable and progressive thinking; accountability and transparency.

In the same year, the Steering Committee was replaced by the Leadership Council, which comprises 16 senior non-profit sector representatives and provincial government deputy ministers. The Leadership Council is currently co-chaired by Mark Sieben, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation (MSD) and Faye Wightman, CEO of the Vancouver Foundation. A five-member secretariat with staff from both the MSD and the Vancouver foundation, now called the Council Office, as well as a number of standing committees and working groups were also created (GNPI, 2009).

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8 Both GNPI chairs are now in a process of transition. As a result of the provincial elections held in May, Mark Sieben will now be taking on the role of the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Child and Family Development and Faye Wightman will be retiring from her role as CEO of the Vancouver Foundation in December of this year.
The GNPI’s vision is to strengthen the wellbeing of British Columbians by providing an ongoing forum that builds the joint and complementary capacity of government and the non-profit sectors, resulting in stronger, healthier communities. Since its creation, the GNPI has worked to increase understanding about the needs, requirements and interdependence of the two sectors and to build a stronger foundation for collaboration. The GNPI has successfully implemented various projects and initiatives towards this end, including consultations and an online survey (2008), a series of Regional Roundtables (2011), and Annual Summits (2008-2011). The GNPI has also formed numerous working groups including Full Cost Financial, Reporting Requirements, Shared Learning, and Cross-sector Mentorship groups, which have produced reports, workshops and most recently an innovative cross-sector mentorship program.

While the GNPI’s activities have resulted in a number of tangible outcomes, and have helped to build respect and trust between government and non-profit stakeholders at the provincial level, there has been increased interest in expanding the initiative at the local level. During the 2011 roundtables and annual summit, participants from Prince George, Cranbrook and Nanaimo indicated that the GNPI should broaden their engagement strategies to include regional stakeholders in order to address their unique needs and challenges (GNPI, 2011). Although the GNPI consequently identified deepening engagement as one of the seven strategic priorities in their 2010-2012 strategic plan (GNPI, 2010), the initiative faces several barriers to achieving this goal.

### 2.4 Challenges Faced by the GNPI

Evert Lindquist and Thea Vakil (2012) identify seven key challenges that have prevented the GNPI from achieving broader engagement and representation:

- The community sector in B.C. lacks an integrated associational structure
- The focus of the GNPI is, by design, on social and human services organizations
- Strategic gatherings have been dominated by “boomers”
- Initiatives are mainly led and supported be a few key individuals with limited resources
- The GNPI has abstained from political engagement and has not attempted to influence an increase in government funding to the non-profit sector
- An under-developed profile or inadequate public credibility
- Insufficient government interest and capacity.

Each of these challenges is reviewed in turn below.

Lack of a unified voice or formal regime to speak on behalf of the non-profit sector has been identified at both the federal (Elson, 2008; Brock and Banting, 2003) and provincial levels.

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9 This is the most recent strategic plan.
Lindquist and Vakil, 2012; Elson, 2011). Only Ontario and Québec have formed a collective representative structure within the voluntary sector that is independent of the intersectoral policy structure (Elson, 2011, p. 148). A relatively weak vertical and horizontal associational structure in the non-profit sector in B.C. has resulted in varied capabilities among service delivery sectors (Lindquist and Vakil, 2012, p. 9). For example, whereas service delivery in child and family services is strong, it is weak in other domains. The absence of a structure prevents the GNPI from engaging with weaker sectors and gaining a better understanding of the issues they face in order to help build their capacity so they can adapt to the new ways of doing business with government. A formal structure can improve coordination and efficiencies, build consensus and credibility, and influence positive outcomes for the sector. It can also “help to breathe life into the initiative when the momentum is waning or stalled” (Carter and Speevak Sladowski, 2008, p.9), contributing to the sustainability and longevity of engagement initiatives. The diversity of the sector, and making the relationship with government relevant to all parts of the sector, or explaining why not, is a challenge (Carter and Speevak Sladowski, 2008).

Housing the GNPI in the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation has resulted in a focus on non-profit organizations in the human and social services, largely excluding other types of non-profit organizations such as those in sports and recreation, environment, arts and culture, faith and spirituality, social justice, philanthropy and international development. Carter and Speevak Sladowski (2008) suggest, “a unit located in a line department, even if that department has a lead role, has been demonstrated to be less effective in reaching across the whole of government than a unit based in a central location” (p.13).

In addition to focusing on social service providers, the GNPI engages mainly with government and nonprofit executives and managers. Having decision-makers at the table is important, however this approach has largely excluded the perspectives of youth and upcoming leaders. Participants at the 2009 Gathering of Counterparts conference in Nova Scotia suggested that engaging youth is a means to improve government/non-profit engagement (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009, p.61). Other perspectives that have been largely overlooked include those of local governments, businesses, and social enterprises.

As has been the case with many comparable initiatives, the GNPI has been characterized as being “highly personalized, relying on a few individuals in government, the non-profit and foundation sector, and universities to drive them” (Lindquist and Vakil, 2012, p. 16). In an environment where civil servants are often shuffled and non-profits face high turnover, personality-driven initiatives are not sustainable and, as the GNPI has acknowledges in their strategic plan, threaten long-term commitment (GNPI, 2010). Without long-term commitment

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10 GNPI’s Strategic Plan (2010-2012) indicates that the scope of the initiative is “Non-profit and government health and social service sectors in B.C. (GNPI, 2010).
comes financial uncertainty and in this case limited human resources. The GNPI has a staff of four (or two full-time equivalent), that is responsible for facilitating strategic initiatives including engagement activities, working groups, and any resulting projects. The work of the GNPI relies highly on the participation of its members to volunteer their time and energy to be part of the GNPI and take-part in various activities. Without them, the work of the GNPI could not be completed.

The GNPI indicated that “policy and strategic advice for [non-profit] sector and BC government” is a strategic priority (GNPI, 2010), yet little action has been taken towards this end. The GNPI rather has chosen to focus its efforts on capacity building and administrative constraints rather than policy dialogue that focuses on issues such as increasing funding or changing funding structures. According to Elson (2012), “the GNPI is seen as a policy ‘think tank’ rather than a formal forum for policy formulation (p. 147). He believes that forums such as the GNPI have not been a venue for formal policy discussions because is politically inconvenient for governments to have formal and binding conversations, and the voluntary sector is not organized enough to engage in such dialogue.

Successful initiatives require a well-developed profile and public credibility (Carter and Speevak Sladowski, 2008, p.10), which require recent and reliable information about the non-profit sector. While B.C. has conducted surveys and held regional dialogues throughout the province, “there is no comprehensive picture of how government funding supports the sector let alone how it connects to other sources of funding…” (Lindquist and Vakil, 2012, p.15). Without this information it is difficult to build a well-developed profile and public credibility.

Inconsistent government interest and insufficient government capacity have also impacted government non-profit initiatives across the country. Changes in leadership have challenged the success and sustainability of efforts to develop and strengthen relations. “The relationships evolve and are guided by the orientation of the party in power and shift with political change” (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009, p.10). In the case of the GNPI, it has been noted that engagement has been limited to a few institutional leaders (Lindquist and Vakil, 2012, p.15), and that leadership change is a “threat to making [the] plan” (GNPI, 2010).

In addition to these seven barriers, Lindquist and Vakil (2012) also explore the impact that the Social Innovation Council has had on the GNPI. The Council was created in 2010 to explore opportunities to “encourage ideas and invest in social enterprise in B.C.” (p. 12). While the initiatives each have a different focus with different objectives, they are currently housed in the same ministry, have overlapping membership, and held a coordinated summit in the fall of 2012. In their 2010-2012 strategic plan, the GNPI indicated that it was a priority to “promote social integration, innovation and facilitate social enterprise activity” (GNPI, 2010). This has
created some confusion in terms of what the differences really are and what the future will look like following the provincial elections.

Addressing each of these challenges is not only be key to the sustainability and success of the GNPI as a whole, it is also key to the GNPI’s ability to increase communication, broaden representation, and strengthen the relationship between the two sectors.

2.5 *What is Engagement?*

Now that we have a better understanding of the background of government and non-profit initiatives and the GNPI, we can turn our focus to defining engagement. For the purpose of this report engagement is defined as a process of involving, at various levels of participation, empowerment and capacity, government and non-profit sectors stakeholders across the province that are affiliated with the GNPI and share a common purpose of improving delivery of services to British Columbians. The process is based on interpersonal communication, respect, transparency and trust, and a common understanding and purpose.

According to the GNPI, engagement activities “are intended to allow for continued communication and solicitation of feedback and information on GNPI goals and objectives, and to further the work done to date by the GNPI to fulfill strategic priorities outlined in the previous strategic plan – particularly to communicate activity and success, and raise awareness of GNPI; and, to implement a strategic approach to improve regional, sectoral and government engagement” (GNPI, 2012).

Not explicit in the GNPI’s description is that government and non-profit sector representatives are engaged in the development of GNPI goals, objectives and strategic priorities. This helps to ensure that strategic plans and resulting activities, such as a regional engagement strategy, take all perspectives into account and are mutually beneficial. In addition to improving communication and raising awareness, engagement should focus on improving “learning across the sector, sharing innovation and experiences from all parts of the sector and those of other jurisdictions, building capacity in government and the sector to better manage contracts and relationships and finding ways to improve accountability and management” (Lindquist, 2008, p.163).

*The engagement strategy will also take into consideration the five principles of engagement as identified by the GNPI (2012):*

1. *Continuous Improvement/Capacity Building:* GNPI should seek to continually improve its communication and engagement approaches and mechanisms to support and enhance regional and community networks.
2. **Responsiveness**: GNPI should consider requests and suggestions made by members through previous events and engagement sessions.

3. **Accessibility**: Engagement opportunities should be accessible to the greatest number and diversity of stakeholders possible. Leveraging technology and alternate communication mechanisms could assist GNPI in this endeavour.

4. **Manageability**: The Council Office is limited by its financial and people capacity. Engagement opportunities must be carefully and strategically selected to ensure the high quality of each initiative and to prevent engagement initiatives from eclipsing or risking successful outcomes on other key GNPI priorities.

5. **Strategic Alignment**: Engagement opportunities should align with the GNPI mandate, purpose and goals.

These five principles of engagement are an important part of the framework that will help move the GNPI from their current state to a state of broadened engagement that incorporates different sizes and types of communities. These principles, along with the GNPI’s guiding principles outlined in Section 2.3, will serve as indicators to help weigh the opportunities available to the GNPI, and determine which options best suit their needs, capabilities, and limitations.

### 2.6 A Strategic Approach to Regional Engagement

GNPI’s regional engagement activities have been mainly conducted in medium and large cities, with the exception of Cranbrook, which is a small city. The selection of areas in which to engage has is not based on a formal classification or strategy, but on the ability to maximize participation by conducting activities in large, easily accessible metropolitan areas such as Vancouver and Victoria.

The regional engagement strategy will focus on approaches that can meet the needs and capabilities of non-profits in municipalities of 2,000-90,000 people (towns, small and medium cities). This accounts for 62 percent of total number of municipalities in the province. Large cities have been excluded as they have demonstrated a high-level of participation in previous government non-profit engagement activities. Also, due to the scope of this research, the lack of information relevant to non-profits in the smallest municipal areas, and in consideration of the resources available to the GNPI, villages are excluded from the analysis.

### 2.7 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework provides a common understanding and approach to the engagement process enabling those involved to be better able to plan and execute it (Manitoba Family
Services and Housing, 2008). Figure 2 illustrates the current state of the GNPI including the current structure and provincial level engagement activities on the left. On the right, the framework illustrates the desired future state, including the goals of a regional engagement strategy. Below the future state are the various factors driving a regional engagement strategy: the goal of deepened engagement, the GNPI’s five engagement principles, and the current environment that rationale for a regional engagement strategy.

**Figure 2. Analytical Framework**

**CURRENT STATE:**
- Engagement with provincial government and non-profit representatives in large urban centres;
- Limited regional and community engagement;
- Limited awareness of GNPI in regions and inadequate awareness of local issues.

**FUTURE STATE:**
- Increase dialogue throughout the province;
- Foster relationships at regional level;
- Increase awareness of unique regional needs;
- Leverage and coordinate existing regional networks;
- Improved capacity and collaboration among regional non-profits;
- Develop innovative solutions.

**DRIVERS**

**Strategic Goal:**
1. Identify and act on mutual priorities
2. Promote and support stable, accountable and effective organizational capacity
3. Coordinate efforts to address multi-dimensional needs
4. Honour diversity through expanded engagement

**Engagement Principles:**
1. Capacity Building
2. Responsiveness
3. Accessibility
4. Manageability
5. Strategic Alignment

**Rationale:**
1. Size and impact of non-profit sector
2. Funding, human resource, and administrative challenges
3. Lack of an effective network to engage the other sectors
3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research project relies on qualitative methods including a literature review, a scan of promising practices in the province and across Canada, as well as interviews and focus groups with government and non-profit leaders, academics and GNPI council office staff. Together, the results of these methods will help to understand the environment that the GNPI currently works in and innovative determine approaches to engagement in order to be able to provide recommendations for the GNPI to broaden their engagement activities. This section concludes with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology.

3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW AND SCAN OF PROMISING PRACTICES

The literature review and scan of promising practices were conducted using a variety of written sources including books and academic journal articles from the University of Victoria library and databases, documents from the GNPI website and internal network as well as other provincial and territorial government and non-profit organization’s websites. Search parameters included records pertaining to government and non-profit relations and initiatives, regional engagement strategies and initiatives, and collaborative efforts among government and non-profit stakeholders.

A scan of promising practices is a way of learning about similar initiatives that are taking place in other jurisdictions and to identify new and innovative practices that the GNPI could leverage in their own engagement activities. The scan looked at practices within and outside of B.C. and Canada to identify:

- Existing regional networks and collaborative initiatives that the GNPI could either replicate, leverage or connect with for their B.C. that brought together diverse stakeholder groups for mutual purposes and benefits to strengthen all parties involved and the relationship amongst them.

3.2 INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

The researcher received approval to conduct interviews and focus groups from the University of Victoria’s Human Research Ethics Board prior to contacting potential participants. A total of 28 government and non-profit leaders, academics and GNPI Council Office staff participated in the research. The researcher chose participants based on the literature review and referrals from the GNPI council office. Participants were selected based on their ability to represent the wider government and non-profit sectors, this included participants who are currently involved in GNPI, who have been in the past, as well as those who have never been formally involved in the GNPI. To get a broad provincial perspective, every attempt was made to include a government and non-profit representative from each of the three sizes of municipalities (town, small and
medium cities) and each of the eight B.C. Development Regions. Each region was represented by at least one participant except for the North East.

A total of 16 interviews were conducted with government leaders, non-profit leaders, and academics to gain insight into the current GNPI engagement activities and their effectiveness, and to gather information regarding opportunities for regional engagement and existing initiatives. Government participants included mayors and councilors from various municipalities, and deputy and assistant deputy ministers and executive directors from the provincial government. Non-profit participants included managers and executive directors from non-profit organizations and foundations throughout the province.

Invitations were sent to participants by email. A follow-up email was sent to participants who did not respond a week after the initial invitation was sent. If there was still no response, participants were then contacted by phone. Six candidates never responded to emails or phone messages and four candidates indicated that they were unable to participate due to time restraints. Once participation was confirmed, a consent form and the draft interview questions were emailed to the participant.

Interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended, allowing the interviewer to change the order of the questions or probe further if needed. The list of questions generally remained the same for all participants, however was altered slightly depending on the participant’s understanding of the GNPI and whether or not they were currently involved in the initiative. The questions for academics were also modified slightly as a result of their expertise and experiences with similar initiatives.

Interviews were conducted during March and April 2013 and averaged 40-60 minutes. The majority of the interviews were telephone interviews. In-person interviews either took place at the participants’ place of work, the GNPI government offices in Victoria, or an agreed upon public location. Signed consent forms were collected prior to each interview. Participants were reminded that they would remain anonymous in the report at the commencement of the interview.

Three focus groups were conducted: one with government leaders, one with non-profit leaders, and one with the GNPI council office staff. A total of 13 participants took part in the focus groups out of 20 that were invited; three of those invited to a focus group requested a one-on-one interview as a result of scheduling conflicts.

The government focus group was made up of leaders located in Victoria, while the non-profit focus group included leaders in Vancouver; this was a deliberate choice so that the focus groups could take place in a centralized convenient location. An invitation was sent to participants and their assistants by email. The researcher contacted participants who did not
respond by telephone within a few days of sending the initial invitation. Once participation was confirmed, a doodle poll, with a number of different dates and time to choose from, was sent to participants to determine their availability. The option with the most respondents was then chosen and confirmed with the participants, and those confirmed were provided with a consent form and the proposed focus groups questions.

Focus groups took place in March and April and averaged between 60-90 minutes. The decision was made to hold the government and non-profit focus groups by telephone to reduce the time required to travel to and from the consultation. Again, the questions were semi-structured and open-ended, and were similar to those asked during the interviews, however fewer questions were asked during the focus groups to allow for a more in-depth discussion around the questions to take place. Due to the nature of the focus groups, anonymity could not be guaranteed, however at the beginning of the focus group the participants were asked not to discuss who was involved or what was said outside of the group. This was also included in the consent form, which was gathered from the participants prior to the focus group.

3.3 Methodology Strengths and Limitations

The broad representation of participants is both a strength and weakness of the research. One the one hand, the broad geographic representation and diversity in terms of involvement in the GNPI provides a rich and robust picture of current engagement initiatives and opportunities and barriers to deepening engagement through the GNPI. However, it reduces the ability to compare amongst groups or generalize results. For example, only three government participants are currently engaged with the GNPI, whereas eight non-profit participants are currently involved. This is partially a result of the researcher’s effort to include local government representation, and also partially a result of government representative’s inability to attend the focus group or to schedule a time to participate in an interview.

While four people participated in the non-profit leaders focus group, only two people participated in the government focus group, one of which joined late. As a result, the government focus group was conducted like two separate interviews, and cannot be compared to the non-profit focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to probe more deeply into specific questions, however this was not possible in the case of the government focus group. Although three invitees could not attend due to scheduling, only one of these made an effort to schedule an alternate time to participate in an interview, possibly suggesting a lack of engagement. Also, results are slightly skewed towards the non-profit sector, as there were two more non-profit representatives than government representatives.
4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides an overview of existing engagement activities within and outside of the province. It begins by reviewing GNPI’s previous engagement activities as well as the main findings and outcomes. The scan of best practices looks at similar government/non-profit initiatives throughout Canada that have also made an attempt to engage at the local or community level. Finally, the literature review looks at promising community engagement initiatives within B.C. that could help to inform the options put forward for the GNPI.

4.1 RESULTS OF GNPI’S REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

In 2008, as part of broader community consultations, the GNPI undertook a series of regionally based focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to provide feedback on a discussion paper that outlined the structure and priorities of the GNPI, and to identify areas of opportunity and/or concern, and gain input for the GNPI’s strategic implementation (GNPI, 2008). Focus groups were held in Abbotsford, Castlegar, Fort St. John, Prince George, Kelowna, Victoria, Nanaimo, Prince Rupert, and Vancouver. Results were summarized in a report: Better Outcomes, Stronger Communities: Enhancing the BC Government Non Profit Relationship (GNPI, 2008).

A few of the common priorities identified by participants in 2008 include:

- A desire to broaden GNPI representation to be more inclusive of the non-profit, government and private sectors, including better acknowledgement of community and regional uniqueness in strategic implementation;
- The establishment of regional planning and decision-making tables to balance the shift to centralized policy making and service delivery by supporting better awareness amongst all stakeholders and tailoring of strategies to local issues;
- Lack of understanding and true partnership between different parts of the sector and the government.

According to participants, a “one-size-fits-all’ approach is not able to recognize or meet the diverse needs of individual communities” (GNPI, 2008). Not only did participants indicate that the needs of small vs. large and urban vs. rural non-profits differ, but also the “social and economic drivers and issues are different from region to region” (p. 13). Regional tables could not only broaden the scope of the GNPI, but also increase awareness and understanding among stakeholders. Factors for success included more regional and community oriented dialogue/regular meetings, enhanced internal non-profit sector voice, and greater GNPI awareness backed by formal structure (p. 15).
The dialogue concerning a regional engagement strategy continued during the GNPI’s 3rd Annual Summit where two café tables focused on the topic. The tables focused on three key areas: communications, government engagement, and accountability. Many of the points regarding communication are still relevant today:

- Determine the most effective medium for sharing GNPI information;
- Provide information about how people can participate in both passive and active roles;
- Consider engaging staff at a non-senior level and determine the value of inviting a broader group of people to the summit; and
- Identify ways to share information outside of common communication tools.

Summit participants also discussed an integrated response to regional socioeconomic pressures. Many of the points raised are relevant to regional engagement. For example, participants suggested that the GNPI should provide opportunities for face-to-face meetings, build capacity to have staff dedicated to collaboration, and identify mutual benefits and outcomes. Participants also suggested that the GNPI could play a facilitating role by bringing groups together and creating space for meaningful dialogue.

A second round of regional roundtables were held in 2011 in Abbotsford, Cranbrook, Prince George, Kelowna, Victoria, Nanaimo, and Vancouver. A brief summary of each of the focus groups are available on the GNPI website, which are summarized in the Fall 2011 GNPI Regional Roundtable Consultations report (GNPI, 2011). Again, the purpose of the second round of consultations was to identify issues and priorities, as well as to gain feedback on current GNPI projects.

About half of the key themes discussed focused on funding, however others included access to information and shared resources (such as accounting services), strengthening local networks, and developing a cohesive narrative for the non-profit sector (GNPI, 2011).

Participants also suggested a number of approaches to increase regional or community level engagement. For example:

- GNPI could serve as a convener and facilitator to bring people together at a local level;
- GNPI could attend Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBMC);
- Develop regional GNPI networks to increase regional collaboration and develop regionally available resources for non-profits;
- Local government can act as a convener to bring together non-profits;
- Partner with local colleges to provide training for non-profits;
- Develop a centralized resource list to identify the suite of services available in each community;
• The GNPI could support local symposiums to bring service organizations together;
• Use existing assets such as Success by 6 and United Way to bring together local government, community agencies, school districts, RCMP and others to effectively plan for coordinated action in the community;
• Foster more coordinated action through regular opportunities to come together (meetings or town halls);
• Use GNPI to bring local government staff to the table;
• More networking opportunities and the creation of small networks within communities;
• Develop tools to increase communication and information sharing such as on online forum.

In July 2012, the GNPI outlined their current engagement model, which recommended six engagement opportunities to take place between fall 2012 and fall 2013:

• A Strategic Planning Session where the Leadership Council will set the direction of the GNPI through 2015.
• A Working Group joint session where all group members can review the work completed to date and learn about priorities moving forward.
• Regional/community projects such as the development of community based government and non-profit networks.
• A series of regional roundtables to determine priorities and help set the agenda for the next GNPI Provincial Summit and the year ahead.
• Procurement Training is being considered for spring 2013, to coincide with the Roundtables. The training may include webcast options to provide regional sessions.
• 2013 Provincial Summit

Together, these initiatives are intended “allow for continued communication and solicitation of feedback and information on GNPI goals and objectives, and to further the work done to date by the GNPI to fulfill strategic priorities outlined in the previous strategic plan – particularly to communicate activity and success, and raise awareness of GNPI; and, to implement a strategic approach to improve regional, sectoral and government engagement” (GNPI, 2012). A regional engagement strategy will not only broaden the GNPI’s representation to include regional networks that have not been engaged in the past, but engaging a broader range of stakeholders will help the GNPI to develop a current set of strategic priorities that are relevant to government and non-profit organizations throughout the province.
4.2 COMPARING CANADIAN INITIATIVES – PROMISING PRACTICES

Increasing engagement and strengthening communication with the non-profit sector is a priority for governments across Canada. Various jurisdictions have used different approaches to improve vertical and horizontal integration with their respective non-profit sectors. Although there have been numerous comparative studies on government/non-profit developments at the national level in Europe, and the United Kingdom in particular, there are very few that focus on Canadian initiatives. There are even fewer studies on provincial level initiatives in Canada.

Campbell and Speevak Sladowski (2009) and Carter and Speevak Sladowski (2008) provide an overview of key initiatives and organizations from across the country. These reports were developed in conjunction with the Gathering of Counterparts, which were national meetings of provincial and territorial government and non-profit representatives.

Elson (2011) examines the institutional relationships between governments and the non-profit sector in seven Canadian provinces.11 Five of the seven provinces studied have an affiliated minister that is assigned to government/non-profit relations. Although ministerial representation may not be necessary, it does “signal a clear intention by these governments that voluntary sector-government relations are valued” (Elson, 2011, p. 146). While the GNPI does not have a minister responsible for the initiative, it has the largest representation of deputy ministers, and is the only province that shares the cost of the secretariat between the government and non-profit sector. New Brunswick is the only province with a geographically representative committee (Elson, 2011, p. 147).

According to Elson’s (2011) study, it is common for provincial initiatives to conduct surveys, regional dialogues, and provincial summits, particularly in provinces that do not have a formal organization to speak on behalf of the non-profit sector. The most common themes of these policy forums are funding, capacity, efficiency, and promotion (pp.148-9). Strengthening capacity, promoting the value of the sector, as well as broadening engagement were the three sub-themes focused on at the 2nd Gathering of Counterparts in 2009 (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009). Conference participants identified a wide-range of strategies to improve on current practices to broaden engagement, such as getting information to small communities, more engagement with diverse communities, engaging youth, and partnering with academic institutions, and working with the private sector to promote social enterprise. A number of provincial initiatives have since integrated these strategies and others into their structure to broaden engagement and focus on the local or community level. A few examples of how provinces are accomplishing this (to varying degrees) are provided below.

11 Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island are not included in the study.
Alberta: According to the Government of Alberta, “collaboration and open channels of communication are crucial in affecting positive outcomes for Albertans and Albertan communities” (Government of Alberta, 2011). To increase collaboration, the Government of Alberta has established an ongoing policy dialogue through the Alberta Non-profit/Voluntary Sector Initiative (ANVSI), which is housed in the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit. In 2009-2010, the minister hosted a series of regional dialogues and videoconferencing sessions to develop solutions to ensure the long-term success of the non-profit sector (GOA, 2011). The ministry has also indicated that they are exploring the potential of a web portal, one-day professional development events (either online or in-person), and increased social networking.  

In addition to ANVSI, the non-profit sector in Alberta is collaborating through the Calgary and Edmonton Chambers of Voluntary Organizations, both of which play an important role in providing leadership and supporting the sector in their respective cities. The chambers are “active in the development of emerging policy issues at the municipal, provincial and federal level” (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009, p. 14).

Manitoba: In Manitoba, the government and non-profit relationship is structured by a framework agreement that was developed in 2003. Along with the provincial ministry of Culture, Heritage, and Tourism, counterparts representing non-profit, business and organized labour at the provincial and municipal level also signed the agreement (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009, p.20). Although the ministry is no longer the lead on non-profit sector relations, it continues to house the Non-Profit Organization (NPO) portal, which supports the sector by linking programs, services, tools and resources through one page.  

The Manitoba Federation of Non-profit Organizations (MFNPO) “is the umbrella body for a network of non-profit community-based organizations, coalitions, and groups” (MFNPO website). The MFNPO has also used roundtables to allow nonprofits from small and remote areas to participate in discussions, and has developed a web portal to provide nonprofits with the information they need and form connections between the two sectors (Government of Manitoba, 2012). They are also in the process of developing the Collective Impact Networking Tool, which will help non-profit organizations visualize relationships and connections in their communities to better collaborate and achieve their organizational vision.

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12 Information on the outcomes of these events could not be obtained. It was unclear whether the activities have taken place or not, or if the information has not been posted for public access.
In March 2011, the MFNPO conducted three regional roundtables to improve non-profit organization’s ability to use human resource data in their human resource planning processes. The sessions were broadcasted-live throughout the province. This enabled allowed non-profits from remote and smaller areas to participate in the discussion and voice concerns. The MFNPO categorizes non-profits based on size and type of service offered, and regions for each roundtable were selected based upon likelihood of participation (i.e. regions with highest populations), (Government of Manitoba, 2012).

**New Brunswick:** In 2006, New Brunswick created the Community Non-Profit Organizations Secretariat. The Secretariat is an eight-person committee (Elson, 2011, p. 147) with representation from all seven regions in the province, and is expected to be “fundamental component in forging the government-sector relationship” (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009, p. 40). Its mandate is to “advise the Community Non-Profit Organizations Secretariat on the development of strategies and policies as they relate to the Delivering on the Blueprint recommendations” (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009, p. 40).

In 2008-09, the Secretariat co-hosted five regional conferences with the non-profit sector, which had over 300 participants in total. Four working groups were also developed during this time, to focus and implement actions on multi-year funding, the Environmental Trust Fund, summer employment (SEED), and employment of seniors during tourist season. According to their website, the work of these groups continued into 2010-2011, however there have been no updates from the Secretariat since 2011.

**Nova Scotia:** The Nova Scotia Volunteer Community Advisory Council (NSVCAC) was created in 2008. The 21 person Advisory Council includes representatives from various sectors such as health, religion, environment, arts and culture, social development, sport and recreation, philanthropic and volunteerism promotion, and international development (Government of Nova Scotia, 2008). “The council also reflects the diversity of the province with members representing Acadian, African Nova Scotian, Aboriginal communities, as well as immigrants, persons with disabilities, seniors and youth” (Government of Nova Scotia, 2008). Later in 2008, the NSVCAC and the Government of Nova Scotia developed and signed a Collaboration Agreement, which will act as the framework to enhance the relationship between the government and non-profit sector (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009). The council has engaged through roundtables to encourage networking, information sharing and new partnerships between the government and non-profit sector.

One of the council members is the Executive Director of the Federation of Community Organizations (FOCO). FOCO’s mission is to connect and strengthen the voluntary sector in the Halifax Regional Municipality (FOCO website). Their focus is on capacity building, networking, advocacy, and collaboration.
**Ontario:** Ontario is currently in the process of developing an intersectoral structure and framework for government non-profit relationships, however the province’s non-profit sector is already well organized through the Ontario Non-profit Network (ONN). The ONN is a province-wide network of networks that spans the breadth of the sector, including arts, social service, environmental, community health, international development, and social economy organizations. It helps build communication and coordination amongst non-profit organizations working for the public benefit in Ontario. “Using a Constellation Model of Governance, ONN has a wide range of volunteers involved in action groups, or “constellations” that focus on issues such as federal and provincial acts, the CRA fundraising guidelines, social finance, social economy, social enterprise, leadership, human resources, and more” (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009, p. 28).

On the government’s part, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) has initiated a number of endeavors to strengthen their relationship with the non-profit sector. For example, MCI supports non-profit input into provincial legislation, maintains ongoing contact with non-profit umbrella organizations such as the ONN, and convenes an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Volunteering and Non-Profit Issues. MCI also developed the Voluntary Sector Relations Unit to coordinate these endeavors, and strengthen volunteerism and the non-profit sector in Ontario. The Unit has also supported annual conferences and a Volunteer Action Online program to enable non-profits to use technology more effectively (Campbell and Speevak Sladowski, 2009).

### 4.3 Community Initiatives in B.C. – Promising Practices

As previously mentioned in Section 2.2, there are a number of organizations and initiatives in B.C. aimed at coordinating the non-profit sector such as VocBC, the Federation, Board Voice, and others. In addition to these organizations, there are numerous initiatives that work at the regional or community level to bring stakeholders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors together to collaborate, help build capacity, and find innovative solutions to address important social issues. Below are a number of local initiatives that can help to inform recommendations for regional engagement through the GNPI. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather a sample of successful initiatives.

**Vibrant Communities:** Vibrant Communities is a pan-Canadian poverty reduction initiative that supports participating cities to “undertake locally-designed initiatives led and implemented by groups comprising municipal leaders, business people, community organizations, and people living in poverty” (McConnell Foundation website). The initiative is led by the Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement, in partnership with the Caledon Institute of Social Policy and the J.W. McConnell Foundation. Tamarack helps link the initiatives by providing a network of support and learning made available by inter-active website tools, and in-person events such
as the annual Communities Collaborating Institute.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{The Quality of Life Challenge}: In B.C.’s Capital region, the Vibrant Community initiative is known as the Quality of Life CHALLENGE, and is committed to addressing the interconnected root causes of poverty and improving quality of life through a multi-stakeholder and comprehensive approach. Originally convened by the Social Planning Committee of Greater Victoria (Community Council), the initiative has a formal structure including a steering working group and several working groups and tasks forces. The initiative equips leaders with knowledge and encourages them to work for change within their own spheres of influence. As a result, “data and research have been successful in bringing together groups spanning economic, environmental and social interests to help establish common objectives” (Caledon Institute of Social Policy, p.3).

\textit{The Social Planning and Research Council of B.C. (SPARC BC)}: SPARC BC is a non-profit charitable organization that focuses on income security, accessibility, and community development and provides community-based research, consulting services, along with other practical resources and workshops (SPARC BC website).\textsuperscript{16} SPARC works with governments and civil society organizations across BC to help build capacity and develop locally relevant, inclusive, and multi-disciplinary approaches to social policy and planning issues.

\textit{BC Healthy Communities (BCHC)}: BCHC “is a province-wide not-for-profit organization that facilitates the ongoing development of healthy, thriving, and resilient communities” (BCHC website).\textsuperscript{17} BCHC is housed in Local Government House in Victoria, with satellite offices around the province. The organization works with communities, local governments, and multi-sectoral groups to develop customized approaches to improve community health including social, environmental, economic, cultural, physical, and political wellbeing.

The provincial and local initiatives described above have similar mandates and visions to the GNPI, and have taken varying approaches to engaging their communities in the hopes of engaging stakeholders from all sectors, strengthening their relationship, and building the capacity of local organizations to build stronger more resilient communities. Each of these initiatives has distinct benefits and limitations and requires specific resources. It will be important for the GNPI to determine which options best suit their needs, capabilities and limitations to be successful in the long term. These opportunities along with others that have been suggested by interview and focus group participants will be further examined in the discussion section to determine the best options for the GNPI.

\textsuperscript{15}http://vibrantcanada.ca/
\textsuperscript{16}http://www.sparc.bc.ca/
\textsuperscript{17}http://bchealthycommunities.ca/about
4.4 CONCLUSION

A review of relevant government and non-profit initiatives across Canada, as well as regional and community engagement activities in B.C. has identified three key themes that can help to inform the GNPI’s approach to regional engagement. Figure 3 summarizes these themes, along with several approaches identified through the literature that could inform the GNPI’s regional engagement strategy.

**Figure 3: Common themes from literature review**

Suggestions to formalize regional engagement included regional planning tables, regional community based projects, the development of community based government and non-profit networks, the creation of satellite offices, and regional non-profit associations. In addition to structural and organizational suggestions, the literature offered many regional engagement methods and tools, the most common being regional roundtables, web-portals, webcasts, networking and communication tools.

Past GNPI engagement has highlighted the need to include business leaders in conversations and plans to address local issues, as well as all levels of government and non-profit staff. Examples of provincial initiatives where this has been demonstrated include Nova Scotia and Ontario, where representatives from a broad range of non-profits are involved; New Brunswick where there is regional representation on the council; and Manitoba where business and labour representatives are also integrated into the structure.

Strengthening the capacity of the sector was a common theme throughout all three types of literature. GNPI engagement indicated a need for better understanding between sectors, how they operate, and their needs and challenges. Provincial initiatives also emphasized the importance of promoting the value of the non-profit sector and its contributions to communities. Lastly, local B.C. initiatives demonstrated that customized, inclusive, and multi-disciplinary approaches are effective in addressing complex and cross-sectoral issues.
5.0 INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The following analysis is based on interviews and focus groups with 28 government and non-profit leaders (both at the provincial and local levels), GNPI council office staff, and academics that specialize in government/non-profit relations in B.C. The interview questions were designed to determine what opportunities exist for GNPI to engage at the regional level, what impacts or outcomes they might have as well as possible challenges. The questions fell into three categories: background information, current engagement with the GNPI and opportunities for regional engagement through the GNPI. The questions are listed in Appendix B. Each section contains commons responses, outlying answers, as well as a selection of quotes.

5.1 CURRENT ENGAGEMENT

Eighteen out of 28 participants indicated that they are currently engaged in some capacity with the GNPI. Of the ten who are not currently engaged, six had been in the past. Two cited that they were no longer involved because they had changed positions, two cited that there had been no follow-up on the part of the GNPI and that updates were “few and far between,” and two cited lack of relevance to their work as the reason they are no longer involved. Of the four that had not been previously involved, two were aware of the GNPI, but again, it was not directly relevant to their work. The other two were not aware of the GNPI, but were asked to participate as a result of their work and expertise with local governments.

Effective Engagement Strategies

Participants who are currently involved in the GNPI, or have been in the past, were asked what types of engagement they find effective and/or ineffective. Participants felt that the following types of engagement were most effective according to their definitions and expectations:

1. Working Groups: Working groups and projects, including training, were seen as the most effective engagement tool. Participants stated that the structure of working groups makes them effective. The structure includes a “good team” with “equitable positions” (both government and non-profit members), “anchored by strong co-chairs.” Mutual accountability and benefit as well as clear goals are also important. There was recognition that some working groups are more effective than others. One participant questioned why the Intercultural Communities group was cancelled, and felt that the objectives of the Human Resource Advisory group were not achieved. The Mentoring Our Rising Leaders program, Government Procurement Processes training, Aboriginal Procurement Guidelines, and the Aboriginal Human Resource Strategy were cited as valuable outcomes.

2. Relationships: Building relationships was the second most effective approach to engagement. Participants indicated that personal relationships helped increase
participants’ understanding of how the other sector worked, what the issues are, and who to talk to. It was clear that the GNPI enabled the development of many friendships that extend beyond people’s involvement in the GNPI.

3. Annual Summits: The GNPI’s Annual Summits were cited as the 3rd most useful engagement activity. The summits have been successful at “getting at the issues,” to “get feedback, network, provide political messaging, and strategic direction,” however, one participant conceded that while the summits are interesting, they are not necessarily useful.

4. Regional Roundtables: This sentiment was also reflected in statements regarding the Regional Roundtables. “Regional dialogues are good, but there has been no follow-up,” and “nothing tangible happened afterwards”. On the other hand, one participant stated that the “regional engagement sessions helped to give executive directors and contract managers encouragement and permission to problem solve. The regional engagement in Nanaimo, and regional workshops in Quesnel and Williams Lake were identified as positive examples.

5. Other tools: Other useful approaches that were mentioned include GNPI’s decision to distance itself from political involvement and advocacy, its structure, the use of storytelling and ceremonies such as the Cowichan Blanket, which “became a witness for everything that was said”.

Ineffective Engagement Strategies
Although participants focused mainly on what has worked, two types of engagement were considered to be less effective:

1. Leadership Council: Participants recognized that the “Leadership Council co-chairs are excellent” and prior to the hiatus, they “made decisions, and got things done”. Despite the effectiveness of the co-chairs, five participants indicated that the Leadership Council was less effective. Reasons given focused mainly on the lack of participation of government members. Not only does “a lack of consistency make it difficult to get things done,” but also “not much happened after meetings,” and “government seemed to pull back when it came to actual work”. One participant recognized that being non-political was a good choice, but as a result the GNPI is not a priority for deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers. Another reason given was that “the GNPI has lost clarity of its vision”. Another participant stated, “the GNPI feels like an in-house club”. “No one knows how to get on the Leadership Council”. “There is a lack of understanding and transparency that has been damaging”.
2. **Website**: The website has mainly been used by those wanting to contact the GNPI to ask questions and seek resources, however it is not considered as an engagement tool. One participant indicated that although the website “does provide some face validity and transparency,” it contains “mainly historical information.” Participants felt that the website could be used for workshops and training opportunities.

5.2 **Barriers to Engagement**

The most common barriers to engagement are time, human and financial capacity, a lack of structure or framework, and insufficient information and awareness of the GNPI.

**Time**: Respondents from all four groups cited time as a major barrier to engagement. A Council Office member indicated that there is not enough staff “to keep up with what is happening in terms of engagement”. The Council Office also recognized that the “GNPI is volunteer based, and above and beyond people’s job descriptions,” and often it is “the same people involved in everything”. Lastly, they conceded that it can be difficult “getting people to understand when there is no money attached”.

**Human and financial capacity**: This was echoed in the government sector, which also indicated people are busy and either “don’t know each other or think that they already know each other” and won’t benefit form engagement. People’s capacity to engage will depend on their priorities and how relevant the topic of engagement is to them and their communities. Throughout the regions, many service clubs are also facing human resource constraints as a result of ageing members, further limiting their ability to network and engage with provincial and regional initiatives.

The non-profit sector also recognized that the GNPI is under-resourced and that people are “doing it off the side of their desks”. Non-profits need to “make good use of time,” and often “have to choose between serving clients and engaging with the GNPI”. In the regions, distance and the travel time required to attend GNPI events has kept many from engaging. Furthermore, there is no funding for this type of activity, or to cover travel costs.

**No formal structure to engage**: Lack of a formal structure for relationships between local and provincial governments and non-profit organizations was also cited as a barrier, although one respondent also acknowledged that formalizing this relationship could make it more difficult. There were differing views with regards to the coordination of the non-profit sector. Two participants cited that the non-profit sector is uncoordinated, while one believed that the sector has begun to organize, and another indicated that non-profits have networks but need a mechanism to connect.
**Lack of information:** The need for increased awareness and improved awareness was cited in a number of areas. The Council Office indicated that a lack of understanding of local and regional issues, of the non-profit sector (such as a common registry), and a true understanding of how both sectors function and work together “in all respects” are all barriers. Local non-profit and government participants both indicated that there is a “lack of awareness of what the GNPI is in the regions”.

**Internet:** Connectivity and high-speed Internet can also be a barrier. Several local government and non-profit representatives indicated that cell phone reception, high speed Internet and technological software are still not available in all communities.

Other barriers that were mentioned include very little trust, lack of results, difficulties connecting with people, cultural divides, high turnover in government, and a difference in expectations, goals, and agendas at the local and provincial levels.

**Participant’s motivation to engage with the GNPI**

When asked about their motivation to engage with the GNPI, answers included policy alignment and consistency around government programs and reporting, a space in between the government and non-profit sector to have dialogue and difficult discussions, and to improve the health and build the capacity of non-profit organizations.

Participant’s opinions on whether these objectives have been achieved varied. One participant said “the GNPI paid for itself early on by lessening the impact of the economic crisis”. Others believed that GNPI’s “focus has allowed it to be productive,” and that GNPI “figured out how to make open tendering more flexible and work better”. On the other hand, participants who did not feel as though their objectives were fulfilled stated that there has been “great conversation about big issues, but not a lot of tangible outcomes”. One reason given was GNPI’s limited financial capacity to invest or expand actions “and so expectations were left high with limited capacity to deliver”. One participant felt that while in the beginning “there was a desire to shift the power and for both sectors to talk about where money should be spent and the bigger issues”, the “GNPI has actually done damage to the relationship in the community”. The damage was cited as being caused by the Vancouver Foundation who criticized the non-profit sector for being unorganized, and acted as though they were the only organization that could undertake this type of work, whereby damaging the relationship and trust with many non-profit organizations.
Participants generally agreed though, that not much has been achieved since the Leadership Council went on hiatus. Many indicated that it was a good time to do some big picture thinking. Participants suggested that the GNPI should take this time to “take the temperature of the sector and the health of the GNPI to determine what the next organization should look like,” “re-imagine themselves going forward,” engage in “big picture policy discussion,” develop a strategic plan, see if the structure works, where we can get in terms of engagement, and what is needed”.

5.3 REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Despite whether or not participants felt that their motivation to engage had been fulfilled, or whether the GNPI had successfully engaged with stakeholders at the provincial level, the majority of participants felt that the GNPI should engage at the regional or local level, and that regional engagement could “bring a more balanced approach,” help “build relationships and get to know each other,” and “allow the GNPI to have value.” One participant felt that the GNPI should not engage at the local level because “the government is disengaged.” Another participant was not sure if it was possible due to the state of non-profit sector in the regions following recent funding and contracting changes such as the discontinuation of core funding and an increase of funding to the private sector.

Important considerations for regional engagement

Capacity: Those in favor of regional engagement through the GNPI were not without reservation, and pointed out a number of important considerations they felt should be made prior to engaging. Capacity was a consideration that was mentioned often. Participants cautioned that the GNPI should not be “too ambitious,” and should consider what they have to offer, what is needed to make an impact, and what can be achieved or not. One participant went as far as saying that “not to be successful would be detrimental.”

Existing initiatives: Another common consideration was the current landscape and existing regional engagement and collaboration. Participants cautioned that the GNPI “needs to know what the make-up of the sector is”, and must be aware of whether “there are already clusters having discussions” or regions working together”. The GNPI, they said, should not “be seen as competition” or “another layer.” One respondent questioned whether there is an opportunity cost, or whether the GNPI would be distorting the space for a cohesive sector voice to emerge.

Purpose: The third main consideration was clarity surrounding the GNPI’s mandate and objectives. Participants expressed that the objectives of the GNPI and the community “should be merged,” and engagement should be “grassroots driven and focus on an issue” of importance to the community.
These are considerations that all warrant further research and discussion prior to forging ahead with regional engagement. Nonetheless, there was a sense that done well, regional engagement through the GNPI could achieve important results.

The purpose of regional engagement

Responses related to the purpose of regional engagement fall into four categories: creating linkages and building relationships, increasing understanding, addressing local issues, and fostering more resilient non-profits.

1. Build relationships. The most common response related to outcomes was the opportunity to make connections and build relationships, both within municipalities and between local and provincial counterparts, which could lead to improved transactional relationships, connections to resources and good ideas, linkages to existing initiatives, and sharing of best practices and community successes.

2. Increase mutual understanding. Participants also felt that regional engagement could increase mutual understanding between the government and non-profit sector. On the one hand, engagement could help local non-profits understand the role of government, and on the other, engagement could enhance government’s understanding of what non-profits do. According to one participant, regional engagement could “create better mutual understanding and synergy to address broad social issues.”

3. Raise awareness about local issues. Perhaps most interestingly, many participants believed that regional engagement could help to raise awareness and address local issues. One respondent felt that “decision makers in B.C. don’t understand what the needs are and what the issues look like in the regions”. Another suggested that regional engagement through the GNPI could “address local issues” and “bring common themes to light so that people can see how they can be upscaled”.

4. Deal with downloading. One respondent believed that regional engagement could “help with downloading of services to local entities,” particularly in cases where non-profits don’t have the skills and expertise to write provincial funding proposals or in cases where organizations can not fulfill the requirements of their grants and must subcontract at a much lower level (potentially affecting the level of services).

Principles of engagement

When asked what regional engagement should look like, participants responded by suggesting six key principles that they felt should guide the engagement process:
1. Engagement needs to go beyond dialogue and focus on a specific issue with tangible outcomes that result in better services for their communities. Communication should be consistent and ongoing.

2. Engagement needs to be meaningful and relevant to the region and the stakeholders involved. Engagement needs to be tailored and flexible to local conditions to meet the needs of communities while still maintaining a consistent structure and meeting government objectives.

3. Engagement needs to be authentic and sincere, and built on trust and good relationships. The relationship capital, which is built through the work, must be able to withstand challenges.

4. Engagement requires good leadership, vision and champions that are interested in the cause and willing to further the relationship.

5. Engagement needs to be grassroots and community driven, and decision-making needs to be kept at the local level.

6. Broadening representation will decrease political instability by broadening support for and capacity of the initiative. More than three-quarters of respondents suggested broadening engagement to be reflective of the region and the issue. Suggestions included:

   • Municipal governments: mayors and councilors, and regional district representatives, and local government associations
   • First Nations people
   • Business community, for-profit service providers: Chambers of Commerce, BC Business Council, Community Futures, and the Board of Trade
   • Colleges and Universities: UNBC, Caledonia
   • Health authorities
   • Service clubs and societies: Kinsmen, Lions Club, Rotary
   • Churches
   • Foundations
   • Co-ops and Community Contribution Corporations
   • Federal government
   • Broader scope for social services, including recreational, and community economic development organizations
   • Boards of Directors and others involved in the governance of non-profits
   • Non-profit associations and singular non-profits (many non-profits have special interests or are more specialized and therefore not part of an association).
In addition to these groups, one participant stated that, “getting people who are not the usual suspects to be your allies can make for stronger non-profits”. Another suggested that the GNPI “could be a way to include those who do not currently have a financial relationship with government”.

5.4 Strategies and Approaches

In addition to suggesting key principles and important stakeholders, respondents had various ideas on what approach GNPI should take and where they should focus their efforts. A number of respondents indicated that following the provincial elections, the GNPI will need to reconstitute based on who is involved with the social services sector and the funding structure. Others indicated it would be a good time to “see where we can get with engagement in the new landscape,” if there is “any way to include local interests,” and “do a road-show to hear about what the GNPI should be doing”.

Following consultations, there was a sense that the GNPI should “let the players take it forward”. There was general agreement that broader policy discussions should continue to take place at the provincial level, and regional engagement should focus on specific issues that communities are facing. As one participant put it;

“The values and principles can be set at the provincial level, once the issues are better understood. Challenges such as homelessness, social determinants of health, fiscal issues are what are being faced at the local level. These have no easy solutions. Regional engagement could be used to address these issues”.

Other issues that were mentioned throughout the research include economic development, jobs, support for seniors and disadvantaged youth, the Societies Act and other legislation, and succession planning. It also became clear through the research that many local non-profits are not currently receiving provincial government funding, and therefore broader policy discussions, such as those around procurement, may not be relevant to local stakeholders.

A strategic approach – how and where to engage

Several respondents indicated that the best approach would be to tap into existing networks, and build on them. The GNPI should “go where the stakeholders are”. Examples given were provincial level umbrella organizations and local government associations. The GNPI could determine when these organizations are holding annual meetings and either get on the agenda, or ask to extend the meetings to consult with people.

Respondents recognized that the GNPI could not engage with all communities and must be strategic on their approach. One participant suggested looking at what kind of challenges
communities have and how the GNPI can strategically help. The choice of where to engage “has to be driven by need and interest”. There were diverging views on the size of community to focus on. One participant suggested that “the smaller the community the better” as they have unique abilities that need to be scaled-up. According to the respondent, “Revelstoke is a good example of cross-sectoral planning for community resources. It has a unique character in that it is relatively isolated and there is only one school board, so it is fairly simple, but is a good example of coordination”.

Others suggested joining up at the regional level “because cities have resources such as professional staff and a high degree of social capital, but smaller communities (3,000-5,000 people) don’t”. Examples given include Prince George or Fort St. John, or the region including Vanderhoof, Fort St. James and Fraser Lake. Respondents cautioned against using regional districts as they are often based on old boundaries that are no longer relevant, and while they can be robust, they can also have capacity issues. The Kootenays were also given as an example of an area “where you could set up a GNPI and tease out the necessary incentives and supports”.

Engagement tools

Regardless of where the GNPI chooses to engage, there was general consensus that local in-person gatherings are necessary for the GNPI to broaden engagement at the local or regional level. Face-to-face meetings help “create linkages,” and get “the right people in the room at the right time”. Participants’ suggested starting with local dialogue in the form of regional meetings, roundtables, focus groups, or table conversations. One participant also suggested developing a toolkit on how to create a roundtable in your community. Regardless of the form, dialogue should be participatory, mutually beneficial, and provide immediate feedback and results. It would also provide people with a better understanding of the GNPI prior to the introduction of web-tools.

The regional meetings could then culminate in broader meetings such as a province-wide summit or annual retreat. They could also lead to workshops or seminars where stakeholders could focus on a specific issue or task and agree on a few objectives. One respondent suggested taking the “recommendations from the Full-Cost Financing and Reporting Requirements to the regions”.

Respondents felt that online tools such as an online virtual space, webinars, or E-training, could be used to support face-to-face engagement, but that they were more effective for one-way communication such as specific areas of instruction. One participant suggested the use of E-symposiums, which integrates PowerPoint and the use multiple cameras, and are “more interactive and interesting that webinars”. The use of videoconferencing and Skype were
suggested, once everyone had met in person, and provided that everyone had access. Also, the technology shouldn’t be too complicated or “it can be hard to get people to commit”. Other online tools that were mentioned included linked-in and Facebook. Teleconference was suggested for small and short meetings, although people felt it was less effective than videoconferencing.

Lastly, several participants suggested the use of shared services including shared administration, space, and back office systems. In Hecate, shared services are currently employed to help with paperwork, bylaws, staffing and office space. In Castlegar, non-profits share financial services, benefit and employee family assistant plans. In other places, conversations regarding shared services were still in the early stages.

Other tools that were mentioned are the Council Office, which is needed for continuity and facilitation, co-mentorship, and the sharing of best practices. Ceremony is also a “way to build social capital and better relationships and dispel any lack of integrity”. The woven Cowichan blanket is one example, and “symbolizes getting out of the habit of linear thinking and provides spirit and intent”.

**GNPI’s role in regional engagement**

When asked what GNPI’s role in regional engagement should be, the most common response was that GNPI should coordinate, convene, and facilitate in a variety of capacities:

- Create a space for good conversations and facilitate workshops and seminars
- Coordinate policy dialogue without being in control
- Connect non-profits
- Bring stakeholders together to plan
- Connection between communities that may have similarities, but don’t know each other
- Coordinate services, provide a link to provincial government, and demonstrate what is being done in other communities
- Create conditions for local stakeholders to continue the work on their own
- Build partnerships when there is no organization to do this

The second most common response was that the GNPI should share their knowledge, leverage their resources, and ultimately help build the capacity of local stakeholders.

- The GNPI should filter for excellent resources, leverage their tools, and connect local communities with existing resources
- Share knowledge, lessons, technical expertise, best practices, and the structure to help work through an issue
• Educate the public and policy makers about the sector, how it works, and what its contributions are
• Create an enabling environment to build capacity, and identify trends so that communities are more resilient
• Deliver and leave capacity

Several participants indicated that the GNPI has unique access to ministers and other high level government decision-makers, and should leverage this position to get the “attention needed for specific issues and to demonstrate the value in addressing them”. The GNPI can support communities to be linked in and gain access, and provide non-profit staff and boards an opportunity to interact with government stakeholders.

Finally, two respondents suggested that the GNPI should be a role model by modeling appropriate behaviour and structure for collaboration, endorsing the relationship and building relationship capital.

5.5 Examples of Regional Engagement

Participants were asked to provide examples of effective engagement outside of the GNPI, or existing initiative and local networks that the GNPI could strategically leverage and possibly build on. Many suggestions were offered, which varied from local and regional government initiatives, municipal networks, community partnerships, and others. The most common examples, along with ways that the GNPI could strategically engage leverage the work of each initiative, are listed below.

1. The Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM): The UBCM is a well-resourced and structured organization that meets once a year (with quarterly executive meetings). In addition to the UBCM, there are five B.C. local government area associations that are strong local bodies and generally meet once a year. Only two of these, the North Central and Island Coastal Local Government Associations, have staff and are active throughout the year. The GNPI could attend these meetings, gather information, and possibly present their key objectives.

2. The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC): The UNBC main campus is located in Prince George, with regional campuses in Terrace, Fort St. John, and Quesnel. Participants recognized that the university campuses have various resources that could be accessed by the initiative including high speed internet and technological equipment. The UNBC also houses the Community Development Institute, and has a focus on rural and small town studies.

3. The Columbia Basin Trust (CBT): The CBT covers a large geographical area, has provincial and local government representation, and has a record of attacking social and
environmental issues with great vigor. The CBT has an annual symposium in November to talk about current issues. The GNPI could attend the conference to learn more about current issues and how the CBT and its funding recipients are addressing them.

4. The Fraser Basin Council (FBC): The FBC is a self-organizing charitable non-profit organization that brings people together to advance sustainability in the Fraser River Basin and across B.C. The FBC brings together four levels of government (federal, provincial, local, and First Nations), non-profits organizations, civil society, and the private sector to help find collaborative solutions to issues such as healthy water and watersheds, climate change, air quality, and strong and resilient communities and regions.

5. The Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC): The OBAC was developed to “support long-term regional economic diversification and sustainability in the face of the devastation caused by the mountain pine beetle” (OBAC, 2013). OBAC aims to achieve full social service coordination in the OBAC region through genuine partnerships that recognize the vital role that communities play in identifying and addressing their social needs as well as the important role government resources play. What OBAC has learned is that “genuine partnerships between public and non-profit service providers will only be realized when all parties recognize both the vital role communities play in identifying and addressing their own social needs and the important role government support and resources play” (OBAC, 2013, p.v). In addition, they have identified two main obstacles to quality services in their region: the geography of the region, and the impact of government administrative structures including considerable disconnections between government departments and rural and small towns, a lack of understanding and awareness of rural realities, rigid and inflexible government practices, inaccessible technology, and a funding approach that contributes to negative dynamics amongst community-level service providers.

A list of additional examples of regional engagement and collaborative initiatives that were highlighted by interview and focus group participants can be found in Appendix A. While many successful initiatives were named, very few were mentioned more than once, and very few were part of a larger network of province-wide initiatives. This indicates that these initiatives could benefit from increased visibility, sharing of best practices, and coordination.

5.6 Conclusion

The interviews and focus groups highlighted several important themes that not only help to evaluate the GNPI’s engagement activities to date, but that will help to inform the development of options for an effective and efficient regional engagement strategy. Some of the key themes discussed were relevancy, tangible outcomes, relationships, leadership, capacity, and representation.
What participant’s considered to be the key purpose and outcomes of the GNPI thus far generally coincided with what they hoped the outcomes of regional engagement would be: fostering relationships, developing mutual understanding, raising awareness of unique regional needs, and most importantly addressing local issues. Participants made it clear that for regional engagement to be effective and successful, it must be relevant and deliver tangible outcomes.

A successful regional engagement strategy would also have to take into consideration a number of challenges faced by government and non-profit leaders as well as the GNPI itself. Challenges include time, financial and human resources, inadequate capacity, insufficient information, and lack of a structure to network and coordinate. However participants also suggested that leveraging volunteers, existing networks, and broadening representation could help to address these challenges.

Lastly, with regards to what approach to take, face-to-face engagement was seen as the most effective approach to achieve the goals, supplemented with regional meetings and web tools. However despite the fact that the interview questions were focused on engagement strategies, many participants indicated that it is time for some bigger picture thinking and a renewal of the GNPI. Only once this has taken place should the GNPI begin to engage communities at the local level.
6.0 DISCUSSION

Overall, the interviews demonstrated that there is both a need and an interest throughout the province, and from both government and non-profit sectors, for regional engagement through the GNPI. However, it is also clear in the literature and interviews that the GNPI is faced with major challenges and considerations that could not only impact the effectiveness of regional engagement, but could ultimately determine the success of the initiative.

6.1 INTEGRATE REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT INTO ALL ASPECTS OF THE GNPI

While the focus of this research is specifically on regional engagement, it is impossible to ignore the broader challenges facing the GNPI writ large, which could also impact their ability to engage at a local level. There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the GNPI and its future. Recent provincial elections have not resulted in a new governing party, however they have resulted in significant leadership changes at the minister and deputy minister levels. It is still unclear what this will mean for the GNPI’s future.

At the same time, the GNPI is in a period of reflection, whereby the organization is assessing its accomplishments and the opportunities that lie ahead. This process includes reviewing the current structure (including the effectiveness of the leadership council), mandate, and priorities. Whether or not those involved in the GNPI feel that the initiative has been successful to date, academics and government and non-profit leaders alike, felt that it is time to engage in a broad review and re-imagining of the GNPI. This will inevitably impact the possibility for regional engagement, however it presents an opportunity for the GNPI to thoroughly integrate regional engagement into their structure, plans, and processes at all levels going forward.

Before the GNPI can successfully engage at the regional level, it must determine what its structure, mandate and goals are going forward and how regional engagement is connected and integrated into all aspects of the GNPI, beginning with its structure and strategic goals.

6.2 CLARIFY MANDATE AND GOALS

What was not made clear through the research was whether there is a consistent understanding of the GNPI’s current mandate and goals, and the purpose of engagement. Some participants indicated that the purpose of GNPI was to build dialogue and have difficult conversations rather than achieve concrete outcomes. Another indicated that GNPI’s value added is “the aspect of collaboration and partnership that is added to government’s purchase of service from non-profits”. A third participant, who was ‘involved in the beginning’ believed that the “approach was to advocate as a result of the open tendering system”. Not only does this uncertainty impacts people’s perception of the GNPI’s success, it may have also influenced participant’s support for the GNPI to engage at the regional level.
Lessons learned from similar initiatives show that engagement should be grounded with a clearly articulated purpose, goals, and approach (Vibrant Communities), as well as a mutual understanding of each sector and their challenges and resources (BCHC). There was some support in the literature and interviews for a stronger focus on policy issues such as the level and type of funding and procurement processes, however the majority of participants suggested that regional engagement should focus on specific issues such as homelessness, poverty, and the impacts of resource dependent communities. Therefore regional engagement will not only require the GNPI to set clear goals and expectations, but also shift from a more administrative focus on human resources, financing, and reporting to an issues-based focus. A focus on specific community issues is a departure from the work that the GNPI has done to date however, there are a number of ways that the GNPI can step into this space and support communities using the resources they currently have, and developing tools that are relevant and can assist communities in realizing tangible outcomes that are mutually beneficial. Lessons learned also indicated that engagement should be comprehensive (Elson, 2012), and ongoing (Lenihan, 2013). This shift would require that engagement not just part of planning, but also deliberation, action and evaluation.

Based on the interviews, it appears that many local organizations are not currently receiving provincial government funding. This is consistent with Murray’s research, which indicates that the majority of non-profit organizations provides services at the community level (62%), and is sustained through community based funding (2006). Research shows that non-profits providing services in their communities rely mainly on community fundraising, rather than provincial funding. It is not clear exactly why this is. It is possible that small and rural non-profit organizations simply don’t have the capacity to procure government funding due to the time and expertise required to apply, they do not meet the requirements, or the funding does not match their needs. Developing tools to build the capacity of small-scale community organizations may enable them to apply for government funding and broaden their funding streams. This could be as simple as sharing previously developed tools such as the GNPI’s Government Procurement Processes Course.

The research also clearly indicated that while there is a need to connect non-profit organizations with all levels of government, there is currently no formal structure for this to take place. The GNPI could be part of this structure by linking local and provincial government leaders to non-profit representatives from around the province. This can be done both at the level of the Leadership Council and through local working or planning groups.

6.3 Broaden Representation

The themes that emerged from the interviews and focus group were nearly identical to those that were raised during GNPI’s previous engagement activities such as regional roundtables and
annual summits. Priorities focused on broadening the representation of the GNPI to be more inclusive of all types of stakeholders in the community. This could include local and regional government leaders, the private sector, academics, church and service club members, and all types of non-profit organizations. Participants also indicated that not all stakeholders would find engaging through the GNPI relevant. Therefore the need for representation varies depending on the community and the issues that the community would like to address through the GNPI, and these stakeholders can be engaged once the GNPI has clarified its mandate and goals and the structure and process for regional engagement have been determined. Engaging the community (Elson, 2012; BCHC), and mobilize residents (Vibrant Communities), is also key to the success of regional engagement. Lastly, according to the OECD (2006) and Campbell and Speevak Sladowski (2009), engagement should involve organizations not personalities, and should include plan for transition, succession and continuity.

The importance of involving youth was a focus in the literature as well as previous engagement initiatives, but was not mentioned during the interviews. Engaging youth has been emphasized in various non-profit volunteer and community service initiatives, as well as the Partners for Social Impact initiative. Youth help to bring energy and innovation to these initiatives, and could likely do the same for the GNPI. It is not clear however that this is currently a priority.

6.4 Build Trust

Many of the approaches suggested in previous engagement were recommended once again during the interviews. These included developing regional networks, a centralized list of resources, supporting local symposiums, using existing networks, and developing tools to increase communication. Unfortunately few, if any, of these recommendations have been seriously considered or implemented, which has greatly impacted the trust and confidence that regional representatives have in the GNPI. It is unclear why such suggestions have yet to be implemented, and whether it is due to lack of capacity to deliver, lack of leadership, or lack of clarity with regards to the strategic goals of the GNPI. Regional engagement could help to increase government engagement by increasing awareness of the issues facing local non-profits and their communities and the possible outcomes should they not be addressed. Regional engagement could also increasing support for the GNPI, and attract new leadership from both sectors.

Some participants supported GNPI’s goal to hold another series of regional roundtables, however both the literature and the interviews confirm that the issues facing communities have not changed considerably over time. Another round could actually be detrimental, particularly if it does not result in any tangible outcomes, as it may be seen as insincere and disingenuous. Many participants indicated that little had come out of previous engagement initiatives. For these reasons, it is not advisable that the GNPI hold regional roundtables in the near future, but
rather encourage and support regional working groups to hold their own roundtables within their communities.

6.5 INFORMATION AND AWARENESS

Another common theme among the literature and interviews and focus groups was the need for more information. The literature demonstrates a critical need for investing in research (Elson, 2012), and the need for better information regarding the sector, including its size, scope, and geographical coverage (Carter and Speevak Sladowski, 2008). Only a few comprehensive studies of the non-profit sector in B.C. exist, and they are dated.

Interview and focus group participants also indicated that there is not consistent awareness throughout the province of the existence of the GNPI and its commitment, principles, and goals. They also indicated that for regional engagement to be meaningful and relevant, the GNPI must gain a better picture of the issues facing government and non-profit organizations in communities throughout the province. The GNPI will also need to gain a better understanding of what they have to offer to help address these issues while adhering to the goals and objectives of the initiative. One simple way to acquire this information would be for the GNPI to attend the UBCM to learn more about local issues. At the same time, the GNPI could increase awareness about the GNPI by presenting during the conference. In addition to the UBCM, various local government associations also hold conferences in the spring, which the GNPI could also attend. This would also be a way to determine interest and find regional champions to join the Leadership Council.

This research does begin to highlight some of the existing regional initiatives, partnerships, and networks, however the GNPI could benefit from research that maps out existing engagement activities and local networks that could be leveraged through the regional working groups. While this research has begun to identify some of the initiatives, thorough investigation of all existing programs and projects was beyond the scope of this project. While it would be beneficial information for the GNPI Council Office to have, they do not have the human resources to undertake such a project at this time, however there may be opportunities to collaborate with the University of Victoria or other academic institutions to develop this research.

6.6 STRATEGIC APPROACH

Despite the fact that broadening engagement has been identified as a priority that is supported by a wide range of government and non-profit leaders throughout the province, time, distance, and both the human and financial resources that are required to implement such a strategy are significant factors. The interviews and focus groups clearly indicated that local government and non-profit leaders are inhibited by the province’s geographic and demographic diversity, and
the time and resources required to travel to the lower mainland and capital regional district to participate in GNPI activities.

At the same time, the GNPI has a limited budget and ability to travel. Unless the GNPI receives a boost in their budget, or chooses to seek additional resources, the need for in-person engagement will need to be carefully balanced with alternative methods of engagement including the use of alternative modes of communication and web-based technology. It may be useful for the GNPI to develop a range of regional engagement tools that can be applied depending on the situation, the geographical location of the community, and the human and financial realities. By building on current successes and what is currently working, the GNPI can optimize existing strengths and abilities. It is key to start small and get good at collaborating before upscaling (Lenihan, 2012).

The need for flexibility has also been a consistent theme. As the literature demonstrates, the non-profit sector is diverse in its structure, focus, funding, and so on. GNPI’s approach to regional engagement must also be flexible. This is not to say that the GNPI’s approach in each community will be different. It is possible to maintain a common structure and government objectives while still being flexible. Incorporating flexibility into the strategy could potentially lead to more work for the Leadership Council and Council Office, all of whom perform multiple functions and many of whom are volunteering their time to the GNPI. Recommendations will need to take this into account, and ensure that whatever approach is taken is within the capacity of the GNPI to deliver.

A deeper understanding of the GNPI and its history, the current government non-profit environment, and key themes in the literature provided ideas for the conceptualization of a regional engagement. Figure 4 outlines the conceptual framework that guides the development of options and recommendation on how to achieve regional engagement. The conceptual framework was developed based on the GNPI’s five principles of engagement as well as the five elements of a good strategy that emerged from the literature review and interviews and focus groups.

To achieve the overarching goal of deepening engagement, it is clear that there are two levels of options that are required – one that focuses on the GNPI’s broader approach and the institutionalization of regional engagement into the structure of the GNPI, and secondly specific options and tools for the GNPI to carry out regional engagement. Research participants offered many good suggestions for both levels of change, many of which have been incorporated into the options that are outlined in the following two sections.

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18 The provincial government has placed a ban on all non-essential travel.
Figure 4: Conceptual framework for deepening engagement

**Principles of Engagement**
- Capacity Building
- Responsiveness
- Accessibility
- Manageability
- Strategic Alignment

**Elements of a good strategy**
- Institutionalization
- Clear mandate and goals
- Trust
- Broad representation
- Awareness of the GNPI and mutual understanding

**High level integration (section 7)**
- **Option 1**: Regional representation on Leadership Council
- **Option 2**: Regional GNPI Leadership Councils
- **Option 3**: Regional non-profit associations

**Deepen engagement through the GNPI to:**
- Identify and act on mutual priorities
- Promote and invest stable, accountable and effective organizational capacity
- Coordinate program efforts to address multi-dimensional needs
- Honour diversity

**Specific engagement tools (section 8)**
- **Option 1**: Regional working groups
- **Option 2**: Regional roundtable toolkit
- **Option 3**: Webportal
7.0 HIGH LEVEL OPTIONS FOR INTEGRATION

This report set out to determine specific tolls and mechanisms for the GNPI to broaden their engagement outside of their current focus, which has been mainly concentrated in Victoria and greater Vancouver. These options are outlined in Section 8. However, the research has revealed a need for regional engagement to be addressed at a higher level within the GNPI. In this section, I will lay out three options for the GNPI to institutionalize and integrate regional engagement into their structure that have been formed by the literature. The options include integrating regional representation into the leadership council, developing regional GNPI Councils, or support the development of regional non-profit associations.

**Option 1: Regional representation on the Leadership Council**

Similar to the Community Non-Profit Organizations Secretariat in New Brunswick, the GNPI could integrate regional representation into the Leadership Council by choosing a government or non-profit leader from each development region to join the Leadership Council. Having regional leaders on the Leadership Council would enable the GNPI to provide leadership and championing at the provincial level that is informed and responsive to regional issues. Including members from across the province will help to inform the GNPI as to the challenges, needs, and opportunities in communities across the province, as well as the networks and regional engagement and collaborations that already exist. This approach would also ensure that ongoing strategic planning incorporates regional needs, requirements, and considerations. Regional representatives should be government or non-profit leaders who have demonstrated a willingness and ability to engage and to collaborate and partner with other sectors. Candidates must also demonstrate that they have the time and capacity to devote to the GNPI both at the Leadership Council level and at the local working group level.

Certain considerations would have to be made in order for regional representatives to be able to participate in the Leadership Council such as the location and scheduling of meetings. Leadership Council meetings are currently held quarterly (while the co-chairs meet monthly). When possible, the Leadership Council could schedule the meetings at times when regional representatives are already traveling to the region for other events or activities. The GNPI could also include a travel allowance within their budget for Leadership Council members to attend meetings. The GNPI could offer the possibility for members to participate via web-conference.

**Option 2: Develop regional GNPI Leadership Councils**

The second option involves replicating the Leadership Council within the regions. This approach is similar to the approach taken by BCHC, which is centrally located in Victoria, with satellite offices throughout the province. The regional GNPI Leadership Councils would be structured in
the same ways as the current Leadership Council, with government and non-profit co-chairs, and equal representation among council members. In addition, representatives from the private sector, academia, and other relevant stakeholders would be welcome to join the council. Having a GNPI Leadership Council within each region would allow the GNPI to tailor each of the councils to be representative of local stakeholders and the issues that are impacting the community. This approach would also ensure that decision-making remains at the local level and that the GNPI is responsive to what is taking place on the ground. The provincial level Leadership Council would continue to focus on high-level administrative policy issues such as human resources and procurement. The working groups would continue to develop resources such as reports, training, and other projects to address issues brought forward from the regional GNPI groups.

The approach would require the GNPI to develop a process to help coordinate the regional Leadership Councils and develop a means of collaborating and communicating with the provincial level Leadership Council. It could be possible to have one of the co-chairs from each regional council attend quarterly Leadership Council meetings to give and receive updates. It would also require strong Leadership at the provincial level to ensure that all groups remain focused on a common mandate and goals, and that fragmentation of the groups does not take place. Again, the GNPI could offer the possibility for these members to participate via web-conference. It would also be important for regional Leadership Council members to receive an orientation to the GNPI so that they better understand the mandate and goals of the initiative.

**Option 3: Support the development of regional non-profit associations**

One of the main challenges of government and non-profit organizations across Canada and throughout the world has been the absence of strong non-profit associations or umbrella organizations that can speak on behalf of the non-profit sector, improve awareness and information regarding the sector, and help build the capacity of membership organizations. With the exception of Québec and Ontario, very few provinces have comprehensive non-profit associations to represent the sector. In Alberta, the non-profit sector is collaborating through the Calgary and Edmonton Chambers of Voluntary Organizations, both of which play an important role in providing leadership and supporting the sector in their respective cities.

Rather than altering its own structure, the GNPI could support the non-profit sector to develop regional non-profit associations that could provide leadership and coordination in their respective regions. Representatives from the associations could then act as liaisons to the GNPI to increase awareness of unique regional needs and challenges and how the GNPI can best work with the associations to strengthen the relationship with the government, improve collaboration and develop innovative solutions.
This approach requires significant human and financial resources, and would most likely need to be developed in coordination with other relevant stakeholders including various government ministries, foundations and other funders, and existing non-profit organizations and associations.

7.1 RECOMMENDATION

Table 2: Comparison of high-level options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Regional representation on the Leadership Council</th>
<th>(2) Regional GNPI Leadership Councils</th>
<th>(3) Regional Non-profit Associations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement/Capacity Building</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to requests</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manageability</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Alignment</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 rates each of the three options in relation to the five principles of regional engagement (as defined in section 2.5).

Capacity Building: Supporting the development of regional non-profit associations has the potential to best support regions to organize, manage and implement engagement activities, however this is highly dependent on the number of associations developed. Given that the cost would be higher that regional GNPI Leadership, there would likely be fewer regional non-profit associations. On its own, Option 1 has the possibility of building capacity however, combined with regional working groups (Option 1 in Section 8), this option would have a much higher ability to build the capacity of regional stakeholders to engage. While all three options would provide continuous improvement for the non-profit sector, only Options 1 and 2 provide improvement for government actors.

Responsiveness: Previous GNPI engagement has emphasized the need for broadened engagement at the local level, for example through local planning tables, where the decision-making takes place within the region. Developing regional GNPI Leadership Councils would ensure that decision-making remains at the local level however; this approach may also impeded communities ability to engage and gain access to resources at the provincial level to respond to ongoing requests.

Accessibility: Regional representation on the Leadership Council would only formally increase engagement by eight regional representatives, whereas Options 2 and 3 would allow for the participation of a greater number of stakeholders.
Manageability: Option 1 is the most manageable for the GNPI to implement, as it requires the least financial and human resources. While Option 3 is the most accessible, it is the least manageable as it would require the highest financial and human resources.

Strategic Alignment: Options 1 and 2 align best with the initiative’s strategic plans to help build the joint capacity of government and non-profit sectors, to honour diversity, and address multi-dimensional issues at the community level. Option 3 does not clearly align with the mandate and goals of the GNPI, which are to build the joint capacity of the government and non-profit sectors.

While all three options are viable, and could potentially be implemented by the GNPI to effectively integrate regional engagement through the GNPI, the current capacity of the GNPI requires the initiative to focus its efforts and strategically integrate regional engagement. Integrating regional representation into the GNPI Leadership Council (Option 1) is the recommended option. Option 1 requires the least human and financial resources (see Appendices C and E for details), and leverages the use of new Leadership Council members who would volunteer their time to participate in the GNPI. The GNPI would be responsible for seeking out leaders from within in the regions to join the Leadership Council. Through the use of technology such as web-conferencing and Skype, Option 1 requires the least amount of their time and travel while still enabling the GNPI to be responsive to regional uniqueness.
8.0 SPECIFIC OPTIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

The GNPI is attempting to strengthening the working relationship between the government and non-profit sectors to better identify their needs and challenges, help build their capacity, and work collaboratively to address these needs. Creating forums for dialogue and problem solving will act to foster collaboration and actively engage government and non-profit stakeholders as a means to improve services in all sizes of communities and regions in B.C.

In addition to the broader suggestions proposed in the previous section, there are a number of specific approaches that the GNPI can use to broaden engagement throughout the province. Research participants suggested many tools and methods for the GNPI to engage at the regional level. The following three options attempt to consolidate these suggestions and offer flexible approaches that meet the needs and challenges of non-profits in communities with varying geographical realities, resources and capacities, and to address various topics of engagement. Tailoring the approach will enable the GNPI to refine their focus and move out of a single high-level plain of discussion. All options have been developed based on the assumption that the GNPI implements the broader recommendation set out in section 7.

Figure 5: Options for deepening engagement

Three options have been identified to broaden engagement throughout the province in a way that is beneficial to the provincial government, the non-profit sector, and local communities (shown in Figure 5). The research strongly suggested that the GNPI take a layered approach to
regional engagement that combines various methods and is flexible to changing realities. Therefore each of the options is a combination of tools that can be employed by the GNPI to engage with a specific type of community. The tools include face-to-face engagement such as regional working groups and roundtables; web tools such as a web portal and e-symposiums; and capacity building initiatives such as workshops and mentorship programs. Each option will rely more heavily on one approach than another. The options are also tailored depending on the topic or type of engagement that is needed and whether it is focused on dialogue or implementation.

**Option 1: Regional GNPI Working Groups**

Option 1 is geared towards communities that are focused around small or medium towns that have the added challenge of fewer human and financial resources, less access to provincial level decision-makers and programs, and limited internet or technological capacity. Such challenges make it difficult for local government and non-profit leaders to connect with the GNPI and other provincial level networks. This approach is focused on bringing people together through the development of a regional GNPI working group, with added capacity building and web components. Engagement is focused first on dialogue, but with the long-term goal of collaborating in order to address important social issues in the region. Examples could include Prince George, Fort St. John, and Revelstoke.

*Primary Element: Regional Working Groups.* The establishment of GNPI regional working groups within communities across the province could provide a mechanism for provincial and local government and non-profit stakeholders to engage and collaborate, and an opportunity to strengthen the relationship and build the capacity of the two sectors at a much broader level. GNPI regional working groups could follow the constellation model like in Ontario where each constellation focuses on a specific topic area that is meaningful and relevant to the community. The regional representative who sits on the Leadership Council could facilitate and coordinate the regional working group along with a co-chair from the other sector. Using this approach, decision-making can remain at the local level with the guidance of the Leadership Council member. The regional working groups should maintain a similar structure to the Leadership Council, in that they have mutual representation and accountability from both sectors. The membership of the regional working group should also be broadened to include all relevant stakeholders in the community such as First Nations representation, the business sector, or local service clubs. Similar to the provincial level, the regional working groups will help develop and implement projects and plans that they, in coordination with the Leadership Council, have determined to be a priority.

There must also be an understanding of the GNPI and its mandate within the community. Therefore the focus should be on a community where the GNPI has previously engaged, or has
attended local government meetings. It is crucial that the working group receive a more in-depth GNPI orientation during the formation stage. The working group will decide together the topics or issues that are most important, and that they feel could usefully be addressed through the GNPI. The regional working group co-chairs will serve as a link to the Leadership Council and will take forward any issues or opportunities that they feel could benefit from further attention at the provincial level. For example, if there is a specific topic where the region could benefit from a workshop, this could be suggested through the Leadership Council.

This approach will allow the GNPI to create the space for dialogue at the local level without expending significant human and financial resources. The responsibility will rest mainly with the Leadership Council member to champion the GNPI working group and at the same time gain the support of community leaders to work towards common goals and objectives that are mutually beneficial to the government and non-profit sectors. The development of regional working groups will take some time, and must be developed in a strategic manner. As suggested throughout the research, the GNPI should begin by choosing a region that has already demonstrated some capacity to engage and collaborate, but that could benefit from the assistance of the GNPI, and that has shown an interest in engaging through the GNPI. Rather than develop regional working groups across the province, the GNPI could develop one or two pilot regional working groups, and then develop a process to share their experiences and lessons learned with others who would like to develop a regional working group in their own community.

*Secondary Elements:*

- **Training.** In addition to the regional working groups, the GNPI would also provide access to capacity building opportunities such as their online Procurement Training and Human Resource Strategies presentation. Further opportunities for capacity building could be developed based on the needs identified through the regional working groups.
- **Web Portal:** The GNPI could further develop their website to include online resources, webinars on specific topics, and an interactive area where communities can network and share their experiences. The GNPI Council Office could continue to host and maintain the website, update resources, and develop webinars. Communities could also have access to the interactive area to post content and share resources.

*Option 2: Regional Roundtables Toolkit*

Option 2 is geared towards regions with clusters of towns or small cities, where government and non-profit organizations lack the resources or opportunity to engage, coordinate, and collaborate to address issues of mutual relevance and benefit. Examples include Vanderhoof, Fraser Lake, and Fort St. James in the Nechako region, or Terrace, Prince Rupert, and Kitimat in
the North Coast. The main element of this option is a toolkit that will provide communities with the resources needed to improve communication and coordination through regional roundtables to help their community determine common issues and locate the necessary resources to address them through working groups and the GNPI web portal.

**Primary Element: Regional roundtable toolkit.** By developing a toolkit on how to run a regional roundtable the GNPI could provide communities with the resources to plan and implement a roundtable in their own community, rather than continuing to hold a series of roundtables throughout the province every few years. The toolkit would be available through the GNPI website for any interested communities to access. The toolkit would provide community champions, and their communities, with instructions on how to plan and implement a roundtable, as well tips on how to acquire the necessary resources, and lessons learned from previous roundtables. GNPI regional Leadership Council members should also be encouraged to hold roundtables in their communities. In addition to the toolkit, the GNPI can assist communities by answering any questions that they may have, putting them in touch with leaders in similar communities that have held their own roundtables, promoting the roundtables through the website and newsletter, as well as highlighting results and lessons learned.

The GNPI would send a representative, whether it be a Leadership Council member or Council Office staff to attend the roundtable and provide input on how the GNPI may further assist the community by leveraging existing networks and resources to help address the issue(s) that the community chooses to address following the roundtable. The GNPI representative will report the results of the roundtable to the Leadership Council to ensure that issues raised are communicated at the provincial level. The Leadership Council will review results of the regional roundtables during quarterly meetings. This will also give the Leadership council an opportunity to offer the community additional capacity building resources, or to develop new resources based on the collective needs that are raised throughout roundtables.

The goal of the roundtables would be to identify local stakeholders, as well as the issues that local and provincial government and non-profit actors are facing in order to develop collaborative approaches to address them. Through the regional roundtables, the community could form working groups to help develop and implement strategies to address the issues that are identified. The GNPI could support the work of the working group by helping to connect them to their network and providing them with technical assistance such as research and reports, training, and other resources available through their web portal.
Secondary Elements:

- **GNPI Orientation.** Option 2 is more of a hands-off approach for the GNPI, whereby they provide communities with the tools needed to develop their own regional GNPI working groups. The nature of small and remote communities however may still necessitate a GNPI presence. One way to do this would be to have a GNPI Leadership Council member or Council Staff that is attending the regional roundtable to offer a half-day orientation on the GNPI, its mandate, and available resources. This would help focus the roundtable dialogue and the issues that the community chooses to focus on.

- **Web portal.** As in option 1, the GNPI would further develop their website to include online resources, webinars on specific topics, and an interactive area where communities can network and share their experiences. The GNPI Council Office could continue to host and maintain the website, update resources, and develop webinars. Communities could also have access to the interactive area to post content and share resources. The website will help to connect communities facing similar challenges and share best practices.

**Option 3: GNPI web-portal**

Option 3 is geared towards small or medium cities that are better connected or have more resources to support the development of coordinated dialogue and collaboration between the government and non-profit sectors. Examples include Kamloops, Nanaimo, and Cranbrook. This option focuses on the development of a more robust online presence with added capacity building through shared services and the possibility of regional roundtables. Larger communities often have the resources to hire staff that specifically to help plan and coordinate social services. The GNPI’s website and online resources could be used by planners and coordinators to help bring stakeholders together in their communities and develop collaborative approaches to address common challenges.

A collaborative e-government web portal and resource database would enable the GNPI to engage more widely and systematically with non-profits throughout the province. The web-based platform, hosted by the GNPI, would allow the government and non-profits to engage in ongoing dialogue regarding the administrative barriers for non-profits. Similar to Manitoba’s interactive web-portal, the GNPI’s online platform would also serve as a comprehensive database that maps existing non-profit organizations, the types of programs and services they provide, available resources, as well as inter-sector networks throughout the province. In addition to the database, the GNPI would also develop an interactive space on their website where regional working groups could share ideas and resources and connect online. Lastly, the GNPI would continue to use their website to share resources such reports, toolkits, and
webinars. This networking capacity will be supported by smaller initiatives that will provide more face-to-face interaction.

Secondary Elements:

- **Shared Services.** Several research participants indicated that there are opportunities for shared services, however there is a lack of understanding of the benefits and challenges. There is also a lack of awareness of successful shared service initiatives. The GNPI would develop a guide to shared services that would enable non-profit organizations determine whether or not they could benefit from such an approach. This could lead to more efficient service delivery if non-profits are able to share the administrative of core costs of providing government (and other) services.

- **Regional Roundtables.** The GNPI would continue to hold bi-annual regional roundtables in communities throughout the province as they have done in the past. The roundtables would be held in the same seven cities as previously, with the addition of one or two roundtables in a smaller community. The results of the roundtables will continue to be summarized and posted online. The roundtables will also help determine the focus of the annual summits.

### 8.1 Recommendation

All three options provided offer a layered approach to regional engagement that include face-to-face and remote engagement opportunities, as well as additional opportunities for the GNPI to help build the capacity of local community stakeholders to increase collaboration and provide the best possible services to British Columbians. Although it would be ideal for the GNPI to employ all of the tools described in the options, the initiative has limited human and financial resources, and must therefore be strategic about how to engage at a local level throughout the province. Table 3 compares each of the options in relation to the GNPI’s five principles of engagement as well as the five elements of a good engagement strategy identified through the literature and primary research. Option 1 is the recommended option to engage at the regional level through the GNPI.

**Responsiveness:** The regional working group led strategy allows for the most face-to-face engagement, something that research participants indicated was key to the success of regional engagement through the GNPI. The development of regional working groups also allows engagement to develop beyond dialogue to focus on tangible collaborative results that benefit government and non-profit stakeholders in communities – a goal that has been mentioned by participants throughout previous GNPI engagement initiatives and the this research. Regional working groups allow the GNPI to help coordinate and facilitate engagement, while decision-making remains at the local level.
Manageability: Although this option requires the most resources (Appendix D), it also leverages the use of regional champions who are willing and able to volunteer their time and expertise to be part of the GNPI and champion the initiative in their communities. Volunteers are crucial to the success of the GNPI. By broadening the Leadership Council to include regional representatives who would also champion the GNPI in their communities, the GNPI can effectively engage at the regional level while still ensuring that other key GNPI priorities are met.

Accessibility: Option 1 also leverages the accessibility of the GNPI’s website by offering capacity building resources such as research, reports, and training as well as, networking opportunities not only to communities where a regional working group exists, but to all communities throughout the province.

Capacity Building: Where a regional GNPI is developed, the GNPI will be enabling these communities to organize, manage and implement their own engagement activities that are focused on addressing common challenges and meeting the needs of their citizens. The working groups also enable the GNPI to learn more about the needs and challenges of communities throughout the region.

Strategic Alignment: Finally, regional working groups are best suited to meet the mandate and goals of the GNPI while honoring the guiding principles. Regional working groups are cooperative and collaborative, focused on results, citizen focused, inclusive, innovative, and transparent. They honour diversity, promote organizational capacity, and mutual priorities.

Table 3: Comparison of specific options for regional engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>(1) Regional working groups</th>
<th>(2) Regional roundtables</th>
<th>(3) Web-portal</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
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<td>Accessibility</td>
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<td>Manageability</td>
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<td>Strategic alignment</td>
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<td>Trust</td>
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<td>Broad representation</td>
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<td>Awareness of GNPI and</td>
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<tr>
<td>mutual understanding</td>
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<td>Challenges</td>
<td>• Slower to implement</td>
<td>• Less face-to-face</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Requires regional</td>
<td>engagement</td>
<td>in low</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>champions</td>
<td></td>
<td>participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not province-wide for</td>
<td>• Requires regional</td>
<td>• Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>some time</td>
<td>champions who</td>
<td>internet</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>are willing/able to</td>
<td>access in</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lead initiative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Requires capacity to</td>
<td>communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>build capacity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Little face-to-face</td>
<td>engagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>engagement</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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59
8.2 Overview of Two Levels of Options and Possible Combinations

Figure 6 summarizes options for high level integration or regional engagement and options for specific engagement tools that the GNPI could use to implement regional engagement. Each of the specific engagement tools could be used in combination with any of the high level options, however certain combinations would not be manageable nor meet the strategic priorities of the GNPI. The arrows indicate the combinations that are most compatible.

**Figure 6: Overview of Options**

High level Option 3 would be most manageable in combination with specific level Options 2 or 3, however these combinations leave little opportunity for the GNPI to engage face-to-face as well as the opportunity for government stakeholders to build relationships with the non-profit sector.

Combining high level Option 2 with specific Option 1 could be highly effective, however it would require a significant amount of planning, time, and stakeholders who are willing and able to volunteer their time to be on either a regional Leadership Council or working group. Combining Option 2 from both the high level and specific engagement tools would be more manageable.

High level Option 1 could also be effectively combined specific Options 2 and 3, however this would result in very little face-to-face engagement and relationship building at the regional level. Combining Option 1 from both the high level and specific engagement tools is the recommended option as it best meets the GNPI’s current human and financial capacity while at the same time meets the key principles outlined by regional stakeholders and aligns with the GNPI’s strategic priorities.
9.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The implementation of regional representation on the Leadership Council and the regional working groups strategy will be completed in 5 years given the GNPI’s current financial and human resources. Implementation will take place in three stages.

**Stage 1: Implement regional representation on the Leadership Council.** Planning for the first stage will begin in August, with implementation to be completed within two years. The first year of implementation will be aimed at increasing awareness of the GNPI throughout the province, and gaining a better understanding of the actors and issues facing communities in B.C. Both the Leadership Council and GNPI Council office will be responsible for increasing awareness through activities such as the Annual Summit and attending local government area association and UBCM meetings in hopes of identifying regional GNPI champions to join the Leadership Council. The Leadership Council will be responsible for identifying representatives from each of the eight development regions by the beginning of the second year of implementation. Once the regional representatives have been chosen and have accepted the invitation to join, the second year of implementation will be spent orientating and integrating the new members.

**Stage 2: Developing two regional working group pilot projects.** In the third year of implementation, the Leadership Council and Council Office will identify two communities that could benefit from and have the capacity to administer regional working groups and begin planning. Two pilot regional working groups will be implemented in year four.

**Stage 3: Continued capacity building and evaluation.** In the final year of implementation, the Leadership Council and Council Office will develop additional capacity building tools based on the outcomes of the regional working groups. This may include workshops or online training, reports, or initiatives like the M.O.R.E. mentorship program. The GNPI will also evaluate the success of the new Leadership Council structure, and regional working groups.

Further development of the GNPI’s web-portal will be the responsibility of the Council Office, and will take place throughout the five-year implementation period. The GNPI should continue to hold their annual summits, but alter them so that regional stakeholders may participate remotely. Annual summits could also be broadcasted live and allow for interactive participation so that those in remote and rural communities do not have to travel to be involved. This could be achieved by partnering with colleges and universities to provide the necessary technology and connections for those who do not have access to high-speed internet or do not have the technology needed to connect.
10.0 CONCLUSION

The non-profit sector in British Columbia is not only significant in size, but more importantly in the impact that it has on the citizens of British Columbia. The non-profit sector plays a vital role in our everyday life by providing critical services to help improve the lives of this province’s citizens and offer support in people’s times of need. Despite its importance, the non-profit sector continues to be faced with an increasingly complex and constrained environment that threaten the sustainability of the sector and its ability to offer the best possible services to British Columbians.

The Government of B.C. plays a critical role in setting legislation, policies, and funding the sector. Neither the government nor the non-profit sector can be successful without the other. This report endeavored to determine how the GNPI, an organization created to help the two sectors successfully work together, could foster dialogue, relationships, and collaborative solutions to complex and persistent issues at the local level.

A review of relevant literature and interviews and focus groups with 28 academics and government and non-profit leaders identified numerous opportunities for the GNPI to integrate regional engagement into their existing structure and leverage existing networks, as well as specific tools and methods for the GNPI to engage. This research allowed me to arrive at three high level options for institutionalization of regional engagement, and three multi-tool options for regional engagement. Ideally the GNPI would be able to implement all options, however considering their strategic goals, principles, and current capacity integration of regional representation in the Leadership Council and a regional working group led strategy are recommended.

Although the report included a thorough review of similar initiatives throughout the country, and regional initiatives in B.C., there is still a need for an in depth review and mapping of existing government and non-profit networks across the province. This will allow the GNPI to better understand what exists and where they can leverage existing relationships and resources to further develop their engagement strategy.

The time to foster relationships and build capacity among government and non-profit organizations at the local level has never been more essential. Not only has this has long been a goal of the GNPI, but it is now clear that the GNPI is well placed to do to. The GNPI is faced with both a complex environment, and some significant barriers and challenges, however implementing a regional engagement strategy is both realistic and achievable.
REFERENCES


Elson, P. R. (April, 2012). What’s up? Voluntary sector-provincial government relations in Canada. Presentation at the GNPI, B.C.


APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS’ SUGGESTIONS FOR REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

- Quebec: Ministry of Regional Affairs (regional offices)
- Neighbourhoods Alive!
- Ottawa Neighborhood Planning
- Ministry of Environment (land based programs)
- Southern Interior Local Government Association (SILGA) (GNPI could attend local meetings)
- Premiers Technology Council in Prince George
- MCFD Regional groups
- Federal government gas tax (forums help to get feedback and develop a report/plan)
- Non-profit network in Nova Scotia ("network of networks")
- Ontario Non-profit Network (uses chaos theory model through online virtual/real space)
- Voluntary Chambers in Calgary and Edmonton
- Muttart Foundation, Alberta
- Community Development Frameworks
- Tamarack Vibrant Communities (collaboration with McConnell Foundation, includes businesses)
- Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MAVEC)
- Local initiatives such as KBCSC (does a lot of skills development and capacity building)
- Community Futures (Economic focus, provides small business loans)
- Nechako - Kitimat - Prince George Trust
- Venture Kamloops
- East Kootenay Child Development Centre (example of shared services)
- Nechako Valley Community Services (works in three communities)
- Hecate (provides shared services and hold stakeholder meetings with a centralized workshop)
- Partnership with NW Training in Prince Rupert and Kitimat Community Services
- Community Living
- CoreBC certification program (blended leadership development), Applied Promising Practices
- Board Voice: Board Together (reaches out to provincial and municipal partners across B.C.)
- Board Voice Coalition for Provincial Organizations (includes recreational and community economic development organizations)
- Scope Health prevention campaign
- Communities of practice
- Social Innovation at Waterloo
- Neighbourhood Link (joint collaboration in Vanderhoof).
- Community Health Networks
- Community counts campaign (put out info on the needs and values of the sector)
- Revelstoke (example of cross-sectoral planning for community resources)
- Federation of Community Social Services of BC
- Immigration Integration Branch's approach to immigrant serving agencies.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today to participate in this interview. As I mentioned in the invitation, I am a Master of Public Administration student at the University of Victoria. My research project is intended to provide the Government/Non-profit initiative (GNPI) with a regional engagement strategy to help broaden engagement, strengthen relationships, and build networks between the government and non-profit sectors across B.C. A regional engagement strategy will provide the GNPI with a more accurate account of the issues facing the sector, actions that can be taken to both strengthen the relationship and ultimately help build the capacity of the two sectors to provide better services to British Columbians.

The interview should take approximately 45 minutes. There are 14 questions in total. I will begin by asking you a few background questions. The second section focuses on your current engagement through the GNPI and other initiatives. The third and final section focuses on future engagement opportunities and what these should look like.

You may choose to end the interview at any point, without providing a reason - information gathered will be discarded. You may also choose to skip a question at anytime. Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

Background information

1. How long have you been in your current position? How long have you been with the organization?

2. What is the nature of your responsibilities (particularly with regards to engagement with the other sector)?

3. What led you to this position?

Current Engagement with GNPI

4. Can you describe your current level of engagement with the GNPI, if applicable, and what is it like? For example: Is it enough? Is it useful?

5. What types of engagement are useful (i.e. networks, relationships, summits, roundtables, working groups, website, etc.)? Not useful?
6. Do you face any barriers to engaging with the GNPI?

7. What was your motivation to engage with the GNPI? Has this been fulfilled? If not, what do you get out of engagement through the GNPI?

**Opportunities for Regional Engagement**

8. In your opinion, should the GNPI engage at the local/community level?

9. If so, what should regional engagement through GNPI look like? For example: Who should this include? Where should the focus be (i.e. which regions, which cities or size of communities)? What types of engagement would be useful (i.e. policy dialogue, collaborative projects, shared services, etc.)?

10. Outside of the GNPI, are there places where engagement is working well (i.e. through other non-profits or levels of governments such as community based networks or even in other jurisdictions)? Are there existing initiatives that the GNPI could build on?

11. What approaches can you suggest for the GNPI to broaden engagement (i.e. web portal, video-conferencing, shared services, roundtables, television broadcasts, etc.)?

12. How much time would you be willing/able to devote to this approach(es)?

13. What should the GNPI’s role be (financial, human resources, facilitator, etc.)?

14. Do you have any additional thoughts or suggestions for the GNPI?

Thank you again for your time. Your thoughts and perspectives are greatly appreciated, and will be very useful to this research, and to the development of a regional engagement strategy for the GNPI. If you are interested, I can forward you the sections of the report that are relevant to you for review during the drafting stage of the report to ensure that I have accurately captured your ideas and that your anonymity is maintained. If you have any further questions or comments, please do not hesitate to be in touch. I will also provide you with a copy of the final report upon completion.
APPENDIX C: BUDGET - REGIONAL REPRESENTATION ON LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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<tr>
<td><strong>Calculation of Expenditures</strong></td>
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<td>Increase awareness and recruit members</td>
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# APPENDIX D: BUDGET - REGIONAL WORKING GROUPS

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<td>Pilot working groups – staff (20 days)</td>
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# APPENDIX E: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

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<td>(1) Regional representation on Leadership Council</td>
<td>Awareness and recruitment</td>
<td>1.0 Develop communication and marketing plan</td>
<td>GNPI LC</td>
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<td>Aug-2013</td>
<td>Oct-2013</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1.1 Submit application for provincial funding</td>
<td>GNPI LC/CO</td>
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<td>Sept-2013</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Promote via website and newsletter</td>
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<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Sept-2013</td>
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<td>1.3 Hold annual summit</td>
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<td>1.4 Attend UBCM and local government area association meetings</td>
<td>GNPI LC</td>
<td>$6,500</td>
<td>Sept-2013</td>
<td>Aug-2014</td>
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<td>1.5 Attend any other relevant meetings</td>
<td>GNPI LC/CO</td>
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<td>Oct-2013</td>
<td>Aug-2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.6 Recruit eight regional representatives</td>
<td>GNPI LC</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>Sep-2014</td>
<td>Dec-2014</td>
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<td>*Items in current budget</td>
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<td>1.7 Formalize new Leadership Council</td>
<td>GNPI LC</td>
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<td>Dec-2013</td>
<td>Jan-2014</td>
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<td>1.8 Plan orientation</td>
<td>GNPI CO</td>
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<td>Feb-2014</td>
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<td>1.9 Hold orientation for new members</td>
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<td>(2) Regional working groups pilots</td>
<td>Web-portal</td>
<td>2.0 Submit application for provincial funding</td>
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<td>GNPI CO</td>
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<td>Jan-2016</td>
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<td>Identify two communities to pilot regional working groups through Leadership Council meetings</td>
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