The Uses and Gratifications of Communications Technologies for Social Economy Organizations in Atlantic Canada

Elizabeth Russell

With the support of:

Darlene Scott
Jenna Hawkins
Ivan Emke
Penelope Rowe
Jessica Kukac

Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network
Partenariat sur l'économie sociale et la durabilité

Bridging, Bonding, and Building / Renforcement des liens et des capacités

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This research examined the use of communication tools in the social economy, using

mixed methods. Based on results from $N = 466$ participants sampled through interviews,

focus groups, and a survey, the study identified the tools organizations typically used,

their purposes, and any barriers to and benefits of using these tools and others. Across

each study, results broadly indicated that the issues of accessibility to communication

tools and capacity to maximize tool use among social economy organizations are factors

primary influencing overall tool usage. Organizations with increased access to and

capacity for appropriate communication tools faced fewer challenges in their use and

were more effectively able to utilize appropriate tools, whereas organizations facing

accessibility and capacity problems were limited in their usage. It is recommended that

barriers limiting accessibility and capacity problems be addressed through budgetary

means, likely reducing the stress and strain of trying to overcome these two significant

barriers to effective communication tool use, and ultimately, to facilitate more successful

and sustainable social economy organizations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

The current research was conducted as an evaluation of the uses of various communication tools in the Atlantic Canadian social economy. This report is one of four research projects conducted between 2008 and 2010 in Sub Node Six of the Social Economy and Sustainability Project (SES) based in Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, NS. The SES is comprised of a number of regional community-university partnerships based in Atlantic Canada, who have come together to explore the social economy in our communities and provinces. Our Sub Node, conducted through a research partnership between Sir Wilfred Grenfell College (SWGC) in Corner Brook, NL, and the Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC) in St. John's, NL, focused specifically on communication tools and technologies in the social economy. This ranged from the benefits and challenges of online communities, communication differentials between social enterprises and economic development agencies, constructing effective emails, and the current project, the uses of communication tools in the social economy. Together, these projects have allowed substantial insight into the current communication situation in the social economy, from a broad perspective, and have allowed us to make important recommendations for change and improvement to enhance communication.

Using mixed methods, including interviews, a survey, and focus groups, this particular project sought to understand the mix of communication tools that are employed in social economy organizations, and how these tools are used in everyday operations. Ultimately, we have identified positive targets for improving communication in Atlantic Canadian social economy organizations. Based on findings from our overall sample of 466 individuals representing diverse social economy organizations, our findings suggest that organizations of all

sizes and budgets are actively integrating as many new technologies with existing ones as

possible, and are keenly interested in acquiring newer and more Internet-based tools to reach

broader audiences. Increasingly, organizations are using multiple tools to tackle multiple projects

and reach a more diverse group of potential volunteers, clients, and supporters, but are

constrained in effectively or efficiently doing so by capacity and accessibility challenges. Our

research suggests that by addressing these challenges, broadly, social economy organizations in

Atlantic Canada may significantly benefit by increased communication capabilities. This is

important, given the value of the social economy to the general public in Atlantic Canada and

across the country. By identifying specific challenges and opportunities to using communication

tools in a time of considerable public uptake and use of various technologies, current results may

support and enhance everyday operations of social economy organizations.

Literature Review

Every day, individuals, families and organizations living and working in Canada benefit, in a variety of ways, from the work of organizations in the social economy. Designed to meet a variety of community needs in large part through the work of volunteers, nonprofit and voluntary organizations positively influence the general well-being of Canadians by "delivering services, identifying emerging needs, raising funds, promoting new policy initiatives, supporting social, economic and cultural development, and advocating for common causes" (Rowe, 2006, p. 1). The term 'social economy' refers to a unit of groups that provide a variety of unique and often much-needed goods, services, and supports to local communities (CSERP, n.d.). Initiatives are often independent of government influence, instead involving boards of directors and other stakeholders in governance and decision-making procedures, and are oriented toward achieving socially valuable goals (SESRN, 2009). Subtypes include co-operatives, nonprofit societies and charities, and mutuals (SESRN, 2009). Women's shelters, church groups, service clubs, credit unions, sports leagues, foundations, food banks, farmers markets, and environmental organizations are all examples of groups comprising our social economy (SESRN, 2009). These groups directly project their efforts toward many subsectors of the Canadian social fabric, including arts and culture, human rights, the environment, sports and recreation, health, faith, and social justice.

Communication in the Social Economy

Organizational communication can be defined as "the central means by which individual activity is coordinated to devise, disseminate and pursue organizational goals" (Gardner, Paulsen, Gallois, Callan, & Monaghan, 2001, p. 561), and within the social economy, it plays a pivotal role in the long-term success of an organization (SESRN, 2009). As technological advances in the last

fifteen years have markedly shifted world-wide toward digital, consolidated, deregulated and more global methods of communication, nonprofits are often placed in the costly bind of feeling pressured to keep pace with the evolution of technology (Buchanan, 2006; Burt & Taylor, 2000; Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007). Ten years ago, with the advent of email and the Internet as major methods of global communication, researchers speculated on their potential to enhance the social economy (Olsen, Keevers, Paul, & Covington, 2001). Olsen and colleagues (2001) explained, at the most basic level, how email and websites were helpful to the social economy, were specific on methods of use, provided very basic "do and don't" lists for emailing, and they even cautioned organizations against the potential for overwhelming levels of new interest in their organization. Finn, Maher, and Forster (2006) commented on changes in communication technology adaptation between 2000 and 2004 in the nonprofit sector. They suggested that by 2004, nonprofit organizations were "beginning to position themselves to take advantage of the opportunities provided by information and communication technology," (pp. 277), showing a movement from basic Internet and email promotion to increased adaptation of more sophisticated technology. However, in recent years, technology has again advanced, and few articles provide a helpful update on communication in the social economy, especially in the late 2000s. However, the literature is consistent on one level: that the adaptation of communication technology in the social economy lags far behind that of the for-profit sector.

Barriers and Challenges to Communication in the Social Economy

Financial capacity was seen as a major barrier to the adoption of newer communication technology in the social economy (Buchanan, 2006; Pinho & Macedo, 2006; Schneider, 2003). Very small organizations lacking the budget to keep up to date with basic technological equipment such as computers found it difficult to compete with other organizations that have greater

technological capabilities (Schneider, 2003). Researchers feel that the problem is not rooted in

associated start-up costs or the monthly Internet connection fee, which are both relatively low-cost

in terms of yearly budgets (Finn, Maher, & Forster, 2006). Instead, cost frequently refers to the

high price of *time* to research new technologies, understand their levels of usefulness, and for

implementation, including training of staff and volunteers in technology use, and ongoing

maintenance and upkeep (Pinho & Macedo, 2006). Schneider (2003) related the case study of an

organization primarily run by one individual, whose time spent on the computer compromised time

spent on essential programming activities. Also challenging was the training of staff or volunteers

from socially-oriented, rather than technologically-oriented, backgrounds to effectively manage

new technologies (McNut & Boland, 1999; Pinho & Macedo, 2006; Schneider, 2003). Other

barriers included a general lack of computer or network literacy, a lack of technical support or

expertise, and a high turnover rate among staff and volunteers (Cravens, 2009).

Resistance to new technologies may be a barrier to using communication technologies, as

organizations may not be easily convinced that the newest communication method will be useful

(Pinho & Macedo, 2006). Buchanan's (2006) literature review reflected that nonprofit

organizations did not always actively work toward using new and efficient means of

communication to most effectively reach key groups. Indeed, Kenix (2008) found that nonprofit

informants in her study were critical of the Internet as a regular tool for activities such as

fundraising, but were interested in the potential economic benefits of Internet communication, and

acknowledged the credibility provided by regularly updated websites. However, the rapid rate of

change in communication technology produces an equally quick rate of technological advancement

and knowledge among the general public, and current data might suggest vastly differing levels of

interest and engagement among the nonprofit sector in even relatively basic or standard

advancements. Similarly, it is an interesting point of consideration as to whether the social

economy truly *would* benefit from the newest changes in communication technology, or whether

their more simple use of basic tools such as Internet, fax, telephone and mail are sufficient.

Technological Trends in Communication: The Internet

The Internet as a constantly changing communication tool provides a major opportunity

for organizations in the social economy to effectively reach key audiences in a variety of ways

(Pinho & Macedo, 2006), and may act as a leveler between large and small-scale organizations

(Waters, 2007). In 2001, Olsen, Keevers, Paul, and Covington wrote that "the future of e-

philanthropy is now!" (p. 372), explaining that the Internet's reach to thousands in a cost-

effective manner spelled real changes for nonprofit organizations. Through the

interconnectedness of websites and email, the key to success may very well be consistent email

communication drawing interested parties toward well-organized and informative websites (Hart,

2002). Indeed, an individual's overall evaluation of an organization may be influenced, in part,

by an attitude toward the website and its layout, design, and degree of user-friendliness, in

conjunction with a more general attitude formed offline (Long & Chiagouris, 2006).

Websites can house universally-accessible databases of information and documents, can

manage web-based forms for conference or membership registrations, and take payments in a

secure and encrypted manner (Cameron, 2006). The Internet is an inexpensive form of

advertising, and may also be used to inform donors about how their contributions are being used

or to allow them to be more actively involved with an organization (Waters, 2007). Linkages to

other sites may help to educate the public, funders, and potential donors about pertinent issues,

and for these reasons, effective websites rank highly as a method of promoting social economy

organizations and their programming (Waters, 2007).

info@cscnl.ca

However, use of online communication is relatively new among some parts of the social economy (Henley & Guidry, 2004), and its full potential may not yet be realized (Buchanan, 2006; Waters, 2007) in terms of creating awareness, advertising, and connections with stakeholders, likely for reasons of both financial and temporal constraints. Without the addition of two-way, interactive options utilized in more recent years among for-profit organizations, the social economy is not keeping pace with the mainstream, although recent evidence suggests that there is interest in more interactive capabilities such as live chat and online discussion forums (Walters, 2007). However, it is also possible that low-cost and simple Internet technologies are increasingly used, within very recent years, as communication methods in the social economy.

Technological Trends in Communication: Email

Computers have become more and more central in the everyday operation of individuals, groups and stakeholders, and provide two-way interactions in conjunction with various technologies (Hyde & Mitra, 1999). As a result, reaching people through email has become the most instantaneous and preferred method of communication in the social economy (Olsen, Keevers, Paul, & Covington, 2001; Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007). Asynchronous communication, in which individuals can respond to messages at their leisure, makes email an easy method of transmitting messages and digital documents in an efficient manner (Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007). Email is more effective and direct than websites because it actively contacts people at their individual computers. Simplicity and low cost make email attractive to nonprofit and for-profit organizations alike (Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007). Email is considered to be the most dynamic fundraising tool beyond face-to-face communication, and consequently, email relationships are as significant in the social economy as they are in the for-profit sector (Olsen et al., 2001).

info@cscnl.ca

Although email overcomes temporal and geographic barriers, it will likely never completely eliminate barriers presented by typed rather than verbalized communication. The removal of social bonds created by visual or verbal cues is problematic and creates depersonalization of others, and a lack of context may create unfortunate misconstruals of important messages. For example, the sender may communicate by email in a brief or abrupt manner solely for the sake of time, rather than a lack of manners, but the recipient may misconstrue this negatively (Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007). Conflicts created in email communication tend to be difficult to resolve, with little human incentive to amend problems while observing a screen rather than a person (Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007). Also, email can get lost or end up in junk folders, may never be read, and is easy to ignore. A personal call may be more effective in some regards. This suggests that without the unique qualities of face-to-face or verbal interactions (Rice, D'Ambra, & More, 1998), email may never completely overtake traditional forms of communication in the social economy (Seshadri & Carstenson, 2007).

Other Technological Trends in Communication

Although much of the communication technology research focuses on email and the Internet, Cameron (2006) created a more comprehensive list of various technologies used by organizations needing to communicate across geographic boundaries. Teleconferencing was frequently reported for its social presence and information richness during discussions of in-depth issues, its creation of learning insights stemming from vocal interactions, and its level of efficiency over regular telephone communication. However, it was considered an expensive tool, language barriers were problematic, and social interactions were reported to be awkward when face-to-face meetings had not taken place in advance (Cameron, 2006). Listserves were found to be useful for exchange of information on a given topic or event, although this one-way, non-interactive, and

info@cscnl.ca

formal method of communication was felt to be increasingly overshadowed by email (Cameron,

2006). Intranets, or shared websites, were used for document sharing and online discussion;

however, in actuality few regularly logged on and intranets, again, were more often replaced by the

convenience of emailing (Cameron, 2006; Cullen & Scott, 2009). Social networking is being used

in the social economy as a method to reach increasingly diverse users of the Internet, but content

analyses suggest that few organizations go beyond basic and relatively uninformative

organizational profiles and do not make effective use of this much newer platform of

communication (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009).

Summary Statements from Literature Review

- Barriers to the use of communication technology often were financially and temporally-based,
  as organizations do not always have the resources to properly take advantage of
  communication tools.

- The Internet and email are widely used communication tools in the social economy; however,
  development and upkeep of websites is often an ongoing challenge, and email does not
  replace the value or efficacy of face-to-face dialogue, suggesting that traditional methods of
  communication remain highly valued in the social economy.

The Current Research

This project was conducted as a component of the Social Economy and Sustainability

project (SES) organized through Mount Saint Vincent University, by Sub Node Six

(Communications), based in Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook, NL, and the

Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador, in St. John's, NL. Our major research

questions for this project included:

- Do social economy organizations have access to communication tools? If so, which ones?

- How do they secure and fund this access (if there is a cost)?

- Do they use these tools that are available, and why or why not?

- Are there plans of acquiring more access to communication tools (such as high-speed Internet)?

- How can actors within different areas of the social economy best communicate with one another for purposes of capacity building and mobilization?

- How and when does access to communication technology help to equalize the disparities of time and distance?

- What do the individual tools do well, and what do they not do well?

- Does the use of different communication tools influence the kind of a community that can be built?

- Can access to communication tools (such as the Internet) sometimes serve to erect further barriers between individuals and groups? If so, why and how? \

- How did social economy organizations develop their ability to work with the communication technologies that they use?

- Are there uses they would like to make of the technology, but do not have the skills necessary?

- Has access to Internet technology replaced other froms of communication, or do they simply augment postal, telephone, print, broadcast, and face-to-face communication?

- What can the Social Economy and Sustainability team of researchers and community organizations contribute by developing and modeling innovative combinations in its internal communications/governance, and research processes, as well as its external dissemination processes and strategies?

Because the literature is broad and does not focus on the social economy in Atlantic

Canada specifically, this study attempts to narrow the focus of communication research in the

social economy toward our particular region. We seek to identify the *tools* being used in this

relatively localized area, and the particular *functions* of communication and communication

methods used with diverse target groups, and to determine any *barriers* to communication. The

intent of this study is to identify ways to potentially improve communication in the social economy

in Atlantic Canada, as communication appears more and more to be integral to the success of these

ventures.

Key Informant Method

Approach and Design

To develop a comprehensive survey instrument, a qualitative semi-structured interview

design was selected to allow in-depth querying of each key informant about their organization's

specific technological experiences. By allowing participants to broadly expand their answers, the

interviewer was able to probe for more specific explanations toward each item. This provided a

great deal of information from which the survey could be developed, minimizing the number of

unnecessary questions and ensuring the survey would address communication issues in a focused

manner. Interview items were informed by an examination of relevant social economy and

communication literature and sought to address communication in the social economy to inform

the larger survey.

Participants

A convenience sample of nine key informants representing various social economy

groups was interviewed, including five from Newfoundland and Labrador, two from Nova

Scotia, and two from Prince Edward Island. Backgrounds of the organizations included

fundraising, research, volunteer liaison activities, arts and culture, health, safety, advocacy and support of populations with unique needs.

Procedure

Contacts were selected from a list of people and organizations that the Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC) was familiar with through work in previous partnerships or projects. Twenty key informants were selected from the four Atlantic provinces and represented various groups ranging from chapters of larger national organizations to smaller local and regional groups. An email was sent to each of the potential key informants inviting them to participate in the research. Those who wished to participate were instructed to complete a consent form (please see **Appendix A**) and fax it to the CSC. Of the twenty key informants contacted, nine participated in the telephone interviews that were recorded for follow-up analysis.

Before beginning the interview, the researcher again outlined the aims of the study. The interview guide contained six questions regarding (1) *groups with whom organizations communicated,* (2) the *tools they used to do so* and (3) any *communication barriers* that existed between organizations. Please see **Appendix B** for a copy of the interview schedule.

Key informant responses were analyzed thematically based on follow-up analysis of voice recordings. Themes that were consistent across a number of informants or that stood out as unique or important were noted and expanded upon.

<div align="center">

Key Informant Results

</div>

Access to Communication Tools

In speaking to nine key informants in Atlantic Canada's social economy, it appears that access to communication tools does *not* pose a problem to these organizations. Although the

organizations were quite diverse in size and varied in their connections with larger (e.g.,

provincial or national-level) parent groups, area of interest, level of funding or other financial

support, and the size of their employee or volunteer base, no participants reflected upon having

difficulty accessing standard communication tools (e.g., computer, telephone, fax, teleconference

capabilities, and so on). Limited financial resources did *not* prevent informants from using

particular tools. Key informants avoided a given tool because of redundancy or lack of

usefulness, a lack of time to learn its features and to properly train others to do so, or simply

because they did not wish to use it. Broadly, all nine organizations readily had access to mail,

telephone, fax, and Internet tools including email and websites, as well as face-to-face

communication. Four of the organizations used paid media advertising or had media coverage in

various forms from newspaper articles and advertisements to radio air time segments, printed

pamphlets and so on. Email newsletters, e-bulletins and social networking websites were used

infrequently by most of the organizations, although the interest in their potential usefulness

varied across groups.

Access to mainstream communication tools was not a barrier to any group, suggesting

that the low-cost nature of basic tools (specifically Internet, telephone, fax and mail) enhances

this fundamental starting point for communication in the social economy. With the ability to

access these four broad categories of tools, organizations in this sample were able to customize

their everyday communication behaviours to meet the organization's specific needs and that of

the board of directors, clients, the public, and other groups or individuals of relevance. Where a

larger, more sophisticated organization may make full use of virtual networks or video

conferencing, a group with fewer staffing resources or less technological sophistication may opt

to use email primarily. Although specific uses of the Internet varied among organizations, these

uses were all derived from a simple Internet connection. All organizations had access to basic

communication tools, using them in simple or in creative and unique ways to meet similar goals

in the social economy.

Communication Tools Most Commonly Used

Results suggest that a number of specific communication tools derived from the most

basic units of communication technology (e.g., computers, Internet, fax, telephone, and so on)

are different when used both externally to and within a social economy organization. **Table 1**

presents the categories of communication tools used by key informants in this project, in no

particular order.

Table 1: **List of Tools Used in the Social Economy in Atlantic Canada**	
Email	Software for people with disabilities
Telephone	Public communication strategies
Online collaborative tools (e.g., virtual networks, Doodle Bug, Base Camp)	Video conferencing
Mail	Listserve
Fax	Websites
In-person (e.g., Meetings, focus groups)	Media
Promotional and policy materials	Public engagement

Distinguishing between internal and external communication appeared to be a significant factor

for each organization when determining *how* to pass on a

given message. Internal communication tools often

included intranet services such as shared national

networks, shared servers, and internal email service,

whereas external communication tools integrated a number

> *"We have a communications strategy for government, the community, local organizations, individuals – they are all slightly different because we are speaking to different audiences. How we* frame *the information and* share *the information is different."*

of more unique approaches depending on the recipient and specific circumstances. Participants

discussed formal communication strategies and protocols, in which one key external target (e.g.,

government), may be contacted only through telephone conversation or in-person meetings,

"That depends on type of communication – I mean standard communication as in logistics, 'Can you come to a meeting' – that's email. If it's communication as in, 'We have a problem, we need to talk' – that's face-to-face. Depends on the issue. How important it is. Whether it's logistical or substantive."

whereas internal communication regarding day-to-day office operations may rely solely on email.

Type of communication within the internal and external dimension also depended on message type. The majority of respondents expressed that logistical arrangements or messages with informal, simple and brief content were almost exclusively transmitted by email. This was not only preferred for its ease, but its ability to trace message history when completing tasks. However, more formal, substantive, or discussion-based communication was almost exclusively preferred to be in person or at least on the telephone. Participants felt that email presented a 'quick fix' to issues that in the past could be quickly addressed over the telephone; however, no other strategies could entirely replace the value of speaking, preferably in person, to another individual or group. In summary, when examining communication in social economy organizations, it is imperative to make the distinction between message type, target audience, and internal vs. external communication, and to recognize the complex, multi-layered nature of the benefits and limitations presented by each particular tool.

The Importance of Email

Throughout the key informant interviews, email emerged as the most dominant method of communication among all participants. Although this of course depended on message type, target audience and whether the destination was internal or external, email was heavily relied on as the primary everyday communication tool. For many, this was a matter of convenience. Individuals could reply on their own time, could access email from their homes, and

"Email is so much easier, and it comes to you, you don't have to go looking for it."

did not have to remember to seek out communication in a scheduled manner or in an extraneous location. Emails could be sent individually and traced from beginning to end, which was reported to be beneficial for mundane or logistical tasks that required recall of past conversations (reviewability). The ability to attach a variety of documents to an email without printing and delivering or even mailing the information was a major advantage for many participants. Emails were considered by respondents to be useful in the listserve format as well, in which an individual can send information to a large audience by the click of a button, again without the cost or time required of printing or regular mail. Such information could in turn be forwarded to the listserves or email lists of other partner organizations or individuals, allowing a wider reach of the information. As more people with whom organizations must communicate obtain regular email access, the benefits of emailing increases exponentially, according to participants. This was reported to be particularly the case in Newfoundland and Labrador, where the often-expensive problem of geographical distances within the province is in part overcome by the universality of email. As a member of a socially conscious organization, one participant reflected on the paper-saving element of email as a benefit. Despite the obvious benefits mentioned by participants about emailing as a primary communication tool, informants reflected that email both *simplifies* and *complicates* everyday communication.

"I'm a firm believer that email is good for sharing very specific pieces of info, not good for discussion. So, I prefer to use email when sharing very specific pieces of information with staff or volunteers. If you're talking about having a discussion, you engage – sharing of ideas – you're at least talking telephone or face to face."

Key informants felt that email was excellent for mundane discussion but when used beyond simple communication, became more of a problem than a convenience. When ideas needed to be shared or discussed in meetings, email was less effective in achieving required outcomes. Although email has the ability to replace a variety

of traditional communication such as face-to-face interactions and the telephone to some extent,

it is not always preferable. Some organizations that target groups or populations who may not

have regular access to the Internet recognized that while it was quite helpful for internal

communication, more traditional methods such as the telephone, mail and the media were most

effective in transmitting messages to target audiences. Some participants reflected on the

logistical and time-consuming problems that can arise from instantaneous message transmission

when not treated properly:

> Email is great. As long as you treat it properly. As long as you don't reply right away and
> then they reply again, and it goes back and forth and you never get anything done. Like I
> could come in in the morning and there are forty email messages. So I take an hour and
> go through and store it or read it or answer it or whatever and by the time I get that forty
> finished there's another twenty. So I'll read those and that'll take me half an hour. And
> by the time I get those done there's another six or eight. And by the time I get those done
> then there's another three or four or five back again and it could just go on for forever! So
> you've got to learn how to do it, so remember you don't have to answer them right away!
> Unless they're really urgent. You could spend your whole life sending emails back and
> forth and having conversations with everyone in the world.

In summary, email has become an essential tool in the social

economy. The instantaneous nature of its temporal and

geography-crossing abilities provides an important and

inexpensive benefit to organizations needing to reach a large

number of individuals at the relatively low cost of a monthly

"I do a lot more email and a lot less telephone than I used to. But I don't think it's really replaced any face-to-face discussions…I still get together with people as much as I ever used to.

Internet bill. However, email is not without its complications and challenges, and according to

key informants, will never completely replace face-to-face and telephone communication within

the social economy.

Barriers to Communication Tools and Technology

Although it is clear from this sample that many social economy organizations are using

communication technology to their advantage, these tools do not come without problems. Noted

problems included a lack of *time* and *capacity* required to identify, learn about and train

individuals to keep up with particular technologies, such as web-based meetings, Facebook,

Twitter, online work space technologies, blogs, and online discussion groups. Also, informants

identified *accessibility*, *geography* and a lack of universal *Internet access* as other barriers to

increased use of communication technology.

The audience with whom these groups are communicating sometimes presented

communication challenges. Messages cannot be communicated effectively to all audiences

because technology is not accessible to everyone. Many of the key informants work with people

who have disabilities, are elderly, or for other reasons lack access to technology. For these

organizations, the technology itself is the barrier. For example, an elderly person may not use

email at all, and the organization is therefore obligated to use telephone or regular postal mail

when communicating.

The cost of new technologies or upgrades was a barrier to most organizations. While the

initial dollar value of acquisition was problematic for few, the cost of constant upgrades and

technical support were more bothersome for many. Similarly, both hiring staff trained to use the

> *"Time and capacity stops us more than other (reasons) – having the time to utilize new tools and also to assess whether they're useful to us."*

technology or finding the time and money to train existing staff,

were identified as barriers to expanding technology use beyond

basic elements of communication. Following the acquisition of

specific technologies or learning to use and

maintain them, key informants mentioned

> *"Some of the younger women use things like Facebook and Twitter – we don't use that. So. That would be kind of – what we are looking at."*

that these new tools would have to be evaluated for their usefulness, but

identified a lack of time to do so. Without proper resource evaluation,

they felt that new technologies could be used without a real

understanding of whether they were bringing further benefit to the organization's communication strategies, or simply creating complications. Key informants reflected that they endeavored to evaluate the benefits of their current communication tools, but did not have the time or resources to do this, either.

"Skype? Have once or twice. I'm not a big fan of it quite honestly. Doesn't add to a telephone conversation. If you need to be face to face, you need to be face to face, in person. We have tried video conferencing, and it just hasn't caught on. I don't know if it's the culture of the organization or maybe it's just a personal preference or dislike of mine. But the video conferencing and Skype is a form of that – obviously there's not major expenses associated with it. The fact that we're not using it more is probably because we're not seeing a value in it."

Participants felt that although these factors created problems in advancing to newer technology, they were not so much barriers as a *lack of desire* or *need* to move beyond currently employed basic, intermediate or even advanced communication methods. Most were quite satisfied with current methods, but did to some degree look to the future for the time or resources to entertain new technological possibilities.

Future Interests in Communication Tools

Many key informants expressed an interest in looking into blogs, interactive web-based discussion groups, interactive websites, Facebook and Twitter. Newly written communication plans pointed towards expanded use of the Internet, specifically, to reach a broader audience or to more effectively access their current one. Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, in particular, were emphasized as a potential method to reach younger groups of people; however, informants seemed hesitant to engage in these methods. Blogs or interactive web-based discussion groups were seen as a potentially valuable method of communicating, presenting the

"We're discussing – developed a communications plan. So use of newer technologies is in our plan but we are a seniors' organization so we have to use low tech as well as high tech."

option for interactive commenting or provision of feedback on an ongoing basis available from a

large number of people. Key informants reported that they had tried to use these methods and the

attempts had been unsuccessful. However, as mentioned, detailed communication plans by these

organizations showed a desire to move toward using these methods again in a more useful and

sustainable manner. This demonstrates a real willingness on the part of social economy

representatives to move toward increasingly effective communication technology and greater

interactivity with their audiences. This is contrasted, however, with a hesitance derived from past

failures or underuse, or from the inability to find time and resources to investigate and filter

through the plethora of available technologies.

Problems with Communication Tools and Technology

The majority of key informants were not receptive to the idea of Voice over Internet

Protocol (VoIP) programs, team site repositories, or in some cases, teleconferencing. All

informants had considered the use of Skype for its video communication benefits, however based

on either assumption or limited use, few believed it was any better than a simple telephone

conversation. Viewing the other person in the video format was unnecessary, they felt, and the

savings of long-distance phone calls was so minimal as to render Skype useless. Similarly, they

felt that teleconferencing was an overly complicated and expensive alternative to the telephone,

which provided no real advantage and was therefore rarely used. Team repositories were seen as

useful only for off-site file storage and sharing, and direct communication benefits were not

recognized. Key informants, therefore, appear to be satisfied their communication needs are met,

in large part, by basic systems of fax, email, telephone and postal service mail. Extensions of

these elements do not provide any major benefit above and beyond those identified in **Table 1**,

especially for groups with time constraints, which appear to be the majority.

Summary Statements of Key Informant Results

- Access to communication tools is not presented by informants to be a problem in the social economy. Primary communication tools include telephone, Internet, fax and mail, and other more complex tools are derived from these, but less often.

- The use of technology differs widely depending on the nature, target, and level of formality required for the particular communication, and whether the communication is internal or external to the organization.

- Email is by far the most dominant method of communication for reasons of convenience and its ability to cross time and geography, but it is not without difficulties and does not fully replace traditional forms of communication.

- Barriers to communication tools and technology are not so much financial as temporal, in terms of the time required to investigate and filter through the plethora of available technologies, and to learn, implement, use and train others in the use of specific technologies.

- Recent communication plans point toward expanded use of the Internet, specifically to reach a broader audience or to more effectively access current ones, but no major leap has been made in the social economy to interactive technologies.

- The use of VoIP programs, team site repositories and teleconferencing are not widely liked or utilized among key informants in the social economy.

<div align="center">

Survey Method

</div>

Approach and Design

In order to assess communication tools used in the social economy on a larger scale, a survey was developed based on key informants' responses. The survey was distributed in email

and mail format in English, and in email and phone interview format in French. All formats of

the survey were identical in content. Please see **Appendix C** for a copy of the survey.

Procedure

      English email survey. A comprehensive sample of 3553 individuals representing various

social economy groups was selected from a database of social economy contacts, maintained by

the CSC. The database was supplemented with contacts supplied by SES partners. This database

contains the names and contact information of registered charities, nonprofits, and cooperatives

in the four Atlantic provinces. Selection categories included province, organization type (charity,

nonprofit or cooperative), and the provision of an email address, but excluded business,

government, or allied professionals. Potential participants were contacted three times over a

period of one month with emails outlining aims of the study and requesting participation. Also,

using the snowball method of sampling, emails were sent to eight Sub Node partners throughout

Atlantic Canada. The messages described the study and included a request to forward the link to

their databases of social economy contacts, in order to reach as many organizations as possible.

      English mail-out survey. In order to target a cross-section of organizations in the

Atlantic Canadian Social Economy, a mail-out recruitment procedure was used to reach

organizations that were not listed as having email addresses. The number of mailed surveys was

proportionally selected according to provincial population, represented in the following **Table 2**:

Table 2: **Breakdown of Mail-Out Targets**			
Province	**Provincial Population***	**Percent of Total Atlantic Canada Population**	**Quantity of Surveys Mailed**
Nova Scotia	939 531	40.52%	131
New Brunswick	748 329	32.27%	105
PEI	122 000	5.53%	18
Newfoundland	508 925	21.95%	71
Totals:	**2 318 785**	**100%**	**325**

*Population as of December, 2009. Source: Wikipedia.

In total, a semi-random sample of 325 potential respondents representing various social economy groups was selected from the CSC database. Our contacts were selected using an in-house PHP script, programmed to randomly select a given number of records from database groups created to categorize organizations. Categories included province, organization type (charity, nonprofit, or cooperative), and whether or not an email address was provided. The current selection of 325 organizations for this mail-out was derived from those who did *not* have listed email addresses.

French email survey. A non-random sample of 548 key informants identified as Francophone was selected from the CSC database. Categories included province, type (charity, nonprofit, or cooperative), and whether or not an email address was provided. Organizations inappropriately tagged as meeting the research criteria and those without email addresses were manually excluded from the sample of 548, leaving a total of 116 organizations in the Francophone social economy who received an email link to the survey. In addition, a colleague included a brief description of and link to the survey in the May 2010 edition of a bilingual non-profit newsletter circulated in New Brunswick, in which readers were asked to consider completing our online survey. English and Francophone Internet survey responses were combined for reporting purposes.

French telephone survey. A semi-random sample of potential respondents identifying as Francophone but lacking an email address was selected from the CSC database. These individuals were contacted by telephone, given a brief description of the study, informed of the survey's confidential nature, and asked to complete the survey over the telephone. In total, 25 Francophone telephone surveys were completed and added to the larger database of survey responses.

Participants

In total, 432 individuals completed the survey, including those distributed by email, mail, and telephone in French and English. The majority of participants represented provincially incorporated nonprofit organizations, as shown in **Table 3**.

Table 3: **Legal Status**		
Response option	**Percentage**	**Number of Respondents**
Provincially incorporated nonprofit organization	57.8%	219
Federally incorporated nonprofit organization	19.5%	74
Local chapter of a nationally incorporated group	4.7%	18
Informally organized community group	2.6%	10
Municipality	1.6%	6
Credit union	1.8%	7
Co-operative	2.6%	10
Other	9.2%	35
Totals:	**99.8%***	**379**

*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding error.

Most organizations were housed in the Arts and Culture and Social/Community Services sector, or in Other sectors, shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4: **Sector**		
Response option	**Percentage**	**Number of Respondents**
Arts and culture	17.2%	65
Environment	6.3%	24
Sports and recreation	3.2%	12
Health	9.8%	37
Faith	9.2%	35
Social justice	3.4%	13

Social/community services	27.4%	104
Other	23.5%	89
Totals:	**100%**	**380**

Organization size ranged from budgets of under $30 000 to over $10 000 000, with the majority

falling in the $249 000 or under range, shown in **Table 5**.

Table 5: **Budget**		
Response option	**Percentage**	**Number of Respondents**
Under $30 000	19.8%	75
$30 000 - $99 999	18.2%	69
$100 000 - $249 000	20.6%	78
$250 000 - $499 000	12.1%	46
$500 000 - $999 999	5.5%	21
$1 000 000 - $9 999 999	10.6%	40
$10 000 000+	2.1%	8
No answer/do not know	11.1%	42
Totals:	**100%**	**349**

Most groups were small, with about 66% having zero to four employees, although the size of

volunteer base varied substantially between participants, largely falling between 10 and 99,

shown in **Tables 6** and **7**.

Table 6: **Staffing Size**		
Response option	**Percentage**	**Number of Respondents**
None	28.6%	98
1 to 4	42.2%	148
5 to 9	8.5%	30
10 to 24	9.1%	32
25 to 99	9.4%	33
100+	2.3%	8
No answer/do not know/other	0.6%	2
Totals:	**100.7%***	**351**

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding error.

Table 7: **Volunteering Size**		
Response option	**Percentage**	**Number of Respondents**
None	4.7%	18
1 to 9	17.4%	66
10 to 24	33%	125
25 to 99	30.6%	116
100 to 199	5.8%	22
200+	5.5%	21
No answer/do not know/other	2.9%	11
Totals:	**99.9%***	**379**

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding error.

Three quarters of organizations surveyed were charities, illustrated in **Table 8**.

Table 8: **Charitable Status**		
Response option	**Percentage**	**Number of Respondents**
Charitable status	72.8%	275
No charitable status	22%	83
Do not know	5.3%	20
Totals:	**100.1%***	**378**

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding error.

Half of respondents were staff people, whereas others were board members, volunteers, and

other, shown in **Table 9**.

Table 9: **Position**		
Response option	**Percentage**	**Number of Respondents**
Staff person	55.1%	209
Board member	21.6%	82
Volunteer	6.9%	26
Other	16.4%	62
Totals:	**100%**	**379**

About one third of organizations were located in each of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova

Scotia, and New Brunswick, with 5% being from Prince Edward Island, illustrated in **Table 10**.

Table 10: **Location**		
Response option	**Percentage**	**Number of Respondents**
Newfoundland and Labrador	34%	126
Nova Scotia	31%	117
Prince Edward Island	5%	19
New Brunswick	30%	112
Totals:	**100%**	**374**

Survey Results

Tool Usage

Survey results indicate that a substantial variety of communication technologies are used in the social economy for multiple methods. When communicating with groups, specifically employees, current/prospective volunteers, board members, funding sources, and the general public, the most frequently used communication methods included the telephone, face-to-face meetings, and email. It is interesting to note that of those methods used most frequently to target various groups, only websites and email were Internet-based. **Table 4** presents a frequency breakdown of groups targeted by various communication methods, and the five most frequently used tools to communicate with each.

The survey examined specific tool usage in terms of their communication functions. Organizations communicating internally most frequently utilized the telephone, in-person meetings, and VoIP. Mail was used most often to solicit donations or in funding applications. When updating members, organizations primarily relied on email, printed and online newsletters, and email lists. Methods most frequently used to inform the general public of services or events included posters and flyers, websites, media advertising, and social networking. Presentations, printed newsletters, web conferences, blogs, and VoIP were most frequently used to share and

disseminate information. A detailed breakdown of these statistics, in terms of purposes of each

communication tool, is presented in the following **Tables 11-17.**

Table 11: **Top 5 Most Frequently Used Tools to Communicate with Employees***

Rank order	Tool	Percentage	Number of Respondents
1	Face-to-face meetings	69.4%	299
2	Email	63.8%	275
3	Telephone	63.6%	274
4	N/A	24.6%	106
5	Postal mail	24.6%	106

Table 12: **Top 5 Most Frequently Used Tools to Communicate with Employees***

Rank order	Tool	Percentage	Number of Respondents
1	Face-to-face meetings	69.4%	299
2	Email	63.8%	275
3	Telephone	63.6%	274
4	n/a	24.6%	106
5	Postal mail	24.6%	106

Table 13: **Top 5 Most Frequently Used Tools to Communicate with Volunteers***

Rank order	Tool	Percentage	Number of Respondents
1	Telephone	75.4%	325
2	Email	67.5%	291
3	Face-to-face meetings	64.5%	278
4	Postal mail	38.3%	165
5	Website	30.6%	32

Table 14: **Top 5 Most Frequently Used Tools to Communicate with Board Members***

Rank order	Tool	Percentage	Number of Respondents
1	Telephone	87.7%	378
2	Email	80.7%	348
3	Face-to-face meetings	79.4%	342
4	Postal mail	37.1%	160
5	Presentations	25.1%	108

Table 15: **Top 5 Most Frequently Used Tools to Communicate with Funding Sources***

Rank order	Tool	Percentage	Number of Respondents
1	Postal mail	74.9%	323
2	Email	73.3%	316
3	Telephone	72.4%	312
4	Face-to-face meetings	62.9%	271
5	Presentations	34.6%	149

Table 16: **Top 5 Most Frequently Used Tools to Communicate with the General Public***

Rank order	Tool	Percentage	Number of Respondents
1	Printed posters/flyers	56.1%	242
2	Website	54.8%	236
3	Unpaid newspaper items	48%	207
4	Email	39.9%	172
5	Presentations	38.7%	167

Table 17: **Top 5 Most Frequently Used Tools to Communicate with Prospective Volunteers***

Rank order	Tool	Percentage	Number of Respondents
1	Telephone	42.5%	183
2	Face-to-face meetings	41.8%	180
3	Email	38.3%	165
4	Website	31.8%	137
5	Printed posters/flyers	24.1%	104

Note: No totals are included as each item is discrete and is totaled out of N = 466.

In addition, the survey examined specific tool usage in terms of their communication

functions. Organizations communicating internally most frequently utilized the telephone, in-

person meetings, and VoIP. Mail was used most often to solicit donations or in funding

applications. When updating members, organizations primarily relied on email, printed and

online newsletters, and email lists. Methods most frequently used to inform the general public of

services or events included posters and flyers, websites, media advertising, and social

networking. Presentations, printed newsletters, web conferences, blogs, and VoIP were most

frequently used to share and disseminate information. A detailed breakdown of these statistics, in

terms of purposes of each communication tool, is presented in the following **Table 18.**

Tool	Table 18 – Percent of usage (*n*)							
	Recruit volunteers or members	*Solicit donations or apply for funding*	*Communicate internally*	*Update members*	*Inform public of services or events*	*Provide advocacy*	*Share and disseminate information*	*Response count*
Telephone	54.7 (202)	48 (177)	66.7 (246)*	55.3 (204)	32.2 (119)	32.8 (121)	63.1 (233)	369
Meetings	62.5 (223)	56.6 (202)	77 (275)	75.6 (270)	43.4 (155)	40.1 (143)	68.6 (245)	357
Email	52.2 (177)	58.7 (199)	77 (261)	81.4 (276)	54 (183)	33.9 (115)	72.6 (246)	339
Mail	31 (104)	75.2 (252)	17.9 (60)	53.7 (180)	45.1 (151)	29.6 (99)	59.7 (200)	335
Presentations	44.9 (136)	51.8 (157)	32.3 (98)	57.8 (175)	58.1 (176)	33.3 (101)	66.3 (201)	303
Printed posters/flyers	40.4 (109)	27 (73)	13.7 (37)	30.4 (82)	85.6 (231)	23 (62)	63.3 (171)	270
Website	58.3 (147)	36.9 (93)	22.6 (57)	68.7 (173)	86.9 (219)	34.1 (86)	80.2 (202)	252
Unpaid newspaper items	36.8 (84)	22.8 (52)	4.4 (10)	27.2 (62)	87.7 (200)	31.1 (71)	64 (146)	228
Printed newsletters	44.9 (92)	32.2 (66)	25.4 (52)	69.3 (142)	64.4 (132)	26.3 (54)	69.3 (142)	205
Paid media advertising	36.4 (67)	19.6 (36)	6.0 (11)	25.5 (47)	85.3 (157)	23.9 (44)	61.4 (113)	184
Unpaid radio spots	32 (57)	23.6 (42)	5.1 (9)	22.5 (40)	89.3 (159)	27.5 (49)	64.6 (115)	178
E-bulletins/newsletters	49 (72)	29.9 (44)	32.7 (48)	72.8 (107)	67.3 (99)	26.5 (39)	66.7 (98)	147
Social networking	55.3 (63)	20.2 (23)	25.4 (29)	53.5 (61)	78.9 (90)	22.8 (26)	71.1 (81)	114
Email lists	34.6 (37)	22.4 (24)	36.4 (39)	67.3 (72)	42.1 (45)	17.8 (19)	62.6 (67)	107
Web conferences/seminars	18.4 (9)	10.2 (5)	26.5 (13)	38.8 (19)	28.6 (14)	24.5 (12)	67.3 (33)	49
Blog	48.7 (19)	25.6 (10)	38.5 (15)	46.2 (18)	69.2 (27)	35.9 (14)	71.8 (28)	39
VoIP	26.3 (10)	10.5 (4)	55.3 (21)	42.1 (16)	13.2 (5)	13.2 (5)	55.3 (21)	38

Note: Darkened boxes indicate the purpose most frequently addressed by each tool.

Barriers to using Communication Tools

Survey participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that certain factors were communication barriers. Participants most frequently agreed or strongly agreed that cost was a barrier to *purchasing* and *updating* tools, and agreed that cost was a barrier to *training* staff and volunteers to use these tools. In terms of *research*, *evaluation*, and *training* targeting communication tools, participants were most likely to agree that the *time* required was a barrier. Participants also were most likely to agree that a lack of staff or volunteer *knowledge* of tools was a barrier to usage. Technical limitations of tools were rated as neutral, and as less of a barrier to tool use. Results were less clear in terms of lack of capacity, access problems of the target audience, and geography, such that dominant responses ranged from disagree to agree. Please refer to **Figure A** for detailed descriptive statistics pertaining to this item.

Figure A

Barriers to Using Communication Tools
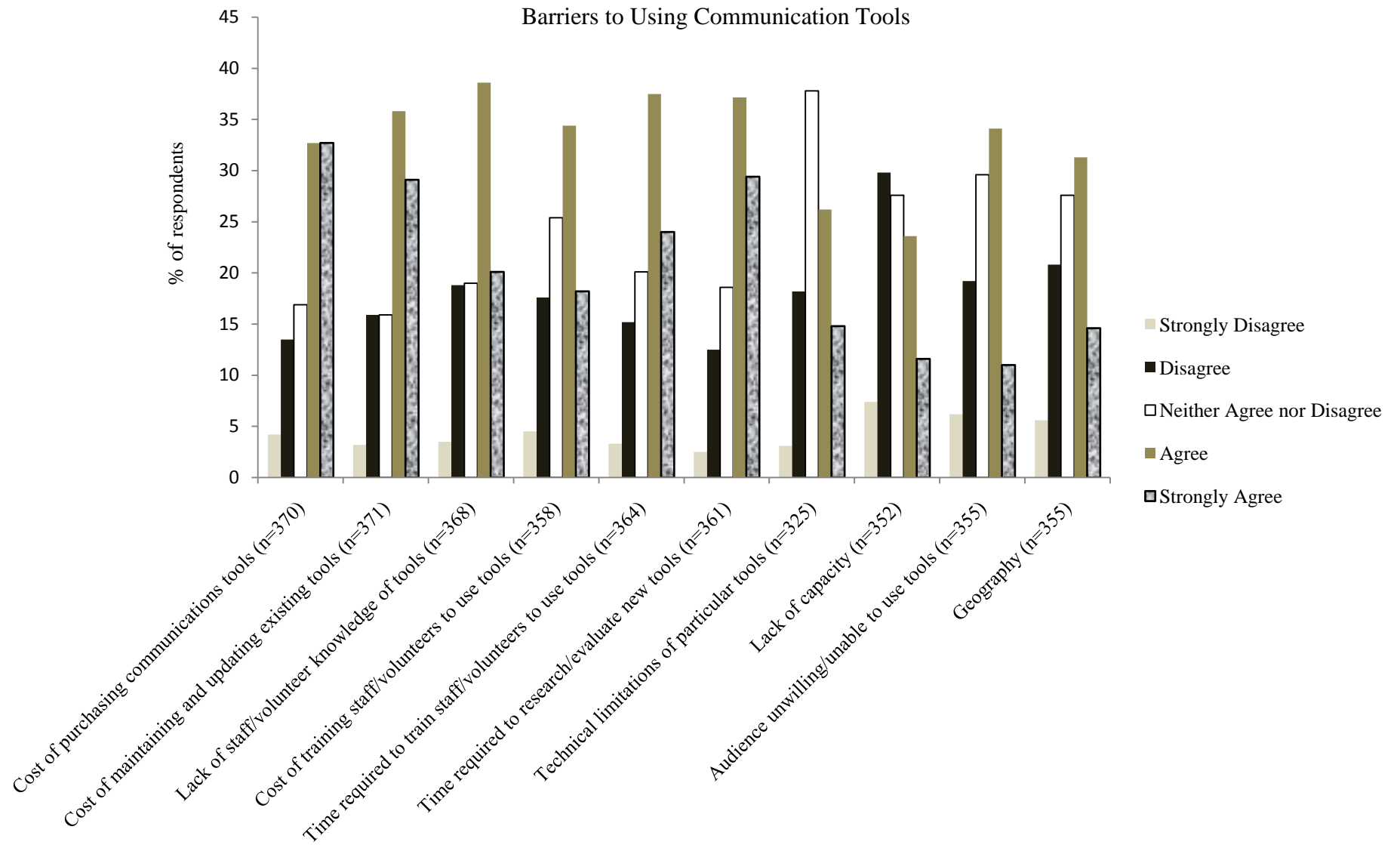
Communication Tools and Training

Training staff and volunteers in the use of communication tools was not a budget item for the majority of participants. Sixty percent of organizations did not provide training for staff, whereas 70% did not provide technology training for volunteers. However, about half of the organizations surveyed allocated a budget for communication tools, and 60% had a person/team solely responsible for communication. The majority (70%) did not have a formal communications plan. Please refer to **Tables 19** to **23** for descriptive statistics on this item.

Table 19 – **Does your organization train staff in the use of communication tools?**

Response options	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	39.5%	159
No	59%	238
Don't know	1.5%	6
Totals	**100**	**403**

Table 20 – **Does your organization train volunteers in the use of communication tools?**

Response options	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	26.4%	108
No	71.4%	292
Don't know	2.2%	9
Totals	**100**	**409**

Table 21 – **Does your organization allocate a budget for communication tools?**

Response options	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	50.8%	213
No	44.4%	186
Don't know	4.8%	20
Totals	**100**	**419**

Table 22 – **Does your organization have a person that is solely responsible for communication?**

Response options	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	37.6%	156
No	60.7%	252
Don't know	1.7%	7
Totals	**100**	**415**

Table 23 – **Does your organization have a formal (written) communications policy or plan?**

Response options	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes (internally)	13.6%	56
Yes (externally)	11.4%	47
No	68.7%	283
Don't know	6.3%	26
Totals	**100**	**412**

Acquisition and Elimination of Communication Tools

        Participants indicated that, overall, they were interested in using new web-based

technologies, but yet did not want to discontinue use of non-Internet based current tools. Nearly

40% of participants indicated that they were *not* planning on using any new technologies in the

next few years (Please refer to **Figure B** for a statistical breakdown of responses to this item).

Figure B - What Tools would you like to Acquire over the Next 2 Years?
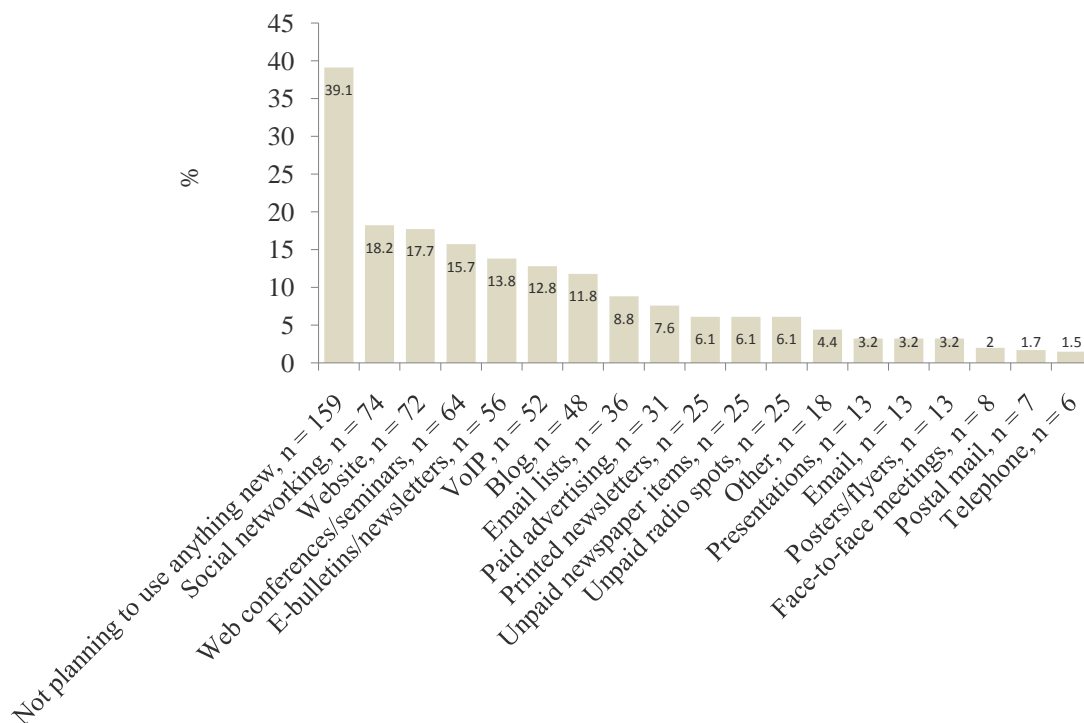
        However, when aggregated Internet-based tools were combined, interest in acquiring web

tools was substantial. By combining all Internet tools into one statistic (web-based tools) and all

other non-Internet based tools into another (non web-based tools), a new picture unfolded (See

Figure C for a detailed graphical representation of this statistic). Interest in acquiring non web-

based tools was similar in quantity to those not planning to use new tools. This suggests that

interest in acquiring Internet tools, overall, is strong, but does not cluster on one particular tool.

Participants were keenly interested in acquiring new Internet tools.

Figure C - What Tools would you like to Acquire: Web- and Non Web-Based Tools
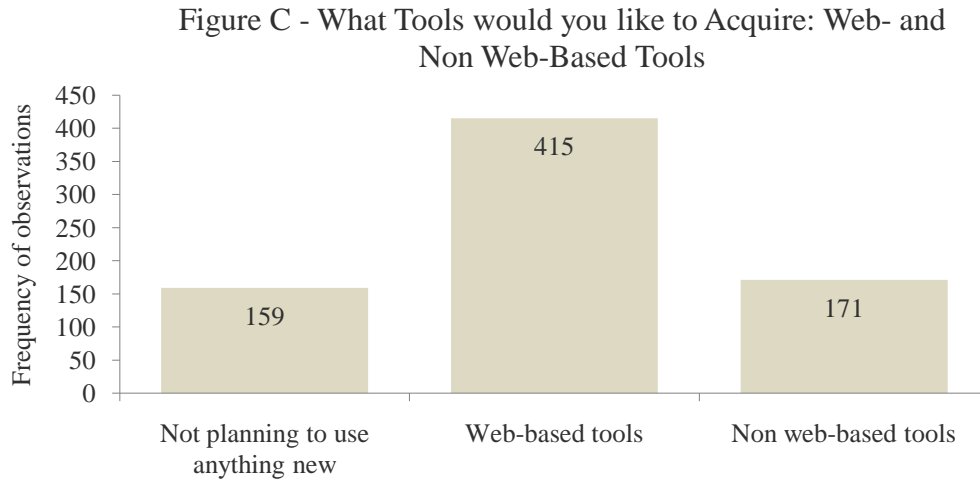
Interestingly, nearly 90% of participants were *not* planning to eliminate any tools currently used (represented in **Figure D**). This indicates that social economy representatives are seeking to in some cases increase usage of web-based tools, but yet do not wish to eliminate others, suggesting that Internet tools are only *adding* to technology workload rather than streamlining it.

Figure D - What Tools are you Planning on Eliminating?
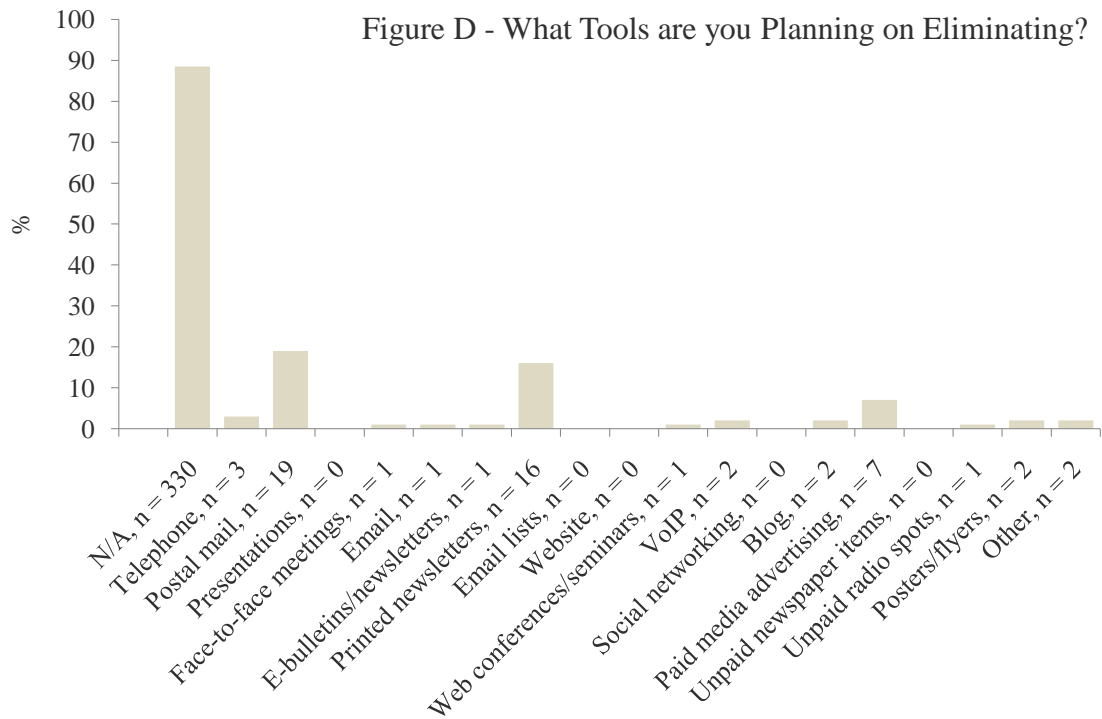
Note. N/A refers to those organizations not wishing to eliminate any tools.

Organization size. It was important to assess whether organization size, defined by budgetary size, contributed to willingness to embrace newer technologies and abandon older ones. Overall, there was no consistency among organizations in terms of size and willingness to embrace newer technologies and move on to newer ones. To varying degrees, organizations with budgets under half a million dollars were not interested in using new tools, but had smaller pockets of interest in newer Internet-based technologies. Larger organizations (up to $999 999) were interested in new tools. Differentially, the vast majority of organizations, across all budget levels, were not thinking about eliminating any tools (please refer to **Figure E** for visual representation of this item).

Figure E.

What communication tools is your organization thinking about ELIMINATING over the next two years? Check all that apply.
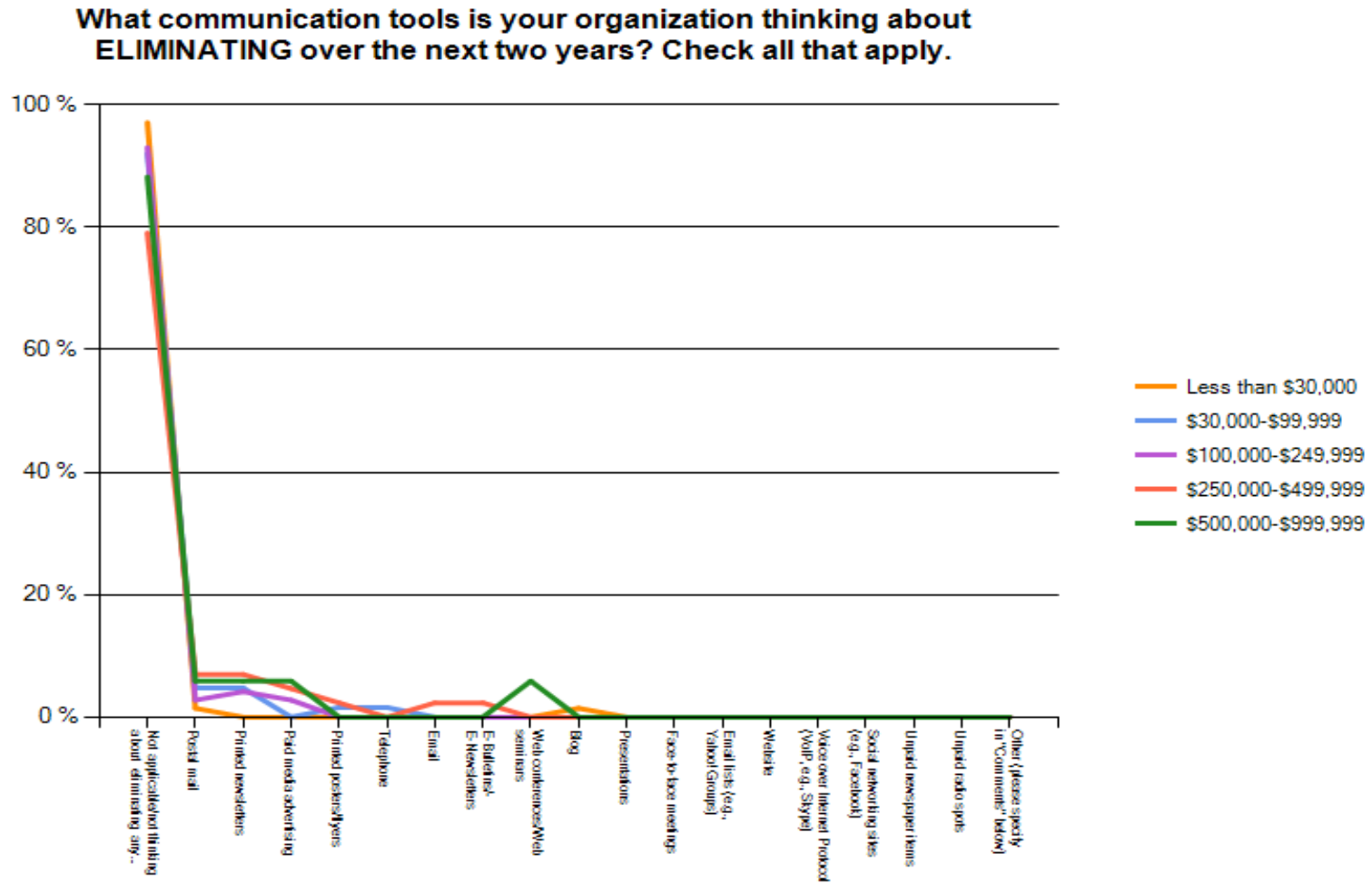
A crosstabulation analysis, represented in detail in **Figure F**, demonstrated that about half of organizations with budgets of $99 999 or less were not interested in acquiring or starting any new communication tools over the next two years. However, there was some interest in acquisition of E-bulletins/newsletters, websites, and social networking. Organizations with budgets between $100 000 and $249 000 were mostly interested in developing social networking capabilities, with about 40% of respondents showing interest in this area. Other areas of interest included E-bulletins/newsletters, websites, web conferences and seminars, VoIP, blogs, and unpaid radio spots. Thirty percent of organizations in this range were not interested in developing new tools. Groups with budgets between $250 000 and $499 999 were not interested, 40% of the time, with other interest clustering in the area of web conferences and seminars, VoIP, social networking, and blogs. The largest organizations included in this analysis, those with budgets between half a million and a million dollars, did indicate interest in advancing their communication technologies, with 40% of respondents being interested in E-bulletins/newsletters, and other large proportions showing interest in email lists, websites, VoIP, social networking, blogs, newspaper and radio items, posters, and printed newsletters. It is interesting to note that larger organizations were more interested in a variety of new technologies, similar to the smaller groups, but in a higher frequency. As noted, this information is presented graphically in **Figure F**.

Figure F.

What new communication tools would your organization like to ACQUIRE or start using over the next two years? Check all that apply.
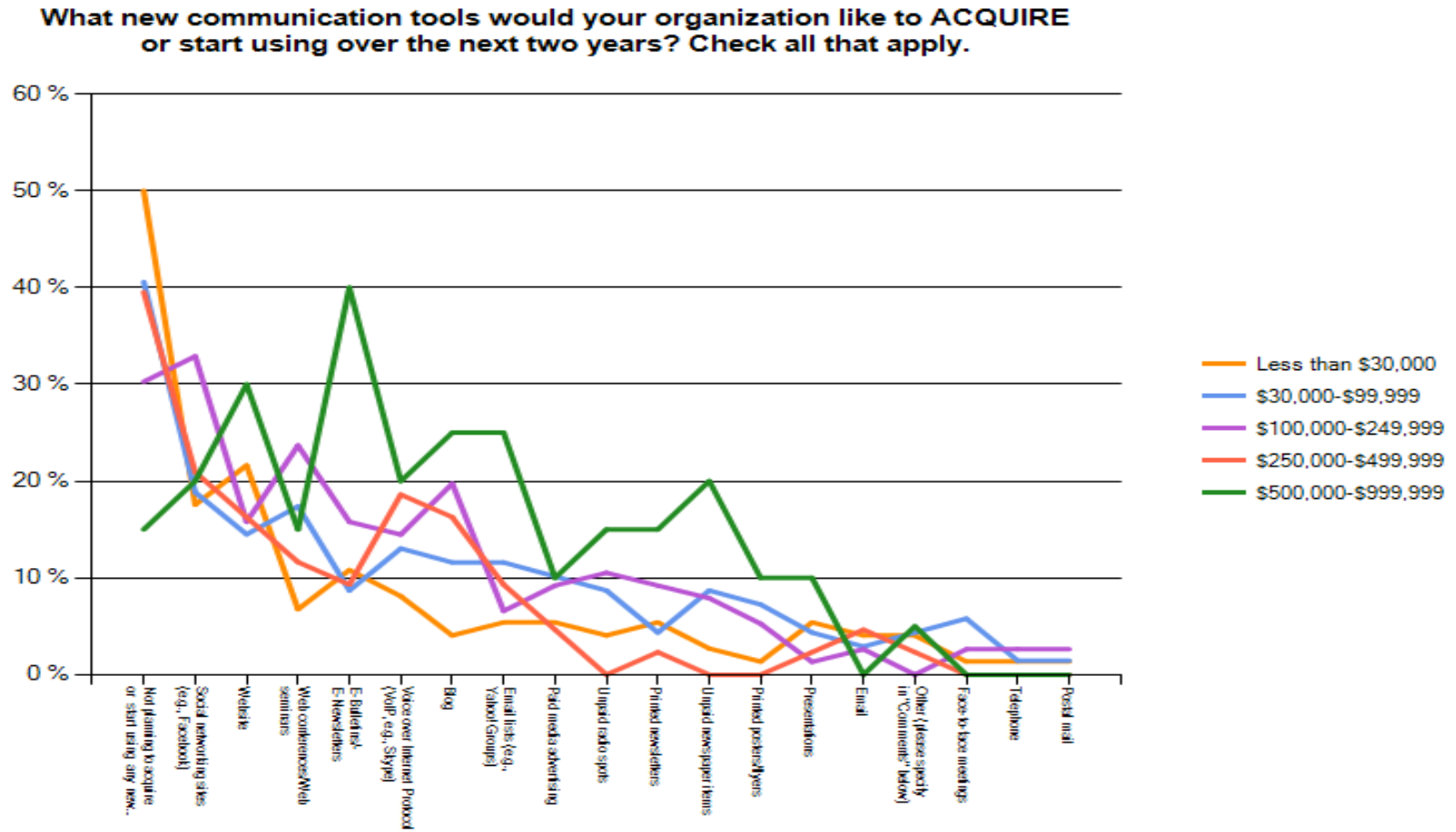
Organization status. A descriptive crosstabulation analysis found that organizations who wanted to use new technologies, but yet wished to maintain current usage, did *not* differ by legal status (e.g., provincially incorporated nonprofit organizations, federally incorporated nonprofit organizations, local chapters of nationally incorporated groups, and unlisted types). Organizations did not want to eliminate any communication tools over the next two years, regardless of designation, including provincially and federally incorporated nonprofit organizations, local chapters of nationally incorporated groups, and other (See **Figure G** for a graphical representation of this item). Fifty to 70% of those organizations were not planning on acquiring or using any new communication tools.

Figure G.

What communication tools is your organization thinking about ELIMINATING over the next two years? Check all that apply.
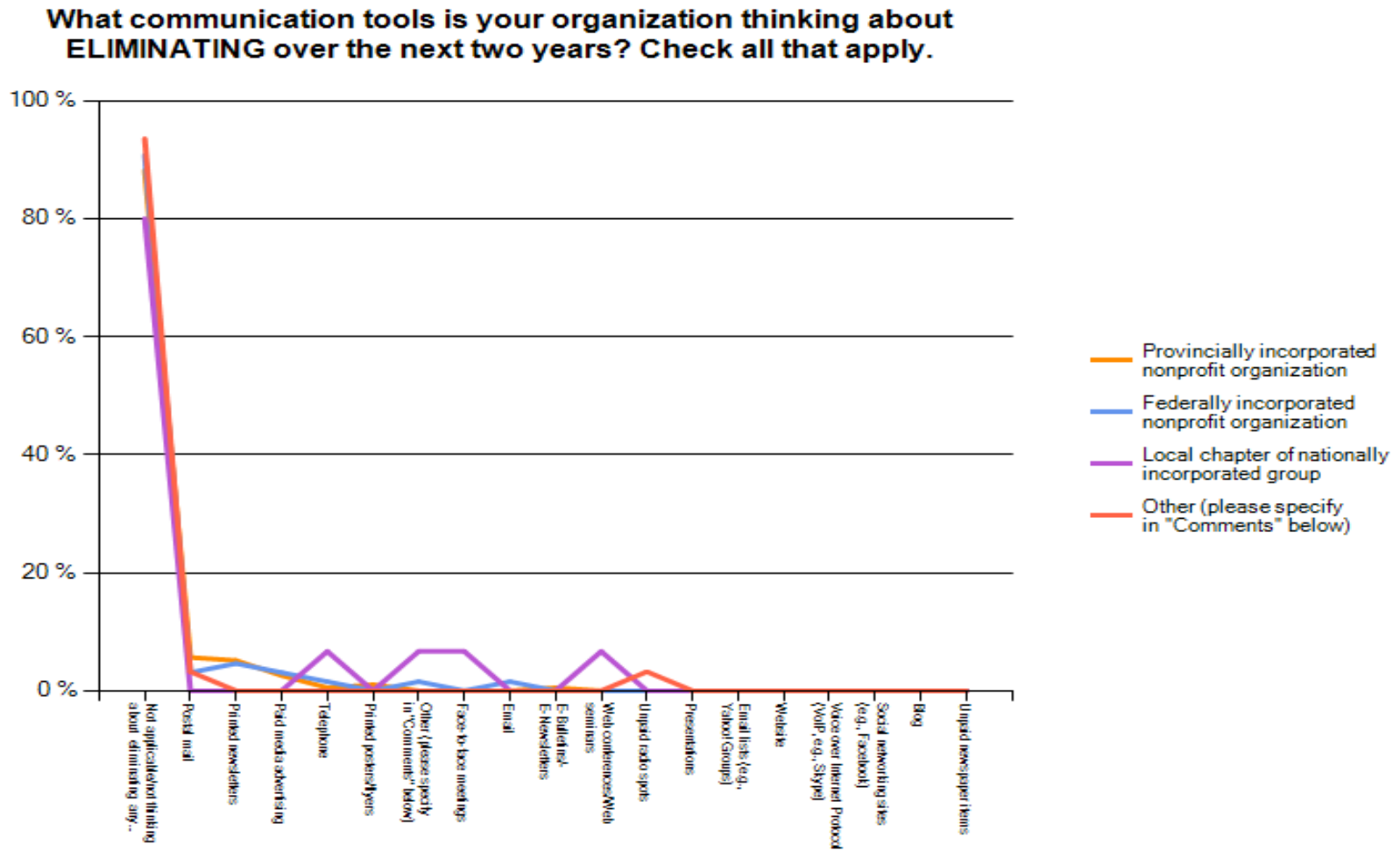
However of those who *were* interested in new technologies, dominant responses included

E-bulletins and newsletters (more commonly among provincially and federally

incorporated nonprofit organizations), printed newsletters (among local chapters of

national groups), and websites, web conferences, VoIP, social networking, and blogs,

across all groups. Please refer to **Figure H** for a more graphical representation of this

item. This suggests that interest in maintaining currently-used tools exists across *all*

subsectors of the social economy, and that those interested in accessing new tools do not

vary by group.

Figure H.

What new communication tools would your organization like to ACQUIRE or start using over the next two years? Check all that apply.
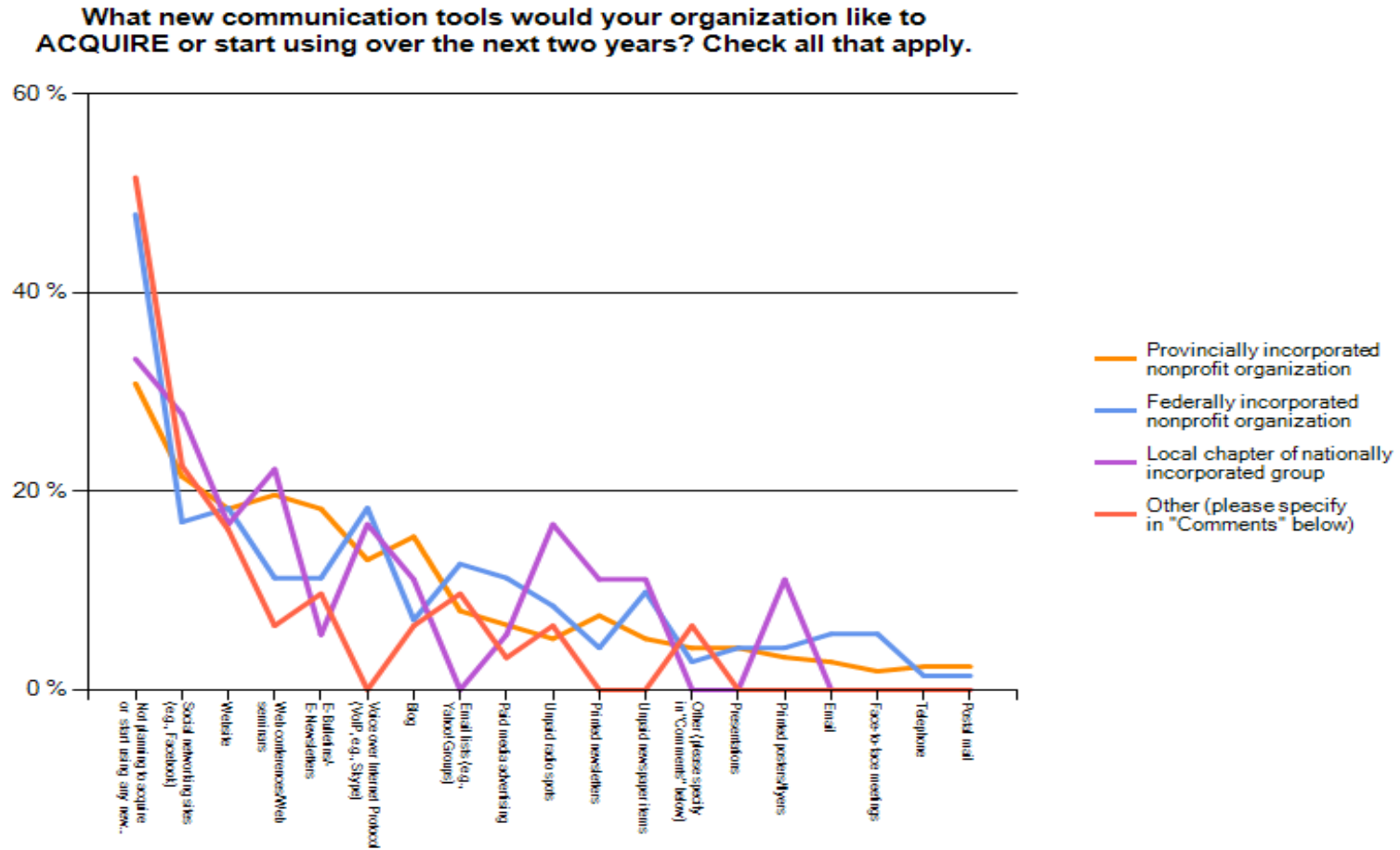
Focus Group Method

Approach and Design

Three focus groups were conducted to provide deeper understanding of survey findings. Facilitating semi-structured discussions among representative members of the social economy provided richer and more reflective interpretations of findings as a whole.

Participants

In response to an item in the survey (previously discussed) which asked if respondents were interested in participating in a follow-up focus group, 137 individuals provided contact information. Based on a cluster analysis of geographic locations, focus groups were organized in St. John's, Halifax, and Fredericton. Participants living within a one-hour radius were contacted by email (please see **Appendix D** for a copy of the email), and were offered a $50 honorarium in recognition of their commitment. Of those who were available to participate, almost all registered and attended the focus groups. A total of 25 social economy representatives participated in three focus groups, with each group having 8-9 participants. Organization types varied widely, ranging in interest from religion to health advocacy to education to historical societies, among others.

Procedure

Focus groups were conducted in person, and were voice recorded for the purposes of content analysis. Question guides were drawn from the most interesting survey findings, and focused broadly on 1) the issue of the *cost* – both financially and in terms of time – of using technology in the social economy, and 2) the apparent unwillingness of organizations to *eliminate* older methods of communication, and to *embrace* and use newer methods. Following participant introductions, a brief informal (graphical) presentation was given on the

info@cscnl.ca

organizational barriers of cost versus time. This prompted an in-depth discussion about survey

findings, as they related to organizations represented at the table. Although discussion sometimes

deviated from the specific topic at hand, few discussions were curbed as they were relevant to

the project topic as a whole, and were often tied to other areas of interest. When the initial item

had been exhausted, a presentation of technological changes findings was given, again prompting

discussion among participants. A number of prompts had been devised to encourage discussion

within each topic, although these were rarely used as participants were keen to share their

experiences. Please refer to **Appendix E** for a copy of the informed consent form, and **Appendix**

F for the focus group guide used by the researchers.

Focus Group Results

Although question guides were specifically centred in the areas of cost, time, and

resistance to/embracement of newer technologies, a number of broader themes became clear

during content analysis. These themes included organizations' *access* to technology, the *capacity*

of the social economy to appropriately acquire and use technology, and the technological

generation gap prevalent in the social economy. Each of these themes are discussed in the

current results section.

Access

Accessibility was identified as a major problem throughout the focus groups in

determining whether potential barriers inhibited social economy organizations from

communication technology uptake. Broadly, this included access of clients or program users,

staff, and volunteers to communication tools, in terms of the level of ability present to use a

given tool.

Client access. Social economy organizations focus extensively on developing

relationships with current and potential clients, and often communication tools are important in

developing and maintaining these relationships. Financially, this research found that current or

potential clients are frequently limited in their access to

computers and Internet-based communication programs.

Although the cost of hardware has substantially

decreased over time, it may still be considered

expensive, and free community computer access may not

be convenient for regular use. An extension of this is that

those without regular computer access are not likely

surfing the web, using email, or communicating via

On streamlining communication tools... "We've had to do that too (use only email to communicate) and it's heart breaking, because . . . in the neighbourhood – a lot of people are older – and this great momentum started with them and now they've dropped off the radar. And with our organization, it's all the people we're hoping will live in our home who are the people we're not *reaching out to."*

social networking as frequently as others with regular or constant (e.g., SmartPhone™) access.

Furthermore, effective use of these tools often relies on high-speed Internet access. Participants

noted that clients living on limited budgets, located in rural areas without reliable high speed

connectivity, or who are not interested in the Internet may not be accessible by newer

communication tools, such as email, social networking, and so on. Respondents reported concern

that by assuming large-scale uptake of Internet-based tools in the social economy, these

individuals may be overlooked and even forgotten by a rush to adapt and update communication

methods.

Focus group participants frequently spoke about being caught between effectively

targeting donors and staff primarily through Internet-based means, while their clients were in

some cases simply not accessible in the same ways for reasons representative of the particular

population. People with disabilities might not use computers or the Internet in the traditional

manner, and might require extra supports such as enhanced visual components, or options for the hearing or visually impaired. Clients targeted by groups working with homeless or near homeless people or seniors may have little or no computer or Internet access, and those with literacy problems may not be best targeted through text-based means. Although these personal limitations were inherent to the specific area of interest for various organizations, they presented a challenge for effectively reaching important clients through the increasingly dominant means of computer and Internet-based technologies.

Overcoming these challenges, while yet increasing use of these methods to target other groups such as staff and donors, was difficult for some organizations working with limited capacity.

> *On client accessibility... "Even if I was the most versed person in the world about technology, I'm still dealing with the fact that the guys over at the shelter have only one telephone amongst themselves, let alone a laptop that they're sitting down at."*

The increased use of Internet-based communication methods such as email, websites, and social networking has created an expectation that organizations will best reach their audience using these tools. However, without corresponding accessibility of clients and potential clients, it may be difficult for organizations to rationalize spending valuable time creating these kinds of promotional materials using Internet and computer-based communication.

Staff, board, and volunteer access. Computer literacy among staff, board members, and volunteers presented major accessibility challenges for organizations wishing to move forward in the use of communication technologies. This included a certain degree of knowledge and ability to effectively use computers and technology, especially among older persons. Technological skill and comfort level varied widely among staff and volunteers, particularly among those

> *On computer literacy... "You could never hire someone at this point that can't use a computer."*

who developed skills previous to widespread Internet use. Participants noted that these

employees, board members, or volunteers in some cases resisted using the various tools, and had

difficulty learning the technologies when required. Even participants in the focus groups, many

of whom were paid staff members, were openly resistant to and mistrustful of using particular

communication technologies (e.g., Facebook, BlackBerry SmartPhones™, etc.) in a widespread

manner.

Email was presented as both a bridge and barrier to this concern. It was noted that email

was frequently used by those resistant to technology,

due to both its simplicity and its similarity to letters in

format and purpose. However, those who checked

their email infrequently or did not use email at all

often inadvertently frustrated participants, with extra

time being spent mailing letters that were emailed to

others, waiting for responses to unopened emails, and

> *On respect… "There's a respect issue there too. If you're recruiting people in, I think we have to respect that there are some people that don't want to use those tools. So you still have to communicate with those people. I could not operate – our board could not do what it's doing without the people that are retired on our board (who don't use the Internet)."*

sometimes even having to telephone family members to prompt the individual to read a

particular email. These habits were not practical or sustainable, and created problems for

organizers readily using email for internal or volunteer communication. However, their

contribution was valued, and concern was frequently raised that a lack of accessibility by staff

members or volunteers to email or the Internet was inadvertently contributing to a phasing out of

these people. It was noted that given the largely voluntary nature of the social economy, respect

must be maintained for those who choose not to or are unable to access various communication

technologies. Ultimately, maintenance of current basic tool use and simultaneously moving

ahead with communicating the same message in newer and easier technological formats was

important to participants, regardless of the duplication in time and effort this created.

Capacity

Capacity – in terms of finance, space, staffing, time, and so on – was found to be a major inhibiting factor in whether certain communication technologies were integrated into an organization's communication methods. As survey results suggested, focus group themes emerged that related to an organization's capacity, structured by issues of finance, and issues of time. Participants repeatedly acknowledged the importance of adapting to changing technologies such as websites and social networking, given the rapidly expanding reach of the Internet, but yet were in some cases prevented from or had difficulty making these changes due to temporal or financial capacity problems. However, they noted that this lack of capacity and adaptation, in a cyclical manner, limited attraction of new clients and/or volunteers. Ultimately, overloaded individuals felt pressure to push themselves, their staff, and their volunteers to adapt the organization's communication methods to fit with changing technology and to attract new members, clients, board members, or volunteers, or to promote the group. In so doing, they felt that they ran the risk of losing those overburdened individuals. The following sections explore participants' responses to inquiry about the disparity between maintenance of all previously used technologies, and resistance to adoption of newer advances.

> *On training volunteers…"It's a balance. I think a lot of it has to do with – you want in your heart to do good for your organization, and you want to reach more people, but you know you're just about at breaking point and so are your volunteers. If you push your volunteers, you're going to lose them. So do you push your volunteers, to see if they will do* one more thing, *or do I hold back, and just get them to keep on doing what they're doing."*

> *On consistency…"Most of the time what will happen is that somebody got a grant to do a website. So they hire a student, and they do the website. And there it sits, 2006… we had for one year, funds, for a tech person who addressed a number of issues that we had at that time. He updated our website; he used a program that he was comfortable with. We have had a lot of problems with that program, and we have had great difficulties in doing all of the updates. So now we have to start from scratch."*

Financial capacity. Lack of financial capacity is a major inhibiting barrier to adaptation and effective use of communication technology in the social economy –participants often reflected on the high cost of obtaining appropriate hardware and software. In some cases, technological purchases were less important in light of necessities such as heat and light. Conversely, many organizations had made significant investments in technological equipment; however, machine and software obsolescence was an obstacle. While recognizing that newer models of hardware and software were necessary, they also simply did not have the financial capacity to frequently update technological tools. This resulted in compatibility problems, difficulty running newer Internet-based programs and fixing computer problems, and so on. A lack of awareness of cheap or free hardware or software alternatives was noted by participants in each group, and by the researchers. However, in many cases, these options were noted to be accompanied by their own problems; chiefly the outdated nature of donated equipment or security concerns with downloaded software.

Financial capacity problems were also noted in the lack of resources to obtain and/or retain technological expertise. Typically coming from a non-technological background, participants frequently noted a lack of technological knowledge personally and among peers, or a lack of time to

> *On personnel resources…*
> *"There's three things: Hiring out is expensive, learning how to do it has a cost attached, and taking the time to do the stuff or to learn it."*

effectively use their knowledge. This in some cases led to implementation of new technologies based on inappropriate and non-expert research, in which making a wrong choice put the organization further behind in terms of time and money. Although the necessity for specific expertise was strongly noted, both among smaller organizations seeking to develop tools such as websites and social networking, and larger organizations seeking to expand to a server

environment, financial capacity for webmasters/Information Technology employees or hourly

expertise was typically lacking. Participants who had moved forward with website development

felt that hiring someone or having a technology-savvy employee or volunteer build a very small,

easily maintainable website at low cost, for example, was the best compromise between figuring

it out alone and employing an expert. However, without the ongoing support of that individual or

a passing on of knowledge required to effectively update the tool, this was noted to cost

organizations in terms of appearing outdated or obsolete online. This was similarly a financial

problem when short-term funds were available for technological development. Following the

termination of funds and the technological expertise, active web presences were not maintained.

Temporal capacity. The restricted nature of time in the social economy is problematic

for organizations wanting to move forward with

communication technology. Without the time to carefully

and systematically identify technological needs, research

available options, and implement, use, and evaluate the

> *On having the time…"And part of it is the time. It is the cost of the time to figure out how to use the tools. The tools themselves aren't expensive any more, but it's the time."*

change, organizations were frequently unable to carry out these steps in an effective manner, or

at all. Survey results suggested that, in line with this,

members of the social economy were in many cases

resistant to adapting newer technologies, or did adapt

those technologies but within time restrictions.

> *On having the time…"I also find that staffs and boards of directors are of varying ages now, from 25-86, so there's actually four types of communication now that we have to deal with."*

Adaptations were severely constrained by a lack of temporal capacity to properly

implement technology changes for all target audiences. Participants repeatedly noted that

targeting youth and targeting adults of varying ages needed to be done using different methods.

Similarly, trying to cast a wide net by putting identical information into increasing numbers of

media formats for social networking, press releases, newspapers, church bulletins, posters, and

so on took up a considerable amount of valuable time. Whether information was tailored by

demographic or other variables, the demand on time was considerable. Participants faced this

dilemma on a daily basis, noting that as people of younger age groups were eager to try newer

technologies; older people were more likely to maintain

current usage of communication tools with which they

were personally familiar, creating a multi-layered and

> *On tool use…"I think it's a lot easier to* get *technology than it is to* learn *it, and* use *it after."*

time-consuming approach to promotion. In this way, multitasking created feelings of time

overload and stress among focus group participants.

Focus group results suggest that social economy organizations experienced a major

overload of responsibilities and requirements necessary in an age of constantly-changing

technological adaptations, yet were stretched so thin temporally that learning just one more tool

> *On multitasking…"Before, it was mail, and telephone, and that was fine, that was how we got to people. Now we have to do that AND this. And it's dividing our time, it's doubling our costs, and it's stretching us."*

might not have been feasible. Participants noted that

although many organizations wished to change and

advance, it is difficult to find the time to incorporate

these adjustments. Time concerns were often expressed

in terms of the time spent understanding how to use a given tool. Although acquisition of many

tools may now be cheap or free, the learning curve is steep for those not keenly interested in the

particular tool or who do not have considerable time to devote, especially when new tools may

not be used daily. In other situations, developing the tool was relatively quick and easy, however

ongoing maintenance and updating took a considerable amount of time. Ultimately, it appears

that organizations in the social economy were quite aware of the need to adapt their

communication methods to include currently effective tools as well as newer Internet-based

tools; however, they often lacked the temporal capacity to do so. Adaptations may or may not have be carried out, depending on a variety of factors including basic access to technology, but without the appropriate time to devote to each stage of the implementation process, reflections were in many cases more negative than positive. The recognition of the need for adaptation remained; however, putting members in difficult positions between demanding more time from the already-limited capacity of the organization, or falling behind in attracting donors, volunteers, staff, and clients. Frequently, this was manifested in accessibility limitations of volunteers and staff to relatively basic technological skills, given that little to no training is provided in this area.

Training capacity. The social economy is constrained by a variety of capacity problems that do not budget or allow time for teaching technological skills necessary for comfortably moving forward with newer adaptations while still maintaining existing methods. This research found that individuals often feel that incorporation of newer tools is important to the overall sustainability of their organization, but remain unaware of how to expand their technological knowledge. Many participants noted that higher-level (e.g., government) training programs were not offered, and as a result,

> *On training…"There isn't the time and money to do the training. So if there was some sort of canopy out there training all these super useful volunteers it would be delightful. But if that's not going to exist then there needs to be more money in the sector for this before it's feasible."*

volunteers or staff members brought little technological knowledge. In these situations, training fell to the organization's administrative person, who in turn did not have the time to properly train each incoming staff member or volunteer. Ultimately, focus group participants repeatedly emphasized their willingness to pay a reasonable price to train individuals in the use of communication technologies, in order to further their organization. Despite the willingness to

pay for training at a higher level, participants did not feel that such training courses were even *available* to the nonprofit sector at local levels, or, if available, they were filled very quickly. Participants in all groups agreed that a lack of training capacity at both the external and internal level was lacking, and that an influx of training programs in this area, particularly with the increasingly high use of the Internet and its related communication programs, was critical to the long term sustainability of social economy organizations.

      Consistency. Consistency among staff and volunteers was noted as a capacity issue with substantial impact on the use of communication tools in the social economy. Turnover rate was considered high and external student or non-student employment or volunteer programs were beneficial, but frequently short-term. For example, organizations filled to capacity with summer or work term students certainly benefited from their technological efforts; however, when the short-term employees left, their expertise went with them and often no continuity of

> *On consistency… "I can't imagine that there's any of us here that haven't had temporary employees from a whole range of funding projects, and so you get somebody who's pretty good. At the tech end of things. And then that JCP comes to an end. And some program is over. And then you get somebody come in from scratch and say, "Oh, well we know how to do all this, we don't use this thing." And you've got no consistency."*

programming or tool use was built into organizational policy. Losing expertise meant that organizations struggle with continuing programs started by employees or volunteers who moved on. Many focus group participants recalled cases of short-term employees or volunteers who started up blogs or websites which sat dormant immediately after that individual left, becoming more of a liability than an asset. As a result, the group's web presence showed an out-of-date or even

> *On champions… "In all these organizations, the stuff that gets done, so much depends on whether or not you have a particular individual that wants to see it happen."*

inoperative public image. This frequently happened when only one individual had the

appropriate skills and interest to effectively use a given tool, and it was not continued by others.

Conversely, permanent staff members often had positive attitudes about a new tool, but lacked

the knowledge to keep it updated. For example, without the knowledge to update website

calendars, photo galleries, contact information, links, layout, and so on, no updates were made

due to the lack of capacity for long-term expertise. Problems of consistency were identified as

significant capacity issues among organizations who were glad to have short-term staff members

or volunteers in general, but frequently could not make use of their technological output

following their departure. Changes in both the finances for in-house training and/or for ongoing

technological expertise, as well as internal policies regarding programming continuity, would

address this particular capacity problem.

Generation Gap

Although not prompted by the researchers, an in-depth discussion about the generation

gap between technology users in the social economy repeatedly emerged. Participants strongly

felt that the sector was facing a significant challenge, given the older age of so many staff

members and volunteers, and the newer technologies

currently being promoted as the best ways to attract

attention to social economy organizations. Participants

in each group commented on the age of those around

the table, and noted that members of the social economy

were not being replaced and/or supplemented by

younger individuals, who have potential technological

knowledge. A significant dislike and in some cases fear

of newer communication technologies, such as social

> *On the generation gap...*
> *"Seasonal staff are largely from the area, they have low levels of literacy when it comes to technology, and great barriers and resistance to change. The majority of our supervisors are well into their 40s and 50s, and they did not grow up with this technology, or do they necessarily want to use it at this point in time, so it makes it difficult to communicate with them off season. And telephones, you know I don't have the time to call all these people."*

networking, advanced websites, and web-based

teleconferencing, was dominant among many participants

and/or the peers they represented. They commented on the

frequency of text messaging and social networking among

youth, and felt that their organizations must learn to adapt to

these newer methods of outreach, but lacked the capacity,

capabilities, and in some case the desire to change.

Furthermore, using newer technologies did not negate the

importance of standard methods, which created a 'doubling

of effort' effect for information development, given that so many organizations targeted

individuals from childhood to the elderly years. Research and development of newer tools had

become a burden to older individuals who were not interested or educated in Internet-based

technologies.

> *On aging volunteers…"A lot of not for profit groups, especially groups that have volunteers, I think a lot of volunteers are older, and or may be over the age of 40 – so there's a bit of a generation gap. Some of my board members, you can only send them – they're using email but that's all they know how to use. If it comes in a different format, they don't know what to do with it. And they'll call and they'll ask for technical assistance and I'm like, 'I'll put you on the phone with my son.'"*

In order to meet these technological demands, participants frequently reflected on the

usefulness of their own children and student volunteers in developing blogs, websites, Facebook

pages, Twitter accounts, and other more advanced

technological communication methods. Sometimes this

was approached positively, such that allowing younger

associates to expand the organization's communication

was good for attracting wider audiences; however, others

> *On youth…"This guy, the new volunteer, he was really keen on blogs. "Oh I'll go set up a blog for you!" And it was done in 20 minutes. And he gave me the password and all this, and I'm supposed to be able to put pictures in but I haven't touched it since. I*

resisted passing some of the information control on to the youth. Participants noted that this

resistance to change is often rooted in a lack of capacity to adapt to and integrate newer tools

with existing methods, given the high temporal and in some cases financial cost of wider web-

based promotion. Without the time and money to properly introduce these changes, organizations with mostly older staff members and volunteers were not able to easily move forward into a newer technological age.

Other focus group participants we spoke with, however, had been quite successful at crossing the generation gap and adopting newer communication technologies. Participants noted the ease with which tools could be updated and integrated, once the initial learning curve had been overcome. They were happy to be attracting newer and in many cases more youthful individuals to their organization or to better reach younger clients. Participants who viewed technological advancements in a positive manner, either through personal or organizational experience, were less inhibited by the generation gap or generation gap. They were more likely to encourage others around the table to strongly consider the investment potential that these tools might have for appropriate organizations, regardless of the age group of staff and volunteers.

On flexibility... "At this point, we're flexible. And we're realizing that we can't stay tied to some of the things that we've created – even if we're not 100% sure, we at least try."

Discussion

An integration of results (discussed above) from key informant interviews and survey and focus group data with the academic literature suggests that the use of communication tools in the social economy is a complex and multifaceted problem. It is clear that social economy organizations are very aware of and concerned about maximizing their use of communication technology to attract and retain volunteers and staff, to target clients, and to attract public awareness. Social economy organizations clearly expressed interest in newer and more advanced Internet-based technologies, and current technological use was often at a high level. However, a number of barriers prevented organizations from freely engaging in and taking advantage of a

variety of newer tools. Current results suggest that organizations typically experienced (1) a lack

of accessibility to communication tools as a major inhibiting factor from maximal use of tools.

(2) capacity problems limited their ability to develop newer technologies, given that continued

use of existing methods were considered important.

Accessibility

Accessibility, in its broadest form, was identified as a major inhibiting factor for

participants in each study. In some ways, access was most problematic when defined in terms of

financial accessibility of clients to a given tool, in that without regular computer access, for

example, various Internet-based tools were ineffective. In other ways, access was defined not as

the ability to obtain proper computer equipment but as a lack of sufficient technological

knowledge. This was frequently expanded upon in terms of a lack of financial and temporal

capacity to obtain practical expertise to efficiently and effectively integrate tools into the

organization.

Capacity

Capacity was the most significant barrier identified in the current research to effective

engagement in communication technology. As with so many other areas in the social economy, a

lack of time and a lack of financial flexibility did not allow organizations to effectively

implement their ideas and strategic communications plans. Depending on the individual

organization, capacity challenges ranged from (1) difficulty obtaining updated equipment or

software, to (2) finding the time to research a given tool, (3) making appropriate purchase

decisions, (4) training staff and volunteers to use the tool, and (5) evaluating tool effectiveness.

Without the time to make these important decisions, the decisions often were not made at all,

such that current tools were only maintained and not updated or supplemented, or that newer

tools were developed using only limited available time. Similarly, a lack of financial capacity limited the ability of organizations to obtain proper technological expertise. Volunteers and staff members from non-technological backgrounds were frequently interested in bringing new tools into their organizations, and again lacked the time to do so, but lacked the finances to hire a professional. These problems limited organizations in their ability to adapt to the changing technological climate at their own pace.

Survey results suggested that social economy organizations were keenly interested in integrating some degrees of Internet-based communication tools into their organizations, but overwhelmingly wished to maintain current usage of tools they perceived to be financially manageable and appropriate for their audiences. Based on elaboration of this item through focus groups and interviews, it was obvious that serious capacity problems limit organizations in the social economy from effectively adapting to changing methods of communication. Ultimately, organizations were forced to hold on to older methods as a lack of time and finances did not allow them to replace these methods, and tools were instead supplemented. This places further strain on organizations working with limited time and budgets.

Conclusion

Adaptation to the changing methods of communication is a challenge for organizations in the social economy. Although the interest is present, numerous problems of (1) accessibility and (2) capacity hindered organizations from effectively transitioning away from older methods and toward newer and more useful ones, or from maintaining current and effective usage but also creating newer and more time consuming ways of reaching out to important audiences. Without increases in budgetary allowances for equipment, software, training, and expertise, among other necessities outlined throughout the current research, organizations *will* adapt to societal changes

in communication, but will do so under increased financial and temporal strain. Although survey results might have been interpreted as resistance to change, when seeking to acquire new communication tools, focus group inquiries demonstrated that social economy representatives see value in new tools, but report an understanding of the time, training and financial constraints faced by their sector. Recommendations for increasing the feasibility of newer communication technologies, in particular, those used through the Internet, lie largely on an increase in budgetary allowances from funding sources and within annual budgets for technological research and development, upgrading and training opportunities.

References

Buchanan, E., & Luck, E. (2006). *Communication trends to non-profits*. Paper

presented at the 2006 ANZCA Conference. Retrieved from http://www.adelaide.

edu.au/anzca2006/conf_proceedings/buchanan_luck_communication_trends.pdf on June

18, 2009.

Cameron, S. (2006). *Using information communication technology tools to facilitate community

economic development networks.* Brandon, MB: Manitoba Research Alliance on

Community Economic Development in the New Economy.

Cravens, J. (2009) *The Internet and mission-based organizations*. Coyote Communication.

Retrieved from http://www.coyotecommunication.com/outreach/online.html on September

01, 2009.

CSERP. (n.d.). *Building and strengthening communities through the social economy.* Retrieved

from http://www.socialeconomyhub.ca/?q=content/understanding-social-economy on

January 22, 2010.

Cullen, R. M., & Scott, D. (2009). *Good luck with that: Collaboration through online

communities.* St. John's, NL: Community Services Council; Social Economy and

Sustainability Research Network.

Finn, S., Maher, J. K., & Forster, J. (2006). Indicators of information and communication

technology adoption in the nonprofit sector: Changes between 2000 and 2004. *Nonprofit

Management and Leadership, 16,* 2006.

Gardner, J., Paulsen, N., Gallois, C., Callan, V., & Monaghan, P. (2001). An intergroup

perspective on communication in organizations. In H. Giles & W. P. Robinson (Eds.), *The

New Handbook of Language and Social Psychology* (pp. 561-584). Chichester, UK: Wiley.

Henley, T. K., & Guidry, M. (2004). *Online communication in nonprofit*

    organizations. Paper presented at the DDEF sixteenth Annual Robert B. Clarke Direct

    Interactive Marketing Educators' Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana. Available at

    http://www.the-dma.org/dmef/proceedings04/7-Henley.pdf

Hyde, M. J., & Mitra, A. (1999). Communication acknowledgement and the

    mortality of cyberspace. In D.F. Burlingame & M.J. Poston (Eds.), *The Impact of*

    Technology on Fundraising: New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising (25). San

    Francisco: Jossy-Bass.

Kenix, L. J. (2008). Nonprofit organizations' perceptions and uses of the Internet. *Television and*

    New Media, 9, 407-428.

Long, M. M., & Chiagouris, L. (2006). The role of credibility in shaping attitudes toward nonprofit

    websites. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, 11,* 239-249.

McNut, J. G., & Boland, K. M. (1999). Electronic advocacy by nonprofit organizations in social

    welfare policy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 28,* 432-451.

Olsen, M., Keevers, M. L., Paul, J., & Covington, S. (2001). E-relationship development strategy

    for the nonprofit fundraising professional. *International Journal of Nonprofit and*

    Voluntary Sector Marketing, *6*, 364-373.

Pinho, J. C., & Macedo, I. M. (2006). The benefits and barriers associated with the

    use of the Internet within the non-profit sector. *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector*

    Marketing, 16, 171-193.

Rice, R. E., D'Ambra, J., & More, E. (1998). Cross-cultural comparison of organizational media

    evaluation and choice. *Journal of Communication, 48*, 3-26.

Rowe, P. M. (2006). *The nonprofit and voluntary sector in Atlantic Canada:*

Regional highlights of the national survey of the nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

Toronto, Canada: Imagine Canada.

Schneider, J. (2003). Small, minority-based nonprofits in the information age. *Nonprofit*

Management and Leadership, 13, 383-399.

Seshadri, S., & Carstenson, L. (2007). The perils of email communication in

nonprofits. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 18*, 77-99.

SESRN. (2009). Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network.

Retrieved from http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic/English/indexE.asp on

September 19, 2009.

Waters, R. D. (2007). Nonprofit organizations' use of the Internet: A content

analysis of communication trends on the Internet sites of Philanthropy 400. *Nonprofit*

Management and Leadership, 18, 59-76.

Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social

networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review, 35,* 102-

106.

Appendix A

You are invited to participate in a telephone interview regarding the use of communication tools and practices within your organization. This particular aspect of the SES project is concerned with how actors in the social economy communicate, and more specifically the tools in which you use to do so. This research is being completed through a collaboration of researchers at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College (SWGC) and Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador. It has been approved by the ethics review boards at SWGC and Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU; a partner on the larger SES project) and therefore conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines.

The interview should take about 15-20 minutes to complete. It will be audio-recorded and parts of it may be subsequently transcribed. Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. During transcription, any information that can identify you personally will be omitted and identifying information will not appear in any report or publication of the research. The purpose of this interview is to collect information to assist in the construction of a survey about communication tools with regards to uses and barriers.

The names and contact information for the research coordinators are shown on the next page should you wish to inquire about your role as a research participant. If you have any questions regarding the ethical review process, you may contact the ethics review board at either SWGC or MSVU. Their contact information is also on the next page.

Please complete and fax this form to the Community Sector Council at 709-753-6112, ATTN: Jessica Kukac. Further contact will be made to set up an interview time that is convenient for you.

I, _____, agree to participate in an audio-recorded
       (print name)
telephone interview regarding the use of communication tools in social economy organizations. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the interview at any time after it begins.

_____   _____
SIGNATURE   DATE

info@cscnl.ca

Appendix B

1. What communication tools does your organization currently have access to?

2. What communication tools does your organization use most often?

3. Who or what groups of people does your organization most often communicate with? Ex. Volunteers, board members, etc. Generally, how big/small are these groups?

4. When communicating with the following groups (those named in previous question), how or what tools do you use?

5. Is there anything stopping you from using a particular communication tool/technology?

6. How does your organization prefer to receive communication?

About your organization:

7. What is the legal form of your organization?

8. Does your organization have a membership base?

9. How many members?

10. In what province is your organization locate?

11. What is the purpose or mission of your organization?

Appendix C

Community Services Council
Newfoundland and Labrador
Suite 201 Virginia Park Plaza, Nfld. Drive
St. John's, NL A1A 3E9
Telephone:(1-866) 753-9860
Fax: (709) 753-6112

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy

SSHRC ≡

Hello,

The purpose of this survey is to explore the communication tools your organization, as a contributing member to the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy, has access to and regularly uses to manage information.

Please consider participating in this research initiative, conducted by the Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador (CSC) and Sir Wilfred Grenfell College (SWGC). This project is a component of the Social Economy and Sustainability Network (SES) communications research initiative.

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Please pay particular attention to questions marked with an asterisk (*). When you are finished, please place your completed survey in the self-addressed, prepaid envelope and mail to the CSC by **March 31, 2010**.

If you would like a copy of the results or are willing to participate in a follow-up, in-person or online focus group, please provide your contact information when requested. Identifying information will be kept separate from survey data.

If you have questions or comments about the survey, please contact Elizabeth Russell at elizabethrussell@csc.nf.net or call 1-866-753-9860.

Thank-You for your Important Contribution to our Survey!

Research Leads:
Ivan Emke, *Associate Vice-Principal, Research, SWGC*   iemke@swgc.mun.ca
Penelope M. Rowe, *CEO, CSC*   pennyrowe@csc.nf.net

Research Team Members:
Elizabeth Russell, *Research Assistant, CSC*   elizabethrussell@csc.nf.net
Darlene Scott, *Senior Program Associate, CSC*   darlenescott@csc.nf.net
Andy Horsnell, *Program Associate, CSC*   andyhorsnell@csc.nf.net

Please see over for a message from our research team...

A social development, policy, research, planning and service organization,
dedicated to citizen engagement and the promotion of volunteerism.

info@cscnl.ca

Community Services Council
Newfoundland and Labrador
Suite 201 Virginia Park Plaza, Nfld. Drive
St. John's, NL A1A 3E9
Telephone:(1-866) 753-9860
Fax: (709) 753-6112

A message from the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Team...

Information glut – that's a term we could use for the world today. Our days are full of managing bits of information, darting in at us from every angle, and sending them out however we can, hoping they make it through all of the clutter. It is increasingly difficult to sift through it all.

Take this survey. It came unannounced – another request among many. But it is focused on these very challenges of how we manage information within our own organizations. We move information around using what we could call "communication tools" – things like telephone calls or radio or email or newsletters. We might use the same tool a lot, but we likely use different ones for different purposes. For example, some tools we use for discussion (face-to-face conversations, or maybe the telephone), or some we may use for reaching a lot of people quickly (radio or email).

That is the first part of the survey title, so now for the "social economy." There are fashions in language, and new terms are always showing up. One such term is "social economy" which refers to voluntary organizations and charities and co-ops. Simply put, if you got this note asking for your participation, then you are a part of the social economy! But if you like jargon, how about: 'an economy is a set of organizations and rules that help to manage the distribution of goods and services, so therefore a social economy is the set of organizations and activities that manage the distribution of the 'social' goods that are needed in a society.'

Keep up the good work on building the social economy here in Atlantic Canada!

Sincerely,

The Social Economy and Sustainability Research Team

A social development, policy, research, planning and service organization,
dedicated to citizen engagement and the promotion of volunteerism.

info@cscnl.ca

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   1

1. Welcome

This survey is about which communication tools your organization has access to and regularly uses to manage information.

We appreciate your participation in this research initiative, conducted by the Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador and Sir Wilfred Grenfell College.

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Please pay particular attention to questions marked with an asterisk (*).

If you would like a copy of the results or are willing to participate in a follow-up, in-person or online focus group, please provide your contact information when requested. Identifying information will be kept separate from survey data.

If you have questions or comments about the survey, please contact Elizabeth Russell at elizabethrussell@csc.nf.net or call 1-866-753-9860.

Research Leads:

Ivan Emke, Associate Vice-Principal, Research
Sir Wilfred Grenfell College

Penelope M. Rowe, CEO
Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador

Research Team Members:

Elizabeth Russell, Research Assistant
Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador

Darlene Scott, Senior Program Associate
Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador

Andy Horsnell, Program Associate
Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador

info@cscnl.ca

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   2

2. Tools for Communicating with Internal and External Groups

In this section, we want to know which tools your organization uses to communicate with various groups.

* 1.   What is the name of your organization?

_____

* 2.   What communication tools does your organization use to communicate with your *Employees*? Check all that apply.

☐ Not applicable/Do not have employees

☐ Telephone

☐ Postal mail

☐ Presentations

☐ Face-to-face meetings

☐ Email

☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters

☐ Printed newsletters

☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo! Groups)

☐ Website

☐ Web conferences/Web seminars

☐ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, e.g., Skype)

☐ Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Blog

☐ Paid media advertising

☐ Unpaid newspaper items

☐ Unpaid radio spots

☐ Printed posters /flyers

☐ Other (please specify):

_____

_____

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   3

*3.   What communication tools does your organization use to communicate with your *Volunteers* (not including Board Members)? Check all that apply.

☐ Not applicable/Do not have volunteers

☐ Telephone

☐ Postal mail

☐ Presentations

☐ Face-to-face meetings

☐ Email

☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters

☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Printed newsletters

☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo! Groups)

☐ Website

☐ Web conferences/Web seminars

☐ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, e.g., Skype)

☐ Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Blog

☐ Paid media advertising

☐ Unpaid newspaper items

☐ Unpaid radio spots

☐ Printed posters /flyers

_____

_____

*4.   What communication tools does your organization use to communicate with your *Board Members*? Check all that apply.

☐ Not applicable/Do not have board members

☐ Telephone

☐ Postal mail

☐ Presentations

☐ Face-to-face meetings

☐ Email

☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters

☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Printed newsletters

☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo! Groups)

☐ Website

☐ Web conferences/Web seminars

☐ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, e.g., Skype)

☐ Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Blog

☐ Paid media advertising

☐ Unpaid newspaper items

☐ Unpaid radio spots

☐ Printed posters /flyers

_____

_____

info@cscnl.ca

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy 4

*5. **What communication tools does your organization use to communicate with *Funding Sources* (including donors, foundations, government agencies, and departments)? Check all that apply.**

☐ Not applicable/Do not have funding sources
☐ Telephone
☐ Postal mail
☐ Presentations
☐ Face-to-face meetings
☐ Email
☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters
☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Printed newsletters
☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo! Groups)
☐ Website
☐ Web conferences/Web seminars
☐ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, e.g., Skype)
☐ Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Blog
☐ Paid media advertising
☐ Unpaid newspaper items
☐ Unpaid radio spots
☐ Printed posters /flyers

_____

_____

*6. **What communication tools does your organization use to communicate with *Service Recipients* (i.e., clients, customers, participants who use your services)? Check all that apply.**

☐ Not applicable/Do not have service recipients
☐ Telephone
☐ Postal mail
☐ Presentations
☐ Face-to-face meetings
☐ Email
☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters
☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Printed newsletters
☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo! Groups)
☐ Website
☐ Web conferences/Web seminars
☐ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, e.g., Skype)
☐ Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Blog
☐ Paid media advertising
☐ Unpaid newspaper items
☐ Unpaid radio spots
☐ Printed posters /flyers

_____

_____

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   5

*7.   **What communication tools does your organization use to communicate with the *General Public*? Check all that apply.**

☐ Not applicable/Do not   ☐ Printed newsletters   ☐ Blog
   communicate with public   ☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo!   ☐ Paid media
☐ Telephone   Groups)   advertising
☐ Postal mail   ☐ Website   ☐ Unpaid newspaper
☐ Presentations   ☐ Web conferences/Web seminars   items
☐ Face-to-face meetings   ☐ Voice over Internet Protocol ☐ Unpaid radio spots
☐ Email   (VoIP, e.g., Skype)   ☐ Printed posters
☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters ☐ Social networking   /flyers
                                    sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Other (please specify):

_____

_____

*8.   **What communication tools does your organization use to communicate with *Prospective Volunteers*? Check all that apply.**

☐ Not applicable/Do not   ☐ Printed newsletters   ☐ Blog
   seek volunteers   ☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo!   ☐ Paid media
☐ Telephone   Groups)   advertising
☐ Postal mail   ☐ Website   ☐ Unpaid newspaper
☐ Presentations   ☐ Web conferences/Web seminars   items
☐ Face-to-face meetings   ☐ Voice over Internet Protocol ☐ Unpaid radio spots
☐ Email   (VoIP, e.g., Skype)   ☐ Printed posters
☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters ☐ Social networking   /flyers
                                    sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Other (please specify):

_____

_____

info@cscnl.ca

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   6

3. Communication Tools and Training in Your Organization

In this section, we want to know about any training in which your staff and volunteers may participate and about the communication tools that your organization plans to use in the future.

9. Does your organization train *Staff* in the use of communication tools?

☐ Yes   ☐ Don't know
☐ No

Comments:

_____

_____

10. Does your organization train *Volunteers* in the use of communication tools?

☐ Yes   ☐ Don't know
☐ No

Comments:

_____

_____

11. Does your organization allocate a *Budget* for communication tools?

☐ Yes   ☐ Don't know
☐ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   7

12. **What new communication tools would your organization like to *Acquire* or *Start Using* over the next two years? Check all that apply.**

☐ Not planning to acquire new communication tools
☐ Telephone
☐ Postal mail
☐ Presentations
☐ Face-to-face meetings
☐ Email
☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters
☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Printed newsletters
☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo! Groups)
☐ Website
☐ Web conferences/Web seminars
☐ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, e.g., Skype)
☐ Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Blog
☐ Paid media advertising
☐ Unpaid newspaper items
☐ Unpaid radio spots
☐ Printed posters /flyers

Comments:

_____

_____

13. **What communication tools is your organization thinking about *Eliminating* over the next two years? Check all that apply.**

☐ N/A; not thinking about eliminating any tools
☐ Telephone
☐ Postal mail
☐ Presentations
☐ Face-to-face meetings
☐ Email
☐ E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters
☐ Other (please specify):

☐ Printed newsletters
☐ Email lists (e.g., Yahoo! Groups)
☐ Website
☐ Web conferences/Web seminars
☐ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, e.g., Skype)
☐ Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)

☐ Blog
☐ Paid media advertising
☐ Unpaid newspaper items
☐ Unpaid radio spots
☐ Printed posters /flyers

Comments:

_____

_____

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   **8**

14. **Does your organization have a formal (written) communications policy or plan?**

☐ Yes – for *Internal* communications
☐ Yes – for *External* communications
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Comments:

_____

_____

15. **Does your organization have a person or team that is solely responsible for communication?**

☐ Yes   ☐ Don't know
☐ No

Comments:

_____

_____

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy 9

4. Barriers to Communication in your Organization

In this section, we want to know what you think are the *Barriers* to communication in your organization.

*16. **Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree that each of the following issues is a *Barrier* to your organization's communication.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No answer/do not know
Cost of purchasing communication tools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cost of maintaining and updating existing communication tools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of staff/volunteer knowledge of communication tools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cost of training staff/volunteers to use communication tools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Time required to train staff/volunteers to use communication tools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Time required to research and evaluate new communication tools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Technical limitations of particular communication tools (e.g., Skype limits number of participants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lack of capacity (e.g., sharing office space/communication tools with another organization)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Target audience unable or unwilling to use communication tools	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Geography (e.g., preferred communication tool is face-to-face meeting but target audience is separated by distance)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

info@cscnl.ca

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   10

5. Functions of Communication in your Organization

In this section, we want to know the purpose for which your organization uses particular communication tools.

For example, your organization may use email to communicate with internal staff about day-to-day logistical planning but use an e-newsletter to report to the same group about your organization's monthly progress.

Sometimes your organization may use a particular communication tool for multiple purposes. For example, your organization may use paid media advertising (e.g., newspaper or radio ads) to recruit volunteers and to solicit donations.

*17.   For what *Purposes* do you use the following communication tools? (For each tool, check all the *Purposes* for which you use that tool. If you do not use a particular tool, leave that row blank.)

	To recruit volunteers or members	To solicit donations or apply for funding	To communicate with internal staff	To provide updates to members	To inform public of services offered or events happening	To provide advocacy	To share and disseminate information
Telephone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Postal mail	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Presentations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Face-to-face meetings	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Email	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E-Bulletins/E-Newsletters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Printed newsletters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Email lists (e.g., Yahoo! Groups)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Website	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Web conferences/Web seminars	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Voice over internet Protocol (VOIP, e.g., Skype)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Blog	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Paid media advertising	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Unpaid newspaper items	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy							11
	To recruit volunteers or members	To solicit donations or apply for funding	To communicate with internal staff	To provide updates to members	To inform public of services offered or events happening	To provide advocacy	To share and disseminate information
Unpaid radio spots	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Printed posters/flyers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. Information about your Organization

In this section we are seeking some information about your organization to help us analyze the survey results. All information will be kept confidential.

*18.   In what sector does your organization concentrate its efforts?

☐ Arts and Culture   ☐ Sports and Recreation   ☐ Social Justice

☐ Human Rights   ☐ Health   ☐ Social/Community

☐ Environment   ☐ Faith   Services

☐ Other (please specify):

Comments:

_____

_____

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   12

*19.   **Which legal status best describes your organization?**

☐ Provincially incorporated nonprofit organization   ☐ Credit Union
☐ Federally incorporated nonprofit organization   ☐ Co-operative
☐ Informally organized community group   ☐ Hospital board
☐ Local chapter of nationally incorporated group   ☐ Municipality
☐ Other (please specify):

Comments:

_____

_____

20.   **Does your organization have *Registered* federal charitable status?**

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

*21.   **What are the first three digits of your organization's postal code?**

_____

*22.   **Approximately how many full-time, permanent staff work at your organization?**

☐ None   ☐ 10 to 24
☐ 1 to 4   ☐ 25 to 99
☐ 5 to 9   ☐ 100 or more
☐ Other (please specify):   ☐ No answer / Do not know

Comments:

_____

_____

| Economy 13

*23. **In a typical year, how many people volunteer with your organization?**

☐ None   ☐ 25 to 99

☐ 1 to 9   ☐ 100 to 199

☐ 10 to 24   ☐ 200 or more

☐ Other (please specify):   ☐ No answer / Do not know

Comments:

_____

_____

*24. **Approximately what percentage of your organization's total revenue comes from the sources listed? (Please enter a value from 0 to 100 in each of the boxes, so that the total from all sources combined equals 100.)**

Government   _____

Earned income   _____

Gifts and donations   _____

Other income   _____

Do not know   _____

*25. **What is your organization's annual budget?**

☐ Less than $30,000   ☐ $250,000-$499,999   ☐ $10,000,000+

☐ $30,000-$99,999   ☐ $500,000-$999,999   ☐ No answer/Unsure

☐ $100,000-$249,999   ☐ $1,000,000-$9,999,999

*26. **What is your primary role in your organization?**

☐ Staff member   ☐ Board member

☐ Volunteer   ☐ Other (Please provide details):

Comments:

_____

_____

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy 14

*27. **As a staff member or a volunteer, do you, personally, have special responsibility for communications in your organization?**

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Some (Please provide details):

Comments:

_____

_____

7. Post-survey Follow-up (Optional)

Please complete this section if you would like to receive a copy of our survey results or if you are willing to participate in an in-person/online follow-up focus group. Please note that identifying information in this section will be kept separate from your survey responses.

28. **Would you like to receive information about the results of this survey?**

☐ Yes (Please provide your contact information in Question 31.)

29. **There may be opportunities for your organization to provide further input. Is your organization willing to participate in a *Follow-up, In-person Focus Group*?**

☐ Yes (Please provide your contact information in Question 31.)

30. **If you answered "Yes" to Question 28 or 29, please indicate how you would like us to contact you.**

☐ Email   ☐ Postal mail   ☐ Telephone
☐ Other (please specify):

_____

Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy   15

31. **If you answered "Yes" to Question 28 or 29, please provide the following information:**

Contact Name   _____

Organization
Name   _____

Street and
Number   _____

P.O. Box (if
applicable)   _____

City/Town and
Province   _____

Postal Code   _____

Telephone with
Area Code   _____

Email address
(if applicable)   _____

Thank you for participating in the Social Economy and Sustainability Network's Communication Survey.

Appendix D

In-Person Focus Group in St. John's: Communication Tools in the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy

SSHRC

Hello,

You may recall filling out a survey this spring that explored the communication tools your organization, as a contributing member to the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy, has access to and regularly uses to manage information.

According to our records, you also indicated interest in participating in an **in-person follow-up focus group** which is taking place at the **Community Sector Council** in St. John's next **Friday, May 28th, from 10:00-12:00**. In recognition of your valuable time spent in this discussion, we would like to offer a $50 honorarium for your focus group participation.

If you are still interested in participating, please let us know as soon as possible by completing the following registration form:
http://events.envision.ca/en/focusgroupsSES

We will follow this note up with a telephone call later today or tomorrow in case you have any questions about this event.

Thanks so much,

Elizabeth Russell

Research Assistant
Community Sector Council
753-9860

info@cscnl.ca

Appendix E

**Communication Tools in the Atlantic
Canadian Social Economy Focus
Group: Informed Consent**

SSHRC ≣

Dear Participant

The purpose of this study is to explore the communication tools your organization, as a contributing member to the Atlantic Canadian Social Economy, has access to and regularly uses to manage information. As a follow-up to our large-scale survey that you may recall completing online, we are seeking to further understand current results using a qualitative, group-based method of inquiry.

Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to end your participation at any time. Your responses to questions and comments will be confidential to the Sub Node Six research team, as all names and identifying characteristics will be altered in transcription and reporting. There is no guarantee that other participants will keep your identity confidential; however, we do ask that everyone keeps participant and content information within the group only.

If you choose to end your participation before the focus group is complete, you are free to withdraw at any time. Also if you later decide to withdraw your information from the study, all data you contributed will be removed and destroyed.

The focus group session will be digitally sound recorded, so that later analysis remains true to precisely what was discussed during the sessions. If you choose, however, the computer recording can be stopped at any time. Copies of the recording will be kept in a secure location, and access to it will only be granted to Sub Node Six researchers. When the session is transcribed to allow for data analysis, names, organizations, and any identifying characteristics will be changed to ensure anonymity.

If you would like to take part in this study, please sign the attached sheet. Keep this sheet for your information.

Thank you so much,

Elizabeth Russell and Darlene Scott

info@cscnl.ca

Signature Page

This sheet is to be signed by you, the participant, if you decide to participate. Please read it carefully:

YES

1. I have read the information sheet. ☐

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason ☐

3. I agree to have the focus group tape-recorded ☐

4. I agree to take part in this study. ☐

_____   _____
           Signature   Date

Appendix F

<Date, Location> – Communication Technology Focus Group Outline

1. **Introduction:**

   a. **Introduce CSC, and SN6**

   b. **Purpose of this project**: Identify the *tools* being used in the Atlantic Canadian social economy, the particular *functions* of communication and communication *methods* used with diverse target groups, and to determine any *barriers* to communication. The intent of this study is to identify ways to potentially improve communication in the social economy here in Atlantic Canada, as communication appears more and more to be integral to the success of these ventures.

   c. **Previous research** – present findings (document)

   d. **Current (focus group) research: Rationale and objectives** – Focus group are being conducted to *reinforce* or *refute* survey findings, and to provide us with more *contextual reasoning* behind these responses, in order to produce a more comprehensive document and provide the most useful recommendations possible regarding communication in the social economy.

   e. **Ethical considerations**:

      i. Group *confidentiality* following the focus group, and *anonymity* in our documents

      ii. Signing of consent forms

   f. **Introduction of us and group members**

      i. Q: What is your single largest interest in joining this discussion?
      (e.g., benefits to organization, want to learn more about technology in the social economy, want to contribute experiences, networking, etc.)

info@cscnl.ca

2. **Discussion**

    a. **Cost and time:** Cost emerged as a relatively important barrier to progress in
        communication tools, but not in a major way. It was accompanied more so by a *lack of
        time* as a major barrier in the use and acquisition of various newer communication tools,
        in terms of time to *locate* the appropriate tool, *learn* the tool, *train* and *re-train* new staff
        and volunteers in its use, *evaluate* the tool in order to maximize its benefits, etc.

        Questions:

        - Do you agree with these findings, based on your own experience?
        - Why is the cost of tools not as important as one might expect in
          communication, and what are the bigger barriers instead?
        - How could these barriers be overcome?
        - Can you provide any further insight into these findings?

        Prompts:

        - Does this depend on things such as organization budget, location (rural vs.
          urban, proximity from other organizations or other large centres), type of
          organization, demographics of target audience, charitable status, specific
          sector, etc.

b. **Changing technology:** Our results clearly show that most organizations do *not* want to acquire many new tools, or get rid of many old ones, suggesting that groups are happy with their current balance of communication tools. However, a significant minority of organizations want to eliminate more paper-based tools and embrace newer, Internet-based tools such as social networking.

Questions:

- Do you agree with these findings, based on your own experience?
- Do you have any examples?
- Let's discuss the resistance to change and the embracement of change encountered in the social economy - what are some of the *barriers* and *challenges* to doing so?
- How could these barriers be overcome?
- Can you provide any further insight into these findings?

Prompts:

- Does this depend on things such as organization budget, location (rural vs. urban, proximity from other organizations or other large centres), type of organization, demographics of target audience, charitable status, specific sector, etc.

3. Conclusion

    a. Is there **anything else you might add** to this discussion on changing technological innovations in the social economy?

    b. **Debrief**: reminder of confidentiality and anonymity, what will be done with data

    c. **Thanks** (and potential mileage compensation?)