

WHAT WE HEARD SUMMARY

July, 2023

Grounding for Volunteer Alberta's Strategic Dreaming

In 2023, Volunteer Alberta's board and staff are on a journey to identify our North Star and chart our strategic path for 2024-2026. To do so, we are engaging in "Strategic Dreaming" to help us identify the futures we want to work towards.

To help ground our work, in June 2023, we kicked off our Community Conversations with a gathering of members of the Alberta Volunteer Centres Network. Through the conversation, we wished to better understand the things that mattered to them that would be helpful for us to keep in mind as we dream.

WHAT WE ASKED

WHY WE ASKED IT

WHAT WE HEARD

What brings you joy in the work you are currently doing?

As an organization, we value an asset-based approach and strive to live into that value in all of our conversations. Learning from the wisdom of the Asset-Based Community Development approach, we "focus on what's strong, not what's wrong." These strengths are things VA could work to cultivate further through our strategic work.

- A clear theme that emerged was that people really enjoy the relational aspects of their work, and working and learning alongside the brilliant people they get to interact with every day
- Similarly, people also shared that they find joy in working directly with and alongside youth, seniors, and newcomers
- Helping people connect with their communities through volunteerism
- Others shared that they enjoy using their skills, wisdom, and life experience to bring about good change in their communities
- Someone shared that they love the way the sector uplifts and supports each other's work

WHAT WE ASKED

WHY WE ASKED IT

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Where is your work stuck?
Why do you think it's
stuck where it is?

We are curious about similarities and differences that exist for different Volunteer Centres about how and why they experience things getting stuck. This information will help VA's board and staff to consider what strategic role our organization could play to help get things "unstuck."

- Sometimes the work gets stuck because it is impossible to innovate since funding is tied to previously relevant -- but now outdated -- needs. In addition, funding tied to specific projects makes ongoing continuity of successful work
- Oftentimes the work is stuck because they have too much of it, and not enough time or support from other people to complete it. This is resulting from a lack of funding to hire more staff, and difficulty in recruiting volunteers
- The work of Volunteer Centres can be nuanced, complex, and difficult to quantify. As such, the impact of the work is not always readily understood by funders and the community as a whole

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If resources were unlimited and failure was not a concern, what audacious goals or projects would you propose for Volunteer Alberta?

We wanted to open up the space for possibility -- to see what AVCN wanted most for Volunteer Alberta to pursue, so that we can use the wisdom contained within those ideas to help inform our future strategic decisions to help get us closer to that wisdom.

- Create a social enterprise to generate funding for AVCN members' core operating costs.
- Participants shared how important training and skill building is, and suggested the creation of a single platform for Alberta-based organizations to be able to access a wide-range of training at low cost.
- Similarly, we also heard the suggestion of creating an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) resource and training platform to educate nonprofits on how to develop a compliant safety program & awareness of the risks of non-compliance.
- Youth Program Development
- Create a "robust and dynamic volunteer platform instead of several really goodish ones"
- Broker competitive benefits that even tiny organizations could buy into

Some other gems we heard

- People are curious to explore new ways to work and work better together
- People are also keen to explore how we might shift and break free from the current limitations of funding structures
- There's good energy to dive further into notions of caring communities, and how those manifest through volunteering

Now What

- The information we learned from the AVCN conversation will be brought forward through the rest of VA's strategic dreaming journey. This will include two community conversations taking place in July with the larger Volunteer Alberta membership and network, and strategic dreaming sessions that VA's board and staff will participate in in September, 2023.
- This work will culminate in a strategic document that will guide VA's work for 2024-2026.

Thanks for
joining us
for this
conversation

Volunteer Alberta's work spans across First Nation Treaty Territories 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10, as well as the homelands of the Métis People of Alberta. For our complete Land Affirmation please visit our [website](#).

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