

... community
sector
council nl

TAPPING THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL



2025

**4.5 Year Labour
Market Project**

**Supporting the
Paid and Unpaid
Workers in the
Community
Sector of
Newfoundland
and Labrador**

**Summary &
Highlights**

Table of Contents

→	02	About The Project
→	03	Profiling The Sector, Employment Opportunities & Workforce Benchmarks
→	07	Regional Skills Facilitator Pilots, Sector Growth and Capacity
→	12	Access to Labour Market Information
→	14	Workforce Maintenance, Continuance & Succession Planning
→	16	Sector Convening & Network Building
→	21	What We Learned
→	28	The Project in Numbers
→	30	Contact Us

ABOUT THE PROJECT - WHY?

The purpose of this project was to strengthen the capacity of Newfoundland and Labrador's nonprofit sector to attract, retain, and support a competent and sustainable workforce—both paid and unpaid. This initiative was born out of a growing recognition that the community sector plays a vital yet often underappreciated role in the province's social and economic development.

Through extensive public consultations, research studies, surveys, roundtables, and direct engagement with sector leaders, CSCNL identified a complex set of challenges that were impeding the sector's ability to plan effectively for its human resource needs.

One of the most pressing factors was the sector's unique structure: paid employment is governed and enabled by unpaid volunteer boards, creating a dual-labour dynamic that is unlike any other industry. Many organizations operate with little or no paid staff, and those that do often face instability due to short-term contracts, limited funding, and high turnover.

Recruitment and retention were consistently flagged as major concerns, with barriers ranging from mismatched skill sets and inadequate compensation to the perception that nonprofit work is not a viable long-term career path. These issues were especially acute in rural and remote areas, where succession planning and access to professional development are limited, despite the fact that many of these organizations are key economic drivers and recipients of significant public investment.

The sector also faced mounting pressure to evolve—adopting more entrepreneurial models, diversifying revenue streams, and expanding services—all of which demand new competencies and strategic planning. Yet many organizations lacked the internal capacity to scale up or adapt, often due to stagnant leadership, limited governance expertise, and insufficient investment in administrative infrastructure. The prevalence of project-based funding further undermined efforts to build a stable HR talent pool, as skilled workers were frequently lost to more secure employment opportunities.

In response to these systemic challenges, the project was designed to provide a comprehensive approach to labour market alignment and human resource planning. It aimed to equip organizations with the tools, knowledge, and strategies needed to build resilient teams, improve governance, and foster long-term sustainability. By focusing on both the paid and unpaid workforce, the initiative acknowledged the foundational role of volunteer leadership in employment creation and organizational success.

Ultimately, the project sought to elevate the sector's capacity to meet community needs, support economic growth, and thrive in an increasingly complex and demanding environment. We are pleased to provide this summary of project deliverables and highlights. CSCNL would like to thank the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour – Labour Market Partnerships Program with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for funding this impactful work.

Profiling The Sector, Employment Opportunities & Workforce Benchmarks



This phase of the project focused on understanding the current state of the community sector workforce in Newfoundland and Labrador. We explored job vacancies, salary levels, benefits, skill gaps, and the persistent challenges in recruitment and retention. We also spotlighted the sector as an employer of choice—highlighting pathways to employment and opportunities for skill development. Importantly, we considered both paid and unpaid roles, recognizing the vital contributions of volunteers who form the backbone of the sector.

Salary & Benefits Benchmarking

The Portage Group led a major salary and benefits survey, informing the December 2024 report: Human Resource Insights, Findings and Potential Next Steps NL Community Sector: Paid and Unpaid Labor Force Attraction and Retention—compiled and released by CSCNL.

Retirement Savings Research

A working paper titled An Overview of Retirement Savings Options – Canada and Internationally examined pensions and other benefits as tools for attraction and retention, offering insights into Canadian and global models.

Sector Health Plan Conversations

Sector-wide discussions were hosted to explore the potential for a collective health plan. A working group was formed, and efforts continue to advance this opportunity.

Profiling The Sector, Employment Opportunities & Workforce Benchmarks

Pulse Surveys

CSCNL conducted six province-wide Pulse Surveys with over 1,500 responses, capturing insights on:

Volunteerism and emerging trends
Key issues in the sector
COVID-19's impact on the sector

Hiring climate and labour challenges
Recruitment and retention
Succession planning and preparedness

Regional Employer Videos

Videos were produced to profile nonprofit organizations as employers and showcase why individuals choose to work in the sector and the impact on local economy. One standout video—featuring social enterprise Island Rock Jewelry and Crafts on the Burin Peninsula—was covered by provincial media and viewed over 1,600 times.



Employment Promotion

Sector job opportunities were regularly shared through the CSCNL newsletter, reaching over 5,600 subscribers.

International Volunteer Day 2024

A special session was hosted to highlight how the unpaid labour force contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Profiling The Sector, Employment Opportunities & Workforce Benchmarks



Youth Engagement Workshops

The Benefits of Volunteering workshop reached hundreds of youth in high schools, post-secondary institutions, employment programs, youth groups, and a provincial student leadership conference—highlighting volunteering as a path to employment and a career in the sector.



Profiling The Sector, Employment Opportunities & Workforce Benchmarks

National Volunteer Week Campaigns

Each year, during National Volunteer Week, CSCNL partnered with organizations across the province to profile the impact of the unpaid labour force of thousands of volunteers on the social and economic wellbeing of our communities.

Children, Seniors and Social De... · 44s · ...
Minister @PaulPikeMHA was happy to be joined by @CSCNL to sign a proclamation recognizing this week as National Volunteer Week.

This week we celebrate the selfless service of volunteers who give their time and talents to help make a difference in their communities.
#GovNL



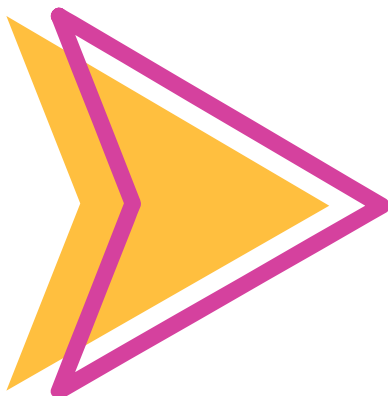
Community Sector Council
Newfoundland and Labrador
Posted by Colin Corcoran
12m · G

Excited to be joining Jen White with the St. John's Morning Show at 8:20am to talk about how #VolunteersMakeWaves across Newfoundland and Labrador. Tune into CBC Radio One or stream live: <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-56-st-john-s-mor...> See more



WHAT CAME OF IT

- A clearer picture of employment trends and workforce needs
- Actionable data to help organizations identify gaps in recruitment
- Practical guidance for hiring, retaining, and supporting staff and volunteers
- A deeper understanding of the sector among youth and emerging professionals



Regional Skills Facilitator Pilot, Sector Growth and Capacity



To strengthen the community sector across Newfoundland and Labrador, we launched pilot programs in multiple regions aimed at building partnerships and responding to local labour market needs—both paid and unpaid. These efforts included job and volunteer fairs, training sessions, workshops, and in-person events designed to connect organizations and offer tailored support. We also facilitated peer support networks, hosted regional conversations, and expanded our searchable sector database. Tangible tools and one-on-one support helped organizations build capacity and collaborate more effectively.

Thriving Nonprofits Inaugural Program

In partnership with Community Foundations of NL, Government of NL, and Scale Collaborative, CSCNL launched the 2024 NL cohort of Thriving Nonprofits—a pilot program focused on fund development and capacity building. Twelve organizations participated; 11 successfully completed the program. Due to its success, a second cohort will launch in Fall 2025.

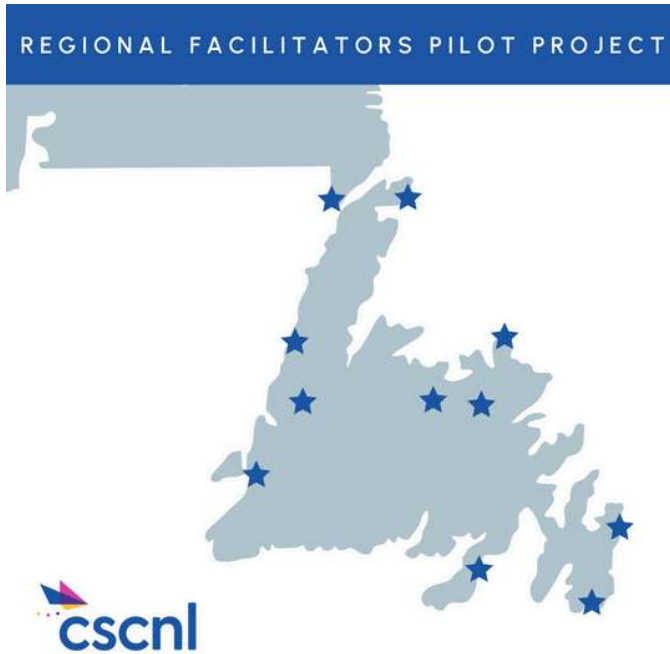
Program Curriculum Highlights:

- Culture of Money – Shift from scarcity to abundance
- Traditional Strategies – Entrepreneurial thinking
- Fee for Service – Pricing, risk, and change management
- Social Enterprise – Readiness, growth, governance
- Assets – Financial and physical asset mapping
- Partnerships – Building strong relationships
- Leverage – Aligning operations with mission
- Final Presentations – Revenue Diversification Action Plan



Regional Skills Facilitator Pilot, Sector Growth and Capacity

Geographic Reach



Regional Network Facilitators were employed or contracted in:
St. John's, Trepassey, Burin, Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander, Twillingate, Deer Lake, Stephenville, St. Anthony, Port Saunders, & Labrador Straits



Community Job & Volunteer Fairs

CSCNL partnered to host fairs in L'Anse-au-Loup, Grand Falls-Windsor, St. Anthony, Burin Peninsula, Gander, MUN, St. John's, Port Aux Basques.



Regional Skills Facilitator Pilot, Sector Growth and Capacity

Warm Line & In-Person Support

Organizations and individuals accessed one-on-one support on:

- Governance issues (by-laws, AGMs)
- Funding sources/application assistance
- HR challenges for paid and unpaid staff
- Referrals and partnership connections



Inquiries often led to larger initiatives. Highlights include:

Lamaline Museum

After media coverage of volunteer burnout, RNF stepped in to revamp recruitment, build a new board, and provide governance and social media training—resulting in a thriving, re-engaged museum team.

Labrador Straits Regional Arena

Volunteers revived a dormant recreation committee, received governance training, and secured \$212,850 from the Government of Canada to upgrade the arena's reefer system for energy efficiency.

Rediscovering Our Main Streets – Labrador Straits

A brainstorm session led to a successful funding proposal through ACOA, resulting in three regional farmers & craft markets coordinated by SLDA.

Public/Private Partnership – Burin Peninsula

CSCNL collaborated with the Chamber of Commerce to promote volunteerism and highlight the mutual benefits of cross-sector engagement for social and economic development.



Regional Skills Facilitator Pilot, Sector Growth and Capacity



Workshops & Training Sessions Delivered In-Person and Online:

Volunteer Management - Planning, Recruiting, Screening, Training, & Retaining

Digital Literacy from CSCNLs Tecknowtutors

Healthy Board Governance Series

Roles & responsibilities of board members

By-laws, policies, procedures

Recruiting & retaining board members

Maintaining corporate records

Youth volunteer engagement

Canada Revenue Agency Series

GST/HST for charities & nonprofits

Taxable vs. exempt supplies

Capital properties & input tax credits

PSB rebates, audits, books & records

Deloitte Workshop for administrative professional upskilling

Museum Association of NL training for paid and unpaid workers on Intro to Exhibit Development, and Public Program Design



Regionally Responsive Training Developed and Delivered

Strength-based Asset Mapping

Social media engagement

Proposal development

Funding applications

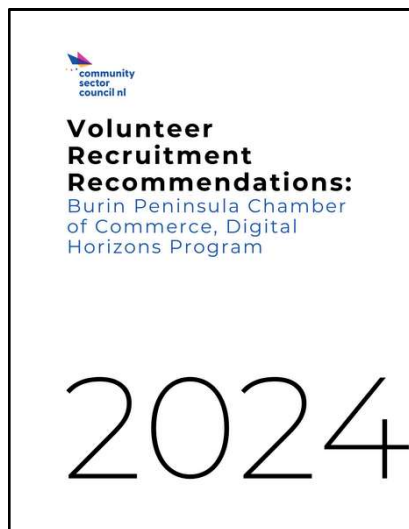
Fundraising strategies

Evaluation measurement

Engaging young adults



Regional Skills Facilitator Pilot, Sector Growth and Capacity



Guidebooks & How-To Tools

- Planning and Hosting a Volunteer/Job Fair
- Tips to Engage Young Adults in Volunteering
- How To Be a Star in Your Non-Profit Universe – A Compliance Guide
- Sample Targeted Recruitment Drive Materials
- A Layperson's Guide to The Corporations Act (in progress)



WHAT CAME OF IT

- Stronger regional relationships and deeper understanding of local challenges
- Increased access to training and development opportunities
- A replicable model for engaging communities around workforce development
- Tangible resources that were well-used and appreciated
- More collaboration across regions
- A stronger, more unified community sector

Access to Labour Market Information



To strengthen workforce planning across the community sector, CSCNL focused on improving how organizations access and use labour market data. Through regional engagement and the development of practical resources, we helped organizations make informed decisions about hiring, retention, and long-term HR strategies.

Labour Market Conversations

In-person sessions were held in: St. John's, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Marystown, Deer Lake, Upper GNP, and St. Anthony. These conversations surfaced local challenges and opportunities, helping shape responsive strategies.



Regional Labour Program Focus Group

A dedicated focus group explored access to and effectiveness of labour market programs. Findings were documented to inform future planning and advocacy.

Access to Labour Market Information

HR Toolkit Development

CSCNL created a comprehensive HR Toolkit to support organizations in building strong, equitable, and sustainable HR practices. The toolkit includes:

- Human Resources Policies
- Guide to developing HR policies
- Reviewing policies through an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) lens
- Sample policies: job descriptions, questionnaires, templates
- Sample position descriptions: Executive Director, Bookkeeper

Recruitment & Onboarding

- Recruitment and selection process
- Sample job ads, interview questions, reference checks, letters of offer
- Onboarding overview and checklist
- Employee handbook

Staff Engagement & Retention

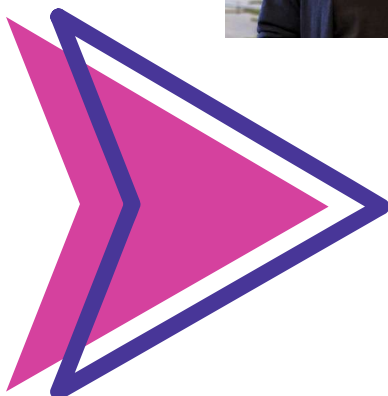
- Stay interviews, exit interviews, exit checklist
- Compensation and benefits
- Summary of CSCNL's 2023 Salary & Benefits Survey

Performance Management

- Fundamentals of performance management
- Sample forms: probationary review, annual reviews (staff and management), self-assessment

Succession Planning

- Tools and guidance to support leadership transitions and long-term sustainability



WHAT CAME OF IT

- More organizations using data to guide hiring and planning
- Better awareness of workforce trends and needs
- A foundation for ongoing improvements in HR practices

WORKFORCE MAINTENANCE, CONTINUANCE & SUCCESSION PLANNING



This deliverable focused on helping community organizations plan for the future—especially around leadership transitions. By supporting the identification and development of “second-in-command” staff, emphasizing asset building, and promoting long-term planning, CSCNL helped organizations strengthen their leadership pipelines and prepare for change with confidence.

Succession Planning Roundtables held in:

Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, St. John’s, Marystown, Grand Bank, Deer Lake, and Labrador. These sessions surfaced local leadership challenges and fostered peer learning.

Retirement Planning Sessions

Delivered by Common Good, these sessions helped sector employees understand retirement options and plan for long-term financial wellbeing.

Mentorship Frameworks

Customized planning agendas were developed to support leadership continuity, allowing organizations to take creative and flexible approaches to succession.

Continuance Planning Workshop

A learning and sharing session was hosted to explore organizational continuance procedures and succession planning strategies.

Volunteer Board Governance Seminar

A full-day seminar on the nuances of working with volunteer boards was facilitated in Corner Brook, St. John’s, Gander, Clareville, Grand Falls-Windsor, and Labrador Straits.

WORKFORCE MAINTENANCE, CONTINUANCE & SUCCESSION PLANNING

Organizational Continuance Transition Pilot Project (OCTPP)

To support organizations facing leadership transitions due to retirement or departure of Executive Directors or senior staff, CSCNL launched the OCTPP: \$270,000 allocated to support 9 organizations, each eligible for up to \$30,000 in transitional funding. A Human Resource Specialist was contracted to provide tailored HR support.

A Succession Planning workshop was attended by 73 nonprofit leaders, featuring:

- Succession Planning Overview & Q&A
- Panel: Lessons Learned & Best Practices
- Compensation Survey Preview & Retention Trends
- Panel: Retention Best Practices

Eight organizations received customized HR support, including:

- Guidance on discipline, respectful workplace, investigations
- Duty to accommodate
- Succession plan development and presentations
- HR policy review and development
- Job descriptions and postings
- Interview questions and screening criteria
- Reference checks and employment contracts
- Participation on interview panels
- Training program advice
- Creation of HR templates

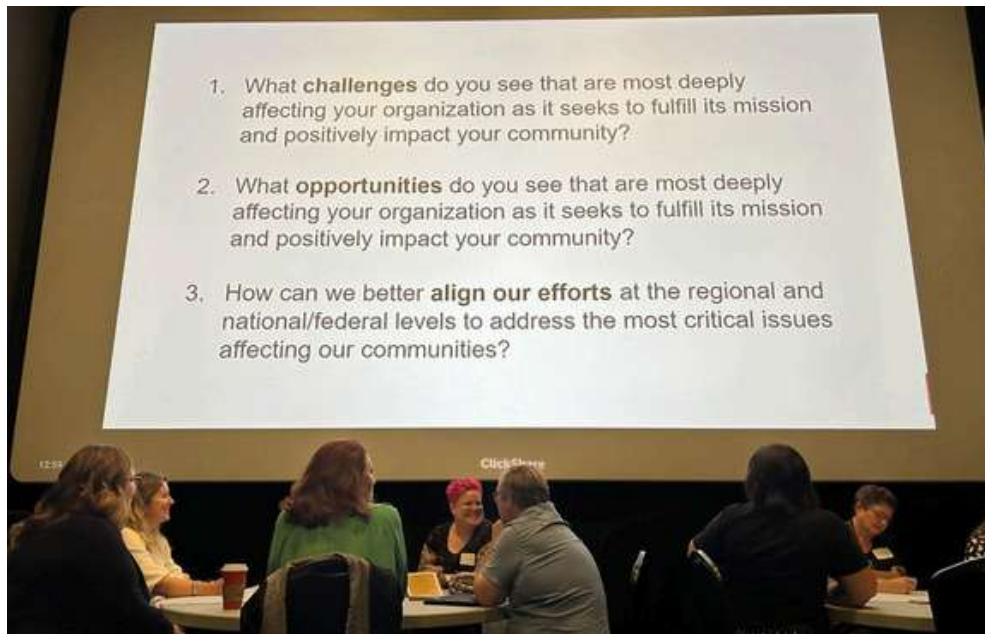


WHAT CAME OF IT

- Increased readiness for leadership transitions
- Tailored mentorship frameworks for continuity
- Stronger HR practices and succession planning strategies
- Financial and professional support for organizations navigating change
- Greater awareness of retirement options and board governance nuances



SECTOR CONVENING & NETWORK BUILDING



CSCNL created meaningful opportunities for people across the community sector to come together, share ideas, and learn from one another. These gatherings strengthened networks, amplified the sector's role in social and economic development, and fostered a culture of collaboration and shared learning. Aligned with sector profiling efforts, these initiatives increased visibility of the sector's contributions, built stronger relationships between community, government, and private sector, and promoted collective action.

Community Sector Summit – 2019

CSCNL gathered 190 participants from 137 organizations across 58 communities. Highlights included:

- Launch of the Community Sector Workplan
- Presentation by Imagine Canada on national trends
- Training on impact assessment
- Information sessions on retirement planning



SECTOR CONVENING & NETWORK BUILDING

Accelerators Igniting Change

During Fall 2022 and early Winter 2023, we hosted focus groups with leaders in the community sector across Newfoundland and Labrador. By adopting a change management focus, we sought to identify issues and opportunities for change, drawing on the collective wisdom and experience of community leaders, as accelerators and the guiding coalition, or forces of change in their communities and the province.

Facilitated by Dr. Susan Murray, this change management series included:

- 6 in-person focus groups and 2 virtual sessions
- Engaged nearly 80 nonprofit leaders

Explored collective strategies to:

- Strengthen sector well-being
- Advance policy and manage change
- Brand the sector for greater public understanding
- Promote volunteerism and sector employment

Collective Commitments Made:

- Raise awareness of volunteers and community contributions
- Increase engagement with CSCNL
- Share skills and knowledge across organizations
- Promote sector visibility at volunteer meetings
- Collaborate regularly with sector leaders
- Mentor emerging community leaders



SECTOR CONVENING & NETWORK BUILDING

Volunteer Connections – April 2023

In response to declining volunteerism post-pandemic, CSCNL hosted the first of nine national strategic conversations led by Volunteer Canada.

- Over 100 community leaders from NL participated
- Contributed to the development of Canada's National Volunteer Action Strategy
- Developed actionable strategies tailored to NL's volunteer landscape



Imagine Canada – Building Bridges – Sept 2024

CSCNL and Imagine Canada convened nearly 100 sector representatives in Gander and St. John's: Discussions centered around aligning local and federal priorities and exploring the sector's role in advancing the social determinants of health. Local issues including housing, food security, employment, equity, and recreation were at the forefront. Organizations emphasized the growing expectations placed on nonprofits and their unpaid labour force.



SECTOR CONVENING & NETWORK BUILDING



Community Ideas Festival – March 2024

A dynamic gathering of 220 social innovators from NL and beyond, co-hosted by CSCNL, Memorial University's CSE, CFNL, and NLFC. Workshops were delivered on revenue diversification and social finance. Table discussions about core funding, NL Health Accord, and development of a social enterprise strategy were facilitated with a plenary on cross-sector collaboration to co-create prosperity through social innovation.



SECTOR CONVENING & NETWORK BUILDING

Newcomer Volunteering – Sept 2024

CSCNL partnered with Volunteer Canada, Association for New Canadians, and Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies to host a strategy session with over 50 newcomers and organizations participants. We explored international trends and data gaps in volunteer engagement, identified tools to strengthen nonprofit capacity and diversify volunteer pools, and created a physical tessellation to visualize the building blocks of a Vision for Newcomer Volunteering in NL.

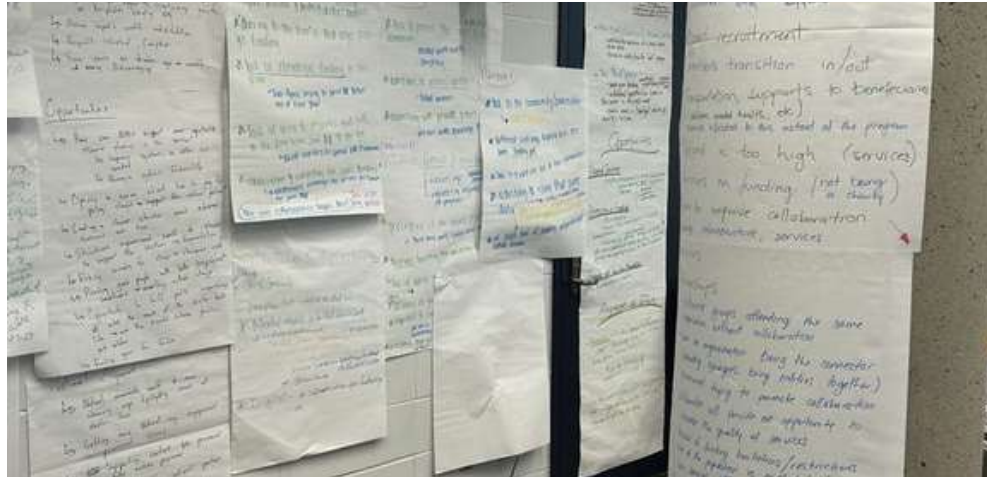


WHAT CAME OF IT

- Stronger cross-sector relationships
- Increased visibility of the sector's impact
- A culture of collaboration and shared learning
- Greater alignment between local & national priorities
- New strategies for volunteer engagement and leadership development

What We Learned

Rather than following a rigid evaluation framework, we embraced a flexible “learn-as-we-go” model. This approach allowed us to track progress, gather feedback, and make real-time adjustments. What emerged was a deeper understanding of the realities facing rural volunteer organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador—and a clearer picture of what supports truly matter.



1. Shared Challenges, Collective Solutions

Volunteer groups across NL may have different missions, but they face strikingly similar challenges—recruitment, retention, burnout, and limited resources. The project revealed that when these groups connect, they don't just share frustrations—they share solutions. Regional facilitators played a pivotal role in fostering these connections, acting as trusted bridges between isolated organizations. In Labrador especially, this model proved essential for building collective strength across vast distances.

2. Informal Collaboration Is Preferred

Formal structures like regional working groups often feel burdensome to rural volunteers already stretched thin. Instead, informal gatherings—coffee chats, pop-up workshops, or community conversations—were more effective at sparking engagement. These low-pressure environments allowed for organic relationship-building and idea-sharing without the weight of formal commitments.



What We Learned

3. Digital Literacy Is a Critical Barrier

Many rural organizations struggle with basic digital tasks, from navigating grant portals to managing social media. This digital divide discourages participation, especially among older board members, and limits access to funding and visibility. Addressing this barrier isn't just about tech training—it's about preserving the viability of these organizations.



4. Governance Training Is Urgently Needed

Uncertainty around board roles leads to confusion, conflict, and disengagement. Many volunteers step into leadership without formal training, which can result in poor decision-making or burnout. There's a clear appetite for governance workshops that are practical, accessible, and tailored to the realities of small, rural nonprofits.

5. Competition Is Undermining Collaboration

Organizations often feel they're competing for limited funding, volunteers, or recognition. This scarcity mindset creates silos and discourages collaboration. The project highlighted the need to shift toward abundance thinking—where resource-sharing and joint initiatives are seen as pathways to greater impact.



What We Learned

6. In-Person Engagement Builds Trust

When funders, government reps, or support organizations show up in person, it sends a powerful message: “We see you. We value you.” These face-to-face interactions build trust, reduce skepticism, and open doors to collaboration. They also help demystify systems and make support feel more accessible.



7. Sector Boundaries Are Blurred and Poorly Defined

There’s no consistent definition of what constitutes the “community sector.” Some include hospitals and universities; others don’t. This lack of clarity makes it harder to advocate for funding, develop policy, or measure impact. A shared understanding is needed to unify efforts and strengthen the sector’s identity.



8. Data Collection Is Fragmented and Inaccessible

Current data systems don’t reflect the nuances of the community sector. Statistics Canada and NL Statistics Agency often categorize nonprofits in ways that obscure their contributions. This limits the sector’s ability to tell its story, advocate effectively, and plan strategically.

What We Learned

9. Geography Limits Engagement

The sheer size and spread of NL makes consistent outreach a challenge. Travel costs, weather, and time constraints all hinder engagement. While virtual tools help, they're not a full substitute for in-person connection—especially in communities where digital access is limited.



10. Financial Literacy Is a Hidden Vulnerability

Many organizations lack the skills to interpret financial statements, manage budgets, or meet reporting requirements. This gap affects their ability to secure funding, comply with regulations, and make informed decisions. Financial literacy training could be transformative for long-term sustainability.



What We Learned

11. Regional Facilitators Must Be Multi-Skilled Connectors

The most effective facilitators weren't just administrators—they were relationship builders, grant writers, conflict management specialists, connectors, and community champions. Their ability to wear multiple hats and respond to local realities made them indispensable. Investing in this role is investing in sector resilience.



12. Leadership Structures Require Sustainable Planning

Efforts to formalize leadership groups often stalled without long-term support. Volunteers were hesitant to commit without knowing the initiative would be sustained. Future planning must include clear funding pathways, role clarity, and succession strategies to ensure continuity.

13. Regions Must Reflect Lived Realities, Not Just Maps

Administrative boundaries don't always align with how communities function. People may live in one town, work in another, and volunteer in a third. Defining regions based on community identity and practical relationships—rather than bureaucratic lines—leads to more meaningful engagement.



What We Learned

14. Volunteer-Led HR Management Is Unsustainable

In many rural organizations, volunteers are managing hiring, performance reviews, and workplace issues—often without training. This places unrealistic expectations on individuals and risks organizational instability. Professional HR support, even part-time or shared across organizations, could alleviate this burden.



15. Willingness Exists, But Leadership Must Be Intentional

People want to help. They're ready to step up. But without someone to lead—someone to convene, coordinate, and create opportunities—momentum stalls. Leadership can't be an afterthought or an “extra task.” It must be intentional, supported, and resourced.



A WORD ON COVID 19

The project had only just begun - hiring a Regional Network Facilitator in the first region—the Labrador Straits—when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, abruptly altering its trajectory.

From the outset, the project was designed to provide in-person, on-the-ground supports, but the sudden onset of public health restrictions forced a shift in approach. Organizations and communities faced immediate challenges, and the prolonged nature of the crisis led to widespread fatigue and a shift in priorities.

This created a level of complacency that many organizations have yet to recover from. Long-term volunteers did not return, individual commitment levels changed, and annual events were cancelled. Staff and volunteers came back seeking greater life-work balance.

Yet, the pandemic also demonstrated the sector's resilience and ability to adapt. Remote work proved viable even for unpaid roles, and organizations became more open to engaging volunteers beyond their immediate geographic area—including expatriates and others living outside the region—having experienced the benefits of functioning virtually.

The shift was so significant that it contributed to legislative change, prompting the provincial government to amend the Corporations Act to officially permit virtual meetings.



THE PROJECT IN NUMBERS

(Some are approximate)



\$525,000

Secured Through Supports
With Funding Applications

1900

Workshop Participants

1500

Pulse Survey Responses

4

Provincial Gatherings



Phone

709-753-9860



Email

info@cscnl.ca



Website

www.cscnl.ca

