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## **Come Together Leave Connected PEI Non-Profit Sector**

### **Conference Final Report – Moving Forward**

#### **Executive Summary**

Produced by:  
The United Way of PEI

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## ***Come Together Leave Connected PEI Non-Profit Sector***

### **Conference Final Report – Moving Forward – Executive Summary**

#### **Introduction:**

Members of PEI's non-profit sector recently gathered together for a two-day event focused on building the strength of the sector. Current and future leaders of organizations had opportunities to celebrate, learn and share, network and vision.

The conference fits within a new strategic plan developed and being implemented by the United Way of PEI, including one strategic goal of building sector strength.

The conference also fits within a larger initiative made possible by the Community Fund for Canada's 150<sup>th</sup>, a collaboration between the United Way of PEI, the Community Foundation of PEI, and the Government of Canada. The United Way of PEI has provided matching funds for this initiative.

This report has been developed to share the results of the conference and its many conversations, as well as the conversations held before and after the conference. "Next steps" will focus on engagement of sector members who wish to participate in the development and/or implementation of a vision and action plans that will aim for a stronger sector in the future.

### **Come Together Leave Connected Conference for PEI's Non-Profit Sector:**

The nonprofit sector on the Island is large, diverse, and has a significant positive impact on the people and communities across PEI. Although each organization has its own focus and area of expertise, it's important that the sector recognize how connected they are as members of the larger non-profit sector, and the opportunities they have to strengthen their work through collaboration.

The conference was designed with the intent of uniting current and future leaders (paid and unpaid) of the non-profit sector to expand knowledge through professional development, increase impact through networking, celebrate shared contributions, all with a lens to developing a shared vision of the future.

The conference was held on September 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at Stanley Bridge Resort, Stanley Bridge, PE.

Organizations and individuals represented a wide diversity of interests and focus areas, including but not limited to social services, arts and culture, agriculture, environment, employment, education, and sports and recreation.

Themes for the conference were identified through United Way's community conversations, as well as a survey to further dive into topic areas for professional development.

***It should be recognized that the role of the United Way of PEI was to plan, host and facilitate the conference, but not to represent itself in any way as a session content expert, nor to drive the visioning activities to any defined end point.***

## **Contributions to the Needs and Vision of PEI's Non-Profit Sector of the Future:**

### **Professional Development**

Prior to setting the agenda of the conference, a survey was used to gather topic ideas for the professional development and plenary sessions. Three streams were identified: leadership skills, fund development, and collaboration. These streams, and the resulting session topics, can perhaps provide some indication of priority focus areas of the sector's leadership: the corporate donor, board/staff roles and responsibilities, theory of change, developing and growing individual giving programs, staff motivation and engagement, social innovation and collaboration, grant writing, the world of social media, and the collective impact opportunity.

### **Networking**

Identified in the pre-conference survey, was the desire to have both informal and formal opportunities to networking. An formal opportunity was provided for the participants with like-minded interests and issues, to meet and share. Participants provided their individual "top issues/interests", and groups were formed around the following topic areas, also giving a perspective to issues relevant to the sector moving forward. These topics were fund development, collaboration, human (staff) resources, human (volunteer) resources, poverty reduction, and youth engagement. As well, opportunities were provided for informal networking at various times over the two days.

### **Visioning**

Over the two days, there were a number of exercises that have helped participants to engage in discussion, and contribute individually, to the potential future of the PEI non-profit sector – what it could be, and what it would take to get to that desired place.

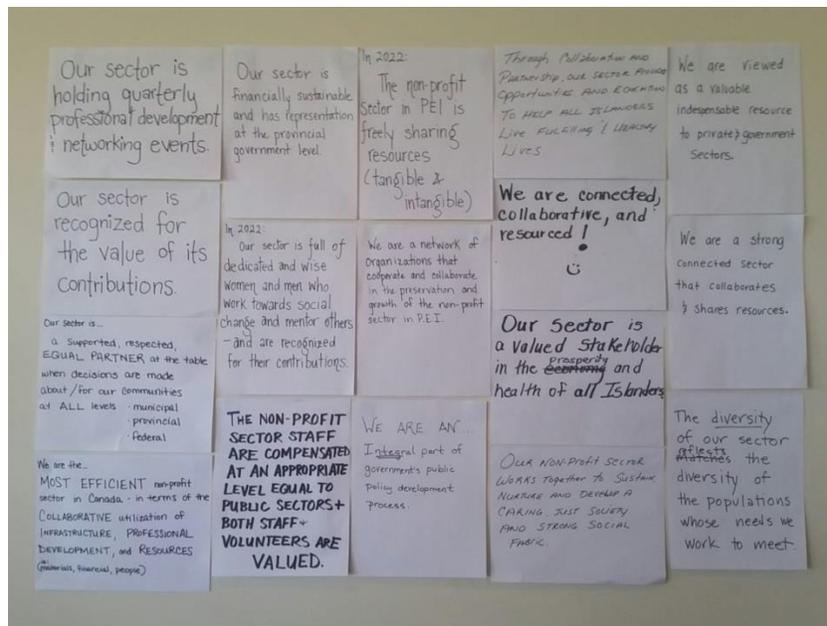
It must be recognized that thoughts of conference participants, their suggested priority actions to lead towards the collective vision, are not necessarily representative of the complete sector on PEI. With more than 1100 charities on PEI, and only 100 people in attendance at the conference, there is a significant gap in the collection of ideas from all Island non-profits.

It would be important, then, to ensure that dialogue continues to ensure Island-wide inclusiveness. However, it would also be important to consider moving ahead in some areas to continue the momentum of ideas generated to-date.

Participants, at the conclusion of the first day, were asked the question: “given what you have learned today, what would your take-away be for moving the sector forward?” The responses were collected that resulted in the following “wordle” illustration of participant ideas.



Participants were led through a facilitated session to help identify a vision, or vision-like statements, for the future of the non-profit sector.



The full group was then provided with the opportunity to develop some key action items and priority areas: establish connection among NPOs on PEI using social media; a mentorship program for Executive Directors; ongoing collaboration, information sharing and professional development opportunities; re-establish the Non Profit Sector Council or other type of network to strengthen connections; and to develop a collective voice to government (moving towards official recognition by government of the sector).

And finally, there was a call for identifying organizations that could help play a leadership role to facilitate movement in these action items. The United Way of PEI responded with interest in taking this role, an offer that the group supported. The Council of People with Disabilities also indicated interest in providing leadership for this work (as part of their mandate to support the sector), which was also supported by the group.

Since the conference, through the evaluation process, additional organizations have made their offers to participate in post-conference activities

### **Next Steps:**

The conference was considered a success in bringing people together, and energizing participants into moving forward with work in developing and strengthening the sector. Based on conference evaluations, there is interest in continuing the momentum for sector development.

It must be recognized, given the nature of the work of the non-profit sector and the resources available to do that work, that while many organizations support the action items, they are not able to contribute actual funds or people power in significant ways.

The United Way of PEI and the Council of People with Disabilities have offered to bring individuals and organizations together who self-identified an interest in capturing the contributions made through the conference and begin development of a draft action plan for moving forward, to be shared across the sector.

This conference report will be shared across the Island's non-profit sector, with the hopes that others who have not had an opportunity to be engaged in the conversations will join in sector development activities.