

Regina's Non-Profit Voices: *Collaborating With the City*

Findings from the March 6, 2025 roundtable conversation between the City of Regina and non-profit organization representatives.

The Purpose of this Conversation:

On March 6, 2025, the Community Foundation and the Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Studies Network at Luther College at the University of Regina (NVSSN) hosted a facilitated roundtable conversation. This took place among Regina non-profit representatives and the City of Regina's mayor, council, and administrative staff. This meeting was a follow-up to the September 17, 2024 conversation titled ['Regina's Non-Profit Voices: Addressing Funding Gaps'](#) where the need was identified for government agencies and non-profit organizations to work more collaboratively regarding funding and policy making decisions.

Participants were asked to answer the following three questions in a collaborative manner:

1. How can we (the City and the non-profit sector) work together to better address the challenges we share in the community?
2. What specific policies or funding options could better support our non-profit sector?
3. This roundtable is a good start but how can we make sure we (the City and the non-profit sector) continue to work together?

The groundwork of this conversation originated from the **'Growing Futures: Vital Signs Report 2023.'** that acknowledges the community funding gaps that the non-profit sector is facing.

Background to the Growing Futures: Vital Signs 2023 Focus Areas:

The **'Growing Futures: Vital Signs Report 2023'** was published by the Community Foundation and focuses on a Saskatchewan region recovering from a global pandemic and adapting to an increased cost of living. The report investigates the ways these challenges are impacting our community.

This gives readers a snapshot of data about south Saskatchewan and its most pressing needs and challenges. It is a starting point to act and find solutions to the identified challenges. The following focus areas were identified in the report:

- Supporting Safe and Affordable Housing
- Increasing Food Security
- Improving Mental Health Services for Substance Use and Suicide Prevention
- Sustaining Community Infrastructure
- Community Funding Gaps

Read the full **'Growing Futures: Vital Signs Report 2023'** at www.GrowingFuturesReport.ca

Who was Included in the Conversation:

The following 28 organizations were represented in-person at the March 6, 2025 facilitated roundtable conversation.

- AIDS Program South Saskatchewan
- Astonished! (The Big Sky Centre for Learning and Being Astonished)
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Regina & Area
- Canadian Mental Health Association – Saskatchewan Branch
- The Caring Place
- Carmichael Outreach
- The Circle Project
- City of Regina
- CNIB Foundation (Canadian National Institute for the Blind)
- EnviroCollective Network
- Family Service Regina
- Luther College
- Nature Saskatchewan
- North Central Family Centre
- OSI-CAN Saskatchewan
- Phoenix Residential Society
- Rainbow Youth Centre
- REACH Regina
- Regina Food for Learning
- Regina Sexual Assault Centre
- Regina Transition House
- Regina Work Prep Centre
- Salthaven West Wildlife Rehabilitation & Education Centre
- Saskatchewan Health Authority
- South Saskatchewan Community Foundation
- South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre
- St. John Ambulance Regina
- Street Culture Project

Key Takeaways:

1. How the City and non-profit sector can work better together:

Creating a Roadmap for Coordination:

Create a road map for services and provide shared spaces for collaboration. The City can act as a systems navigator to help non-profits work better together.

What was discussed:

- The non-profit sector needs a Regina roadmap and systems navigator to help identify who is doing what role, when, where, and how – this can help better align collaboration and efficiency-building efforts
 - o More shared navigation to services
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework for collaboration
 - o Align measurement and communication with global language
- It is a challenge to operationalize ideas and visions to address SDGs
- Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action alignment
- Review all services and identify alignment with community needs
- Define roles and responsibilities of each organization, including the municipality and non-profits, to best utilize resources and have a communications plan
- Each organization has different work – make sure the context of this variety of work is understood
 - o Get to know your organizations and what they do
- Record and communicate step-by-step details of what we have achieved and what the gaps are

Developing Centralized Community Hubs:

Establish multi-service centres to help non-profits be more efficient while reducing costs.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Shared resource depositories and shared spaces
- ❖ The city needs to have wrap-around service community hubs
 - To create efficiencies of shared costs, enhanced non-profit sector collaboration, and more convenient distribution of services to patrons; centralized community hubs can be developed that house a variety of service providers in a single physical location
 - There is a potential to strategically re-invent or re-invigorate community centres for this purpose
 - māmawêyatîtan centre is a good example leaning towards this idea of a shared community space
 - More development is needed, and we need to make sure they are well used

Holding Frequent Transparent Meetings:

Frequent meetings between the City and non-profits can build relationships and trust. This will help to address challenges, together.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Bringing people together (i.e., this meeting) is necessary to address challenges in a stronger and more coordinated manner
- ❖ These types of events – the City can coordinate meetings through the Community and Wellbeing Table
- ❖ More involvement of external community groups
- ❖ Open and transparent conversations
- ❖ Frequent meetings are important
 - Quarterly meetings don't work
 - We need to meet more often
 - Build rapport among each other
- ❖ Events – Chamber of Commerce Events bring businesses together often
 - Non-profit sector doesn't do this but would benefit from similar events
- ❖ Community Forums
 - Gather and learn together
- ❖ Schedule regular “pulse” checks
- ❖ Canadian Food Centre use a message board – this approach could be used here to keep people up to speed with each other
- ❖ How to connect better amongst each other
- ❖ Continue the conversation and collaboration
- ❖ The City can create conditions for the non-profit sector to thrive
 - We should come together to make real collaborative choices
 - Transparency amongst all groups
 - Presentations and questions amongst non-profits and the City
 - Visit organizations to see them and know what is going on

Building Relationships

Teamwork and trust lead to success. Advisory groups can help address challenges.

What was discussed:

- ❖ It is important to continue to build on existing action tables that have been established and/or were being established at the City of Regina prior to this meeting.
 - Trust
 - o Not feeling trusted by funders
 - o Need to be able to trust each other to collaborate
 - Relationship Building
 - Mentorship
 - Teamwork
 - Collaboration
 - Make it easier to link up with a city staff member
 - Opportunities for non-profits to present directly to the City

- Being more honest about challenges in the sector and understanding from all stakeholders
- Need to be more honest about how challenging the challenges are
- More honesty on expectations of funders and the ability of NPOs to deliver
- The non-profit sector already collaborates
- Learning from others
- Advisory Committees – identify and build on what is working and fund based on this information
- Include more charities so everyone has a voice
- We need space to get to know each other (non-profit sector and municipality)
- We need a level playing field for collaboration
- More City collaboration

Exploring Out-of-the-Box Funding Ideas:

Look into new funding models. Some ideas include pooled funding and partnerships with private businesses.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Explore different and out-of-the-box funding opportunities
 - Example: pooled funding with private businesses
- ❖ Collaboration on funding between City and non-profits
- ❖ Matching organizations together
 - To support collaboration and provide collaborative funding
- ❖ Cooperate for bigger dollars from the federal government

2. Ways to Address Funding and Policy Challenges

Funding Core Operations:

Providing support for administrative needs will help with long-term success.

What was discussed:

- ❖ More support services provided by the City are necessary to help with administrative and operational needs
- ❖ Loss or decrease of federal funding is making challenges more difficult to address
- ❖ Restricted funding is making challenges more difficult to address
- ❖ Operational funding is needed
 - There are no long-term and sustainable funding options
- ❖ Need funding for administration and operations to sustain organizations
- ❖ Understanding complexities of non-profit organizations and the need for more overhead to run effectively
- ❖ The City could offer administrative costs for some grants. We need more opportunities that include administrative needs

Allowing for Flexible and Reliable Funding:

Flexible and multi-year funding without restrictions helps create bigger impact.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Unrestricted funding and flexible funding
 - Let the non-profit sector tell the City and funders what is needed to succeed
 - Flexibility to add new programs
 - Let non-profits use funding for food – food is needed to attract people
 - To help build sustainability
 - Program funding is problematic and creates more work than intended – hurting the efficiency and effectiveness of organizations to help those who need it
 - Financial support to help small organizations write grants and build capacity for fund development
- ❖ Tailored grants with specific needs can be problematic if they don't line up directly with community need
- ❖ Multi-year funding models
- ❖ Look upstream – City listen to non-profit needs and create funding opportunities based on it
- ❖ Unrestricted funding for more collaboration and to sustain successful existing programs
- ❖ A bouquet of solutions is needed to support local non-profits
- ❖ Flexibility in applying extra grant dollars to other impactful internal initiatives
- ❖ Barriers include funding competition which is set by funders

Adopting Easier Processes:

Making grant applications and reports simpler will lower administrative work for non-profits. Consider allowing for oral or storytelling applications. Take an equitable approach.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Streamlined processes
 - The City streamlined the grant application process recently – this saves a lot of administrative work
 - Any effort to streamline paperwork is greatly appreciated
- ❖ New ways of grant applications
 - Oral grant applications – story-based approach
- ❖ The staff and time that goes into applying for funding and reporting on it is high and decreases capacity to focus on the cause
- ❖ Finding grant opportunities is time consuming and can be difficult
- ❖ More flexible funding criteria
- ❖ Policies to streamline reporting processes
- ❖ Currently, grant opportunities are limited and take a lot of time to seek out and attempt to be successful with
- ❖ Open ended call for applications opposed to rigid deadline dates to help address emergent needs
- ❖ The city should ensure equitable funding access

3. Expanding Non-Profit Sector Capacity

Enhancing Space and Staffing:

Many non-profits struggle with small or outdated space in need of repair. They also have under-resourced staff. There is a need for better facilities and operational support.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Organizations are outgrowing spaces and need suitable spaces (size, capacity, quality)
- ❖ Larger organization capacity is needed (for example, schools that need an organization's support are turned away due to lack of capacity)
- ❖ Tax breaks for renting space
- ❖ It is currently difficult to make use of City spaces (for example, there is a lack of adequate storage)
- ❖ Value the sector more fairly (the sector is currently undervalued)
- ❖ Opportunities to overcoming challenges non-profits face are currently too limited due to lack of resources, time, and awareness
- ❖ Coordinated action with the City on mental health supports for staff
- ❖ Non-profit staff are underpaid, and the sector is underfunded – this undermines the ability to do the work effectively and reduces equity
- ❖ Funding challenges have financial, health, and mental wellness implications for folks dedicating themselves to creating community impact
- ❖ Not enough staffing
- ❖ Maximizing momentum of established efforts that are proving to be successful

Increasing Volunteerism:

There is a need for more volunteers. This needs attention from both the City and non-profits to help promote volunteerism.

What was discussed:

- Example: University of Alberta's Non Profit Board Student Internship Program
<https://www.ualberta.ca/en/community-service-learning/student-info/non-profit-board-student-internship-program.html>
- ❖ Volunteerism is down and needs to be addressed
- ❖ The City can assist in promoting volunteerism
 - Public volunteers, staff volunteers, seeking long-term commitments

Building Capacity:

The City can provide more resources to help build the capacity of non-profits. This can include training programs and help retaining staff.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Non-profit organizations lack efficiencies, and spend too much time with items including governance
 - Help non-profits like how the City helps business improvement districts
- ❖ External supports for certain areas (for example, gathering and writing grants)
- ❖ A centralized grant-writing body

- ❖ A group or contact to reach out to talk about the above ideas
- ❖ Information sessions specifically on city grants
- ❖ Assess the future economy impact on charities and plan accordingly
- ❖ Bring non-profit experts together and build together

Supporting Early Intervention and Prevention:

Providing the funding and resources needed for early intervention and prevention. This can reduce long-term costs and increase return on investment.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Find ways to measure **prevention** efforts – how do we communicate the impact of prevention?
- ❖ Early interventions are key to reduce costs and work better
 - Early interventions reduce costs to the city at the grassroots level
 - Grassroots organizations have a massive return on investment for the dollars they receive
 - Social development grants tend to get the small amounts of funding

Creating a Resource Hub:

Make a publicly available resource hub to share important tools and information for non-profits.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Places and resources to help people be more efficient and aligned
 - Support Portal
 - Resource Directory
 - Look at what EnviroCollective does: <https://www.envirocollective.ca/directory/>
 - “Skill” directory for mentorship, HR Resources
 - “Human Library”
 - For things like legal advice, HR advice, labour laws, etc.
- ❖ Collaboration Hub to support one another

4. Increasing Advocacy and Public Awareness

Understanding the Value of Investment:

Help the community understand the value of investing in non-profits. Communicate the long-term impact and return on investment to the public.

What was discussed:

- ❖ Investment VS Funding and understanding Return on Investment (ROI)
 - Need more funding for more impact – there isn’t enough funding available to make the impact needed

- The City needs to build a narrative for buy-in to explain how investing into community organizations has a tangible benefit
 - It isn't "funding" or "giving" hands outs – it's investment that has positive returns
 - Focus on SDGs and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESGs) for global language and credibility in the narrative building process
 - Use existing data to bring this to life
 - This is a long-term perception shifting process – not a quick change
- The Community Foundation and educational institutions can act as a neutral convenor to bring this to life

Increasing Public Education and Pride:

Help the public understand how the non-profit sector makes a positive impact. Share stories in partnership with other organizations.

What was discussed:

- More and better communication to the community
 - o Through the City
 - o Through educational institutions (University of Regina)
- More public education of the non-profit sector and its role in the community
- Generating civic pride around impact of non-profits
- Celebrate the work of the sector for public knowledge
- There is an unfair difference in expectations between the non-profit and for-profit sectors
- City and non-profit sector connecting and creating awareness of community need and how it is being addressed to the public
- City support in providing awareness of all charities

Advocating for Private Sector Support:

The City should help non-profits get more support from the private sector. Help grow buy-in from the public to increase investment into non-profits.

What was discussed:

- ❖ The City can work with other grantors to make sure there are no gaps
- ❖ Connecting organizations with the private sector
- ❖ There needs to be pressure/advocacy from the City to encourage more private sector support of local non-profits
 - Linking City projects to social impact
 - Currently, it's tougher for nonprofit organizations (they struggle), when for-profit organizations thrive at the same time
 - Engage all stakeholders in a collaborative effort
- ❖ Private funding campaigns to help address funding gaps would be helpful
- ❖ Education at post-secondary schools

- ❖ City playing an advocating role
 - Advocate to the private sector on behalf of the non-profit sector

Sharing Data and Collective Storytelling:

Non-profits collect useful data but do not have a way to broadly share it. Facilitating the pooling and sharing of data will help tell a story of community impact.

What was discussed:

- Data sharing and pooling
 - o A lot of great data exists, but non-profits don't have the capacity to work with it – there is a need to gather it and tell a collective story with it
- Reaching beyond current data base
- Establishing complex databases