

Engaging Young Adults:

A Strategic Vision for the
United Way of Greater Victoria

598 Policy Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

United Way of Canada - Centraide Canada is second only to governments in funding the voluntary sector and social services in Canada. As part of the United Way movement, the United Way of Greater Victoria (UWGV) is committed to investing in services and programs to help address important social issues and to facilitate a stronger and healthier local community.

The UWGV, like other philanthropic organizations, currently faces unprecedented challenges to sustain its leadership role as a facilitator of social improvement. Turbulent economic, social, and political conditions are having a direct impact on the welfare of Canadians. In this uncertain climate, non-profit organizations anticipate both a decrease in donor and government support and an increase in demand for assistance and services. At the same time, many long-time donors and volunteers approach retirement, creating the need to encourage the participation of new individuals in these organizations.

In addition to these threats, the UWGV has identified an under-representation of young adults in philanthropic organizations and community activities. This raises serious concerns about the impact of disengaged younger generations on the future strength of Canadian society.

Project Objectives

Key Research Question: *What can the United Way of Greater Victoria (UWGV) do to engage the 23-35 age group in the local community, while also building awareness of the organization and connections to the causes that it supports?*

The objective of this project is to develop a strategy for the UWGV to engage young adults in the organization and the local community. The goal of the research is to identify why young adults are not engaged and determine the best approaches for the UWGV to attract the 23-35 age group to become involved with the organization and other causes throughout Greater Victoria.

Methodology

This research project is a qualitative analysis of strategies for engaging and sustaining young adults as contributors to the UWGV and the local community. The research for this project included several phases: a literature review, demographic scan, review of other comparable programs and several focus groups.

To summarize the results of research and develop recommendations, analysis performed for this report identified seven *Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement*. Recommendations were then developed to apply findings of research and analysis in the local Victoria community. An implementation plan is also provided as a guideline for the UWGV to put recommendations from this report into practice.

Findings

A strong civil society and genuine engagement of citizens has cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. To develop young adults as engaged citizens, the UWGV should take into account the defining characteristics of the “Millennial” generation such as values for social responsibility and concern about global issues, and an increasing dependence on technology. Additionally, the UWGV must consider the specific demographic features of the 23-35 age group in Victoria in designing a strategy that meets the needs of this target segment of the population. These features consist of:

- *A target group (23-35) representing approximately 16% of the population in Greater Victoria*
- *A large number of parents with young children*
- *Many singles and ‘unattached’ individuals*
- *A mobile segment of the population that moves regularly*

A goal of research was to identify key components of engagement, focusing on motivations and psychological factors that affect young adult participation in community activities, volunteer work and philanthropy. The following barriers to, and motivations for, engaging young adults were identified:

Barriers:

- *Time Limitations*
- *Commitment*
- *Transient Lifestyle*
- *Lack of Information / Opportunity*
- *Self-Perception (“Don’t fit the Mould”)*
- *Identity Labelling*
- *Bureaucracy*
- *Financial Constraints*

Motivations:

- *The Cause*
- *Giving Back*
- *Making an Impact and Seeing Results*
- *Personal Development*
- *Recognition*
- *Social Interaction*
- *Support from an Employer or School*

Based on findings from other United Way organizations, (and recognizing unique characteristics of Victoria) the following recommendations are suggested as key to developing a successful young adult program at the UWGV:

- *A mandate that focuses on causes rather than fundraising*
- *Support of the executive of the organization*
- *Flexible and meaningful roles for young adult participants*
- *Effective marketing and branding*
- *Events and activities designed to target young adults*

Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement

Seven *Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement* are suggested in the report based on the findings from all the facets of the research. These Smart Practices highlight key principles for a successful young adult engagement strategy and consist of the following:

- *Provide Organizational Support*
- *Promote Awareness*
- *Be Flexible*
- *Balance Social Interaction and the Cause*
- *Make a Call for Action*
- *Provide Opportunities for Feedback and Acknowledgement*
- *Be Realistic*

The *Smart Practices* identified here should not be seen as mutually exclusive; rather, various components of these practices should be incorporated into a young adult engagement program.

Recommendations

The following recommendations apply the *Smart Practices* identified in this report to suit the specific characteristics of the UWGV and young adults in the Greater Victoria Region.

- *Make Organizational Change – Engage Young Adults in Current Structure*
- *Avoid Traditional “Youth Group Model”*
- *Establish the UWGV as the Primary Facilitator for Young Adult Engagement*
- *Pursue use of “Live United” Marketing*
- *Establish Engagement Committee*
- *Expand Engagement Opportunities*
- *Dedicate Funding and Resources to Young Adult Engagement*
- *Obtain and Invest in Better Data and Research*

This report proposes a plan for UWGV to develop an informed strategy to brand and structure the organization to better meet the needs of the young adults living in Greater Victoria. Recommendations include a re-evaluation of organizational structure and priorities, and the commitment of time and resources. An implementation plan proposes a set of timelines and action items to help progress the report’s recommendations.

The plan is intended as a guideline rather than a comprehensive, prescriptive requirement. The UWGV should undertake its own assessment of the report and application of its recommendations and subsequent implementation. However, implementation of this strategy can help position the UWGV to employ the skills, abilities and enthusiasm of younger generations, to continue to fulfill its mandate as a builder of strong community in Greater Victoria.

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The United Way of Greater Victoria (UWGV), like other philanthropic organizations, faces unprecedented challenges to sustain its leadership role as a facilitator of social improvement. A glance at the front page of a Victoria newspaper or the evening news provides an overview of the current reality in much of the world: climate change, political unrest, homelessness and poverty, in addition to a global financial crisis. These issues impact the daily lives and future objectives of many, with particular significance for young adults, who now face new uncertainties about their future.

Canadian non-profit organizations anticipate a decrease in donor and government support and an increase in the number of people seeking help and services as a result of these changes. At the same time, many long-time donors and volunteers approach retirement. These threats, combined with the current under-representation of young adults in the work of philanthropic organizations, could have negative effects on the ability of these organizations to continue to contribute to the sustainability of a strong civic society.

Many political scientists view voter turnout as a useful measure of civic engagement (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004; Putnam, 1995). As evidenced by results of the October 2008 Canadian federal election in which an all time low of only 59% of citizens voted (CBC, 2008), or the Victoria November 2008 civic election in which only 26% of eligible voters went to the polls (Hunter, 2008), the future of engagement in Canada does not look very healthy. While final data on these elections is not yet available, voter turnout appeared especially low among younger Canadians (Canadian Press, 2008).

Canadians in their twenties and thirties (the “Millennial generation”) are less likely than their parents’ generation to donate time or money to community organizations. This raises serious concerns about the impact of disengaged generations on the future strength of Canadian society. However, the 2008 United States election offered promising evidence that the Millennial generation can be motivated to become engaged; young Americans voted in numbers higher than ever before. This involvement may translate into a commitment to participate in action to address pressing current problems affecting their world.

Younger generations in Victoria have significant potential to become engaged in social processes if they are aware of key issues and opportunities for positive change in their community. The UWGV has the ability to take a leadership role in promoting causes and developing messages that appeal to new generations of philanthropists. Additionally, the UWGV has an opportunity to be a leader for young adult engagement serving as a model for other organizations to reach this segment of the population.

1.1 Project Objective

Key Research Question: *What can the United Way of Greater Victoria (UWGV) do to engage the 23-35 age group in the local community, while also building awareness of the organization and connections to the causes that it supports?*

The objective of this project is to develop a strategy for the UWGV to engage young adults in the organization and the local community. The goal of the research is to identify why young adults¹ are not engaged and to determine the best approaches for the UWGV to attract the 23-35 age group to become involved with the organization and other causes throughout Greater Victoria.

The key outcome of this research is to provide recommendations for how the UWGV should approach engaging the 23-35 age group in the organization and local community. These recommendations will be based on the application of findings on demographic characteristics of young adults in Victoria, motivations and barriers associated with engagement, and “smart practices”² from other United Ways across Canada on how to engage this target group.

1.2 Academic Requirements

For completion of the Masters in Public Administration program at the University of Victoria, candidates are required to complete a major report, similar to a thesis. The Advanced Management or Policy Report is expected to be a substantial analysis of a management, policy or program problem for a client in the non-profit or public sector. The ADMN 598 Report is prepared in consultation with the client and an academic supervisor in the School of Public Administration; the report must be practical and useful to the client as well as academically rigorous. It is intended that this project with the United Way of Greater Victoria will meet the requirements for this report.

All research proposed by students in the School of Public Administration must be reviewed by the UVIC Human Research Ethics Board (HREB). The mandate of HREB is to ensure that all human research is conducted in accordance with the highest ethical standards and that the public, the researchers, and the University are protected from harm. School of Public Administration 598 projects are expected to conform to these guidelines. As this project included interviews and other data collection methods which involved people, an ethics review was conducted to ensure the integrity of the research.³

¹ Defined by the UWGV for this project as the 23-35 age group.

² To avoid the problems presented with claims of what constitute “best” practices, Eugene Bardach’s (n.d.) term of “smart practices” will be adapted for this project. A “smart practice” will be defined as a tested approach that has a proven track record of success in solving a problem (Feng & Stoyko, 2008). For further discussion on Smart Practice research, please see *Section 4: Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement*.

³ A copy of the approved Ethics Review is available from the researcher at dkp@uvic.ca.

1.3 Client Background

The United Way of Canada comprises 122 volunteer-based organizations located in ten provinces and two territories, and a national organization, *United Way of Canada - Centraide Canada*. The mission of all United Way organizations is “to improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action” (United Way of Canada, 2008).

Second only to governments, the United Way Movement is the largest funder of the voluntary sector and social services in Canada. Each year, United Ways raise upwards of \$440 million, the vast majority of which is reinvested in local communities to support programs and services directed at improving the social conditions of Canadians.

Each of Canada’s 122 United Way organizations is an autonomous organization operated by a voluntary board of directors chosen from the community it serves. These organizations are built upon a long history of bringing together diverse partners at the local level to initiate action on community issues and problems. While approaches and practices may differ across the country, all United Ways aim to strengthen communities by:

- convening human and social service agencies at the community and neighbourhood level together with governments, businesses and labour to facilitate discussions around assets, needs and priorities of the local community in question;
- pooling and leveraging resources by building partnerships and collaborations;
- providing training, learning and professional development opportunities for voluntary sector organizations in leadership and governance; and
- delivering national programs such as 211 (a community resource help line) or the Day of Caring (opportunities for companies, groups or organizations to work in the community and help a non-profit agency with a project or special event).

For over 70 years, the UWGV has been committed to investing in the Greater Victoria community to help create systemic changes addressing important social issues. In 2005 the UWGV initiated an internal organizational restructuring intended to shift from its role as primarily a fundraiser and fund-distributor to that of a community impact organization. As a community impact organization, the UWGV promotes building the community’s capacity to address key issues and contribute to lasting, positive change. Under this model, not only is the UWGV a fundraiser and fund distributor, but the organization is becoming increasingly recognized as an advocate for addressing key local community issues. The UWGV focuses on three issues that it has identified as the most critical needs to facilitate a stronger and healthier community in Victoria:

- Family & Community Well-being
- Housing for Homeless, Low Income & Working Poor
- Mental Health & Addictions

Within these strategic issues, the UWGV emphasizes the need for involvement of marginalized populations and meaningful consideration of diverse perspectives as a basis for finding common ground. *Community Impact* also includes helping ensure that individuals who need help know where to go, explaining the nature of issues, and communicating the importance of problem prevention, early identification, and early intervention. Additionally, the UWGV recognizes the importance of engaging clients and other community members to provide input on issues and feedback on programs.

1.4 Rationale for Youth Engagement Research

While significant progress has been made to transform the UWGV into a community impact organization, several governance challenges and structural issues have been identified by the UWGV Board and management (UWGV, 2007). One key issue regards the need to increase involvement of youth and young adults in board decisions, community impact councils and other activities of the organization.

The UWGV has facilitated a variety of *youth* engagement initiatives in the Greater Victoria Region, with a goal of promoting and facilitating volunteerism among youth aged 15-22. The UWGV Youth Advisory Council (YAC) organizes a number of programs and events to involve youth in volunteer work and projects with non-profit organizations. In early 2008 the YAC developed a *Youth Engagement Strategy* that included literature reviews, interviews and recommendations for the UWGV to encourage more youth to become involved in their community. Among recommendations was the need to find better ways to engage young adults that fall outside of the target age group for UWGV youth programs. The executive of the UWGV agreed with this recommendation and recognizes a gap in providing programs that appeal to the 23-35 age group.

Impending retirement of baby boomers will also have a significant impact on the UWGV. Currently a large percentage of donations and contributions to the UWGV come from workplace campaigns and pay-cheque deductions. However, once current donors retire, it is unclear whether they will remain as supporters of the UWGV. Many private sector organizations and government agencies are focusing significant time and resources to succession planning and knowledge transfer to prepare for the impact of an aging population. Non-profit organizations must also focus on long term planning to ensure that their operations are sustainable in the future.

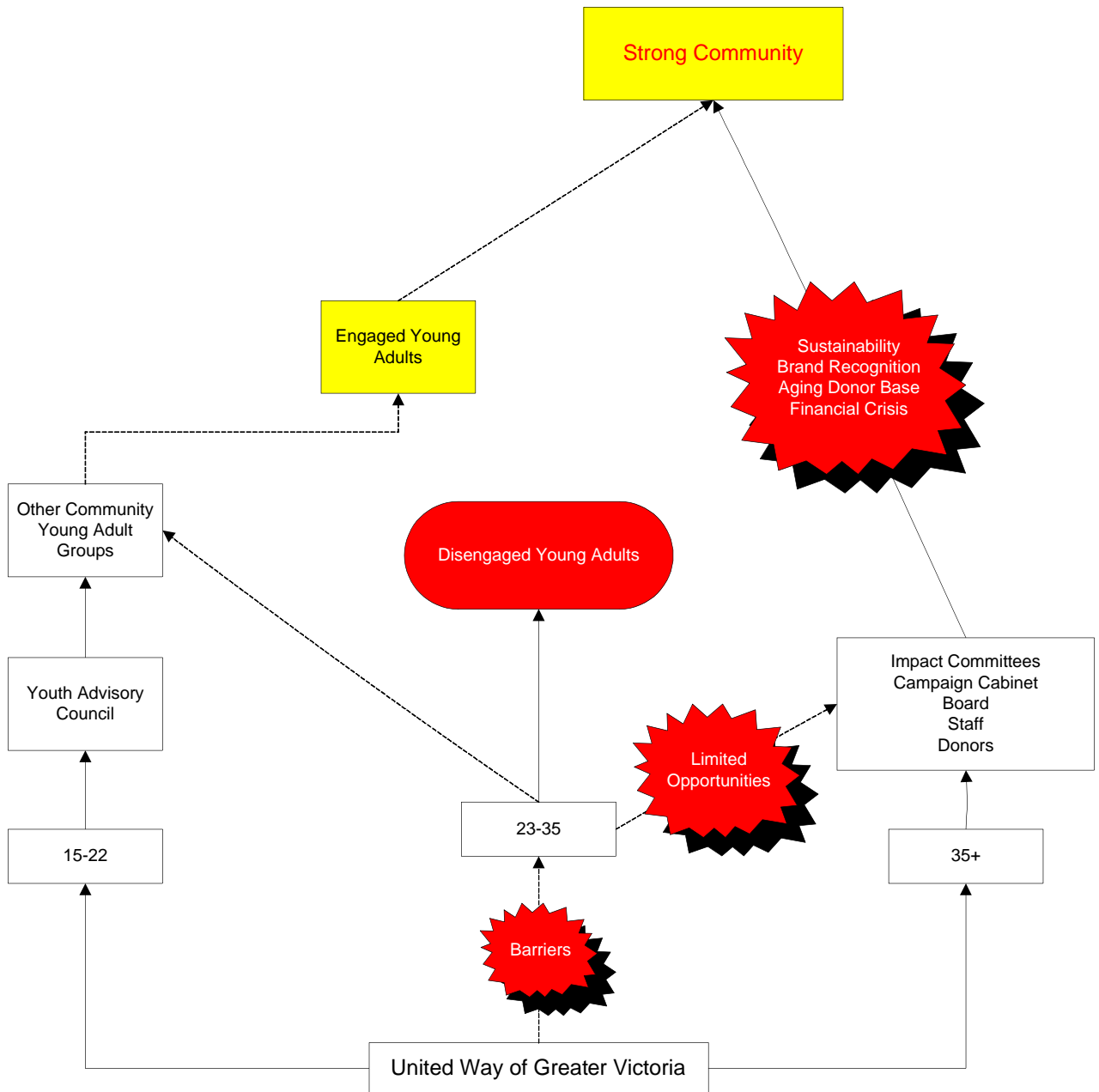
This climate of shifting demographics in Greater Victoria requires the UWGV to be proactive in developing plans to engage and gain commitment from the next

generation of volunteers and donors. As the UWGV has undergone restructuring and transformation, now is an ideal time to consider initiating programs that meet the needs and interests of young adults while supporting the new goals of the organization. However, significant change and commitment within the UWGV is needed to successfully engage young adults in the organization and the community.

Conceptual Framework: As-is Model

Figure 1 (see next page) demonstrates the current structure of the UWGV and highlights some key issues that affect the organization's ability to deliver services and achieve its goal of building a strong Victoria community. The diagram identifies some of the main concerns of the UWGV and illustrates that there are a variety of barriers that keep the 23-35 age group from becoming involved in the community (described further in *Section 3.3* of this report). *Figure 1* also shows some of the key organizational barriers that keep young adults from becoming involved in the UWGV; specifically related to a lack of opportunities and programs aimed at this age group. Finally, it is important to emphasize the challenges that the UWGV will face if it does *not* engage young adults in the current organization. These challenges include threats to sustainability, a strong donor base, brand recognition and the 2008 global financial crisis.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework - 'As Is' Model



SECTION 2 - METHODOLOGY

A variety of different research approaches employed in preparation of this report will provide recommendations to develop and sustain young adults as 'engaged' contributors to the UWGV and throughout the local community.

Any future programs and initiatives aimed at engaging young adults at the UWGV should take into account the multiple components of engagement that will be discussed throughout this paper. It is not the UWGV's goal simply to increase the number of people peripherally involved with the organization; attendance at an event or a one-time donation does not lead to sustained connection to the organization. The challenge for the UWGV is to develop programs and initiatives that will promote long-term commitment of young adults to the organization and the local community.

2.1 Young Adult Engagement Strategy Structure

This research project is a qualitative analysis of strategies for engaging and sustaining young adults as contributors to the UWGV and the local community. The research for this project included several phases:

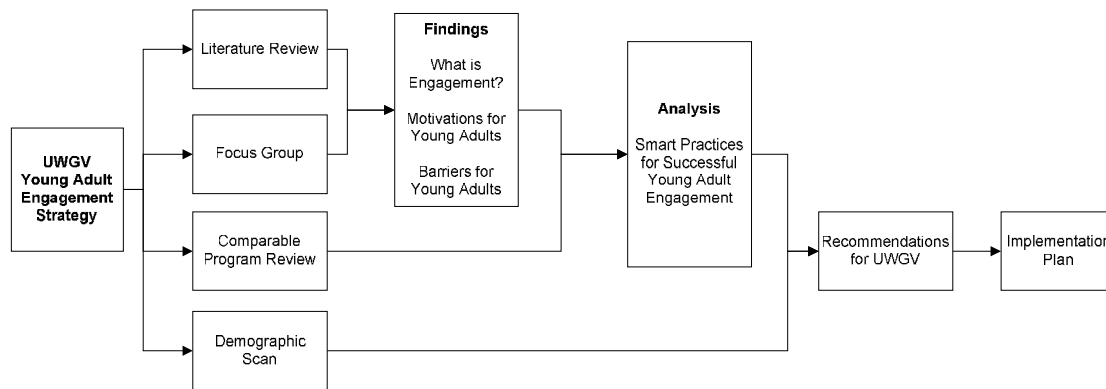
- *Literature Review*
- *Demographic Scan*
- *Comparable Program Review*
- *Focus Groups*
- *Analysis: Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement*
- *Recommendations*
- *Implementation Plan*

The research strategy is also included graphically in *Figure 2*.

A qualitative approach to the research was adopted in preference to using quantitative techniques for a variety of reasons. A primary reason for a qualitative approach was the lack of available quantitative or statistical data on the target age group. The UWGV does not collect this data, and other surveys and research on volunteering and community engagement do not report specifically on the 23-35 age group.

Additionally, many of the existing programs across Canada created to engage young adults are structured very differently than the UWGV or are new or in development. Therefore, even if data were available from other affiliate organizations, its validity could not be confirmed and a comparative analysis would be flawed. Conducting a survey was considered as part of the research design, but it was determined that, given resource and time restraints this exercise was not a feasible option. A survey on young adult engagement is a potential opportunity for further research.

Figure 2: Young Adult Engagement Strategy Structure



2.2 Literature Review

A goal of the research was to identify key components of engagement, focusing on motivations and psychological factors that affect young adult participation in community activities, volunteer work and philanthropy. The research involved a review of academic journals and periodicals, in addition to a scan of reports and other information on specific programs and organizations. Another major component of this research was a review of academic literature to determine if there were existing models or theories that could be applied to development of an effective strategy to engage young adults in the UWGV.

A scan of academic articles, reports and several surveys identified many barriers to engaging young adults in their communities, philanthropy and volunteering. Two of the key sources used throughout the report are Statistics Canada General Social Surveys (GSS)⁴ and results of Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP).⁵

While these surveys do not specifically measure ‘engagement,’ they provide useful insight into some key motivations and barriers that affect Canadian participation in volunteer or community activities.

⁴ Conducted each year, the two primary objectives of the General Social Survey (GSS) are to gather data on social trends in order to monitor changes in the living conditions and wellbeing of Canadians over time; and to provide information on specific social policy issues of current or emerging interest. Cycle 17 on *Social Engagement* and Cycle 19 on *Time Use* were the main sources of information for this report.

⁵ The Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP) provides a comprehensive look at the contributions of Canadians to one another and to their communities. The CSGVP, (conducted three times in 1997, 2000 and 2004) asks Canadians a series of questions about:

- I. how they give money and other resources to individuals and to charitable and nonprofit organizations;
- II. volunteer time to charitable and voluntary organizations and directly to individuals; and
- III. how they participate in organizations by becoming members.

The survey reports results by a variety of demographic features and also geographically by province.

2.3 Demographic Scan

This research project originally planned to analyze existing data on young adults that are currently donors or are involved in volunteer work and events at the UWGV. This information would be used to set targets and goals to develop a strategic plan for the UWGV concerning young adult engagement. However, the UWGV does not collect data on its donors or on the local community.

Focus for this project was therefore shifted to conducting a demographic scan of the Greater Victoria region to identify features of the population and the composition of the target young adult demographic living within the jurisdiction of the UWGV. An important outcome of this demographic scan was identifying characteristics of the Victoria population to gain insight on key features of the 23-35 age group within the broader region. The demographic profile of Greater Victoria reveals some unique characteristics of the population that the UWGV can use to better promote engagement in this age group. The demographic scan also includes discussion of key predictors of volunteering and how they apply to the population in Victoria.

The demographic scan was based on information collected through Census and BC Stats data and Statistics Canada surveys.

2.4 Comparable Program Review

The goal of the Comparable Program Review was to contact established young adult programs throughout Canada to determine “smart practices” that could be applied to a young adult group at the UWGV. Despite extensive efforts to contact comparable United Way young adult programs, only a limited number of representatives responded to information requests or made themselves available for interviews.

Phone interviews were conducted with representatives from six United Ways in other regions of Canada that have existing young adult programs. Informal communication occurred with several other affiliate offices; however, information available on young adult engagement was limited. This lack of information is no doubt due to the fact that many United Way-Centraide offices and similar Canadian philanthropic organizations are not targeting this age group.

Interviews were also conducted with representatives from existing young adult groups and non-profit organizations in Victoria. Information collected on other young adult programs was used to highlight some key themes, and compare successes and challenges. Interview participants and their organizations are anonymous in this report to meet the requirements set out in the UVIC ethical review application for this project (see *Academic Requirements* in Section 1.2 of this report).

2.5 Focus Groups

Research and literature reviews revealed limited information available on the specific needs and interests of young adults in Victoria. Based on this finding, several focus groups were conducted to validate literature review research, enhance the recommendations of this project and to provide the UWGV with a better understanding of the specific needs and interests of the 23-35 age group in Victoria.

Intended goals for the focus groups included identifying barriers to, and motivations for, young adult engagement in non-profit organizations in Greater Victoria. Also, it was planned that the focus groups would be used to brainstorm potential programs for a young adults group at the UWGV. Key desired outcomes for the focus groups included receiving feedback on findings of the literature review, obtaining Victoria-specific information and arriving at some new ideas for future programs at the UWGV.

Findings from the focus group and literature review were combined to generate key themes on engagement, and on motivations and barriers. This analysis identifies consistencies between literature and the focus group results and also discusses some discrepancies in information gained from academic research and the focus groups.

In total, four focus groups were conducted. Two focus groups of young adults were held to gain feedback from 23-35 age group. There were a total of seventeen participants in these groups, representing a range of ages (within the 23-35 bracket) and backgrounds.

A focus group of current UWGV staff was conducted as these individuals have useful organizational and institutional knowledge to provide context for findings and insights on the implementation of recommendations (Mitra, 1994). Seven staff members attended this discussion representing UWGV executive, marketing and communications, community impact and campaign. Also, a focus group of six of eight current UWGV Youth Advisory Council (YAC) members was held to identify programs that appealed to future young adults and to gain feedback on how the current UWGV youth programs could tie in with a future young adult group.

Due to time and resource restrictions, random sampling for the focus groups of young adults was not possible. Therefore, an informal process was used to recruit young adults relying on networks, friends, colleagues and UWGV staff to populate the two sessions. This method of recruitment does not affect the integrity of this research, as the goal of focus groups is to generate themes and perspectives from discussions (Creswell, 1998). A perfectly representative sample is not necessary as focus groups are intended to provide trustworthy naturalistic data that can lead to important insights about human behavior.

Focus groups “are not, however, intended to lead to generalizations about the population” (Grudens-Schuck, *et al.*, 2004: 2). Results were qualitative and remained anonymous.

For further discussion of Focus Group Methodology and an outline of questions used and participant consent form, please see Appendix 1.

2.6 Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement

To summarize the results of research and develop recommendations, analysis performed for this report identifies seven *Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement*. This analysis combines recommendations from literature with findings of this report to create a list of key practices that can be the foundation of a program for the UWGV that successfully engages young adults. The smart practices identified in this report provide a general summary of findings from the literature review, focus groups and comparable program review that could be applied by any United Way organization in Canada trying to engage young adults.

For Further Discussion on Smart Practice methodology please see Section 4.

2.7 Recommendations and Implementation

Recommendations were developed to provide specific guidelines for how the UWGV could use this research report to put findings into practice in the local community. These recommendations incorporate the list of smart practices with findings about the characteristics of the region from the demographic scan. Recommendations include an implementation plan with an outline of initial steps that should be taken by the UWGV to successfully put into practice a strategy to engage young adults. The implementation plan also proposes a timeline for milestones, but is intended as a guideline rather than a comprehensive, prescriptive requirement. The UWGV should undertake its own assessment of the report and application of its recommendations and subsequent implementation.

SECTION 3 – FINDINGS

3.1 What is Engagement?

The UWGV has identified that many young adults are not engaged in volunteer organizations or civic action. There is significant concern about the impact that a generation of disengaged citizens could have on the community and greater society. But what is engagement? Why is citizen engagement so important?

The following section will discuss the concept of engagement and elaborate on its importance as a foundation of healthy communities and society.

Engagement Defined

It is necessary to define the term *engagement* to better understand the current situation of the UWGV and to establish goals for the future. Engagement, is not, however simple to define and cannot necessarily be measured by numbers, hours or dollars. The Marriam-Webster's Dictionary (2003) defines the term engagement using words such as "bind," "hold" and "pledge." This definition is helpful to demonstrate literal meanings of engagement.

For many organizations definitions of engagement are very similar to definitions of volunteerism. Volunteerism refers to individuals contributing time, resources and/or energy without receiving monetary compensation (Weaver, 2005). It is a goal of the United Way to increase the number of volunteers and participants and the amount of money that donors give. However, the UWGV's vision of *engaged* young adults goes beyond volunteering and monetary donations.

The engagement that the UWGV seeks for young adults should be viewed as the spirit of philanthropy and volunteerism (McClintock, 2004). This spirit encompasses motivation, meaning, quality of life, excitement, value-building and ownership (Volunteer Canada, 2005), in addition to the actions being performed. For a person to be fully engaged, he or she should feel a personal connection with an organization and a desire to take ownership of outcomes and responsibility for successes. Engaged individuals believe in the mandate of an organization and relate to its vision and goals.

In his book *Terms of Engagement*, Axelrod (2000) focuses on the importance of engagement in leading employees through organizational change. For Axelrod (2000: 5), "true" engagement involves: alignment around a common purpose, personal relationships and interactions; a communal willingness to work together to accomplish meaningful goals; and setting aside personal interests for the common good. While these principles were written as a guide for workplaces undergoing change, the themes presented can be equally applied to volunteer engagement. Axelrod effectively incorporates emotions and motivations into his model, supporting the idea that engagement is more about personal connections

than about actions and participation. These personal connections and feelings, Axelrod argues, prompt action and participation in civic life.

Axelrod's idea is effectively incorporated in the Centre of Excellence for Children's Health and Well-Being's definition of engagement as "the meaningful and sustained involvement of person in an activity, focusing outside the self... it has cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. Head, heart, feet" (MacDougal & McCart, 2008: 15).

Why is "Engagement" Important?

Sociological and political theorists have long discussed the importance of engagement in society. The work of Robert Putnam (1995; 2001), often classified as social capital theory, emphasizes the value of civic engagement and social connectedness for a society.

Social capital theory refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1995: 67). A well-connected society can leverage individuals and local communities towards higher aspirations and better outcomes through reciprocity, trust, cooperation and mutuality of support (Althaus, Bridgeman, & Davis, 2007). "Dense networks of interaction probably broaden the participants' sense of self, developing the 'I' into the 'we,' or enhancing the participants' 'taste' for collective benefits (Putnam, 1995: 67)."

Putnam's thesis associates a decline in social capital as the result of increased individualism, largely due to consumerism, media, globalization and technology (Althaus *et al.*, 2007). This decline has led to weakening communities and civic organizations, and to disconnected citizens. Putnam maintains that this decline is not without consequence as there are strong correlations between social capital and indicators of positive or negative social well-being, such as child welfare, educational performance, violent crime, health and tax evasion (Putnam, 2001).

For Woolcock (2001), the basic idea of "social capital" is that communities endowed with a rich stock of social networks and civic associations will be in a stronger position to confront poverty and vulnerability, resolve disputes and take advantage of new opportunities. Many organizations and governments are beginning to recognize the value of social capital in contributing to the well-being of a society (Franke, 2005). Research supports the idea that a strong voluntary sector, the presence of engaged citizens, and an active civil society are strong indicators of a viable democracy. Weak civil society, in contrast, is often a sign of alienation, passivity and political unrest (Coleman, 1999).

Engagement and social capital are important because of the benefits for communities, for organizations and for individuals. In the *Canadian Code for*

Volunteer Involvement, Weaver (2005) emphasises the values that engagement promotes. Engaging individuals in communities “fosters civic responsibility, participation and interaction; promotes change and development by identifying and responding to community needs; increases the capacity of organizations to accomplish their goals, and provides volunteers with opportunities to develop and contribute” (Weaver, 2005: 6). It also allows individuals an opportunity to grow and give back to the community in meaningful ways.

Ideas of the importance of social capital date back to Greek philosophers including Aristotle, who wrote that “helping others increases people’s happiness and that true happiness is to be found in the expression of virtue; a happy person is therefore a moral person” (Meier & Stutzer, 2006: 39). The value of social capital for the lives of citizens is supported by the results of the 2003 Canadian General Social Survey on Social Engagement (Schellenberg, 2004). The survey revealed that the degree of happiness expressed by Canadians was associated with how individuals described their sense of belonging to Canada, to their province or to their local community (*For survey table please see Figure 11 in Appendix 2*). The study also showed that individuals were more likely than others to be “very happy” if they reported higher levels of trust, had greater confidence in institutions, were involved in at least one group or organization, and personally knew people in their neighbourhood.

The participation of citizens in their communities through involvement in civic groups, service clubs, volunteer organizations and other institutions has long been a cornerstone of society in Canada (Jones, 1999). However, if trends of declining civic participation continue, the impact on the wellbeing of Canadian citizens may be very significant.

Millennials, Eco Boomers and Generation Y

While there is significant concern that today’s young adults are not engaged in society, many generational studies emphasize hope for the current generation. The terms “Baby Boomers” or “Generation X” may create stereotypes about these age groups. However, there is a less clear sense of today’s generation of young adults. The terms *Millennials*, *Eco Boomers* and *Generation Y* are the most commonly used names to describe the cohort born in the 1980s and 1990s (“Millennials” will be used for this section of the paper).

A field of research has tried to classify characteristics of Millennials and identify trends within this generation. There is debate about whether classifying characteristics of a specific generation is useful as many actions and motivations differ greatly from person to person (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). However, common themes discussed in articles on Millennials may provide useful background on motivations and other features of today’s young adults.

Howe and Strauss (2004: 2) have identified seven key characteristics of Millennials that are used widely (Merritt & Neville, 2002; Dickson, 2008; Rushowy, 2007) to define key traits of today's young adults:

- *Special*. From “precious-baby movies” to effusive rhetoric.
- *Sheltered*. Explosions of child safety rules and devices.
- *Confident*. High levels of optimism. Often boasts of power and potential.
- *Team-oriented*. New emphasis on group learning, tight peer bonds.
- *Achieving*. Accountability rising. Best-educated and best-behaved.
- *Pressured*. Pushed to study hard, take advantage of opportunities.
- *Conventional*. Take pride in behavior. Comfortable with parents' values.

In addition to these traits, a consistent trend that evolves from theories on the Millennial generation is the view that it is a “civic generation” (Howe & Strauss, 2004). Young adults today have been told they can make a difference and are determined that their efforts will have a positive influence. Contrary to popular opinion, members of the generation do not appear to be self-indulgent, gratification seeking or irresponsible; they are strong advocates for social responsibility and they care about the world, the environment, poverty, and global issues in general (Alch, 2000).

As Howe, an author of several of generational studies, describes in an interview on the Millennial generation, engagement of young people today is deeply rooted in their desire to fix problems left by previous generations:

The driving force behind Millennials' civic participation is probably the desire to fix a lot of these problems - the older generation's not managing things too well. I think that's a real civic vacuum. Late boomers and x-ers they don't vote, they don't run for office – they're really tuned-out. This creates an opportunity for younger generations to fill that vacuum (Dickson, 2008).

Others are less positive about the current generation. In his book, *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes our Future* (2008), Bauerlein sees the Millennial generation as overly enmeshed in technology, a characteristic seen as having detrimental effects on society. Seaton and Boyd (2007: 71) provide evidence for this claim, explaining “young adults today have witnessed the introduction of quick and endless information by using lap top computers, the internet, cell phones... that have greatly changed the way that people live their lives.”

As people spend more time alone on-line they have less time for other activities in the community and face-to-face social interactions. Connections with society now happen in chat rooms or on social networking sites, blurring the role that local communities and neighbourhoods have in the lives of citizens. Many would argue that individuals who spend more of their lives in a virtual world have less time for participating in activities and events that have traditionally engaged

citizens in their communities and led to strong civic action (Flanagan *et al.*, 1998).

While views are mixed concerning the future legacy of the Millennial generation, there are indications that civic participation and engagement *are* important values of this group. An overarching conclusion from the discussion in the literature is that while some see over-dependence on technology as a weakness of today's young adults, it is essential that organizations use technology to harness the interests of this generation.

Are Young Adults in Greater Victoria Engaged in the Community?

When asked whether they felt engaged in their community, the focus group participants overwhelmingly responded “no.” This finding supports the belief of the UWGV executive that there is significant room to improve the involvement of the 23-35 demographic in the Victoria community. Overall, most of the young adults felt that they were in fact “disengaged” in Victoria for a variety of reasons.

Several student focus group participants explained that they felt engaged in activities and events at the University of Victoria, but they did not feel that this qualified as being engaged in the greater community as the university provided a “micro-universe.” Students also felt that if they lived on, or near campus, it was very easy to lose connection with the community. Focus group participants also mentioned the difficulty of transition from being a student to a resident of the greater community, and there are no efforts to facilitate this change.

Some non-student participants responded that they did feel engaged in the community; largely through work connections. These participants credited working in the social sector (“where you have to be engaged”), or community activities and networking opportunities presented to them through their workplaces.

A majority of participants said that they would like to be more engaged in the community if presented with an attractive opportunity. Some mentioned that they felt guilty about focusing only on themselves or their families, and they were motivated to get more involved in the community.

Summary

A strategy to engage young adults in the UWGV and local community should take into account the multiple components of engagement discussed in this section. As explained, strong civic participation and social capital are keys to a healthy society, and there are significant concerns regarding the impact that disengaged citizens could have on the strength of community in Greater Victoria. Any initiatives aimed at engaging young adults should focus on the benefits of involvement for an individual and greater society. The UWGV should also take

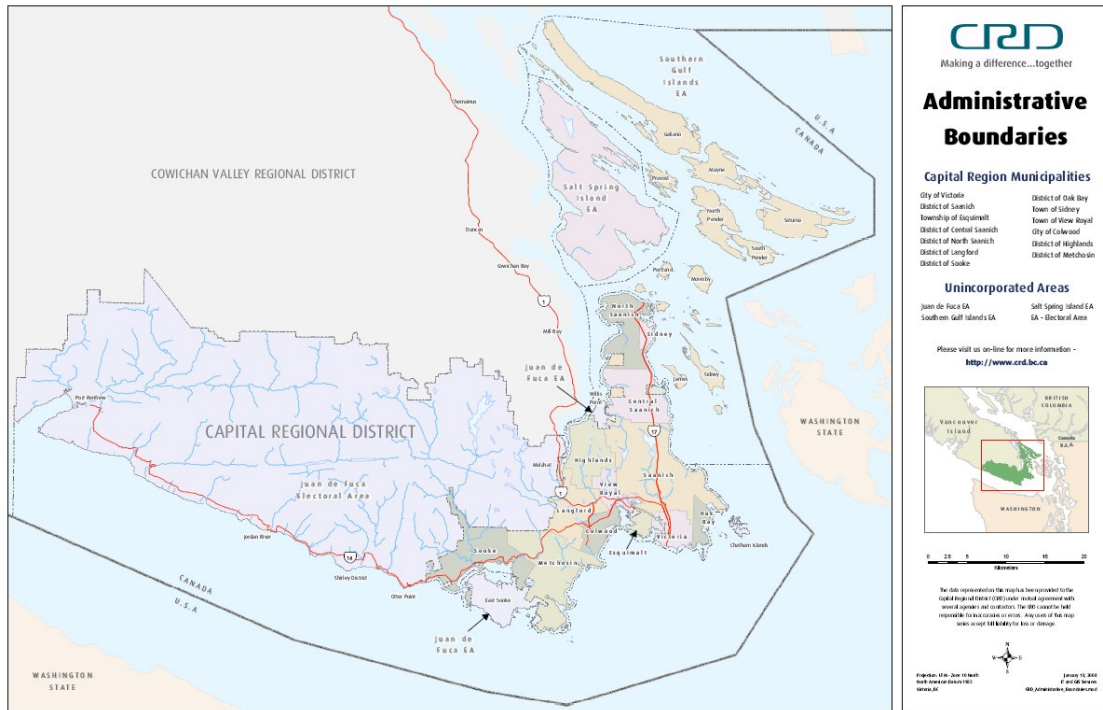
into account the defining characteristics of the Millennial generation and of young adults in Victoria in designing a strategy that meets the needs of this target age group.

3.2 Demographic Scan

The Local Context

The jurisdiction of the UWGV is referred to as Southern Vancouver Island. In discussions with the client it was agreed that data for the Capital Regional District (CRD)⁶ would be used to analyze demographic trends for the UWGV as this census region represents a majority of the organization’s volunteers and donors. For the 2006 Census, BC Stats (2007) defines the CRD to include the Victoria Metropolitan Area; Juan de Fuca Electoral Area (including Sooke); Salt Spring Island Electoral Area and Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area. *Figure 3* provides a pictorial map outlining this geographical area.

Figure 3: Jurisdiction of the UWGV



(Map from Capital Regional District, 2008)

Using data from the 2006 Census, BC Stats provides a detailed profile of the population of the Capital Regional District, including information on ethnicity, employment and several other categories. This information is used in this section to highlight key characteristics of the CRD population including specific observations concerning the 23-35 age group.

⁶ Unless otherwise mentioned, data for this section was taken from the BC Stats 2006 Census Profile-Capital, CD; and the 2004 Canada Survey on Giving Volunteering and Participating.

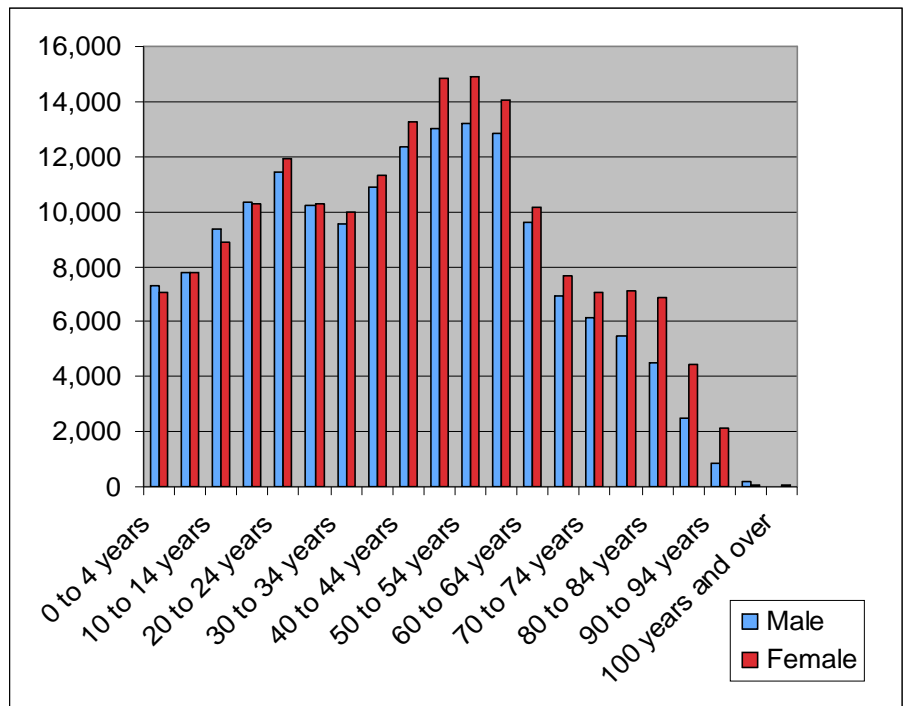
It is important to note that data was not found to cross reference age, geographic location and income. This information would be quite useful to identify unique features in terms of income of the 23-35 age group in the CRD.

Characteristics of Total Population - The Capital Regional District

The 2006 Census reported 345,165 residents in the CRD. The median age in the region is 43.6 years, almost three years higher than the rest of the province. The largest percentage of the population falls within the 40 to 60 age group. Of the total population in the CRD, just over 52% of the citizens are female. (For chart of CRD population profile, please see Figure 4).

Figure 4: 2006 Population by Age and Sex - CRD

The ethnic make up of the CRD is distinctive when compared to the totals for the province of British Columbia. Of the total population in the CRD, 34,310 (or 10%) are of visible minorities. This number is significantly lower than the totals for the province, in which visible minorities represent 25% of the population. There are 11,365 individuals of Aboriginal identity in the CRD making up approximately 3% of the population (compared to 5% for BC).



Of the total population in the CRD, 32% of individuals are single, never having married. 48% are legally married, while the other 20% were separated, divorced or widowed. These statistics on marital status were fairly consistent with the rest of the province.

The census reported 96,485 census families in 2006 from the CRD, 45,350 of which did not have children at home. Of those with children, 20% of the children were under the age of 6, 36% fell between the ages of 6-14, 34% were between the ages of 15 and 24 and just under 10% were over the age of 25. 70.5% of parents were couples, while 14,350 were lone parents. There were 64,755

(25.5%) unattached individuals⁷ in the CRD, significantly higher than 18.1% average for the rest of the province.

The CRD is a highly educated region with 29% of the population aged 25-64 having completed a bachelor's degree or higher (25% for rest of BC). In addition, nearly 20.8% of the population, completed college and 34% obtained University certificates (also both higher than the provincial average).

Labour force statistics for the CRD were fairly consistent with the rest of the province with a few exceptions. The census profile reveals a high number of individuals employed in what could be classified as 'professional designations.' For example, 12.6% of the labour force over 15 years of age in the CRD, worked in public administration compared with only 5% for the rest of the province. This number is likely due to the large number of government offices that are located in Victoria as the capital of the province. In addition, health care and social assistance made up 11.6% of the labour force, just over 2% higher than the rest of the province. Victoria's employment profile was lower than some the rest of the province in professions associated with agriculture, forestry, fishing, wholesale trade and manufacturing.

Residents in the CRD are very mobile. 17% of the population in the CRD moved in the last year, with 46.6% moving in the last five years. Of British Columbians who did move between 2001 and 2006, approximately 50% moved within the same municipality, 29% moved to a different municipality within the province, 9% moved in from another province, and nearly 12% arrived from a different country (BC Stats, 2007). Over 10,000 individuals immigrated to Victoria between 1996 and 2006 with nearly 41% of total immigrants falling between the ages of 25 and 44. Overall, BC was second only to Alberta in terms of net migrant inflow, and within the province the CRD was the second highest chosen destination behind Vancouver.

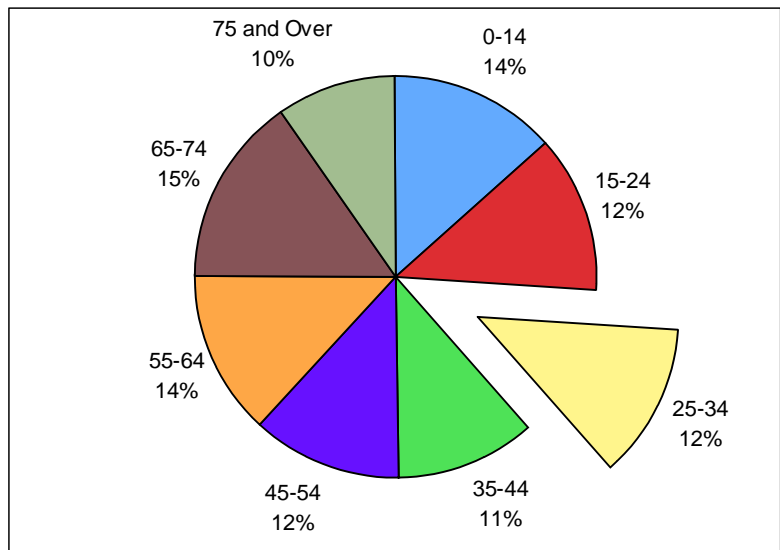
Young Adult Population - The Capital Regional District

As *Figure 5* shows, the 25-34 age group represents 12% of the population in the CRD, a number that is slightly lower than the total for this group in the rest of BC. Census age data is reported in five year intervals, therefore exact data for the 23-35 group that the UWGV hopes to target is not available. Instead, a proxy estimation was calculated.⁸ It is estimated that the target population of 23-35 represents approximately 16% of the population in the CRD. Using the same method of calculation, approximately 51% of the CRD population in the 23-35 demographic is female.

⁷ An unattached individual is a person living either alone or with others to whom he or she is unrelated, such as roommates or a lodger (Statistics Canada, 2006).

⁸ This estimation was calculated by adding to the 25-34 total (40025), 2/5 of the 20-24 group [(23390/5)*2 = 9,356] plus 1/5 of the 35-39 group [(22155/5) = 4431]. Based on these calculations the target demographic of 23-35 accounts for approximately 16% of the population of the Capital Regional District.

Figure 5: 2006 Total Population - CRD



In general, young adults tend to move more often than people in other age groups, with seniors moving the least. A BC Stats report (2007) explains that motivation for moving may be different among age groups. Migrants are most often people in their late teens to mid-twenties, usually moving away from their childhood home, seeking education,

employment, or both, as well as social activity. Often those between 25 and 34 move to start families of their own, for work or to improve their housing situation.

Migration data shows that the most mobile age group in BC was 25 to 34 (which encompasses a majority of the UWGV's target group). The 2006 Census revealed that nearly 75% of this group moved at some point between 2001 and 2006 (BC Stats, 2007). Additionally, the average distance younger people move is somewhat greater, with about 8% of movers aged 25 to 34 coming from a province other than BC. The CRD and the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) had more of the 25-34 group immigrate into the regions than move out. This inflow of immigrants is likely linked to the greater variety of educational and employment opportunities in Vancouver and Victoria, as well as other economic and social benefits of living in urban centres.

Demographic Scan: Discussion

The 2004 Statistics Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP) provides a profile of volunteers in the country. When combined with demographic information provided in previous sections of this report, several opportunities can be identified for the UWGV to engage young adults in the CRD. This information also highlights some of the challenges that exist for the UWGV to target this demographic group. While the CSGVP does not measure 'engagement,' it provides a useful perspective on involvement of Canadians in their communities and suggests some interesting trends in the profile of volunteers.

The CSGVP concluded that approximately 45% of the Canadian population aged 15 and older volunteered their time to charities and other non-profit organizations. However, several trends in the profile of Canadian volunteers

were identified in the study, indicating that age, income, education and presence of children in a household are key variables in whether or not Canadians volunteer. These themes also support the argument that a gap exists in engaging young adults in non-profit organizations.

According to the study, the percentage of British Columbians who volunteer decreases with age. Over half of youth (aged 15-24) volunteered in 2004⁹, a number that decreases to one-third of seniors (65 and older) volunteering. While the percentage of the population that volunteers decreases with age, the average number of hours that a person volunteers generally rises with age.

This trend was consistent across all age groups with one exception: the 25-34 age group. Throughout the country, those in the 25-34 age group were less likely to volunteer than either youth or any group younger than 65. In addition, across Canada, those aged 25-34, who made up 17% of the population older than 15, contributed only 13% of total volunteer hours. This statistic provides evidence that a gap does exist in engaging young adults, not just in the Capital region, but across the country.

Education is another indicator of the amount of time a person volunteers. In general, volunteering (percentage of population and hours) increases with the level of education. The CSGVP revealed that the percentage of Canadians that volunteer ranged from a low of 37% among individuals who had not graduated from high school, to a high of 59% among those with a university degree. University graduates made up just 22% of the population, but contributed 30% of all volunteer hours. The correlation between education and volunteering is quite positive for the UWGV as Victoria, according to a MacLean's Magazine study (Gulli, 2008), is one of the "smartest" cities in Canada. Many young adults currently living in Victoria, are attending university or colleges or have recently graduated. It is, then, crucial that the UWGV finds way to identify the interests and needs of this highly educated segment of the population.

According to the CSGVP, the presence of children in the home has a significant influence on whether people volunteer. In BC, 57% of parents with school-aged children volunteer, a number significantly higher than the rest of the population. Children's involvement in sports teams, schools, clubs and religious groups motivates parents to become involved in a community. 45% of BC parents with both pre-school and school children volunteered, and only 38% with only pre-school aged children volunteered. For the population with no children in their household, 42% volunteer, however the average hours per volunteer is higher for this group.

Overall, parents with young children do not volunteer with the same frequency as the rest of the population. Young children require significant amounts of time,

⁹ Volunteer participation is high among the 15-24 group largely due to school program's requirements for mandatory community service (Hall *et al.*, 2006).

leaving new parents with few hours to engage in activities beyond work and their families. And, as 20% of parents with children in the CRD have children under the age of 6, a sizeable percentage of the population is likely not engaged in the community. The low number of parents with young children that volunteer provides an opportunity for the UWGV. The UWGV needs to understand the barriers that keep parents with young children from volunteering and create programs that will meet the needs of this segment of the population.

Finally, several studies of migration trends in British Columbia suggest that mobility is one of the largest barriers to engaging young adults in the CRD. In cities like Victoria, where young adults are moving frequently (for school, new jobs, high cost of rent, starting families) promoting deep ties to the community becomes a challenge. The inflow of immigrants to the CRD also must be recognized as the research shows that immigrants are less likely to volunteer than native-born Canadians (41% vs. 48%). Low participation from immigrants confirms that this segment of the population does not identify with or feel represented by local community organizations such as the UWGV.

Summary

To attract involvement of young adults, the UWGV needs to recognize key issues, and questions raised by the demographic scan. How can the organization engage the interests of parents with young children? How can it reach the large number of singles and unattached young adults living in the CRD? How can the UWGV find ways to work with a segment of the population that moves regularly and new immigrants? How can the UWGV use key indicators of volunteer involvement in its planning?

This demographic scan confirms the gap between the needs of young adults and effective programs to engage them in volunteer organizations and community activities. The data suggests challenging barriers to the engagement of young adults; it also reveals opportunities for the UWGV to improve recruitment in this target age group. To ensure success in engaging young adults in its future, the UWGV must develop a strategy that incorporates these demographic realities.

3.3 Engaging Young Adults - Barriers

The following section highlights some of the key barriers for young adult engagement as identified in published surveys, academic literature and the focus group research conducted for this study. These barriers consist of:

- *Time Limitations*
- *Commitment*
- *Transient Lifestyle*
- *Lack of Information / Opportunity*
- *Self-Perception (“Don’t fit the Mould”)*
- *Identity Labelling*
- *Bureaucracy*
- *Financial Constraints*

These barriers are ordered based on importance according to results of the CSGVP. Results of a ranking exercise that was undertaken in the focus groups were also considered in the ordering of these barriers (See *Appendix 1.3* for focus group ranking exercise). The list was ordered from most significant barrier to least significant.

Time Limitations

Throughout the literature, *time* (or the lack of it), is identified by all demographics as the main barrier to becoming engaged with a volunteer or community organization. This is especially true for young adults. According to the CSGVP, 80% of individuals aged 25-34 (the highest response rate of any age group) gave time limitations as the most important reason for not volunteering (Lasby, 2004).

A key challenge to engaging young adults is the understandable focus of this target demographic on building their careers and establishing families. New parents often see their children as their priority; other young adults are consumed with the challenges of school or new careers.

Work commitments are often cited in surveys as disincentives to community engagement. The 2005 General Social Survey concluded that almost one-third of Canadians aged 25 to 44 (including most of the UWGV's target age group) identified themselves as “workaholics.” This is supported by reports that the average workday in Canada is almost one hour longer than in the past decade (Fast *et al.*, 2001).¹⁰ More than half of the target demographic acknowledged concerns about having enough time to spend with family and friends. It is not surprising, therefore, that this group was most likely to report lack of time as their main barrier to volunteering and becoming involved in their communities (McClintock, 2004).

¹⁰ In 2005 the average work day amounted to 8.8 hours (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Focus Group

In the focus groups of young adults, time was overwhelmingly ranked as the top reason why they were not engaged in their community. A majority of focus group participants mentioned that volunteering or becoming involved in the community is not a priority at this point in their lives. Many young adults are focused on achieving personal goals in school, their careers or family, and felt that when they have free time, they “want to do something for themselves.” For those participants with children, most free time was spent on activities with their children.

Commitment

Commitment is also commonly described as a major barrier to community participation of young adults. The 2003 GSS identified hesitation about long term commitment as a key barrier to volunteering for many young adults. The CSGVP also found that, after time limitations, commitment was the second most common barrier identified (46%) as a reason to not volunteer or volunteer more (Hall *et al.*, 2004). Young adults often avoid volunteering or participating in events or activities in which they perceive a need to make commitment at a time when many aspects of life seem uncertain. Uncertainty of many young adults about family, career, finances and living situations often creates challenges for this age group to make long term plans, including involvement in the volunteer sector and community organizations.

Many volunteer organizations require individuals to commit to weekly work or to regular participation in events and activities, and lack the flexibility that young adults need in their ever-changing lives. Young adults are often concerned that if they get involved in volunteer organizations they may not be able to meet expectations (Ad Council, 2000). This line of thinking may often lead individuals to choose to not volunteer at all rather than to take the risk of letting people down.

Young adults today are focused on personal life styles and career ambitions and hold less loyalty to organizations and jobs than previous generations (Seaton & Boyd, 2007). This group also has high expectations of the organizations that they work for and will be “quick to capitalize on opportunities elsewhere if unhappy with their current situation” (Whitmell, 2002: 7). Long-term commitment appears to be less of a priority for this age group. Instead of expecting individuals to adapt to meet the needs of organizations, organizations must find ways to direct activities and events to fit the schedules and objectives of the target demographic.

Focus Group

Various aspects of commitment were also identified by focus group participants as deterrents to young adult engagement. Uncertainty about career, family and social lives made long term commitments unappealing or unfeasible.

When discussing commitment issues, some participants agreed that a main deterrent to becoming involved in an organization is the fear of letting others down. Some young adults in the focus groups mentioned that they didn't want to initiate relationships with people or organizations that they were not sure they could maintain for a long period of time. Examples were provided of how a few individuals had volunteered in seniors' homes and had an opportunity to meet and interact on a regular basis with some of the residents. However, when their schedules changed because of work or school, the young adults mentioned that there was guilt associated with not being able to visit the residents with whom they had developed relationships.

Transient Lifestyle

Frequent moves are common among young adults in the 23 to 35 age group (as discussed in *Section 3.2 Demographic Scan*). Whether this involves movement to a new city to start school or work, or to a new neighbourhood to start a family; young adults are the most mobile group and move with the highest frequency of any demographic (BC Stats, 2007). And, as young adults move, their connections with their communities change, often resulting in disengaged citizens. In what Putnam (1995: 74) refers to as the *re-potting hypothesis* "mobility, like frequent re-potting of plants, tends to disrupt root systems, and it takes time for an uprooted individual to put down new roots." Ultimately it is more difficult for people to connect with a new community as they do not have the same ties and networks that they may have established in the past. When people move to a new city or community, they may retain their connections with the old community instead of working to develop new networks (Ad Council, 2000).

Numerous studies of organizational involvement have shown that residential stability and homeownership are clearly associated with greater civic engagement (Putnam, 1995: 74). However, for a demographic that changes addresses frequently, more flexible approaches must be developed to engage young adults in communities in which they may not stay for a long period of time.

Focus Group

Individuals differed in response to this issue as those not originally from Victoria had less certainty about where they would be living in the future, compared with those with roots in the city. However, the "transient lives of young adults" was commonly referred to as a major obstacle to getting involved in volunteer

organizations or activities in the local community. Many of the participants that were not from Victoria were not sure if they would still be in the city in the near future. As is likely a common theme in Victoria, many of the participants and their friends were in the city for school and did not have plans to stay for a long period of time. For this group the probability of moving away from Victoria greatly decreased “the feelings of need or the desire to get involved in the local community.”

Lack of Information / Opportunity

A common response to the question about why people did not get involved in volunteer organizations is that they are not asked. A lack of information about community involvement opportunities is identified as a key reason for lack of engagement (Barbulak, 2003, Ad Council, 2000). Many young adults are interested in volunteer work and community involvement but are not aware of existing opportunities available to them.

A key challenge then, is finding effective ways to reach and connect with young adults. Traditional models of engagement and volunteering often require individuals to take the initiative to approach organizations or seek opportunities. In this structure, if information and opportunities are not easily accessible, young adults are less likely to get involved.

Some organizations have had success reaching the younger part of the 23-35 demographic by promoting volunteer positions, campaigns, and other opportunities on university and college campuses and through student organizations. But for the many young adults that do not attend post-secondary institutions or who have already graduated, access to these programs is limited. In addition, there is no clear support for the transition from on-campus involvement to involvement in the greater community.

Volunteers often reference family, friends, classmates or coworkers who encouraged them to volunteer (Ad Council, 2000). The large percentage of young adults that may be new to Victoria and do not have family and friends in the area may have difficulty knowing about or identifying opportunities to participate.

Based on a 2001 study by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, just under half of volunteers initially got involved in volunteering because someone approached them from an organization (Hall *et al.*, 2001). According to findings of the CSGVP, 43% of respondents between the ages of 25-34 that had volunteered in the past said that they did not continue because they were “not personally asked” (Lasby, 2004). These results suggest that the recruitment activities of voluntary organizations are an important determinant of rates of volunteering, with significant room for improvement.

Focus Group

While a majority of participants in the focus groups had heard of the United Way brand, very few knew what the organization actually does. In addition, almost none of the participants knew of the activities, events or structure of the UWGV. Among the young adults that attended the focus group, there was some knowledge of the fundraising activities of the United Way, as a few had been asked to give money in their workplaces. Also, some mentioned that they had seen United Way activities taking place on university campuses.

Overall, the young adult participants knew very little about the United Way and what the organization does with money that it raises. The few that had heard of the United Way's fundraising and role as an umbrella organization knew little about the process for allocating funds (however, there were assumptions that allocations of funds is a "highly political process"). Also mentioned was the lack of understanding of the differences between the United Way of Canada and the roles of the United Ways of specific cities such as Victoria. When explained about the structure of the United Way and the programs and goals of the UWGV, focus group participants were attracted to the newly formed "Community Impact" structure of the organization as many were interested in actually seeing the results of money that they gave.

The responses of the focus group suggest that lack of knowledge about the UWGV, the roles of community organizations and about opportunities for involvement are key barriers to engaging young adults. Many of the focus group participants explained that while they wanted to volunteer or get involved with community organizations, they didn't because details about how to participate or other information was often not clear. Several participants mentioned that they would be hesitant to attend an event or raise money for an organization that they did not know much about. Or, as one participant explained, "Why would you help a cause if you don't know anything about the organization or what they are doing?"

"Not knowing people attending" and a "fear of the unknown" were also mentioned as barriers to engagement in community organizations and volunteering activities for young adults. A majority of the young adults that attended the focus groups said they would not attend if they did not know people that were going to be there or if they had not been personally invited.

Self-Perception ("Don't fit the Mould")

Many young adults have very specific images of volunteers in their minds. The term *volunteer* often connotes images of keen, altruistic, selfless people committed to saving the world and dedicating all of their time to a cause. This image of a volunteer often stands in contrast to the way that many individuals view themselves (Ad Council, 2000). A contributing factor to this image of

volunteers for young adults is that a majority of programs for the 23-35 demographic are aimed at “young professionals.” Programs aimed at young professionals often focus on networking, personal development and career building, which are attractive aspects of becoming involved in community organizations for some individuals. However, these dimensions often do not have the same appeal to those young adults not in professional careers.

For this reason, there is a large segment of the population that chooses not to participate because they don’t identify as the target audience. A study by Volunteer Victoria suggests that low-income, less educated youth and young adults participate far less often in extracurricular activities and community service (Barbulak, 2003). Inaccurate perceptions about volunteerism are a challenge for non-profit organizations, especially those like the UWGV that are trying to engage a diverse group of people. Preconceived notions of volunteer activity lead many young adults to question whether their skills and experience are suitable or useful to an organization. In addition, they often question whether they would be able to relate to other volunteers.

Focus Group

Focus group participants described “not fitting the mould” as a key barrier to involvement in their community or organizations. Barriers included lack of awareness of opportunities for first-time volunteers and/or a sense of guilt or embarrassment about lack of previous volunteer participation. Some mentioned that they felt under-qualified to volunteer because they didn’t know if they had skills that would be useful for an organization. Others felt that they were overqualified for many of the jobs that were offered to volunteers, and that they would rather sit on a board or be involved in decision-making in the organization. Cultural differences were also discussed as a barrier for those from other countries or backgrounds that did not place emphasis on community engagement and volunteering.

Identity Labelling

Non-profit organizations often failed to understand the identity, needs and interests of young adults. Organizations, including the UWGV, have extensive youth programs aimed at engaging teenagers and high school students. However, there is often no program targeting the 23-35 age group. Some organizations recommend increasing the age limit of a youth council to include young adults; however, it is unlikely that this will achieve desired results. A scan of youth programs across Canada showed that participation in youth groups decreased dramatically as teenagers made the transition into young adulthood (Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2007). As *Figure 6* shows, only 3.16% of all participants in youth groups were in the age group of 19-25. This data suggests why expanding youth groups to include older demographics will not be successful.

Figure 6: Youth Group Participation in Canada

Total Per Year (448,348)	Total / Year	% of Total
Participants 8-12 years	268,090	59.80
Participants 13-15 years	81,916	18.27
Participants 16-18 years	60,974	13.60
Participants 19-25 years	14,172	3.16

(Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2007)

Classifying young adults as youth can lead to underestimating their skills and ability, when, in fact, many individuals in this demographic have several years of experience and skills that would be useful to the organization. Young adults want to be thought of as valid potential contributors to their communities. Those in the 23-35 age group want to be considered as adults; therefore it is unlikely that this target demographic will identify with the term “youth.”

Focus Group Findings

While the focus group did not find a consensus on an appropriate label for the 23-35 demographic; “young adult” was seen as the best of the various options. To some, the term young adult seemed condescending and made them “feel like they were 18.” In addition, some felt that the “over-30 crowd” would not identify with being referred to as young adults. Responses were fairly consistent that the term “young professional” was not ideal as it described only a segment of the population and could deter individual participation by those who felt excluded by this definition. Very few liked the United Way brand for young adult groups, “Generation Next” or “Gennext” that is used by other United Way affiliate offices across North America, explaining that Gennext was confusing and that the term also implied this age group “is not *currently* important to the organization.”

Participants also frequently mentioned that events, activities and programs developed to engage citizens in their community are “not geared at the 23-35 demographic.” Based on past experiences, many participants felt that overall, volunteering and community activities are not aimed at the needs and interests of young adults.

Bureaucracy

The traditional bureaucratic structure of most non-profit organizations, including the United Way, is commonly described by young adults as a deterrent to volunteering or engaging in community activities and events. Many young adults perceive too much bureaucracy and not enough action in such organizations (Hall *et al.*, 2001). In many large bureaucratic organizations it is often difficult for volunteers to connect the work that they do, or funds that are raised, with actual results. Many young adults view corporate structured volunteer organizations to be unwelcoming places. A common view is that decisions are often highly political and made primarily by older representatives from the community. This

environment can be intimidating for youth and young adults. The perception of young people is that their role in many organizations is to provide token representation for the age group. As well, organizations may view youth and young adults as lacking in experience and as creating extra work for the organization (Allen, 2002). This unwillingness by adults to recognize the skills and value of young adults is a key barrier to attracting younger demographics to large organizations. Adults must share responsibility with younger decision makers empowering them to make meaningful contributions to an organization (Allen, 2002).

Today's young people tend to be more responsive to small, flexible, creative and locally-relevant organizations (Ad Council, 2000). In smaller organizations young adults often feel that they can have more of an influence on key decisions. They also see more tangible connections between their contributions and the outcomes that are achieved.

Focus Group

Focus group participants did not specifically note organizational bureaucracy as a key barrier. However, when the question was posed, participants did agree that bureaucratic structures and complex politics of organizations could be unappealing. Some mentioned that in an organization with a very bureaucratic structure, they didn't feel that there would be positions for young adults to become involved in boards or committees or have a role in influencing decisions. Also, participants expressed concern that traditionally structured organizations would accept only token involvement of young adults. As one participant described, "I want to sit on a board if you want to hear my opinion, but don't ask me just because I fit within a specific demographic." Some mentioned that "the rest of your life is full of that stuff," implying that they did not want to have to deal with politics or bureaucracy in a volunteer role.

Overall, the group concluded that if they are going to become involved with an organization or cause, this involvement should be welcoming and accessible. Young adults want to see results of contributions without concern about a "cloud of bureaucracy."

Financial Constraints

In the CSGVP, only 11% of respondents mentioned the "financial costs of volunteering" as a barrier to engagement (Lasby 2004). Money was not commonly identified in academic literature as a key barrier to engaging young adults.

However, financial constraints were seen as a major barrier to volunteer involvement for some of the focus group participants. Many didn't want to become involved in what they perceived as fundraising organizations (like the

United Way) because they didn't have very much money to give. As one participant described: "Some events ask you to fundraise or give money just to participate. I don't want to ask my friends for 20 dollars because just like me, they need that 20 dollars... Organizations need to come up with more creative ways to target young adults that go beyond just raising money." The high cost of living in Victoria was discussed as factoring into the financial restraints faced by many young adults.

The focus group participants largely felt that they would rather give time than money, because the small amount that they could give would not have a very significant impact. Some individuals did mention "the cost of volunteering or participating" as a deterrent. Minimum registration or membership fees and fundraising targets were described as costs that deter some young adults from participating in events or activities. Also mentioned was the cost of transportation to events, expenses that may be incurred when volunteering, or the potential of lost income if they had to miss work to become engaged.

3.4 Engaging Young Adults - Motivations

The following section highlights some of the motivations for young adult engagement as identified in published surveys, academic literature and in focus groups conducted for this study. These motivations consist of:

- *The Cause*
- *Giving Back*
- *Making an Impact and Seeing Results*
- *Personal Development*
- *Recognition*
- *Social Interactions*
- *Support from an Employer or School*

These motivations are ordered based on importance according to results of the CSGVP. Results of a ranking exercise that was undertaken in the focus groups were also considered in the ordering of these motivations (See *Appendix 1.3* for results of ranking exercise). As with the list of barriers, the motivations discussed in this section are ordered from most significant to least significant.

The Cause

The “cause” was consistently identified throughout research as one of the most influential motivations for engaging any individuals. In the findings from the CSGVP, 95% of respondents cited a belief in the cause supported by the organization as the reason why they would get involved (Hall *et al.*, 2004). Additionally, 69% mentioned that they were personally affected or knew someone who was affected by the cause, as the reason for becoming involved (Lasby, 2004). Research suggests that successful and sustained engagement requires that individuals feel affiliation with the cause and the work of an organization (Ad Council, 2000). It is through connections with a meaningful cause that long-term commitment can develop. In a study of the motivations of core volunteers¹¹, Conn and Barr (2006) found that a passion for a cause was the main characteristic that differentiated these core participants from volunteers who contributed less time.

Attraction to specific issues was often driven by the fact that young adults could relate to an organization’s specific mandate. Individuals may also choose to become involved with a volunteer organization seeing participation as an opportunity not only to support a cause, but also to learn more about a topic or issue in which they are interested (Clary *et al.*, 1998).

¹¹ Conn and Barr (2006) define *core volunteers* as those that volunteer 188 hours or more per year.

Awareness about what organizations do and about their role and mandate is an important motivation for engagement. An MIT study on motivations for social involvement emphasized the importance of awareness; concluding that if a cause is ill-defined, an individual will be significantly less likely to become involved (Ariely *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, it is very important that organizations (such as the UWGV) place a priority on promoting awareness of the causes they support and their role in the community. The UWGV must also find ways to connect its core mandate to the interests and motivations of young adults. If individuals relate the work of an organization with a cause that is personally important to them, they will be much more likely to become involved and remain connected in the future (Clary & Synder, 1999).

Focus Group

Focus participants agreed that “the cause” is a motivating factor for engagement, confirming results of academic literature and studies. The participants mentioned a range of ways that people develop connections with a cause, from working with an organization in the past; to having a family member or friend affected by the cause an organization supports; to being interested in a particular issue in society (for example, the environment was commonly mentioned).

The focus group participants expressed a need to believe the work that an organization does is useful and leads to tangible outcomes. However, the young adults mentioned that awareness of an organization’s mandate is a key indicator of whether they will become engaged. As one participant mentioned, “If I know the organization and I think the work that it’s doing is good and important then I’m going to be much more likely to attend events or become involved.”

Giving Back

An opportunity to “give back” can be a strong motivation to becoming engaged in philanthropy and providing a means for individuals to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others (Clary *et al.*, 1998). Giving back is cited regularly as a main motivation for individuals or families that have benefited or been helped by people and organizations in their community (Conn & Barr, 2006). A desire for reciprocity based on past experiences or hopes for the future, encourages activism and volunteer participation.

Organizations like the UWGV are created and operate on the belief that individuals will work towards a collective good and support each other (Flanagan *et al.*, 1998). The “Golden Rule;” *do unto others as you would have them do unto you*, has been regarded as the supreme moral principle, spanning diverse religions and cultures (Wattles, 1996). “The underlying justification lies in the human desire to reciprocate kindness and cooperate, for this has enabled our continued existence in a hostile world, and that helping others will increase the likelihood that they will help us in the future” (Axelrod, 1981: 3). While many

young adults do volunteer or become involved in philanthropy without expectations of return, behavioral economists have demonstrated that the potential for reciprocal actions increases the rate of contribution to the public good, providing evidence for the importance of reciprocity in society (Fehr & Gächter, 2003).

Democratic systems depend on citizenry that invest in the common good. Contributing to the common good is overwhelmingly the reason why citizens become active in civic and political affairs (Flanagan *et al.*, 1998), a finding that can be applied to engaging young adults in community organizations. These deeply rooted moral principles of reciprocity, helping society and giving back are often referred to as motivations for young adults to become engaged in community organizations such as the UWGV.

Focus Group

The focus group participants mentioned that they were very motivated by being able to feel that they were making a positive contribution to the world in some way. While some of the findings from the focus group lead to the fact that young adults are in a self-centred phase of life, “an opportunity to give back” was ranked by many as a top motivation for potential involvement. Some mentioned that they had benefited from organizations, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, when they were growing up and that they wanted to help these organizations pass on the benefits to others. Participants also noted that many young adults felt some form of obligation to help the less fortunate and those in need in their community.

Making an Impact and Seeing Results

A consistent theme in academic literature on characteristics of the Millennial generation is that this generation wants to make a difference in the world (as discussed in *Section 3.1 Millennials...*). Moreover, if they get involved in any form of volunteering or philanthropy, they want to be able to have an impact and see the results of their contributions. Past cohorts such as the “Baby Boom Generation,” are often characterized as entrepreneurs whose idealism of the 1960s was replaced by a goal of gaining status and material worth. The newer generation of young adults expresses a desire to find intellectually challenging careers that make a difference and help society (Seaton & Boyd, 2008).

It is important that young adults are informed about what they can do to contribute their time and talents to causes in the volunteer sector and throughout their community. According to the Ad Council Report (2000: 14) “without this type of message, young adults will see little impetus for devoting their increasingly scarce free time to a particular cause.” Young adults want to have a voice in the decision making of organizations that they support (Jennings, 2000). For organizations to successfully engage young adults, it is important that they are incorporated into the existing structure of the organization and given real

opportunities (such as positions on boards and committees) to influence decision making (Allen, 2002). In studies of motivations for volunteering, individuals commonly reference the satisfaction that comes from knowing their efforts make a positive contribution in society (Conn & Barr, 2006).

Focus Group

Focus group participants agreed that young adults place great value in being able to connect their volunteer contributions to actual outcomes. Motivations included opportunities to be on the “front line” helping and developing relationships with individuals that organizations supported. A key theme was that young adults don’t want to “just give money.” And, if they do make financial contributions, they wanted to know where the money was going and that it was actually having an impact.

Some focus group participants regretted that, in past volunteer experiences, they were unable to see if their work made a difference. They also emphasized flexible and short term opportunities would be more attractive to this age group than rigid or long term commitments of time and money.

Personal Development

Personal development is one of the most commonly cited motivations for the young adults to become engaged. Several components of personal development are discussed in the academic literature.

The opportunity to gain skills and experience for a resume or future career is frequently cited as a motivation for young adults to become involved in volunteer organizations and community activities. Volunteering or working with a community organization can provide the opportunity to learn, practice and develop new skills that may be useful in future paid employment (Barbulak, 2003). In addition to building skills and getting experience, volunteering provides an opportunity for young adults to explore their identities and interests. Many young adults discover passions and career goals through volunteering and community involvement. Becoming engaged with organizations also provides an opportunity for individuals to discover or refine career options (Stukas *et al.*, 2006). Employers often place significant value on hiring employees who have performed volunteer work; in some cases, volunteer positions can also turn into jobs (Conn & Barr, 2006; Barbulak, 2003).

Networking was also identified as an incentive for community involvement. Young adults hoping to begin or advance their careers often saw volunteering as an opportunity to develop relationships which might be valuable in establishing business contacts or finding employment (Meier & Stuzter, 2006). Other attractive aspects of volunteerism for young adults include meeting people with

similar interests and interacting with individuals who are successful in their careers and can provide advice and mentorship.

Another key benefit of engagement that motivated individuals to become active is the opportunity to build their self esteem and confidence. Volunteering can help individuals to feel important and needed by others, promote self awareness and boost self esteem (Stukas *et al.*, 2006; Conn & Barr, 2006). The personal benefits of volunteer service are especially applicable to “high risk” individuals at lower income and/or lower educational levels (MacDougal & McCart, 2008).

It was common that young adults failed to see “selfish” aspects of involvement or the personal benefits of devoting their time to volunteer efforts. While some acknowledge that it is a selfish activity for them, organizations need to help young adults understand that “it’s good selfish” (Ad Council, 2000: 12). The simultaneous giving and getting of volunteering was a benefit identified by many volunteers (Conn and Barr, 2006) and should be emphasized in efforts to engage this age group.

Focus Group

Personal development was identified in focus groups as another motivation for young adults to become engaged in an organization. Many in the 23-35 age group see career as a main priority, and felt that there were potential career benefits in being involved in community events and volunteer organizations. Networking was a common response as a motivation for becoming engaged. When informed about the numerous influential people from the local community that were involved with the UWGV, many participants were very interested in the opportunity to make contact with people who would be able to provide career advice and mentorship. Participants also explained that they would like to meet other young adults with whom they share similar interests. Also, opportunities for skill development and using volunteer organizations and community groups as a way to build resumes and develop credentials were described as a very attractive reason of why young adults would get involved.

Recognition

Academic literature finds no consensus on the value of volunteer recognition practices. Some individuals view formal recognition (such as awards and ceremonies) as a motivation to become engaged with an organization. However, others do not require promises of recognition as an incentive (Conn & Barr, 2006). Many volunteers say that they do not need to be thanked, while others value meaningful acknowledgement of their work (Ad Council, 2000).

Behavioral studies have compared the affects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on volunteers. Clary and Snyder (1999: 3) emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation in developing commitment to volunteerism:

There is a body of research that suggests that applying external pressures to perform some action will not necessarily lead to the behavior once the pressures are removed, and may even result in shifting the locus, or origin, of the motivational force or dynamic from the person to the environment.

In a study measuring life satisfaction as a motivation for volunteering, Meier and Stutzer (2006) found that individuals who place more importance on extrinsic goals, benefit less from being engaged than those who relate volunteering to intrinsic values. They offer evidence that volunteering is less personally rewarding for those who participate primarily for material reward such as a better job.

In Conn and Barr's (2006: 22) interviews of core volunteers, many mentioned that recognition had little impact on feelings of satisfaction or a desire to continue volunteering:

Receiving recognition is not what determines the quality or effectiveness of volunteering. Rather, the experience must have some intrinsic reward for the volunteer above all else... I do it for my own reasons. I don't have to receive all sorts of recognition for it. It's satisfying just doing it.

While young adults may have different motivations for volunteering than older adults, all value feedback and acknowledgement. To successfully engage and sustain young adult participants, organizations must find a balance between external incentives and intrinsic benefits of volunteer experience (Frey, 1997; Meier & Stutzer, 2006).

Focus Group

Focus group participants also identified recognition (such as the UWGV youth awards) as a motivating factor, but did not reach a consensus on its importance. Participants mentioned ideas such as publishing names or photos in local media as effective recognition. The group also identified contests and prizes as potential motivations for involvement.

Many focus group participants did not rank recognition as a main motivation. Some participants were attracted to "formal recognition" while others viewed this type of recognition as a deterrent; they believed that such methods distracted potential volunteers from a focus on the cause and other meaningful reasons for becoming engaged. The reward of helping others was seen as a stronger motivation than formal acknowledgement.

The groups did agree that feedback was an important determinant of positive experiences. They also agreed that young adult volunteers needed acknowledgement that their contributions were important and valued. The participants confirmed that a sense of connection with a cause or an organization

required they “actually feel that the organization needs and values our contributions.”

Social Interaction

The 23-35 age group is more likely to be motivated to become engaged if organizations provide opportunities for meaningful social interaction, according to many academic sources. Social interactions with other volunteers, staff or clients of an organization provided a strong incentive for volunteer engagement (Meier & Stutzer, 2006). Young adults often mention that the encouragement or invitation of friends helped them to become involved in volunteer activities or community events (Lasby, 2004). Young adults found that volunteering provides opportunities for friends to spend time together (Stukas *et al.*, 2006).

Young adults are also attracted to community engagement as an opportunity to meet new people with common passions and interests (Ad Council, 2000). Young singles were especially attracted to volunteering as a way to meet new friends (and possibly partners), connect with others and explore new areas of their communities (Barbulak, 2003). Young adults moving to a new city or town, found volunteering or participating in community activities a way to meet others with common interests, expand their social networks, and learn first-hand about important community issues (Conn & Barr, 2006).

Some studies suggest the value of structuring volunteer activities to provide opportunities for social interaction and “fun” (Ad Council, 2000), especially in initial phases of recruitment or engagement. Individuals who do not enjoy what they do, or if they have negative initial experiences, will be unlikely to volunteer again.

Focus Group

Focus groups agreed that young adults are more likely to become and stay engaged if volunteer activity is interesting and “fun.” The focus group participants saw opportunities to meet new people as a strong motivation for volunteer engagement. As one participant explained, “I would be motivated to become involved because I want to hang out with my friends that asked me to come, but more importantly, I would really like to meet new people that have similar interests.”

Participants also agreed that UWGV events should target the specific interests of young adults in Greater Victoria. For example, one participant mentioned that the 23-35 age group in Victoria is health conscious and would likely be attracted to “activities that have opportunities for exercise and get you outside and off the couch.” “Fun” was observed as a primary motivation among younger (age 23-25) focus group participants.

Support from an Employer or School

Young adults believed that support from an employer or educational institution would help overcome key barriers of engagement. Findings from the CSGVP revealed that 57% of employed volunteers reported that they had received some form of support from their employer for volunteering (Hall *et al.*, 2006). Support from employers can include reduced work hours to allow time for volunteering, loaning facilities or equipment and in some cases recognition for employees that volunteered. The survey also explained that younger volunteers were somewhat more likely to benefit from employer support for their volunteer activities; 60% of employed volunteers aged 25-34 received some form of non-monetary support from their employer (Hall *et al.*, 2006).

Studies show the benefits to employers of supporting employee volunteerism. Employers that provide opportunities for staff to volunteer through workplace programs increase employee satisfaction and retention (Vermond, 2008). Workplace volunteer programs also can provide opportunities for team building, and for younger employees to work collaboratively with more senior management. Such programs have been shown to be more beneficial to employers and to staff than programs that only encourage financial donations (Vermond, 2008). Work place volunteer programs also can promote companies as good “corporate citizens” and in many cases improve their public image (Porter & Kramer, 2002).

Many universities and colleges have incorporated “service learning” into their curriculum. Course credit, encouragement for volunteer research or co-op opportunities with non-profits have become common practices on some Canadian and the United States campuses. The University of Victoria provides opportunities for students to engage with community organizations through the Centre for Non Profit Management (<http://www.cnpm.ca/>) and the Office of Community Based Research (<http://web.uvic.ca/ocbr/mission.html>). Service participation as part of an academic program encourages students to become more socially responsible and committed to serving their communities and to their education (Austin, Sax & Avalos, 1999). Service learning is also beneficial to universities to publicise contributions of institutions to the community.

However, initiation to volunteerism through work or school programs may not be sufficient as a model for creating long term, engaged citizens. Some studies contend that willingness to volunteer among students, even if supported by course credits, did not necessarily translate into long term volunteer participation (O’Brian, 1994).

Focus Group

Focus group participants agreed that opportunities to volunteer or become involved with community organizations through school or work could promote

engagement among young adults. Participants offered suggestions for the UWGV to collaborate with universities and colleges. Focus groups agreed that options to receive course credit for community projects (similar to this report for the University of Victoria's Masters in Public Administration program) would be an appealing alternative to their other course requirements. Internships and co-op positions were also viewed as recruitment opportunities and a method for increasing awareness about the role of non-profit organizations and causes in the community. Participants also suggested that workplace volunteer programs would be attractive as some of these engagement opportunities could be completed during work hours rather than cutting into their personal time.

3.5 Comparable Program Review

A review of established young adult programs at other United Ways in Canada provides some useful insights for development of a young adult strategy for the UWGV.

Interviews were conducted with representatives of affiliate United Way offices in six Canadian regions. Many United Ways across Canada have pursued, with varying success, strategies to engage young adults. Interviews revealed that United Ways throughout the country have some consistent goals and structures for young adult engagement programs. However, they often differ in their approach to achievement of these goals. Not all United Way affiliate organizations feature young adult programs and only a few have actually conducted research on how to better engage this age group. Also, activities and programs that work for one United Way might not necessarily be successful in Victoria as cities and regions of Canada have different features, demographic characteristics and community structures.

This section highlights findings identified in communication with other United Way affiliates. These findings are discussed according to the following headings:

- *Mandate*
- *Organizational Support*
- *Program Characteristics*
- *Structure*
- *Recruitment of Participants*
- *Communication*
- *Activities*
- *Brand – “Live United”*

Some ideas from the United Way of America, in addition to feedback from focus groups with the UWGV YAC and staff, have been incorporated into this section.

The Mandate

Representatives of affiliate United Way offices agreed in interviews that a program mandate of a young adult group focused on awareness and engagement was more effective than a mandate focused on fundraising. United Ways that had focused young adult activities on fundraising in many cases alienated members of the young adult population who did not have substantial financial resources.

One United Way affiliate found that young adults identify positively with marketing that mentions specific local causes. Their research showed that young adults are interested in addressing problems that affect the local community. Emphasis on a local context was seen as a successful means of

attracting young adult volunteers and should be a focus of any strategy to engage this age group.

Organizational Support

United Way representatives suggested that successful strategies for effective young adult engagement required strong organizational support. United Ways must designate young adult engagement as a top priority and an investment in the future of the organization. Suggestions included dedicating an internal staff member, funding and resources in initial phases of implementing a strategy.

Program Characteristics

Representatives suggested a lack of consistency in terminology used to identify young adults. The most commonly used name for United Way young adult groups across Canada is *Gennext* (or Generation Next). However, staff at many United Way affiliate organizations expressed uncertainty about the extent to which young adults understand and relate to this labelling. In addition to *Gennext*, names used for these groups and strategies included *Nextgen*, *Young Leaders* and “2335.” Groups were cautious about using the term “new professionals” as many young adults do not identify with this title. Different United Way affiliate organizations identify target age groups variously, ranging from: 18-30; 20-35; 19-35; 20-40; 25-40; and 23-35.

Structure

Most established young adult groups were created as committees or advisory councils in their respective United Ways. A representative for these committees usually sat on the Board of Directors to report on the group, activities and events. The number of young adults on committees, the structure of the groups and roles of members varied among different regions.

Young adult groups within United Way organizations are mainly responsible for planning events and recruiting in the target age group. Most groups meet once a month; meetings are kept short and are scheduled early morning or at lunch time.

Representatives at affiliate offices noted that young adult participants sought significant roles in planning programs but didn't necessarily want to be involved with the specific details of organizing events. In these programs the dedicated staff member takes a lead role on logistics of events and activities. Internal marketing staff also play a role in promoting events.

Recruitment of Participants

Representatives from other United Way affiliate offices confirmed that recruitment is a main challenge of engaging young adults from diverse backgrounds. A variety of different methods were used to recruit young adults to plan and organize programs. One successful tactic applied in other regions relied on staff and board members to recommend five suitable candidates that fell within the target age group. A staff representative from the United Way then followed up with these individuals to select participants for a young adult group. Umbrella organizations, unions and loaned representatives¹² also proved effective as contacts for the target age group. Some affiliate offices also hired co-op students for placements or internships resulting in increased awareness about the United Way among university students.

Communication

United Way affiliates reported using a variety of methods to create awareness and inform the target audience about opportunities to become engaged. These methods include email lists, website information, Facebook groups, Twitter (a social networking site that uses text message alerts), podcasts, posters on campuses and in workplaces, and local radio advertising.

Personal communication (“word of mouth”) was identified as the most effective method to attract participants. A common theme raised by representatives and supported by the UWGV youth council is that young people today are overwhelmed by technology and information. To avoid contributing to this “information overload,” it was recommended that emails or other electronic messaging are kept short and focused at the target audience.

Workplace representatives¹³ play an important role in promotion for some groups. In initial phases of developing a young adult group, “Campaign Kick-Off¹⁴” was found to be a useful event for promoting the group and its goals.

Activities

Events sponsored by United Way young adult groups have had varying degrees of success in attracting the target age group. According to affiliate representatives, networking events are helpful to develop awareness among young adults. Networking usually involved a party or reception featuring speeches about the United Way and opportunities to meet successful people from the community.

¹² During Campaign, organizations throughout the community often loan employees to work at the United Way to assist in the administration of programs and fundraising.

¹³ Workplace representatives are an important component of United Way’s annual fundraising campaigns. Workplace representatives are responsible for providing information about the United Way and coordinating events and activities in their offices.

¹⁴ The event that begins the four month United Way Campaign, where a fundraising target is announced.

The “Day of Caring” has been a successful event for many young adult groups. These days of “front line work” provided opportunities for participants to learn about community issues and meet other young adults. Limited attendance was a challenge for some Day of Caring events; turnout was much higher in regions where participants had the support of their employers.

Some United Way affiliate organizations have had success organizing programs called “Timeraisers.” Timeraiser (<http://www.timeraiser.ca/>) is an organization that has partnered with United Ways in several cities, collaboratively hosting events aimed at raising contributions of time rather than funds. Attendees take part in a silent auction where they are encouraged to bid hours of volunteer work on a variety of donated items. Bidders then have one year to work off their hours for an organization of their choice. Timeraisers are considered successful by United Way affiliate offices as the model allows volunteers to commit based on their needs and also give in a way that does not require financial resources.

Representatives agreed that dedicated funding from the United Way is helpful; however, there are opportunities for events to be self-sustaining. Sponsorship of local businesses and organizations that donated goods, services or money, helped to cover costs. Many groups charged admission and registration fees for events but acknowledge the importance of keeping the price ‘reasonable.’ Follow-up by the organization is essential to sustain initial enthusiasm generated by events and to offer opportunities for ongoing participation.

Brand – “Live United”

The United Way of America has launched the “Live United” movement. Many components of this campaign could be adapted to the development of a strategy for engagement of the young adult population in activities of the UWGV. Live United promotes different ways for individuals to get involved in giving, advocacy and volunteering (See Figure 7).

“Living United means being a part of the change. It takes everyone in the community working together to create a brighter future” (United Way of America, 2008).

Live United is promoted through t-shirts, television commercials (the

Figure 7: Live United Poster



United Way of America, 2008

National Football League is a major sponsor), celebrities, posters and also by providing opportunities for participants to share how they “Live United.” Many of these resources are available through the United Way of America’s Website, <http://www.liveunited.org/>.

Live United is not restricted to a particular age group, however, its promotion specifically targets younger generations. Many United Ways in the US have Gennext groups but fundraising appears to be the key mandate of these young adult programs.

Summary

The UWGV should consider the experiences of other United Way affiliates in developing a strategy to engage young adults. However, the UWGV must recognize that programs that have worked in other jurisdictions may not be successful in Victoria due to unique characteristics of the population in this region. Based on findings from other United Way organizations, keys to developing a successful young adult program in the UWGV include:

- *a mandate that focuses on causes rather than fundraising;*
- *support of the executive of the organization;*
- *flexible and meaningful roles for young adult participants;*
- *effective marketing and branding; and*
- *events and activities designed to target young adults.*

These findings should be important considerations in the planning and execution of a young adult engagement strategy for the UWGV.

SECTION 4 – ANALYSIS

4.1 Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement

The findings from the demographic scan, literature and comparable program reviews, and the focus groups provide useful insight into the issues of engaging the 23-35 age group. These findings suggest seven *Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement*:

- *Provide Organizational Support*
- *Promote Awareness*
- *Be Flexible*
- *Balance Social Interaction and the Cause*
- *Make a Call for Action*
- *Provide Opportunities for Feedback and Acknowledgement*
- *Be Realistic*

These Smart Practices highlight key principles for a successful young adult engagement strategy. The Smart Practices identified here should not be seen as mutually exclusive; rather, various components of these practices should be incorporated into a young adult engagement program.

To avoid the problems presented with claims of what constitute “best” practices, Eugene Bardach’s (n.d.) term of “smart practices” will be adapted for this project. A “smart practice” will be defined as a tested approach that has a proven track record of success in solving a problem (Feng & Stoyko, 2008).

A smart practice will be identified based on the following criteria. For a program, initiative or theory to be classified as a smart practice, it must have been applied in several different contextual situations that indicate its effectiveness (Overman & Boyd, 1994). A smart practice has to have been demonstrated to be more effective when compared to alternative courses of action. Theories and programs recommended should have been applied and have resulted in intended actions. And finally, where available, success of smart practices should be backed by quantitative results. These criteria provided a framework for research that ensured consistent analysis and supported the legitimacy of the findings of this project.

The Smart Practices for Successful Young Adult Engagement are elaborated in more detail in the following sections.

Provide Organizational Support

Support from the board and staff of an organization is key to the success of any strategy aimed at engaging young adults. One important component of organizational support is acknowledgement by the board of directors and staff

that engaging this age group is a priority and that the executive values the contributions that young adults can make. The organization must also demonstrate commitment to this priority by allocating adequate funding and resources.

Organizational buy-in can be expressed by finding ways to include the young adult age group within the current structure of the organization. Recruiting young adults to sit on the board of directors and participate in committees sends a strong message that the organization values these individuals and is interested in their input on how the organization is run (Ad Council, 2000; Allen, 2002).

Promote Awareness

A strategy to develop engaged young adults should focus on promoting awareness to overcome key barriers to engagement: a lack of information and volunteer opportunities or self identification with the organization. Awareness programs must emphasize personal benefits of volunteerism for young adults.

Fundraising should be a secondary goal of any program aimed at engaging the young adult demographic due to financial constraints common in this age group. Non-monetary contributions from this age group may translate into future financial support of the organization as well as a source of future volunteers. Advertising and promotional efforts should focus on potential personal benefits of engagement for young adults.

Be Flexible

Organizations must offer flexible opportunities to engage individuals in the 23-35 age group. Because young adults have limited free time, organizations must find ways to accommodate the schedules and needs of this segment of the population. Casual volunteer opportunities without rigid schedules or offered on an as-needed basis are better suited to the busy schedules of the target group. Young adults do not want to spend extensive time training, filling out forms and dealing with bureaucracy and politics. Organizations need to find ways to register volunteers and make attendance of events as easy and flexible as possible. Flexibility also applies to fundraising. Organizations must find ways to accommodate those who would like to become involved in fundraising or to make financial donations.

Balance Social Interaction and the Cause

Successful young adult engagement programs should focus on creating opportunities for social interaction without losing connection with the organization's purpose and cause. Identification with the cause was cited by young adults as the most important motivation for becoming involved in an organization, initiative or event in their community. Finding an appropriate

balance between social interaction and purposeful involvement should be the foundation of a successful strategy to engage young adults in an organization and their local community.

Make a Call for Action

The review of academic literature and the focus groups conducted for this study noted that individuals strongly value seeing tangible results of their contributions. Successful engagement programs demonstrate that volunteers can be important agents of change. It is essential for events to motivate young adults to think, talk and participate actively in community organizations and causes. The UWGV may choose to work with its community partners and other local organizations (such as Volunteer Victoria) to develop opportunities to translate awareness into action.

Provide Opportunities for Feedback and Acknowledgement

Focus group and literature review findings do not provide a consensus on the value of formal volunteer recognition programs. However, an organization must find ways to acknowledge individuals and provide feedback in addition to the intrinsic satisfaction of volunteer engagement. As discussed in the *Section 3.4* of this report, many young adults appreciate recognition for their contributions to the organization. In addition, encouraging feedback from individuals about their experiences demonstrates that an organization values their opinion and ideas and places a priority on ensuring that engagement opportunities are positive.

Be Realistic

Engaging young adults is not an easy task. Past attempts to involve this age group in community activities and philanthropy have largely been unsuccessful. Therefore, organizations must be realistic about expectations for new programs targeting this population. This study provides evidence that the smart practices described here will help to address (but not necessarily solve) challenges of engaging the 23-35 age group. It is, however, necessary for organizations to set realistic goals and timelines for meeting this objective.

SECTION 5 - RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Recommendations

The UWGV executive has identified meaningful engagement of young adults as a key priority and recognises involvement of this age group as an important component of a strong and sustainable organization. This research project was initiated to address these issues.

The following recommendations apply the *Smart Practices* identified in *Section 4* to suit the specific characteristics of the UWGV and young adults in the Greater Victoria Region:

- *Make Organizational Change – Engage Young Adults in Current Structure*
- *Avoid Traditional “Youth Group Model”*
- *Establish the UWGV as the Primary Facilitator for Young Adult Engagement*
- *Pursue use of “Live United” Marketing*
- *Establish “Engagement Committee”*
- *Expand Engagement Opportunities*
- *Dedicate Funding and Resources*
- *Obtain and Invest in Better Data and Research*

Implementation of these recommendations by the UWGV will increase its ability to engage young adults in the organization and the local community. Each recommendation is now discussed in more detail.

Make Organizational Change – Engage Young Adults in Current Structure

Significant organizational changes are required to effectively engage young adults in the UWGV. The organization must change to a model that incorporates the 23-35 age group into its existing structure to recognize the skills and abilities of young adults. This change will require a reordering of the priorities of the Board of Directors, management and staff of the organization.

Future decision making must consider the needs, interests, motivations and barriers to engagement of 23-35 age group in Victoria. Recruiting young adults to serve on the Board of Directors is an important step to change the current image of the UWGV as an organization that does not appeal to younger generations. The UWGV should actively seek young adults to participate in committees and be involved with Campaign. Hiring staff in the target age group will also help to position the UWGV as an organization that values and welcomes the participation of young adults.

Providing opportunities for current board and committee members to mentor young adults would help to prepare these individuals to participate in the

organization. Mentoring may also be beneficial to allow young adults to learn more about the backgrounds and experiences of successful community leaders.

As identified in this report, young adults are motivated by seeing the tangible results of their contributions. However, few individuals in the 23-35 age group know about the activities of the United Way other than its annual fundraising campaign. Greater awareness of the UWGV's community impact will increase perception of the organization's year-round role as a leader in building a stronger Victoria. The UWGV must promote the important potential contributions of young adults to help the organization accomplish its goals.

Avoid Traditional "Youth Group Model"

Some United Way organizations in Canada have developed a "Gennext" model based on establishing youth or young adult groups as a separate entity within the organization. Results of this study do not support this approach for the UWGV. Classifying this age group as "young adults," "new professionals" or "Generation Next" will not appeal to a diverse group of 23-35 year olds who do not identify with these labels. In addition, participation by this age group that is segregated from the mainstream activities and structure of the organization will be viewed as tokenism. Token representation in decision making of the organization reinforces the perception that young adults do not have adequate skills or abilities to participate in "adult" boards and committees. This perception must be avoided.

Traditional engagement models also often require that young adults become members of groups or the organization, some even requiring a membership fee. Requirements for membership or long term commitments may deter some young adults.

In a strategy to engage young adults, what is avoided is as important as what is included. Results of this study support the development of young adult engagement model for the UWGV that reflects a genuine acceptance of this age group as meaningful contributors to the organization.

Establish the UWGV as the Primary Facilitator for Young Adult Engagement

Some organizations in Victoria have been successful in attracting various segments of the young adult population using a traditional engagement model (eg. Rotary Club's *Roteract*, Victoria Chamber of Commerce's *Prodigy Group*, Institute for Public Administration (IPAC) - *New Professionals*). However, these organizations also face challenges in recruiting and maintaining commitment from individuals in this age group. Creating another group of this model within the UWGV is unlikely to have a significant impact on engagement of young adults in Victoria.

The UWGV is in a unique position due to the credibility of its brand and as an umbrella funder for many organizations in the region. UWGV now has an unprecedented opportunity to become the primary facilitator for young adult engagement in the Greater Victoria Region. The UWGV can also assume an important role in developing connections among community organizations, to encourage collaboration that will enhance the participation of this age group. This role as a community facilitator for young adult engagement will also support the UWGV's community impact goals of facilitating partnerships to increase effectiveness, developing shared vision and consensus, and strengthening communication.

Pursue use of "Live United" Marketing

Research conducted for this study provides evidence that the UWGV could benefit from adoption of a marketing strategy that uses United Way of America's brand of "Live United." Live United expresses essential components of engagement, emphasizing the connectedness and the interdependence of society. This concept encourages sharing and communication as the foundation of community participation. This marketing strategy has proven effective in promoting engagement of younger generations in American United Way organizations.

Adoption of such a campaign could help the UWGV's expand its recruitment and participation beyond a focus on fundraising. A campaign based on the Live United concept would help overcome financial restraints, an issue identified in this study as a current barrier to young adult engagement. A Live United motto may have greater appeal to young adults than labels such as "Gennext" or "new professionals," that fail to identify much of the target population. This campaign would also be inclusive of other age groups in the community.

Canadian United Way organizations can not currently use "Live United" marketing due to copyright restrictions set by the United Way of America. However, the United Way of Canada has had some discussions regarding use of the brand, as a few Canadian offices have expressed interest in the Live United campaign. If an agreement is reached to allow the United Way of Canada to use Live United, the UWGV could take advantage of the many resources that United Way of America has made available. These resources include commercials, posters and other advertising materials available on their website. T-shirts and other Live United items are also available for purchase that could be used as recognition for participants and to promote the campaign. Additionally, the United Way of America provides packages to promote Live United in workplaces and on university and college campuses.

Establish Engagement Committee

Establishment of a young adult engagement committee is a reasonable initial step in developing a strategy for UWGV to target the 23-35 group. The role of this committee will be to consider the priorities, barriers and motivations of the target demographic in the development of an overall plan to engage young adults in the organization and the Greater Victoria community.

Fundraising must be a secondary goal of the organization in regards to this segment of the population. Building connections and relationships should be seen as the first priority. These relationships may translate into financial support as young adults become more established in the community. The key goal for this committee will be to develop awareness about the UWGV, its role in the community and other key issues affecting the region.

Membership of the committee should include representatives of the target age group as well as representatives from the UWGV staff and board to demonstrate the organization's genuine commitment to the engagement of young adults.

Expand Engagement Opportunities

The UWGV must consider expanding the variety of engagement opportunities for young adults before launching a program or activities. These opportunities should range from short-term commitments such as volunteering for a day to more significant roles such as membership on committees, grant opportunities, or staff positions within the UWGV. Efforts should include proactive approaches to reach young adults, shifting responsibility for initial contact from individuals to the organizations.

Coordination with other community partners (such as Volunteer Victoria) will be an important aspect of expanding opportunities. Additionally, the UWGV should work with local businesses and educational institutions to develop support for employees and students to volunteer and become involved in the community.

Dedicate Funding and Resources to Young Adult Engagement

The dedication of UWGV funding and resources is another crucial factor to ensure success in engaging this target group. Suggestions included designation of a staff member to coordinate a youth engagement program. Additionally, assigning a champion from the Board of Directors would reinforce the commitment of the organization to the success of a young adult program at the UWGV.

Obtain and Invest in Better Data and Research

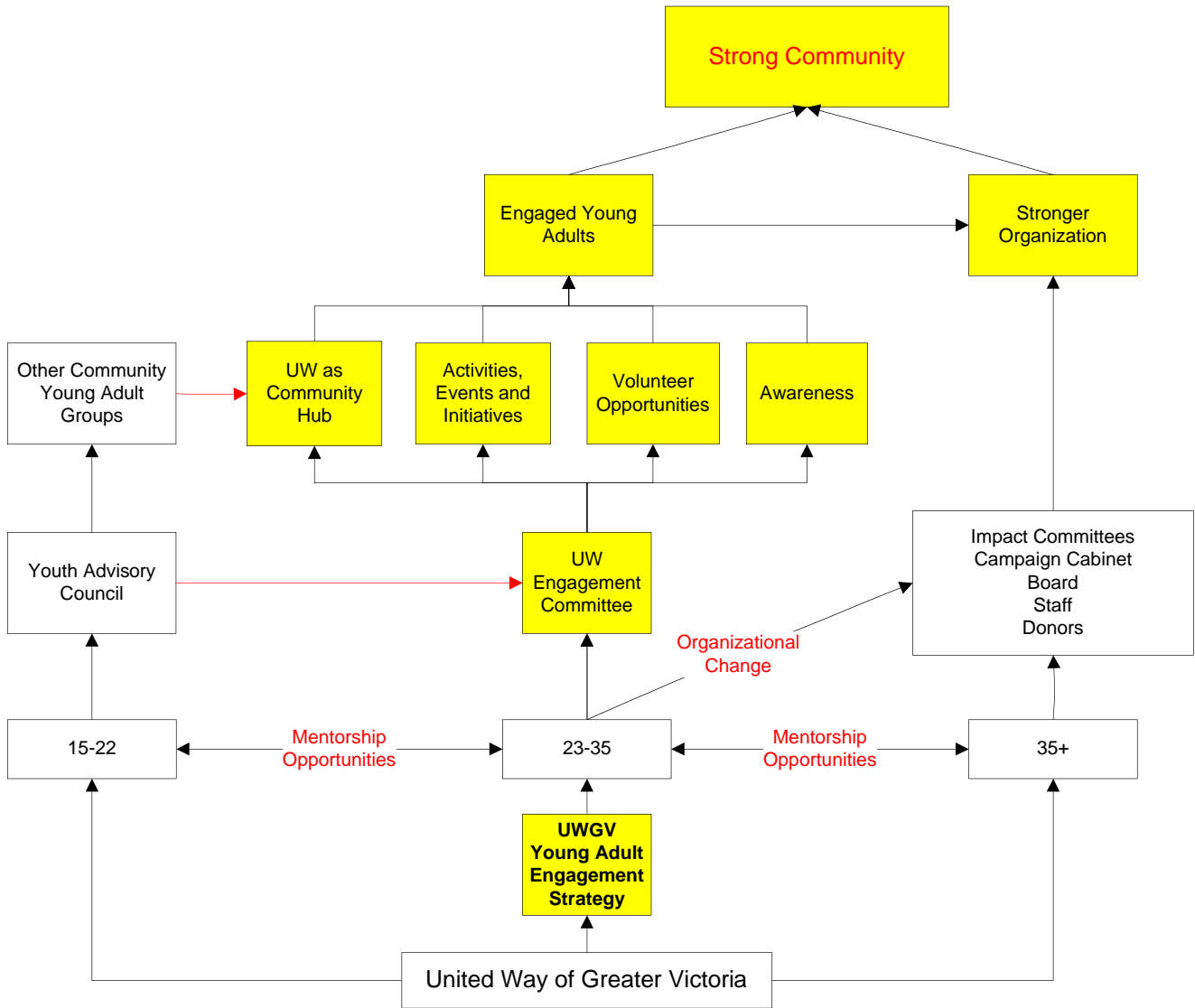
The UWGV should make it a priority to improve its methods for research and data. Research for this project was hampered by the lack of internal data on donors and volunteers. Another limitation was the absence of analysis on current population and demographic trends of the region within the jurisdiction of the UWGV. This analysis should include market research that considers population, income, needs, attitudes and behaviours of the local community.

In addition, better collection of data about donors and volunteers will increase the ability of the UWGV to identify strengths and weaknesses in the current organization. This information would also be useful to forecast future trends and their potential impact on the organization. Some Canadian United Way affiliate offices collect data on donors by including general questions on their pledge forms about age and employment sector. While privacy legislation requirements must be taken into account, it is recommended that this option be explored by using similar methods to improve data collection at the UWGV. Dedicating staff to research on demographics and population trends could strengthen strategic planning for the future of the organization. Such research conducted by the UWGV will also be useful to umbrella organizations in developing programs that will address community priorities.

Conceptual Framework: Recommendations

Figure 8 shows the potential impact on the UWGV that could be realized by the incorporation of young adults into the organization. As this figure suggests, careful considerations of the recommendations of this report could help the UWGV to accomplish its goal of developing a stronger organization and community in Victoria.

Figure 8: Conceptual Framework – Recommendations



5.2 Implementation

This report provides recommendations for key components of a strategy to engage young adults in the UWGV. This implementation plan suggests steps for putting these recommendations into practice. The UWGV staff and Board of Directors could use this implementation plan as a framework to ensure that a strategy to engage young adults is efficiently and effectively developed and put into operation.

The implementation plan is divided into five phases that includes a tentative timeline for the first year of a young adult engagement strategy at the UWGV:

- *Phase 1: Presentation of Report and Recommendations (December 2008)*
- *Phase 2: Establish Internal Capacity (January – February, 2009)*
- *Phase 3: Planning and Promotion (March-August 2009)*
- *Phase 4: UWGV Young Adult Strategy Kick-Off (September-December 2009)¹⁵*
- *Phase 5: Evaluation (January 2010)*

Some implementation tasks should be ongoing goals for the UWGV:

- *Make Organizational Change – Engage Young Adults in Current Structure of UWGV*
- *Obtain and Invest in Better Data and Research*
- *Collaborate with affiliate offices in development of a national United Way Young Adult Engagement Strategy (Potential Future Research)*

See Figure 9 (next page) for a detailed implementation plan outlining timeframes and tasks for each phase of the proposed young adult strategy. The plan is intended as a guideline rather than a comprehensive, prescriptive requirement. The UWGV should undertake its own assessment of the report and application of its recommendations and subsequent implementation. However, implementation of this strategy can help position the UWGV to employ the skills, abilities and enthusiasm of younger generations, to continue to fulfill its mandate as a builder of strong community in Greater Victoria.

¹⁵ Timing of a kick-off event should take into account that many people take vacation and many students will not be in Victoria during the summer months. Therefore, a kick-off event should likely take place in September. Combining a kick-off of the young adult strategy with Campaign Kick-Off could be an effective method to generate excitement and take advantage of publicity that the event usually generates. Also, waiting until September will provide more time to implement recommendations and ensure that foundations for a successful program are in place.

Figure 9: Implementation Plan

	Time Frame	Tasks
Phase 1: Presentation of Report and Recommendations		
Presentation of Young Adult Engagement Strategy (YAES)	Dec-08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of report to Board of Directors / UWGV Staff • Discussion and revisions • Determine Next Steps • Assign Board Champion
Phase 2: Internal Planning and Evaluation		
Evaluate UWGV's Capacity: Logistics and Resources Available	Jan-Feb 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine structure of YAES • Define role of YAES within the UWGV • Determine available funding and resources for YAES
Dedicate Staff Representative	Jan 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One staff member at UWGV will need to take on responsibility for facilitating implementation of young adult engagement strategy
Recruit for Engagement Committee	Jan-Apr 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask UWGV staff, board and community partners to provide names of people that may be good candidates for Engagement Committee • Recruit 6-10 participants for establishment of UWGV Engagement Committee
Phase 3: Strategic Planning and Promotion		
Establish Engagement Committee	Mar-Apr 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and establish terms of reference • Determine committee roles • Allocate resources required • Determine structure of committee • Clarify logistics
Develop Community Partnerships	Apr-Aug 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop volunteer plan with Volunteer Victoria • Begin discussions with other Victoria young adult groups regarding joint events • Inform funded partners of UWGV young adult engagement goals • Pursue sponsorship / volunteer support from community businesses and organizations
Marketing	Apr-Aug 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue "Live United" copyright permission • Identify medium and methods for communication • Begin development of YAES marketing plan
Phase 4: UWGV 23-35 Strategy Kick-Off		
Kick-off Event	Sept 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote new UWGV young adult program at Campaign Kick-off • Encourage participation of UWGV supporters
Follow up Events	Sept-Dec 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Timeraiser" or Day of Caring • Recruitment for future programs and activities
Phase 5: Evaluation		
Year One Evaluation	Jan 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Year One of YAS • Develop YAES plan for 2010

Ongoing Goals		
Make Organizational Change	Implement by Dec 09	Recruit 1-2 Young Adults to sit on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UWGV Board • Impact Councils • Campaign Cabinet
Explore Improving Data Collection and Research	Implement by Dec 09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore possibilities of dedicating or hiring staff for demographic studies, community and market research • Identify desired data and possible methods for collection
National United Way Young Adult Strategy	Ongoing/Future Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with United Way of Canada to develop national young adult engagement framework • Develop connections with UW young adult programs in affiliate offices to share resources and ideas

5.3 Conclusion

Canadian non-profit organizations currently face a decrease in financial support and an increase in the number of people seeking help and services due to the 2008 financial crisis. As discussed in this report, under-representation of young adults in the work of philanthropic organizations further threatens the ability of these organizations to continue to contribute to the growth of a vibrant civic society.

Engaged citizens are the key to a strong society; however, sustainability of the UWGV and other community organizations depends on participation by all age groups. Adults in their twenties and thirties have shown reluctance to become involved in civic and community processes. A low rate of engagement of this age group has been recognized as a challenge by the UWGV, leading to the initiation of this study.

This report offers a detailed analysis of factors that contribute to currently low levels of young adult engagement with the UWGV and the local community. It also proposes a plan for UWGV to develop and put into practice an informed strategy to brand and structure the organization to better meet the needs of this target age group. Recommendations include a re-evaluation of organizational structure and priorities, and the commitment of time and resources.

Implementation of this strategy can help position the UWGV to employ the skills, abilities and enthusiasm of younger generations, continuing to fulfill its mandate of building a stronger community in Greater Victoria.

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APPENDIX 1: FOCUS GROUP

1.1 Focus Group Consent Form

Engaging Young Adults: Strategic Visions for the United Way of Greater Victoria

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Engaging and Sustaining Young Adults: A New Strategy for the United Way of Greater Victoria that is being conducted by David Puterman.

David is a Masters student at the University of Victoria in the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria and you may contact him if you have further questions by email at dkp@uvic.ca or by phone at 250-888-7794.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Althaus. You may contact my supervisor at **250-721-8060**.

Purpose and Objectives

The goal of this project is to recommend a strategy for the United Way of Greater Victoria (UWGV) to engage young adults in sustained involvement in philanthropic and volunteer activities in the Capital Region. The intended objective is to analyze the current state of engagement with the UWGV by young adults in Victoria and to determine if, and where, gaps in engagement exist. This analysis will be used to determine appropriate programs and a governance structure that engages young adults in Victoria.

Importance of this Research

Young adults make up a large percentage of the population in Victoria and have important skills and abilities that can be useful assets to any non-profit organization. However, management of the UWGV has identified that there is a gap across the sector in providing programs that appeal to young adults and the new professional demographic. Young adults (defined as those aged 23-35 or “the under 40 crowd” by United Ways in other jurisdictions) are often in transitional points in their careers and families and are among the most difficult demographic to engage in civic action and philanthropic work.

The climate of an aging population in Victoria requires the UWGV and other non-profit organizations to be proactive in developing plans to engage and gain commitment from the next generation of volunteers and donors. It is intended that this research project will provide insight for the UWGV and other non-profits, to improve engagement strategies for young adults and increase the sustainability of their organization.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you fall within the target demographic for the research project.

What is involved?

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include providing information and possibly some response to questions regarding volunteer engagement, focusing specifically on young adults. The interview can either take place by phone or, if appropriate, at your place of work.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study you will be consulted to discuss further use of information that has been provided. No information will be used without your consent.

Confidentiality

There are limits to your confidentiality due to selection of participants. Because participants are drawn from a relatively small pool, it is possible that your participation in the study could be inferred. However, all information provided for inclusion in the final report should not be of confidential nature and participants' responses will remain unattributed. However, if requested, the information or opinion in question will be cited or quoted in the report on a confidential and not for attribution basis.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others through a report presented to the United Way of Greater Victoria, defended before a graduate examination committee at the University of Victoria, and held within the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria.

Disposal of Data

Information from this study will be kept by the researcher as needed. Information may be used again by the researcher in the future to further, or conduct similar, research, except for information collected on a confidential not for attribution basis, which will be destroyed within six months of the completion of the report.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include researcher David Puterman (250-888-7794), academic supervisor Dr. Catherine Althaus (250-721-8060) or Client Supervisor at the United Way of Greater Victoria, Chris Poirier-Skelton (250.385.6708 ext. 254).

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

1.2 Agenda and Script for Focus Group with Young Adults

I) Moderator Introduction

II) Project Background and Format of Focus Group Session

III) Introductions of Participants

- First Name
- Where are you from?
- How long have you lived in Victoria?
- What do you feel is the most important issue facing the local community?

IV) Questions for Focus Group

1) Young Adults

- Do you identify with the title of young adult? Or can you think of a better term for describing yourself.

2) Role of Young Adults in United Way

- What do you think of when you hear about the “United Way?”
- What do you know about the programs and initiatives of the UWGV?

3) Engagement

- When I say “engaged citizens” what comes to mind. What are some of the components?
- What are some things that you do to engage in the community? (eg. Participate on teams or in clubs, volunteer, attend community events?)
- Do you feel engaged in Victoria?
- Would you like to be more engaged?

4) Barriers

- What are barriers to becoming engaged in your community and with organizations like the United Way?

(Write down on white board / flip chart.)

(Show list of barriers from Research)

- Do you agree? Can you think of any others?

(Ask people to write down three most important motivations on post- it notes and rank)

5) Motivations

- What are Motivations to becoming engaged in your community?

(Write down on white board / flip chart)

- What are Motivations to being engaged with the UWGV of Greater Victoria?

(Show list of motivations from Research)

- Do you agree? Can you think of any others?

(Ask people to write down three most important motivations on post- it notes and rank)

6) Brain Storm Programs

- What are some programs that you feel would be beneficial for engaging young adults at the UWGV?
- Do you think volunteer organizations are doing enough to attract young adults you to participate?
- What could the United Way do better?
- How could success be measured?

7) Conclusion / Summary

- Is there anything that we've missed or does anybody have any questions?

1.3 Focus Group Ranking of Motivations and Barriers

After brainstorming session on engagement, young adult focus group participants were asked to rank the three motivations and barriers that have the most significant impact on them. To analyse these results, a first place ranking was given a value of 3, a second place ranking was given a value of 2 and a third place ranking was given a value of 1. Values were tallied to develop the following rankings of motivations and barriers:

Figure 10: Focus Group Ranking of Motivations and Barriers

Barriers	
Time	45
Commitment	18
Awareness	11
Transient	7
Money	6
Won't make an Impact	4
Not Aimed At 23-35 Age Group	3
Mental	2
Not A Priority	2
Fear of Unknown	2
Not Fun	2
Other Barriers Brainstormed	
Under Appreciated	
Under Qualified	
Over Qualified	
Transportation is difficult	
Guilt	

Motivations	
Cause/Believe in Organization	19
Fun	18
Giving Back/Make a Difference	15
Recognition	12
Social/Networking/Meet New People	9
Resume/Experience/Skills Gained	7
Front Line opportunities	6
Friend Participate	5
Follow Interests	3
Learn About Issue	3
Discovering Self and Values	2
Variety in Life	2
Activity/Exercise	1
Other Barriers Brainstormed	
Flexibility	
Singles Events	
Flexibility	
Religion	
Escape	

APPENDIX 2: CHARTS AND TABLES

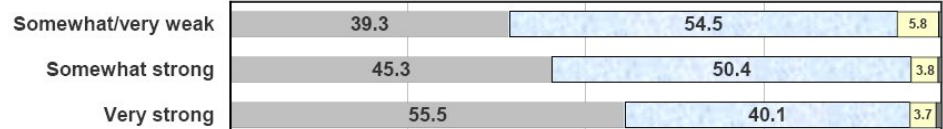
Figure 11: Level of Happiness in Canada

2003 General Social Survey on Social Engagement, cycle 17: an overview of find

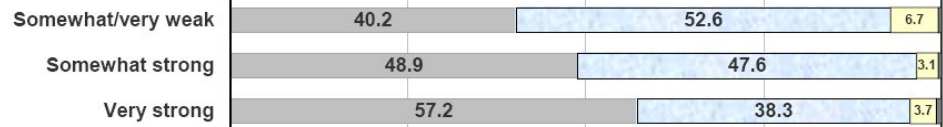
Chart 25

Level of happiness by sense of belonging, Canada, 2003

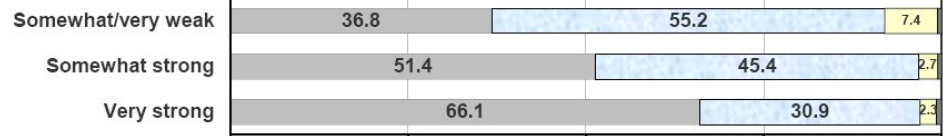
Belonging to community



Belonging to province



Belonging to Canada



0 25 50 75 100
%

Very happy Somewhat happy Somewhat/very unhappy Not stated

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2003.

Figure 11 was copied from the overview of findings for Cycle 17 of the Statistics Canada GSS, available at < <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/dli-ild/data-donnees/ftp/gss-esq-eng.htm>>.

Figure 12: CSGVP Volunteer Barriers

Table 3. Barriers to volunteering more and the personal and economic characteristics of volunteers

	Already volunteer enough	No extra time	Health problems	Not personally asked	Do not know how	Cost of volunteering	Legal concerns	No interest	Give money instead	No year-round commitment	Bad previous experience
Age											
15 - 24 years	11%	76%	15%	49%	29%	20%	6%	24%	24%	24%	11%
25 - 34 years	11%	80%	9%	43%	22%	19%	8%	21%	37%	47%	7%
35 - 44 years	17%	78%	15%	33%	18%	19%	7%	21%	40%	50%	7%
45 - 54 years	27%	72%	22%	34%	17%	18%	7%	27%	41%	48%	8%
55 - 64 years	27%	64%	35%	31%	16%	19%	8%	27%	40%	43%	8%
65+ yrs	43%	39%	58%	27%	15%	17%	6%	28%	45%	41%	8%

Figure 13: CSGVP Volunteer Motivations

Table 2. Motivations for volunteering and the personal and economic characteristics of volunteers

	Believe in cause	You/someone know affected by cause	Friends volunteer	Improve job opportunities	Fulfill religious obligations or benefits	Explore own strengths	Use skills or experiences	Required to volunteer
Age								
15 - 24 years	90%	59%	42%	55%	19%	71%	86%	18%
25 - 34 years	93%	66%	29%	27%	22%	63%	81%	6%
35 - 44 years	95%	74%	25%	18%	24%	55%	81%	7%
45 - 54 years	97%	75%	27%	13%	25%	53%	78%	6%
55 - 64 years	97%	69%	27%	8%	32%	50%	79%	3%
65+ yrs	98%	65%	34%	6%	50%	46%	78%	2%

Figures 12 and 13 were copied from the CSGVP report *The Volunteer Spirit in Canada: Motivations and Barriers*, available at <http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/pdf/reports/volunteer_spirit.pdf>.