

Engagement Strategy: Path Forward & Outcomes

Alberta Nonprofit Network, in the spirit of reconciliation, humbly and reverently acknowledges that we live and work on the traditional, ancestral, and present-day territory of many peoples on land currently subject to Treaties 6, 7, and 8. We express our gratitude and appreciation to the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who have lived in and cared for these lands since time immemorial. Through our work with ABNN, we strive to be and become good Treaty people.



Overview

Alberta Nonprofit Network (ABNN) was created with the vision of improving the lives of Albertans through the collective impact of a connected, collaborative, and strong Alberta nonprofit sector. Initially, determining how to effectively work as a Network was paramount. Once processes were established, it was important to understand the needs of the sector.

With the guidance and expertise of Network Stewards, ABNN determined the need for data in the Sector and, consequently, developed a Data Strategy. Work continues to understand the needs of the Sector. Running parallel to this understanding is the capacity of ABNN, the impact, the need, and the relationship it has with the Sector.

To inform the Network Stewards, ABNN requested an Engagement and Relationship Strategy be developed to support the ABNN strategic plan and assist the Network in connecting with its stakeholders.

Research and engagement activities to support developing the strategy took place mainly between January and March 2022. This report is a brief synopsis of how the Sector was engaged and the outcomes.

ABNN is guided by the following principles:

- *Inclusive engagement and consistent communication*
- *Openness and transparency*
- *Integrity*
- *Relevance and authenticity*
- *Encouraging reciprocity, solidarity, and shared interests*
- *Adaptive learning*

Where We're Headed

Relationship- building

Frequent engagement
virtually and in person.

Relevant Communications

Value and impact as
priorities.

Sector Involvement

Ongoing collaboration
and participation
opportunities.

Clarity

In purpose, identity,
values, diversity of
ABNN.

Engagement Process

To assist with clarity around Network engagement and expectations, three months of research and activities were undertaken.

This included:

- 3 focus groups with a total participation of 20 individuals representing a variety of stakeholder organizations;
- one-on-one interviews with 27 organizations or individuals primarily representing Network organizations;
- a survey completed by 140 respondents representing a variety of stakeholder organizations.

The sector was broken down by region for this primary research. For ABNN's purposes, Alberta is broken into 7 regions: Northwest, Northeast, North Central, Edmonton, Central, Calgary, and South.

In addition to primary research, the current ABNN database was assessed to better understand who makes up ABNN's Network. Approximately 70% of ABNN's contacts are split evenly between Calgary, Edmonton, and the rest of the province. The remainder serve both AB as well as Canada.



What We Heard

Months of interviews, focus groups, surveys, and polls gave us a very clear indication of what our Sector wants, needs, and values:

- Clear, valuable communications that provide impact to the Sector in total and individually as nonprofits. Direct. Timely. Relevant.
- The chance to build relationships in the Sector and with ABNN. Reciprocity and two-way relationships are prioritized by the Sector.
- Less talk about Sector needs and wants and more action and specifics. The Network organizations want to be engaged and support ABNN's work.
- Diversity in ABNN's leadership (consider rural, sub-sectors) and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion lenses.
- Sense-making and future-thinking; sharing and explaining of relevant resources, data, and best practices; trends and resources to help inform the sector.

The Sector sees significant potential and opportunity in ABNN. This stated, the Sector hasn't seen much in terms of tangible outcomes from ABNN. The Sector wants ABNN to be its collective voice – the foundational understanding of what the sector is and why it matters.

Increasing capacity of ABNN was an important recommendation from the Sector. Importantly, increasing the human resource capacity of the Network Stewards table to invigorate and diversify Sector representation, both from rural and equity, diversity, and inclusion lenses, was suggested repeatedly.

Further, the Sector encouraged increasing the financial capacity of ABNN through additional funders.

Finally, a move to continue to hire contractors to support ABNN was encouraged by the Sector.

Purpose - ABNN seeks to advance the cohesive, pro-active and responsive nonprofit sector in Alberta. ABNN sees an opportunity to:

- *Engage one another in defining and responding to systemic issues that impact the nonprofit sector in Alberta*
- *Enable opportunities for collective action in response to strategic issues*
- *Leverage learning and resources*

Moving Forward

ABNN Network Stewards met and reviewed the Engagement Strategy in detail in April 2022.

As Stewards that guide the work of ABNN and, also, direct major capacity-building organizations in the province, it was imperative to understand the needs of the Network along with the capacity of the Stewards.

Discussions evolved throughout the day and a path forward was realized. The current Stewards acknowledge the significant opportunity that lies in ABNN and that the work done to date to inform and engage the Network has been useful and well-received:

- Government Relations and Data Strategy committees have made progress over the past couple of years.
- Government Relations has advocated on behalf of the Sector to our provincial government regarding funding and grants.
- Data Strategy developed a plan to help inform the Sector with more and better data.
- Both committees are spearheaded by Network Stewards and much of the work is done by their respective organizations.

Duplication of efforts matched by capacity was debated by the Network Stewards.

The outcome is simple: *ABNN will do a few things and do them well.*

ABNN will let those organizations doing Government Relations and Data Strategy continue, with support from ABNN but not duplication of efforts.

To that end, ABNN will focus on:

- providing opportunities for Sector connection and engagement with ABNN and each other
- providing consistent, relevant communications

ABNN Network Stewards:

Calgary Chamber of Voluntary

Organizations - Karen Ball

Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary

Organizations - Gemma Dunn

FuseSocial - TBD

IntegralOrg - Mike Grogan

Volunteer Alberta - Miki Stricker-Talbot

Volunteer Lethbridge - Amanda Jensen