

DATA STRATEGY FOR BC'S NONPROFIT SECTOR

Preliminary meeting – summary notes

July 30, 2015
2:30 - 4:30 pm

Facilitator: Trina Isakson, 27 Shift	Guest: Michael Lenczer, Ajah/PoweredbyData
<p>Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bob Prenovost, bc211 • Michael Davis, Board Voice • Gillian Vrooman, OpenDataBC • Joanne Curry, SFU • Allison Andrachuk, Tides Canada • Susan Grossman, UBC • Mary Ellen Schaafsma, United Way of the Lower Mainland • Mandeep Sidhu, Vancity • Lauren Dobell, Vancity • Kevin McCort, Vancouver Foundation • Rebecca Mullen, Vancouver Foundation • Denise Baker, Vantage Point • Tim Beachy, VOCBC, BC Centre for Non-Profit Management and Sustainability, Realize Co-op • Andrea Moir, Government of British Columbia, Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation • David Hume, Government of British Columbia, Government Communications and Public Engagement 	<p>Regrets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eli van der Giessen, Net Squared / Tech Soup • David Eaves • Kathy Zandbergen, TELUS • Nicole MacLellan, TELUS • Andy Broderick, Vancity • Bryn Sadownik, Vancity Community Foundation • Paul Stacey, Creative Commons

Overall summary

The room expressed varying levels of interest in a data strategy for BC's nonprofit sector. Some needed more information "meat on the bone" in order to move forward or express support. Others had plans already for their own organizations. Some were excited, and expressed need for creativity and infrastructure. One emphasized the importance of moving forward, wanting "a future where data is an enabler for good things. Right now the enabler is ignorance."

In order for a data strategy to be the right move, participants expressed needs for someone to step up as a backbone/lead organization, funding to support the strategy, clarity/consensus on the intended goals and beneficiaries, awareness of resources available for data work, a place for a central repository, access to data that is useful and *used*, and an easy ask for nonprofits, especially smaller organizations.

Trina will follow up with each participant individually.

A list of data sets and other resources discussed during the meeting is at <http://bit.ly/1INncJg>.

Meeting notes

HOW WE GOT HERE

Trina summarized what led to us being in the room. She had spent time in Ontario working in a federal government social innovation unit. One of the pillars she was working on was data and technology. She attended a variety of open data events while in Ottawa, and presented at a few on what nonprofits need from open data. She met Michael of PoweredbyData, heard what Michael was doing in Ontario with the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN). Trina thought there may be opportunity/interest in BC, but there is no natural provincial BC org that focuses on this topic.

Michael had plans to be out in Vancouver they decided timing would be great to have a meeting where Michael could be in the room. Trina invited orgs that work at a sector level, had great response. She emphasized that any future movement depended on the nonprofit sector leadership in and out of the room, as she was an independent “rogue agent.”

WHAT DATA?

Trina provided an overview of the types of data that is most often talked about (see image below), why that data can be useful, and what makes for good data/a good data strategy:

- good data is
 - ▶ shared freely
 - ▶ machine readable (not scans, PDFs)
 - ▶ useful and used
- good data can
 - ▶ help connect dots, see how we’re doing, what we’re doing, anticipate future trends
 - ▶ give evidence/context for policy recommendations and other work
 - ▶ help us be more effective, efficient, collaborative
- a good data strategy includes a focus on
 - ▶ data standards
 - ▶ policy - both policies around data, and how data is used for policy work
 - ▶ skills and resources needed to effectively work with data
 - ▶ clear leadership to drive the strategy forward
 - ▶ a plan for effective and responsible use of data

What data?



Source: Markets for Good: Upgrading the Information Infrastructure for Social Change , p. 7
<http://www.marketsforgood.org/markets-for-good-upgrading-the-infrastructure-for-social-change-2/>

DATA PROJECTS OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants each shared data-related projects they are working on or have worked on. Some of the projects were internal e.g. internal databases that collect information to help them understand their work better, or determining a theory of change and therefore what sort of data is important to collect. Some projects were focused on large-scale open data, e.g. data from Gaming Branch, Community Living, rental housing stock database, data.gov.bc.ca in order to inform organizational strategy or policy advocacy. There was a lot of curiosity about what others were working on, and participants asked many questions and made many suggestions of one another.

MICHAEL'S OVERVIEW FROM ONTARIO

Michael then shared an overview of PoweredbyData's and ONN's work on a data strategy. Michael highlighted the types of data that are accessible and what can be done with that data. One example is a transparency link on the bottom of every federal government department website that leads to listings of grants and contribution agreements since 2005, and how that led to scraping some of that data (and data from other funders) to create Sector Landscape (<http://landscape.ajah.ca>), where people can search past funding by keywords, location, dates, etc.

In Ontario, ONN and PoweredbyData had an initial meeting last summer, and after subsequent consultations they released "Towards a Data Strategy for the Ontario Nonprofit Sector" (<http://theonnc.ca/our-work/our-partnerships/data-strategy/>). ONN has used this work already to make a submission to the Government of Ontario Consultation on the draft Open Data Directive (<http://theonnc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Submission-to-the-Government-of-Ontario-Consultation-on-the-data-Open-Directive-3.pdf>).

WHAT WOULD NEED TO BE TRUE?

Participants then brainstormed "what would need to be true in order for a data strategy for BC's nonprofit sector to be the right decision?" Participants started individually, then in pairs, then in groups of 4, then shared any small group consensus with the room. They shared opinions included what would need to be true to get started, and what would need to be true of any data strategy. Ideas include the need for:

- backbone/lead organization
- funding/investment to support the strategy
- and that any strategy need to/could include
- clarity/consensus on the intended goals and beneficiaries
- awareness of resources available for data work
- a place for a central repository
- access to data that is useful and *used*
- government interest
- an easy ask for nonprofits, especially smaller organizations
- opportunities for pilots
- information on what data nonprofits want
- mapping the resources spent on buying or compiling data/research

CLOSING COMMENTS

Trina asked the room where they were at: did they think this was an important step (i.e. for the nonprofit sector to think strategically about data/develop a data strategy)? Most shared that they would need to see more "meat on the bone" in order to know how they could participate/contribute. Some organizations shared what they planned to do as individual organizations (that they were already working on, separate from any BC nonprofit sector strategy). One shared that we need to move forward, wanting "a future where data is an enabler for good things. Right now the enabler is ignorance."

NEXT STEPS

Trina will follow up with participant organization individually.

A list of data sets and other resources discussed during the meeting is at <http://bit.ly/1INncJg>.