

ABNN 2019 Policy Agenda

Alberta's nonprofit and voluntary sector (nonprofit sector) is a key partner in the Government of Alberta's commitment to enhance the quality of life of Albertans.

We are a diverse, innovative frontline sector delivering opportunities and services to enable Albertans to thrive. We are equally social and economic drivers and safety nets in communities across the province. Albertans depend on us for their social, economic, recreational, environmental, and spiritual well-being. And we depend on collaborative, mutually beneficial relationships with the Government of Alberta to work effectively, efficiently, and with the greatest impact.

Leading into the 2019 Alberta provincial election, the Alberta Nonprofit Network (ABNN) is advocating for a renewed nonprofit policy agenda to strengthen our sector for the benefit of all Albertans, centred on four priority actions:

- Develop a government-led and sector-informed Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Strategy
- Increase policy and program-focused collaboration between the Government of Alberta and the nonprofit sector
- Modernize Alberta's laws, policies, and funding models to realize the public benefits of nonprofits
- Adopt an ongoing provincial data-driven assessment of the nonprofit sector's contributions

Priority: Increase policy- and program-focused collaboration between the Government of Alberta and the nonprofit sector

WHY IT MATTERS

The Government of Alberta and nonprofit sector have "interconnected mandates to provide services to Albertans" and shared goals of "striving to redistribute resources equitably as well as reach Albertans with varied needs and interests" (Alberta Culture and Tourism, 2018). To fulfill this mandate and achieve these goals, it's critical for both parties to recognize the interdependence of the Government of Alberta's policies and programs and the nonprofit sectors' programs and services and work to align them.

ABNN was established as to act as a cohesive force for the nonprofit sector to work collectively on province-wide opportunities. It recognizes that advancing these opportunities depends on its ability to work effectively and efficiently with the Government of Alberta.

As it stands, some representatives of the nonprofit sector interface with the Government of Alberta on sector issues through its Alberta Nonprofit Voluntary Sector Initiative (ANVSI) – a forum for government to understand and gather the broader perspective of the nonprofit sector. The majority have direct relationships with local MLAs and, depending on their field of work (e.g., seniors, children, environment, status of women), department staff. The nature and formality of these relationships varies substantially, and the sector's overall relationship to government is greatly influenced by Alberta's political and economic conditions.

The nonprofit sector is an innovative, nimble, frontline, and adaptive partner that works with the Government of Alberta to meet the needs of Albertans. It has the potential to help the Government of Alberta demonstrate an increase in public benefit on every public dollar by helping to deliver programs and services through a combination of public funding, revenue generating activities, donations, and in-kind supports. Acting as a contributor in this regard requires a greater commitment to co-developing and advancing policy and programs by:

- Recognizing, valuing, and actively promoting collaboration between government and nonprofit sector
- Creating pathways for how the nonprofit sector, as a collective, to interface and collaborate with the Government of Alberta
- Co-developing a clear picture of the economic, social and manpower (volunteer) impact of the nonprofit sector in Alberta
- Establishing a collaborative, rather than consultative, governance structure and working relationship
- Involving the nonprofit sector, as leaders and subject matter experts, in understanding the frontline view of Albertans' needs and creating policy, programs, and service-delivery models to help meet them

Priority: Develop a government-led and sector-informed Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Strategy

WHY IT MATTERS

The Government of Alberta released a 2018 Alberta Culture and Tourism [discussion paper](#) on the value and contributions of the nonprofit sector. The report identifies the strengths and benefits of a strong nonprofit sector in Alberta, and also acknowledges how the diversity, varied mandates, and independence of the organizations makes its challenging to harness and leverage its collective potential.

Both ABNN and ANVSI are indicators that the nonprofit sector and government see value in better articulating and leveraging the undefined potential of the nonprofit sector, with its more than 26,200 nonprofit organizations, 451,000 paid employees, and \$8.3 billion in annual volunteer labour (Alberta Culture and Tourism, 2018). To do this, it is imperative that the Government of Alberta:

- Collaborate with the nonprofit and voluntary sector to identify sector-wide social, economic, and environmental goals, and develop a framework to help advance them
- Establish guidelines and expectations on how the non-profit sector can most effectively interface and communicate with elected officials and department staff, as well as collaborate on and lend expert voice to the development of government policy, programs, and services
- Enable sustainable, predictable funding models supported by multi-year business plans, budgets, performance indicators, and service agreements

It is only with clarity of purpose, strong working relationships, and stability in funding that nonprofits can ensure they are doing the right things, at the right times, and in the most efficient manner to achieve positive outcomes for Albertans.

Priority: Modernize Alberta's laws, policies, and funding models to realize the public benefits of nonprofits

WHY IT MATTERS

Alberta's nonprofit sector contribute more than \$41.7 billion to our economy in combined expenditures and volunteer labour hours (Alberta Culture and Tourism, 2018). This doesn't consider the economic value that it creates through supporting and readying Albertans to contribute to our economy, nor the cost savings achieved by delivering frontline, capacity building social and economic services. While the advantage of an empowered, enabled nonprofit sector is clear, Alberta's regulatory environment and government-led funding agreements do not reflect this. There is a need for the Government of Alberta to apply a "public benefit" lens to its legislation, regulations, policies, funding models (e.g., charitable gaming review), and, at the more operational level, funding and service agreements. This will ensure that policy changes, such as increases in minimum wage, requirements to adhere to employment standards, or lobbyist registration, are considered in context of the nonprofit sector. It will help to enable, support, and further strengthen the impact of the nonprofits supporting the Government of Alberta's priorities and working to improve the quality of life for Albertans.

Priority: Adopt an ongoing provincial data-driven assessment of the nonprofit sector's contributions

WHY IT MATTERS

Alberta Culture and Tourism's October 2018 [discussion paper](#) on the value and contributions of the nonprofit sector paints a high-level picture of the nonprofit sector. It acknowledges job creation, economic expenditures, volunteer labour hours, and the breadth of the sector's profile and, accordingly, its impact.

However, this profile skims the surface of understanding how the more than 26,200 active nonprofits in Alberta are helping to achieve better outcomes for Albertans. Right now, the impact of nonprofits is being gathered by the organizations themselves or by umbrella organizations that have been created to strengthen the sector (e.g., ABNN, Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Volunteer Alberta).

In order to effectively understand the strengths, challenges, issues, and opportunities in the nonprofit sector, it is necessary to have ongoing, high-quality, and relevant data about the sector. This includes data related to its labour force, economy, and social, economic, and environmental

contributions. Currently, nonprofits in the province look to Statistics Canada, academic research, organizationally-driven surveys, and stakeholder engagement for evidence to recommend solutions to sector challenges. Without robust, current, and longitudinal data, both the sector and the Government of Alberta are piecing together an informed perspective and missing opportunities to develop informed solutions to realizing the potential of the nonprofit sector and how the sector and provincial government can better partner.

Moving Forward

ABNN supports an interdependent relationship between the Government of Alberta and nonprofit sector. As a “network of networks,” we reach, represent, and are working to mobilize the credibility, expertise, and capabilities of Alberta’s more than 26,200 active nonprofits.

Our policy agenda reflects input from more than 49 diverse nonprofit organizations captured as part of public policy planning workshops held in Edmonton and Calgary in January 2019, and considers the extensive work of the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, and Volunteer Alberta to support local nonprofit interests and advocate for provincial policy imperatives for the sector.

Leading up to Alberta 2019 provincial election and beyond, we are actively seeking opportunities to connect with Alberta election candidates to share our story and policy interests.

If you are an Alberta general provincial election candidate or representative of a nonprofit organization interested in sector policy, please contact us at: theabnn@gmail.com

Who is ABNN?

The ABNN is an independent network of nonprofits seeking to advance the cohesive, proactive, and responsive nonprofit sector in Alberta. We work together to define and respond to systemic issues that impact the nonprofit sector in Alberta, take collective action in response to strategic issues, and leverage one another’s learning and resources. Learn more at albertanonprofits.ca

References

Alberta Culture and Tourism (2018). Profiling the Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector in Alberta: Discussion Paper on the Value and Contribution of the Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector. Retrieved from <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/99071990-cfbc-4409-9ca5-a25292582f2a/resource/1a736968-dfdb-4222-a937-a7de0c07ec0b/download/profiling-the-nonprofit-voluntary-sector-in-alberta-anvsi.pdf>