

What We Heard

2014 Community Summit

February 7, 2014



Office of Public Engagement
June 2014

The Office of Public Engagement would like to thank all of the participants of the 2014 Community Summit for attending the event this year, as well as the presenters, recorders and facilitators.

A special thank you goes out to the Community Sector Council (CSC) for helping promote this event, and partnering with us throughout the year to provide guidance and support.

Introduction

Volunteers are vital to the health and prosperity of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Not only do volunteers and non-profit groups deliver innumerable services, as well as care and support, but they consistently go above and beyond the call of duty to serve the public. This province has an enviable community sector, with incredibly active and engaged citizens.

Newfoundland and Labrador Volunteer Facts:

- Newfoundland and Labrador volunteers, on average, give 155 hours of service per year.
- For a province that has just over 500,000 people, there are well over 190,000 active volunteers.

Newfoundland and Labrador volunteers are committed to giving back to the community, and the Office of Public Engagement is committed to helping them thrive by providing the sector with opportunities to collaborate and connect in meaningful ways.

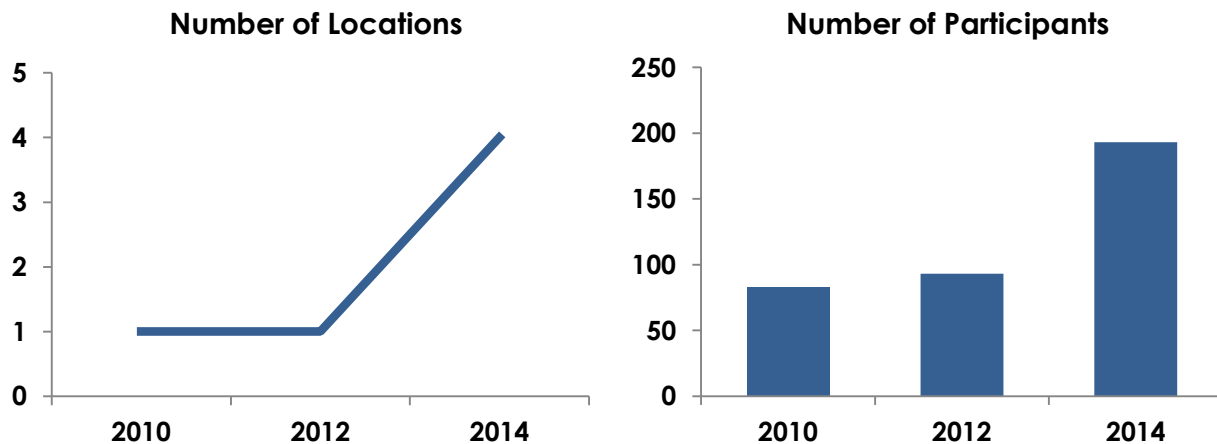
The 2014 Community Summit was one such initiative by the Office of Public Engagement. As detailed in the following document, the event was approached from a new perspective: how to engage the highest number of people in their own regions using innovative technology. It was also designed to gather useful information about the current and future needs of the community sector. The event did just that. By creating a virtual link between four sites, nearly 200 people were able to simultaneously attend the same event from four sites across the province. As such, the 2014 Summit embodied the Office of Public Engagement's commitment to engage in innovative collaboration as a way to address the issues of our province's community sector.

The following document is intended to provide a snapshot of the content delivered, the information shared, and the input collected at the 2014 Community Summit. This document captures the presentations and responses to polling questions, as well as the outcomes of table discussions. The aim of this document is to present the data in a form that is clear and accessible. It is meant to be easily used by those who attended the Summit, or other interested parties. The polling data and table discussion data collected is presented largely as it was gathered. While some general "theming" of table dialogue has been undertaken, the words quoted from participants remain unchanged. Additionally, all polling results and presentations are available online at ope.gov.nl.ca.

This information is presented so that dialogue within and about the sector will continue. The Office of Public Engagement is also open to receiving additional input and feedback about the 2014 Community Summit, or on any other sector-related matters.

Background and Context: Engaging on a New Frontier

Although the 2014 Community Summit was the third provincial Community Summit (following a summit in 2010 and 2012), it was unprecedented in its innovative use of technology. The Office of Public Engagement aimed to build on the success of previous summits by adding a technological twist and subsequently, boosting attendance. To do this, the Office utilized technologies to engage citizens in a number of locations around the province. As the graphics below illustrate, increasing the number of locations enabled a much larger number of people to attend – including support staff, the attendance doubled to include almost 200 people.

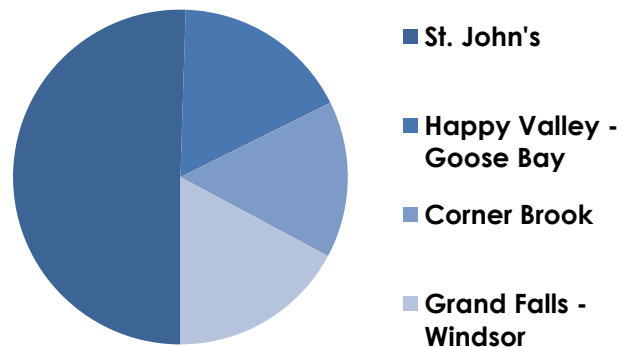


The Summit linked four regional sites via Skype to create a “virtual rooms” dialogue event. Turning Point audience response keypad polling technology was used to capture real time audience views on a number of topics across all sites. Participants met on-site in St. John’s, Grand Falls-Windsor, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Corner Brook. They worked together within each room, and across all four rooms on to capture views on five topics: “Non-profit Research Priorities”, “Social Enterprise”, “Partnership Development”, “Training and Professional Development”, and “Resource Hubs”. The following table and chart illustrate how the participants were dispersed amongst the four sites for the province-wide event:

WHAT WE HEARD: We are based all over the province!

Where are you joining us from today?

- 50% - St. John's
- 17% - Happy Valley-Goose Bay
- 15% - Corner Brook
- 17% - Grand Falls-Windsor



Half of the participants joined the Summit from St. John's, while the remaining half was about equally represented from Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Corner Brook and Grand Falls-Windsor. By engaging multiple locations concurrently, the Summit was truly province-wide. Unlike other years when the summit was hosted in one location, at the 2014 Community Summit, all participants were able to meet *within* their own regions. This reduced travel time and inconvenience, while also having the benefit of creating cross-regional awareness and showcasing new technologies that can support engagement.

The 2014 Community Summit was created with the goal of capturing input on a variety of different topics with an assortment of techniques. It featured the use of online technology (Skype, Google Docs and Turning Point Technology) to engage audiences at four locations at once. The event captured individual polling and group discussion results and ensured all voices represented were captured.

Demographics of Participating Organization

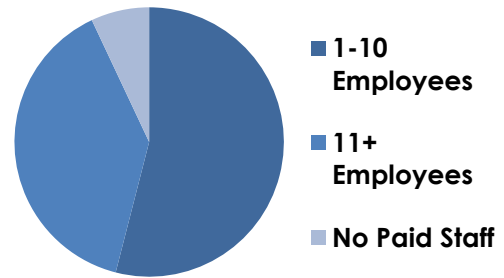
It has been estimated that there are about 5,000 community organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador. The community sector is a key economic generator for the province with approximately 23,000 employees. These employees work in a broad range of fields and organizations. The voices of the participants of the 2014 Community Summit were diverse, as the types of organizations represented varied from small (no employees) to much larger (20 or more employees). The needs of these organizations can be very different. The following section outlines demographics captured during live polling at the 2014 Community Summit.

The 2014 Summit had more attendees than ever; 191 individuals attended the Summit. Of these, 120 were community sector participants, while the remaining seventy-one were various facilitators, presenters, observers, note-takers or other event support (including some Members of the House of Assembly and the Office of Public Engagement Senior Executive). There was one facilitator and one note taker for each participant table. The community participants were chosen on a first-come-first serve basis in each region. Event support staff did not vote during the polling sessions or participate in the table discussions. As such, the polling results reflect only responses from participants. The organizations that were represented at the event varied in their type, goals, and capacity. The table and graph below illustrates the range of capacity and budget of the organizations.

WHAT WE HEARD: Our staff levels vary.

How many staff are employed by your organization?

- 54% reported 1-10 employees
- 39% reported an 11+ employee capacity
- 7% reported that they had no employees
- The majority (83%) of participants were paid staff of sector organizations



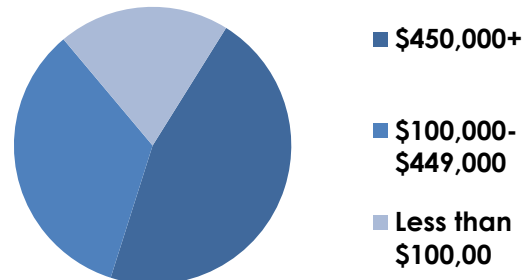
There was a significant difference in the funding and employee capacity of participant organizations. While the vast majority of participants at the Summit (83%) were paid staff, some organizations had only a small number of employees overall (54% had from 1-10 employees). Nearly 30% of the respondents had 20 employees or more in their organization.

Related to staffing, the budget capacity also varied significantly. While many organizations had budgets of less than \$100,000, almost half of the participants reported having a budget of \$450,000 or more. This is illustrated below:

WHAT WE HEARD: Our budgets vary.

What is your organizational budget?

- 46% indicated \$450,000+
- 34% indicated \$100,000-\$449,999 range
- 20% indicated a budget of \$100,000 or less



These organizations have very different goals and priorities. An organization with no employees, and a less than \$100,000 budget, operates very differently on a day-to-day basis than an organization with over 20 employees and a budget of over \$450,000.

This is reflected in some of the comments submitted by participants. One indicated, “[the term] ‘Community Sector’ is very broad. Issues affecting strict non-profits will be different from issues affecting social enterprise non-profits.” Another wrote, “Organizations are not all the same. Established national organizations do not have the same needs as emerging community based organizations. Emergent organizations need more government assistance.” It was deemed necessary that all types of organizations be represented at the 2014 Community Summit, and that all have an opportunity to voice their comments and concerns pertaining to the sector. As such, the event was organized in such a way as to encourage and enable groups of all shapes and sizes to participate. The following section explores the Summit objectives, process and evaluation in more detail.

Summit Objectives, Process and Evaluation

The concept behind the 2014 Community Summit was to provide a networking and regional-based dialogue opportunity for the community sector. Volunteers and community sector staff are best positioned to speak to their current and future needs. They are also well placed to educate and inform decision-makers about the sectors challenges and needs. The 2014 Summit was an opportunity for individuals from all over the province to share, learn and inform policies in a new and innovative way.

The Summit objectives were as follows:

- **To provide regionally-based dialogue opportunities for the voluntary and non-profit sector; and,**
- **To provide organizations, staff and volunteers with information to build capacity and access networking opportunities.**

In order to best achieve these objectives, the Summit was organized into five themed segments. These themes were chosen based on the themes of previous summits and a pre-survey of registrants in late January 2014:

- 1. Non-Profit Research Priorities**
- 2. Social Enterprise**
- 3. Partnership Development**
- 4. Training and Professional Development**
- 5. Resource Hubs**

Each of the five themed segments involved a PowerPoint presentation including interactive polling and group discussions. The polling results were shared automatically with the group. During the table discussions and the brainstorming exercise, the main topics that arose from those conversations were documented by table facilitators and note-takers, then subsequently shared with the entire group. A summary of the findings for each theme is presented below. All associated PowerPoint presentations and discussion comment summaries are available at ope.gov.nl.ca.

Summit Evaluation

In general, there was considerable positive feedback regarding the approach used at the Summit. Participants were given an opportunity to communicate their impressions of the overall event at the end of the day through keypad polling and a “Key Learnings” table discussion.

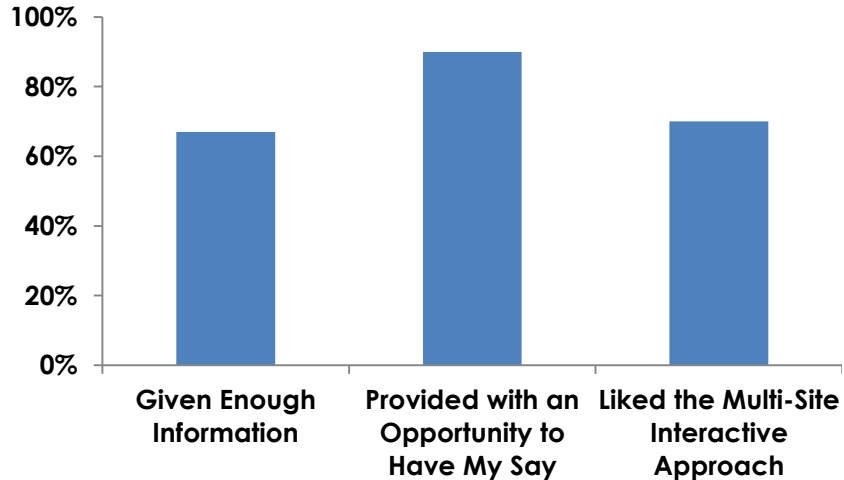
Participants were asked a number of evaluative polling questions. While participants were neutral on some questions (please see polling results available online at ope.gov.nl.ca) there was some congruence on the following three questions:

WHAT WE HEARD (about the 2014 Community Summit):

67% of respondents "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with the statement, "I was given enough information on the topics to fully participate in today's discussion"

90% of respondents "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with the statement, "I was provided with an opportunity to have my say"

70% of participants either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with the statement, "I liked the multi-site interactive approach"



A high proportion of participants felt that they were able to have input into the conference and voice their opinions (90%), while a smaller majority indicated they were "given enough information" (67%) and "liked the multi-site interactive approach" (70%).

Opinions about how the technology functioned were especially noteworthy, as the Summit utilized technologies that had not been used at the other two summits. A number of the comments given during the table discussion also focused around improvement of technology, such as "Audio could have been improved" or "liked the connection via technology with other corners of the province".

A number of the other comments offered suggestions for future summits including: simplifying or clarifying the material (13%); changing scheduling (13%); increasing networking (7%); and expanding or inviting more attendees (12%). All comments will be considered in future events planning.

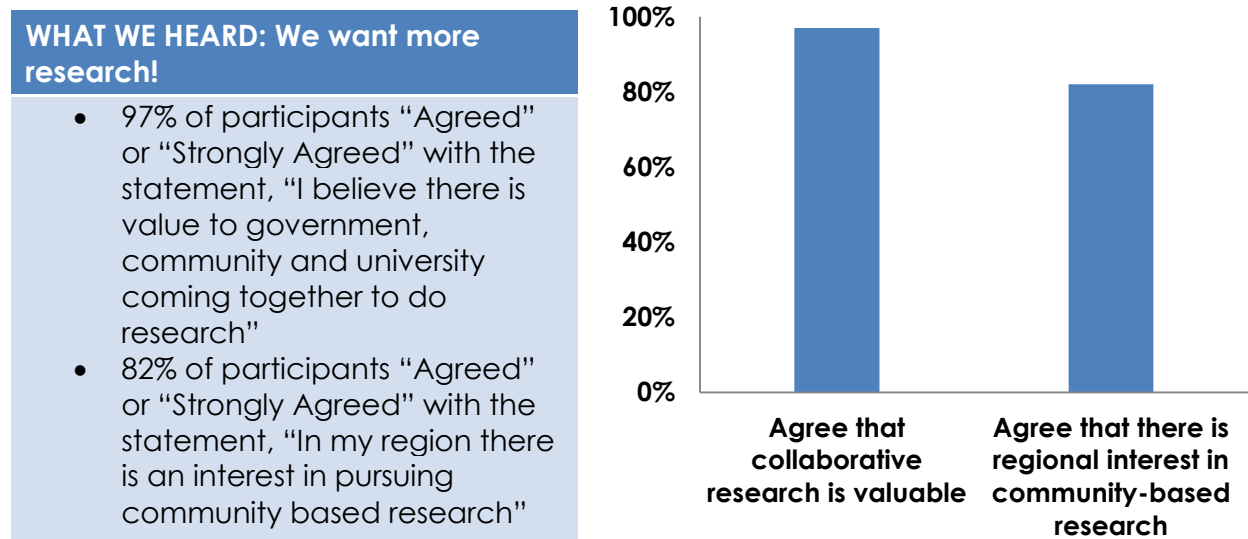
Outcomes

This section presents the data collected at the Summit. Facilitators and note-takers were able to collect various types of information: polling results, submitted written commentary, and general discussion comments captured by a recorder on a laptop. It was hoped that by employing these methods, all participant views would be recorded and have a direct impact on future government efforts to support the sector.

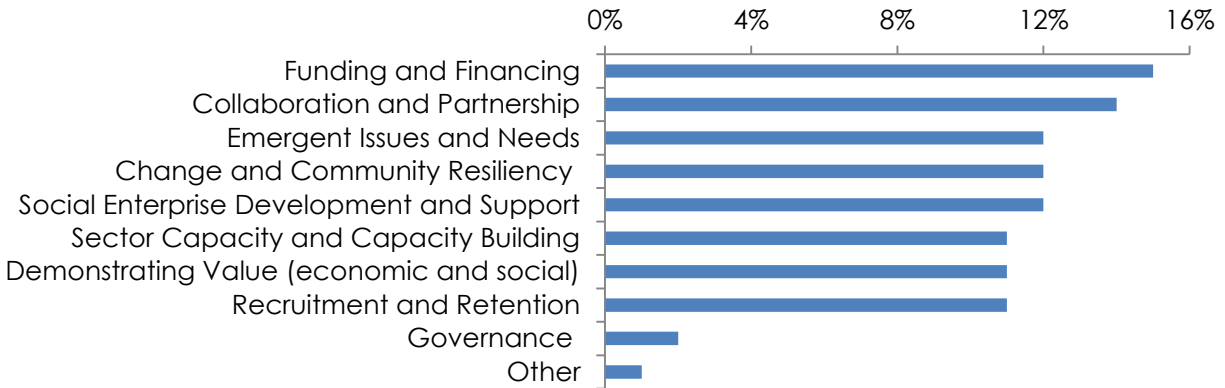
Non-Profit Research Priorities

The first session (Non-Profit Research Priorities) began with a presentation by the Office of Public Engagement and Dr. Kelly Vodden, Memorial University's Grenfell Campus. The session provided an overview of the contribution and value of community-based research to the sector. This session was designed to get an impression from participants about how they viewed community-based research and what topics they would like to see examined in the future.

One strong conclusion emerged from this session: the community sector is very interested in seeing more research in the future. Nearly all participants saw value in collaborating with government and university to do research; nevertheless, the participants were divided on which topics they prioritized for future research. All of these results can be seen in the table and charts below.



Participants illustrated significant agreement in the value of collaborative research and there was strong agreement that there is regional interest in community-based research, with 97% and 82% support, respectively. When asked to rank their "top 3 research themes of interest," results were nearly equally divided amongst a number of topics (as seen below):



Interest is spread almost evenly amongst the top eight themes, ranging from nearly 15% for “Funding and Financing” to 11% for “Sector Capacity and Capacity Building”, “Demonstrating Value” and “Recruitment and Retention”. Only a very small number of people (less than 2%) prioritized “Governance” as a main research interest. This seems to illustrate that not only do participants want *more* research, but they would like lots of types of research on a variety of topics. The level and diversity of interest in this session will be considered by the Office of Public Engagement when drafting a research plan with and for the community sector.

Ongoing Initiatives and Projects

Over the past few years, the Office of Public Engagement and its Regional Councils have been involved in a number of research efforts. A variety of reports and other documents are assembled on its website. A list of research projects, and related downloadable files, on a broad range of topics can be found at ope.gov.nl.ca, as well as a list of recent collaborations and partnerships.

Suggestions for future research or collaborations are always welcomed. Please contact the Office of Public Engagement at ope@gov.nl.ca if you have an idea for a future research project.

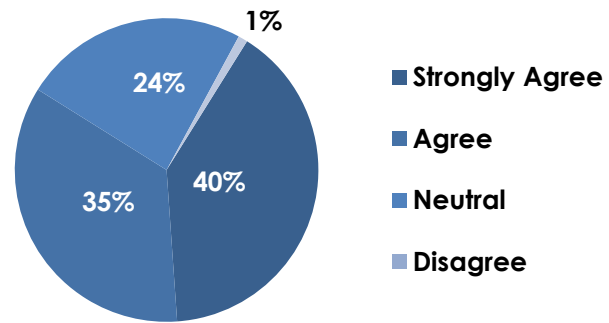
Social Enterprise

The concept of social enterprise has become increasingly salient in the province in the past number of years, with good reason. Social enterprises have the potential to benefit both non-profits (with an additional revenue source) and the community (by providing a commodity, service, or a social benefit). Social enterprises are seen as having the potential to help non-profits increase their long term sustainability; fund program and/or service expansions; and/or enhance community capacity overall.

Nationally, between 2005 – 2008, the non-profit sector reported a 17% increase in earned income. In 2008, social enterprise revenues in Canada reached \$3.6 Billion. Social enterprise is a new way of doing business, and one that has caught the attention of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as many in the non-profit voluntary sector. Summit participants mirrored this sentiment, with three-quarters agreeing that they would like to be included in future discussions on this topic.

WHAT WE HEARD: We want to talk about social enterprise.

75% indicated that they "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with the statement, "I would be interested in participating in a future dialogue regarding social enterprise in my region"



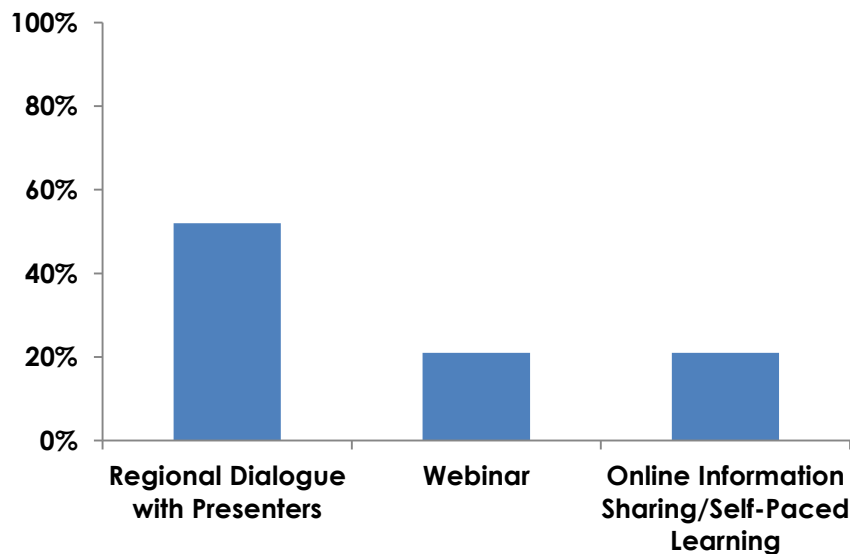
This sends a clear message: there is significant support for furthering social enterprise amongst community sector groups. This is not surprising as Newfoundland and Labrador has a rich history of social enterprise. Also, nationally, the social enterprise momentum has been gaining ground. Clearly, participants indicated that they would like to learn more about this growing movement, although they have differing views on how this learning could best take place.

The table and chart below illustrate the learning preferences indicated at the 2014 Summit. The majority (51%) of participants indicated their preferred learning opportunity would be through regional dialogue presentations, whereas 21% selected "webinar" and 21% chose "online information sharing/self-paced learning".

WHAT WE HEARD: We want flexible learning opportunities, especially within our own regions

I would be interested in learning more about social enterprise via:

- 51% chose regional dialogue presentations
- 21% chose webinar
- 21% chose self-paced learning opportunity



Participants were also asked to share some suggestions about social enterprise. Some of these suggestions are listed in the table below:

WHAT WE HEARD...

(some suggestions to advance social enterprise):

What could be done to advance social enterprise?

- Increase the availability of education, training and resources
- Provide mentorship programs and activities
- Target career education to MUN and high school students and make information more youth friendly to increase awareness
- Increase funding and grants
- Create a social enterprise network to disseminate information/best practices
- Share Information including local, regionally, national, international information
- Develop common accepted definitions
- Increase capacity and provide assistance
- Highlight success stories using concrete examples
- Increase collaboration and data sharing between government, communities, community sector and social enterprise groups
- Develop alternative funding arrangements
- Change attitudes to ensure public and business community perceive social enterprise as true businesses not charity

Participants had many ideas on how to advance social enterprise. Based on responses, social enterprise should remain on the radar of both government and the community sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ongoing Initiatives and Projects

To better understand and advance social enterprise, the Office of Public Engagement has commenced internal and external discussions on this topic. An internal working group has begun to explore how departments can best support social enterprise and an external committee comprised of stakeholders involved in social enterprise has been created to explore current barriers to the growth and development of this field. Input provided at the Summit will be considered by the Office of Public Engagement, the working group, and committee in future developments in this area.

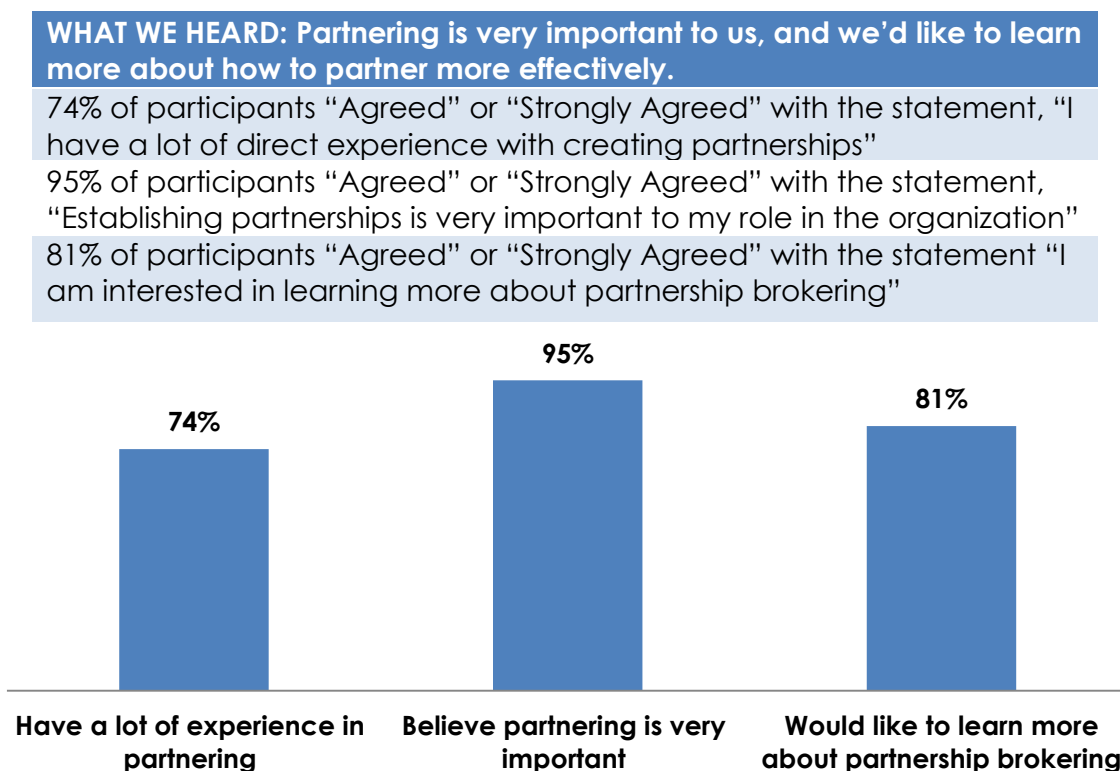
Partnership Development

The Office of Public Engagement is striving to engage with its community partners more effectively to help them achieve their goals. Collaboration is at the core of what the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador envisioned when the Office of Public Engagement was formed in October 2012. The need for better partnerships and collaboration has been highlighted by the community sector in both previous

community summits, as well as through other interactions with sector groups. It was with this in mind that this session was designed.

This session focused on introducing basic concepts and practical skills related to the theme of partnership development. Participants explored innovative approaches to partnership development and partnering problem-solving. They were asked to relate their experiences to better understand how to build and maintain collaborative structures and processes. The partnership development presentation and the polling results are available on the website at ope.gov.nl.ca.

Participants were asked three main questions about their views on partnership, the results of which are illustrated below:



As in previous years, partnership remains significant to the community sector. In fact, nearly all (95%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that partnership is "very important to their role." Although the majority of participants (74%) believed that they had a lot of experience with partnering, 81% of total respondents still said they were interested in learning more about brokering. Clearly, this is still a priority of the sector and more could be done to advance partnership practice.

Despite the significant experience most of the respondents have with partnering, it remains a common challenge in day-to-day operations. As a part of the "Partnership Development" session, respondents were asked for suggestions on how to best deal with power imbalance common in partnership work. Some of their responses are summarized in the table below:

WHAT WE HEARD...
(some suggestions to deal with power imbalance):

What are your suggestions/ideas to solve the power imbalance challenge common in many partnerships? (Sample Responses).

- Recognize strengths and expectations and identify roles at the beginning.
- Establish ground rules and agreements.
- Utilize a neutral third party to moderate and facilitate.
- Recognize that power imbalances exist.
- Be transparent and open.
- Provide a safe space and encourage listening.
- Discuss issues for partnership (i.e. find common ground).
- Dissolve partnership if serving no purpose.

The examples above represent broad themes that emerged throughout table conversation.

Ongoing Initiatives and Projects

The Office of Public Engagement maintains strong relationships with many organizations in the community sector. It aims to strengthen these relationships by engaging with voluntary and non-profit organizations more often, more effectively, and in ways that the sector has identified as preferable. The Office of Public Engagement will use the information collected at the 2014 Community Summit to shape future relations with the sector.

Training and Professional Development

The 2010 Community Summit identified the need for a training plan for the non-profit sector. In pursuit of this commitment, the first phase of the province-wide census of the non-profit sector commenced in November 2013. Information and data collected from this census will highlight current training needs as well as key labour market information. The census will be a key tool in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's strategic decision-making regarding future training opportunities supported or provided to the sector.

The census – the first of its kind in Canada – is capturing the number, location, mandate and labour market information of volunteer and non-profit organizations in this province. Over the past few months, the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency has been calling representatives to determine how many organizations are in the province, where they are located, and who they hire.

The second phase of the census will involve the distribution of a more detailed questionnaire to all groups which will collect mandate and detailed labour market

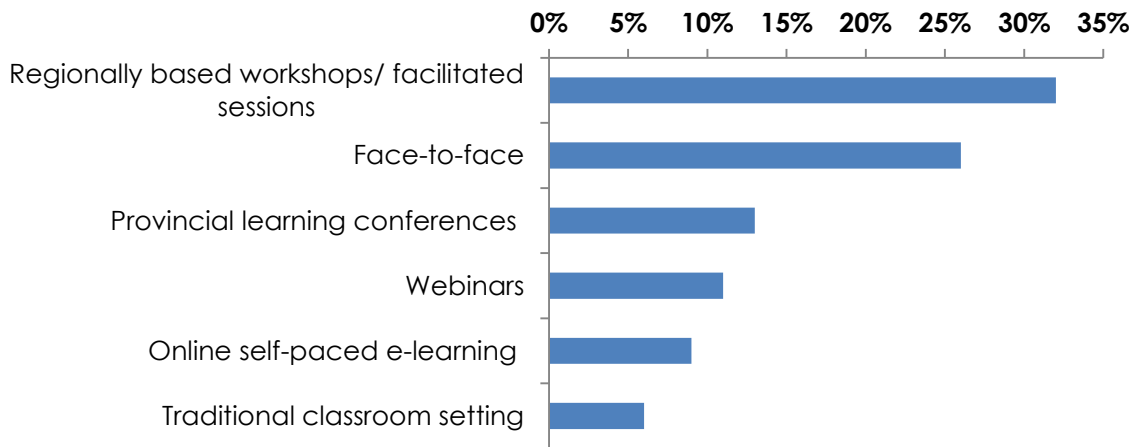
information. It is this phase that will help identify training needs as well as any barriers groups are facing – such as geography, cost of training and awareness. Phase two will also provide insight into the community sector's role as an employer by identifying the number and gender of individuals who are employed as well as the seasonal, full time or part time nature of their work.

The intent of this session was also to gain a perspective on how the community sector views their training and professional development needs.

WHAT WE HEARD: We offer training to our staff, but it is often not sufficient.
 89% stated that their “organization currently makes training or professional development available to staff or volunteers”, but only 32% “Agreed” with the statement “the training needs of my organization’s staff and volunteers are appropriately addressed”

When asked through polling, the vast majority of participants (89%) indicated that many already engage their staff in a variety of types of training and professional development activities. Many (nearly 40%) still “Disagreed” or “Strongly Disagreed” with the statement, “The training needs of my organization's staff and volunteers are appropriately addressed.” There is still room for growth and improvement in this area. Additionally, participants repeated a message identified earlier in the day: “It is important to us for workshops to be delivered in our own areas.”

The ranked responses to the question, “What are your organization's Top 2 preferred delivery mechanisms for training or professional development” are demonstrated in the bar chart below.



When asked specifically about social enterprise training, participants indicated that they prefer sessions or workshops that are “regionally-based”. Despite significant technological advances, face-to-face workshops remain important to the provincial community sector.

Ongoing Initiatives and Projects

Participants in the Summit indicated that although many organizations offer training themselves, it is often not sufficient. Participants want more training, and in a variety of formats. To address these issues of concern, the Office of Public Engagement has pursued related training initiatives in recent years.

In the fall of 2013 Government announced online training courses that are available, free of charge, to groups, volunteers and employees (available at smartforceNL.ca). Bluedrop Performance Learning (a local company) was engaged to customize a bundle of eight courses specific to the work and needs of the volunteer and non-profit sector. The courses explore topics like the importance of non-profit organizations, risk management, how to become a registered charity, effective board governance, among others. They are simple to access – log on to SmartForceNL.ca, create a log-in and password, then choose courses. The Office of Public Engagement is interested in any input on experiences with this resource, as well as any suggestions on how to improve this or any other initiative.

Resource Hubs

A resource hub is one method that has been identified to facilitate greater regional resource sharing. To operate a resource hub is to pool or share resources in a physical or virtual location. Resource hubs have the potential to increase networking and collaboration while minimizing overlap in spending and effort. In this way, resources hubs have the potential to increase effectiveness within the community sector.

In the "Resource Hubs" session of the Summit, participants were asked to respond to the key discussion question: "Thinking of the history of your region and its stakeholders, what could be done and by who to strengthen or improve collaborative resource sharing within your region and/or across the province?" The participants had the opportunity to respond to the question from three different perspectives:

- Government Leadership
- Organizational/Individual Leadership, and
- Online Resources

The comments received on this topic were very insightful. Participants made a number of suggestions for innovation and improvement. The following three tables summarize the responses.

Government Leadership

The first perspective explored in the session was the role of government leadership in improving collaborative resource sharing. There were 56 responses to this section of the question. The highest numbers of responses (13 or 23%) were focused on how government should engage with the community. The second most prominent category of comments relate to the importance of understanding regional needs and nuances when addressing resource sharing issues (10 responses, 18%). The following table illustrates the type of responses received:

WHAT WE HEARD... (ideas related to “Government Leadership” and “Improved Collaboration”):	#	%*
Engage with the community to more effectively communicate	13	23%
Understand regional needs	10	18%
Provide more funding or resources	7	13%
Encourage government or other organizations to share space/resources	7	13%
Expand/improve programs or processes to make more efficient	6	11%
More opportunities to meet in person	6	11%
Providing facilitator/broker	5	9%
More training/research	2	4%
*May not add to 100%		

Participants suggested it is important for government to understand and be engaged in the regions of the province. This would include appreciating the culture and heritage of each region, as well as the impact (economic and social) of non-profits. Some suggestions included establishing “regional think-tanks” or increasing resource sharing amongst groups in each region. Participants suggested that regions and Government should develop a closer relationship by communicating consistently, openly and effectively. Government should be mindful to consult with the community sector and to provide timely notice of opportunities.

Some additional recommendations included expanding or improving programs or processes to increase efficiency or altering funding programs and incentives (i.e., “make collaboration a condition of funding”). Participants also suggested that government or multiple groups could share space or resources (including technology, meeting space, infrastructure, office staff, etc.). They indicated that facilitators or brokers could be put in place to “establish a link” and serve as “point[s] of contact”.

Organizational/Individual Leadership

In terms of organizational or individual leadership, participants indicated that research and/or information was the most important first step in improving collaborative resource sharing within regions: 26% of comments focused on this point.

WHAT WE HEARD... (suggestions for “Organizational/Individual Leadership” and “Improved Collaboration”):	#	%*
Do research to better understand circumstances	13	26%
Develop more effective partnerships or networks	11	23%
Share resources, information, spaces, etc.	11	23%
Train staff	5	10%
Have facilitator available	5	10%
Be more open-minded	4	8%
*May not add to 100%		

Participants stressed the need to identify or clarify the role of various groups by region and to know more about their client bases, as well as skill and resource availability. They stated that this information should be available to the community sector, other stakeholders, and the public.

Another factor mentioned was the importance of developing partnerships and improving networking (23% commented on this). Participants suggest that this could be achieved by meeting regularly, reducing other barriers, and greater encouragement of each other. Sharing resources (including information, spaces, and training) was also mentioned in 23% of comments.

In this session, participants also encouraged open-mindedness. Some noted, “Think outside the box and try some new strategies”, an “attitude shift [is] needed”, and “drop the control and have an open vision about collaboration. Find win-win solutions. Be open to work with others that are outside of regular partners.”

Online Resources

Participants had a number of suggestions regarding online resources. One major benefit they identified was that through shared online resources, organizations would be able to reduce duplication of services. Participants envisioned possibly adopting features such as: “post/seek opportunities”, “community calendar”, “newsletter” and “online directory”. Participants suggested that multiple users should be able to upload content that would be sortable by region and subject. Some of the websites or software mentioned included: Yaffle, Microsoft Lync, CCEPP, PLEI Connect, Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn), and Cloud. It was suggested that the Office of Public Engagement or a community organization could play a facilitating role.

WHAT WE HEARD... (suggestions for “Online Resources” and “Improved Collaboration”):	#	%*
Technological concerns, particularly ease of use	14	29%
Ability to share information or resources using varied models	11	23%
Utilize, adopt, or expand existing programs or infrastructure	9	18%
Should be customizable by region, specific needs, etc.	6	12%
The Office of Public Engagement or organization could play a facilitating role	5	10%
Importance of advertising and promotion to keep site active	4	8%
*May not add to 100%		

The largest number of comments focused on technological concerns. Of these, ease of access was mentioned by the highest number of participants. Other concerns included keeping websites up-to-date and active, as well as privacy concerns for those utilizing social media or online technology. Some participants were concerned with the advertising and promotion of such sites, as they deemed this necessary to garner significant online traffic and therefore remain relevant.

Ongoing Initiatives and Projects

Numerous interesting and useful ideas regarding Resource Hubs were generated at Community Summit. The concept of voluntary resource hubs was an area of interest discussed at previous community summits. An online resource hub is currently being considered by the Office of Public Engagement. This would allow organizations to connect and collaborate within their region and across all regions. The comments and information received at the 2014 Community Summit will be considered during all future project development efforts.

Summary: Where to From Here?

The goal of the 2014 Community Summit was to build upon the successes of previous gatherings, creating learning and sharing opportunities for sector representatives, and provide an opportunity to showcase new techniques being used by the Office of Public Engagement to strengthen the province's community sector overall. The two main objectives were:

- To provide regionally-based dialogue opportunities for the voluntary and non-profit sector; and,
- To provide organizations, staff and volunteers with information to build capacity and access to networking opportunities.

The Summit engaged participants across four provincial sites and simultaneously provided them with information on topics relevant to them. The Office of Public Engagement was able to employ technology that had never before been utilized in a community gathering of this type in this province. By doing this, more people were engaged in the community summit than ever before.

Participants in four regional sites were provided with an opportunity to connect with colleagues and provide input to the Office of Public Engagement on a range of themes. Regional discussions facilitated learning, sharing and networking opportunities among community leaders. A number of government departments including the Office of Public Engagement, Advanced Education and Skills and Innovation, Business and Rural Development learned a great deal about the sector by serving as support staff for the event.

An added benefit of the Summit was the opportunity to gather information about the community sector in this province. This document is founded on this information. Together with information gathered through other initiatives such as the census, this data will help the Office of Public Engagement make informed decisions about how best to support the sector in the future.

Over the next eight to ten months the Office of Public Engagement will use the results of the community summit to support key directions and guide its work. The information and recommendations will also be considered when planning upcoming events, policy and programs. Ultimately, the Office of Public Engagement will use the information gathered to engage with the community sector in ways that stakeholders and representatives have outlined as most effective and beneficial to them.