



Capacity Assessment of Youth Focused Organizations in Vancouver

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Sustainability Scholars Disclaimer

This report was produced as part of the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, a partnership between the University of British Columbia and various local governments and organizations in support of providing graduate students with opportunities to do applied research on projects that advance sustainability across the region. This project was conducted under the mentorship of City of Vancouver staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the City of Vancouver, or the University of British Columbia.

Land Acknowledgment

To start I want to acknowledge that this research took place on the stolen, unceded and ancestral lands of the of the $x^w m \theta k^w \acute{a} y \acute{o} m$ (Musqueam), $S k w x w \acute{u} 7 m e s h$ (Squamish), and $s \acute{a} l i l w \acute{e} t \acute{a} \acute{t}$ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. I was privileged to grow up close to the ancestral Tsleil-Waututh village site of $s \acute{e} y \acute{o} m \acute{e} t \acute{e} n$ and as a white settler I acknowledge the many ways I have and continue to benefit from settler colonialism. Given this work examines the role of non-profits in supporting the wellbeing of youth in what is now known as Vancouver, it is critical to reflect on the devastating impacts of colonialism and state led violence on Indigenous children, youth, and families. Indigenous children and youth continue to face disproportionate health and welfare outcomes in Vancouver and across the country. For example, while Indigenous children represent only 7.7% of children 14 or under in Canada, they account for more than half of children in foster care (Indigenous Watchdog, 2022). On a federal level, action must be taken on all Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, including actions 1-5 on Child Welfare. In local contexts it is critical that Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing are supported which will be further explored in part 3 of this report.



Acknowledgments

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- Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House
- Covenant House Vancouver
- EMBERS
- Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
- Gallery Gachet
- Japanese Community Volunteers Association in Vancouver, Tonarigumi
- The KidSafe Project Society
- The Learning Disabilities Society (LDS)
- LOVE BC
- McCreary Centre Society
- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
- Progressive Intercultural Community Services
- Promise Vancouver
- QMUNITY
- RayCam Cooperative Centre
- SFU Students of Caribbean and African Ancestry (SOCA)
- Take a Hike Foundation
- United for Literacy
- Urban Native Youth Association

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Executive Summary

Research Context and Objectives

Recognizing the profound issues impacting youth today, the City is entering a new era of engaging with youth and the non-profit youth sector with the Building Safer Communities Program. While a vibrant non-profit youth sector is critical to address challenges facing youth today and mobilize youth voices, there is little research on the unique strengths and challenges youth focused organizations. Therefore, City of Vancouver staff have identified the need to have an updated overview of the youth sector. This research seeks to understand the current service capacity of Vancouver community based non-profit youth focused organizations.

Research questions:

1. What organizations in Vancouver currently provide programs and services to youth (ages 12-24)?
2. What strengths of youth focused organizations promote service capacity?
3. How are external factors impacting service capacity and service delivery?
4. What organizational capacity issues are youth focused organizations facing?
5. How are youth focused organizations collaborating?

Non-profit capacity can be defined as “the ability of an organization to draw on various internal and external resources for achieving its desired goals” (Svensson et. al, 2017, pg. 2056). This research uses a theoretical framework of capacity developed by Hall et. al (2003) with the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. This model identifies three core dimensions of capacity: human resources capacity, financial capacity, and structural capacity. However organizations do not operate in a vacuum, capacity is impacted both positively and negatively by external factors (environmental constraints and facilitators, access to resources and historical factors).

Methodology

This research uses mixed methods, including an inventory of youth focused organizations, spatial analysis of place based youth services, an online survey and focus groups. Data for the inventory and spatial analysis was collected in October 2022 from BC211 and cleaned based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. In total 195 youth focused organizations with varying outputs were added to the inventory. 141 locations of place-based youth services were then mapped to analyze spatial distribution. In January 2023 a survey was conducted to collect high level data on perceived capacity challenges, organizational strengths, and current collaboration efforts. 43 youth sector staff

answered the survey. In February 2023 two focus groups were held (one online and one in person) with 24 staff from 19 youth focused organizations.

Findings

Findings are divided in five parts to reflect each of the research questions. Key findings are as follows:

Key findings from the youth sector inventory analysis (part 1):

1. The Vancouver non-profit sector consists of approximately 1660 community based organizations, this inventory finds 195 organizations focus on youth.
2. The youth sector includes organizations that offer direct programs and support services for youth (in person, online or a hybrid model) and organizations whose outputs are important for building capacity and systems change (advocacy, funding and network building).
3. Approximately 126 organizations offer place based services at 141 locations across Vancouver. Given the lack of data on youth services, an interactive map has been created on [Google My Maps](#).
4. There is a concentration of place-based services in East Vancouver with the highest number of service locations in Downtown, Strathcona and Mount Pleasant.
5. There is a gap in research on youth organizing and youth governed initiatives.

Key findings on organizational strengths that support service delivery (part 2):

1. Many strengths were identified with the most common being staff’s ability to meaningfully connect with youth and meet their needs, followed by a sense of community with an organization.
2. Youth sector staff greatly value their relationships with youth, creating safe spaces and supporting youth through exploring their identity.

“It’s all about relationships. Being able to at least be one supportive adult in a youth’s life that believes in them and helps to empower them to do whatever they want in their lives. It’s a really special role. So how they show up is exactly how they need to be.”

(Focus group participant)

Key findings on the impacts of external factors on organizational capacity (part 3):

1. Capacity literature often examines the impacts of regulatory and funding environments, this research sought to examine some of the most impactful forces facing society in 2023, including the climate crisis, COVID-19, movements for justice (like Black Lives Matter and Every Child Matters, and the toxic drug crisis).
2. Crises are intersecting and exacerbate existing inequities, disproportionately effect equity seeking groups and increase the complexity of challenges facing vulnerable youth.
3. These external factors increase pressure on an already strained workforce.
4. These external factors are having a significant impact on the mental health of youth and youth sector staff today, and will have consequences for years to come.
5. Youth sector staff are seeing incredible passion from the youth they work with to tackle social issues and be agents of change in their communities.

“The external factors listed here are so serious on our end. It’s mentally debilitating and affecting their day to day lives.”

(Focus group participant)

the snowball effect on youth if staff are not being compensated or supported to take on this increased need and complexity.

Key findings on collaboration in the youth sector (part 5):

1. There is strong consensus from youth sector staff on the benefits of collaboration but moving from talk to action is a challenge because of organizational capacity issues and barriers including:
 - Lack of time to make and sustain connections.
 - Staff turnover.
 - Difficulty negotiating resources for joint initiative.
 - Competition for the same funding streams.
 - Privacy and access to information.
 - Siloed approach to programming and services.
2. There is excitement in the sector to improve collaboration. Youth sector staff want to see:
 - Improved systems and spaces for collaboration including more meaningful funding and networking opportunities to connect, share ideas and prevent duplication.
 - Spaces for front line workers to connect.
 - Meaningful inclusion of youth to ensure decisions are centred in the lived experiences and needs of youth.

Key findings on organizational capacity challenges (part 4):

1. Financial and human resources capacity issues are interconnected and compound.
2. Three most common financial capacity issues are:
 - Increasing program costs.
 - Increasing staff salaries.
 - Time required to apply for grants.
3. Three most common human resources capacity challenges are:
 - Staffing levels and workload.
 - Issues with recruiting and hiring.
 - Burnout.
4. Affirmed assumptions that organizations are facing many challenges, in some cases at a higher rates than the rest of the non-profit sector. While 28.5% of non-profit organizations across BC struggle with retaining skilled employees, this research found 64% of organizations in the Vancouver non-profit youth sector struggle with retention.
5. Retention a particular concern for the youth sector because of the critical personal development that happens between the ages of 12 - 24. One participant said, “If people aren’t sticking with young people, it could affect their growth.”
6. Service providers are seeing an increase in demand for services and complexity due to overlapping crises while already struggling with financial and human resources challenges. Youth sector staff worry about

Conclusion

This research seeks to offer a baseline assessment of a broad range of trends and challenges in the Vancouver non profit youth sector. The author notes that the findings for each section are not exhaustive but rather seek to understand the perceptions of people working in the youth on a high level.

This research affirms that youth focused organizations are being called on to do increasingly more with substantial challenges. The youth sector includes a wide range of services from meeting critical basic needs (like emergency shelter and crisis intervention) to providing spaces for belonging, personal growth and skill development (like youth leadership programs). While all youth serving organizations are impacted by rising costs of living, COVID-19 and climate change, because of systemic inequality there is disproportionate burden on equity seeking youth and increased pressure on organizations that work these youth. Youth sector staff are very passionate about supporting the wellbeing and personal growth of youth but are generally overworked and under-compensated. To ensure the youth sector can continue to make a difference in the lives of youth it is critical that financial and human resources capacity challenges are tackled.

Introduction

Background

In the early 2000s the City of Vancouver was a leader in planning for and with youth. This era of youth engagement was guided by the Vancouver Civic Youth Strategy Policy (1995) that asserted a commitment to work in partnership with youth on issues affecting them. The policy had four main objectives, one to ensure youth have a place in the City, two to ensure strong youth voice in decision making, three to promote youth as a resource to the City, and four to strengthen the support base for youth (Daviau Dempsey, 2010, p. 4). This resulted in the creation of the Child and Youth Advocate Office, a Youth Outreach Team, issue-specific working groups and a community/ city support network (Anderson, 2002, n.p.). A former City of Vancouver Child and Youth Planner, explains how this planning era saw programs and plans co-created with youth like YouthPolitik a program that sought to train more than 100 youth about municipal government (Rossi, 2006). While the Child and Youth Office initiatives were phased out by 2009 due to political changes, the youth outreach team model gained interest from cities around the world (Daviau Dempsey, 2010, p. 4).

The City of Vancouver, Social Policy and Projects Department is now entering a new era of renewed attention to the youth sector with the Building Safer Communities Project (BSCP) that launched November 2022. This initiative, funded by Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada aims to “prevent and address the root causes of youth violence, create safe spaces and empower young people and communities to develop and implement solutions” (City of Vancouver, 2023). Currently in Phase 1 the City seeks to co-develop prevention efforts with community that promote individual and community wellbeing. This includes addressing inequities in social determinants of health, youth violence, racism, and bullying. Recognizing the integral role of the community non-profit youth sector to meet the needs of equity denied communities and drive social change, the City seeks to steward coordination in the sector and build capacity to identify community responses that effectively prevent youth violence. While staff are well connected to community non-profit organizations and there is research on challenges facing the broader non-profit sector, there is a need to document the unique challenges and strengths of the youth sector in Vancouver.

Purpose

Understanding the capacity of the non-profit youth sector is an important first step in planning with community. Therefore, this research seeks to provide a baseline assessment of the youth sector in Vancouver, including an overview of the landscape of youth programs, sectoral trends in capacity issues, organizational strengths, and collaboration efforts. The goal of this project is to understand the current service capacity of the Vancouver youth sector to engage youth in the city. This research can be broken down into five research questions:

1. **What organizations in Vancouver currently provide youth programs and services?**
2. **What strengths of youth serving agencies promote service capacity?**
3. **How are external factors impacting service capacity and service delivery?**
4. **What organizational capacity issues are youth serving agencies facing?**
5. **How are youth serving organizations collaborating and coordinating within the sector?**



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Defining Youth

To start it is important to define key concepts that guide this project. Most centrally is to define youth. While the term generally refers to the period between childhood and adulthood, there is no universal age range. The United Nations defines youth as people between 15 and 24 years and children as people 14 years or younger. However, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as up to the age of 18 (UN, n.d.). The Government of Canada's 2021 State of Youth report defines youth as between the ages of 15 to 29 (Government of Canada, 2021). However, from a legal perspective under the federal Youth Criminal Justice Act, anyone between 12 to 17 years old is considered a youth (Government of British Columbia, n.d.).

Due to this lack of consistency organizations often choose an age range that makes the most sense for their purposes. This research will use the City of Vancouver's definition of youth, ages 12-24. While defining youth by an age range is important for the scope of this work, the author notes that youth are not a monolith and that intersecting identities play a critical role in an individual person's lived experience.

Defining the Youth Sector

A youth in Vancouver may be supported by a range of programs and services offered by the private sector, public sector, and the non-profit sector. While all sectors play a role in the wellbeing of youth, this research focuses on community based non-profit organizations which are critical to mobilize and strengthen communities. Given there is ample research on the sector broadly, this research seeks to focus on the unique challenges and strengths of organizations that support youth.

The Vancouver non-profit youth sector can be defined as the collective of non-profit organizations that are dedicated to enhancing the wellbeing of youth in Vancouver through programs and services that directly target their unique needs and support skill building (NACY, 2020). These organizations have a wide range of functions from providing basic services like food and shelter, to raising awareness and advocating for issues affecting youth and fostering the development of leadership skills. While the primary focus of this research is on place-based programs and services that a youth can access in a physical space located in Vancouver, the author will also discuss the role of organizations who deliver online resources, provide funding, and organize networks. This analysis includes both youth-based organizations and multi-serving agencies that serve a wide range of demographics including youth which are defined as follows:

Youth based organizations

- Organizations whose mission centres around youth, such as:
 - Environmental Youth Alliance whose mission is to “empower youth from equity-deserving communities to become environmental stewards.”
 - Red Fox Healthy Living Society that serves Indigenous and inner-city children, youth, and families and seeks to “transform the lives of children and youth through the power of recreation and mentorship.”
 - CityHive, a youth governed organization whose mission is to “transform the way that young people are engaged in shaping their cities and in civic processes.”

Multi serving agencies with a youth focus

- Organizations whose mission may be centred on a specific vulnerability or identity but have targeted programs or services for youth, such as:
 - QMUNITY whose mission is “to improve queer, trans, and Two-Spirit lives through services, connection and leadership.” While they have a range of programs and services for adults, they also have a dedicated youth staff and youth programs.
- Organizations that serve a specific geographic community and have youth services, such as:
 - Neighbourhood houses (Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, Little Mountain Neighbourhood house) and community centre associations (RayCam Co-operative Association, Hastings Community Association).
- Includes organizations that serves a broad range of populations including youth, such as:
 - Pacific Community Resources society whose vision is for “everyone thriving in strong, healthy communities”



Photo courtesy of, Devin Avery from Unsplash

Defining and Understanding Capacity

Non-profit capacity can be defined as “the ability of an organization to draw on various internal and external resources for achieving its desired goals” (Svensson et. al, 2017, pg. 2056). Scholars have put forward multiple theoretical models on the dimensions of capacity, but this project uses the conceptual model of non-profit organizational capacity developed by Hall et al. with the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. Hall et al’s model from *Capacity to Serve* is rooted in the seminal literature on capacity but was formalized using findings from Statistics Canada’s 2003 National Survey of Non-profit and Voluntary Organizations (NSNVO) that surveyed more than 10,000 Canadian non-profits. This framework was chosen because of its alignment with the operational context of non profit organizations in Vancouver. While the language and concepts are similar to other models (Brown et. al, 2016; Anderson et. al, 2016), this framework is rooted in the experience of a wide range of Canadian non-profits and is therefore more applicable.

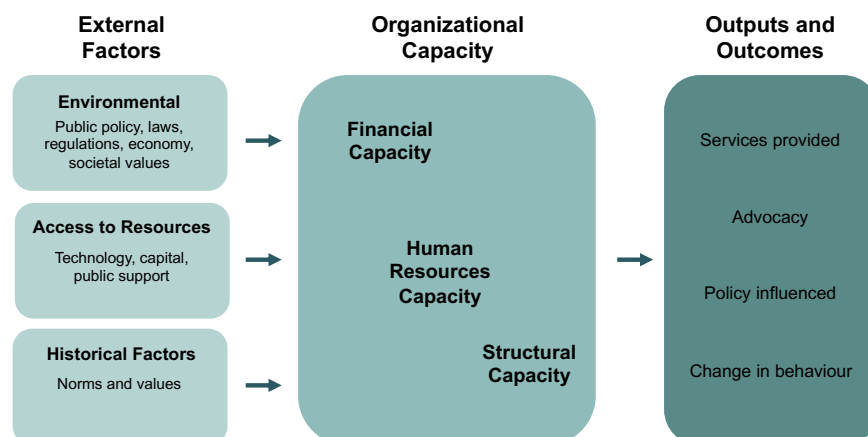
Hall et al. (2003) identify three core dimensions of capacity: **human resources capacity, financial capacity, and structural capacity** (p. 5). Human resources capacity is seen to be the most important element as it impacts the other two capacity areas. It can be defined as “the ability to deploy human capital within the organization and the competencies, knowledge and behaviour of those people” (Hall et al, 2003, p. 5). Financial capacity describes the ability to deploy financial capital like revenues, expenses, and assets of an organization. Structural capacity describes the “ability to deploy the non-financial capacity that remains when the people have gone home” (Hall et al, 2003, p. 5) which is broken down into three sub capacities, relationship and network capacity (which we

examine as collaboration), infrastructure and process capacity and planning and development capacity. Capacity challenges facing the Vancouver youth sector will be further explored in Part 4 of this report.

However, organizations do not operate in a vacuum; their **capacity is impacted both positively and negatively by external factors** that Hall et al. group into three main categories. First is environmental constraints and facilitators like political environment, policy, legal framework, societal values, community needs and demographics. The second category, access to resources includes financial resources, human resources, and technology. The last category, historical factors, includes fundraising practices, abuses of public trust, norms, and values.

While many of the external factors mentioned in Hall et. al’s 2003 research still resonate today, this research will focus on some of the most pressing contemporary issues shaping communities in 2023: the climate crisis, COVID-19, movements for justice and the toxic drug crisis. These crises and movements for justice were chosen due to their profound impact on young people’s lives during a critical developmental stage for identity formation. The impact on youth and the youth sector will be further explored in Part 3 of this report.

The final component of Hall et al.’s framework is an organization’s outputs which are the direct result of an organization’s capacity and its external environment. This includes the provision of services, distribution of goods or information and advocacy. These outputs hope to achieve intended outcomes. For example, a youth leadership program output may be the delivery of a workshop on bystander intervention, and the desired outcome may be to reduce bullying and discrimination in a community.



Methodology

Introduction

This multi-focal research uses mixed methods, including mapping and spatial analysis of youth focused organizations, an online survey and two focus groups. This section describes the methodology used for each component.

Inventory

A scan of non-profits was conducted to create a baseline inventory of youth focused organizations serving youth living in Vancouver. The locations of in person services was then mapped and spatially analyzed to understand the distribution of services. This qualitative component included five steps:

Step 1: Sourcing Data

The first step was sourcing a database on youth programs in Vancouver. Data on the non-profit sector in general is scarce and adding a population specific criterion posed challenges. Data was exported from the United Way's BC211 Online Directory, a free service that provides information on a range of community, government, and social services. To narrow in the results filters were applied to export results for services in Vancouver under the youth category. The results included 494 services.

Step 2: Cleaning Data

Next inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to guide the data cleaning process. If it was not immediately clear if the inclusion criteria was met, the author validated information by examining organization's websites, annual reports and CRA charity listing. In total 246 services were excluded.

Inclusion criteria:

- Non-profit agencies serving individuals and households.
- Offers programs/services that specifically target youth aged 12-24.
- Programs/services offered in Vancouver or can be accessed by youth in Vancouver.

Exclusion criteria:

- Organization is not in operation.
- No programs or services in Vancouver.
- Does not target or serve youth aged 12-24.
- Private sector/for profit organization.
- Government/public organization.

Step 3: Identifying Gaps in Data

While BC211 offers an extensive directory of services, the author identified gaps in the data and conducted additional searches for youth focused organizations to add to the project inventory. This process started with cross referencing City of Vancouver documents and databases including the 2020 Non-Profit Organization database and organizations involved in BSCP. This resulted in the addition of 51 organizations. Next the author examined lists of youth sector organizations identified by Rising Youth which resulted in the addition of five organizations. Finally, the author examined the Sports BC website and their member organizations to identify community sports organizations which resulted in the addition of 17 organizations. In total 126 organizations were sourced from BC211, and 69 organizations were added from other sources, for a total of 197 unique organizations.

Step 4: Categorizing Data

The author categorized organizations based on the type of agency and the populations they serve (youth based or multi-serving). Next the author classified organizations based on the International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations (ICNPO) which designates 12 major activity groups (see Appendix A). Finally, the author categorized organizations by outputs (place-based services, online services, funding, advocacy).

Step 5: Visualizing Data

Finally, the location of place-based services was visualized to analyze spatial distribution. 141 program sites, operated by 124 organizations were mapped. The author notes potential error in the addresses in the BC211 database and in the manual ground truthing that was required. Given the dynamic nature of non-profits some programming may not be offered anymore and locations or delivery methods may have changed. As will be explored in Part 3, COVID-19 and the closure of physical spaces resulted in many organizations shifting their programming online. While many organizations have returned to program delivery methods pre-COVID, some may have chosen to keep a virtual or hybrid service delivery model. This mapping exercise does not include the locations of services that are operated by a non-profit on school property, or in public spaces like parks.

Survey

Survey Purpose and Methods

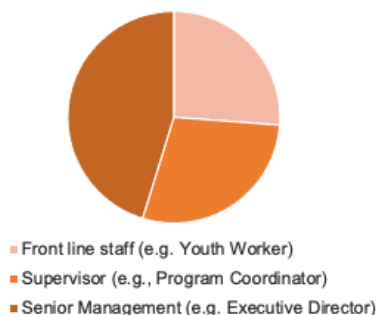
Survey questions were drafted based off capacity challenges and strengths identified in the gray literature including *Capacity to Serve* (2004), *Vancouver's Non-Profit Sector Current State Analysis* (2020) and *United for Building Capacity: A Review of What we Heard Final Report* (2022). The survey purpose was to gather high level, baseline information on the research questions from a broad range of experiences within the youth sector. The author chose select-all questions but recognizes having closed ended questions assumes certain conditions, so to ensure all experiences were captured an “other” or “unsure” option was added to the questions (see Appendix B for survey).

This survey was open to any staff that work in youth programming or services. To get a wide range of perspectives it was directed to all levels of staff from front line workers to executive directors. Given this project partner is the City of Vancouver which provides grants to many non-profit organizations, all answers were anonymous. This sought to enable people to answer freely without fear of their response effecting funding. The author notes potential response error based on an individual staff's knowledge on organizations operations. This may have influenced results as some staff may not have any knowledge on all aspects of operations (like revenue generation or applying for grants).

Survey Distribution and Response

The online survey was open from January 9 – January 20, 2023, with invitations to participate distributed to 120 active emails sourced from the BC211 database, the BSCP community Partner Reference Group and organizations receiving grants from the City of Vancouver. In total 42 responses were collected from people working in different roles and for organizations of varying sizes (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Role of Respondents



Focus Groups

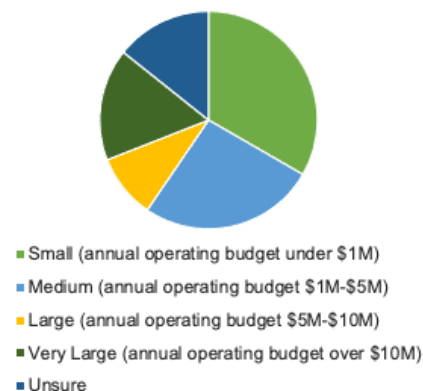
Focus Group Participants

In February 2023 two focus groups were held with 24 participants from 19 organizations. Approximately 150 email invitations were sent out to organizations through the Building Safer Communities Community Partners Reference Group and a list generated from the youth sector inventory. 30 people registered and 24 attended. Participants held a range of positions from front line program staff to executive directors.

Focus Group Methods

One session was conducted online, and one was conducted in person. Each session began with participants explaining what they liked most about working in the youth sector. Next, findings from the survey were reported back and participants discussed if the results resonated with them. Next, participants were asked to describe how external factors including the climate crisis, COVID-19, movements for justice (like Black Lives Matter and Every Child Matters) and the toxic drug crisis impacted their capacity. Finally, participants discussed collaboration in the sector, including what is working, what is not working and what they want to see change (See Appendix C for focus group plan). The data collected from discussion was transcribed and coded using a combined inductive and deductive approach. The author first grouped excerpts into categories based on the research questions and then in-vitro coding was conducted to analyze trends and patterns for each topic.

Figure 2: Size of Organizations



Part 1: Inventory

Introduction

This section seeks to understand what organizations are included in the youth sector, how they engage with and serve youth and how services are distributed in the city. While the **Vancouver non-profit sector consists of 1660 organizations, this inventory finds the 195 organizations focus on youth.** The following sections provide further details on the categorization of the youth sector by describing their expression related functions and the types of program delivery.

Categorizing Based on Service Function

As discussed in the introduction, the youth sector is comprised of organizations whose mission centres on youth (youth-based organizations) and organizations whose mission does not explicitly target youth but offers youth specific programming or services (multi-serving organizations). The inventory reveals the **youth sector is comprised of 74 youth-based organizations and 121 multi serving organizations.** Within the youth-based organizations, 3 organizations are governed by youth for youth including CityHive, Apathy is Boring and Amplify Canada.

A second layer of categorization, is the International Classification of Non-Profit Organizations (ICNPO) to understand expression related functions. This classification groups non-profit organizations into 12 categories to capture the role that non-profits generally play in their communities. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the 195 organizations identified in this inventory.

These results are different from the breakdown of the Vancouver Non-Profit Sector in which arts and culture organizations make up 24% of the sector, religious organizations make up 22% of the sector and social services make up 20% of the sector. In the youth sector we see a much larger percentage of organizations categorized as social services (29%) and development (22%) followed by sports and recreation (16%).

Table 1: Youth Sector ICNPO Categories

ICNPO Category	Organizations	Percent
Social services	56	29%
Development and housing	42	22%
Sports and Recreation	31	16%
Arts and Culture	27	14%
Education and research	13	7%
Philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion	10	5%
Health	7	4%
Law, advocacy and politics	5	3%
Environment	3	2%
Religion	1	1%
International	0	0
Professional associations, unions	0	0

Total organizations: 195

Outputs

The last layer of categorization is to understand the tangible ways organizations are contributing to the wellbeing of youth through the delivery of programs, services, advocacy, funding, and network building. A scan of organization's offerings was conducted in fall 2022 and organizations were grouped into five categories to better analyze how organization's outputs impact youth. The categories discussed are funding, hybrid model, in person programs/ services, networks/ coalitions and online programs and resources (see Table 2).

Table 2: Youth Sector Outputs

Type of Output	Organizations
Funding	10
Hybrid	5
In person program/ service	
Community Sports	20
Place based	124
School programming	8
Network/ Coalition	8
Online Program or Resource	20

Total Organizations: 195

These categories can be understood as follows:

1. Funding

Organizations that provide funding either directly to families and youth to participate in programming (like registering in sports), or to organizations that provide youth services. Supports the active participation of youth in community programming and the financial capacity of youth focused organizations.

2. Hybrid Model

Organizations whose programming is primarily based on a mixed model of in person and online components. Programming in this category tends to run on a cohort model where youth apply to be a part of a themed program for a set number of sessions (e.g., Vancouver Foundation Youth Policy Program and CityHive City Shapers Programs). These programs generally seek to help youth build leadership skills, knowledge on a specific topic and generate innovative ideas on how to address local challenges like climate action or housing affordability.

3. In Person Programs and Services

Organizations whose primary focus is to provide regular programs or services to youth in person. These may be registered programs, by appointment or drop in. The place-based delivery model includes consistent staffing and support for youth. This category also includes organizations that do not own physical program spaces but operates regularly out of public facilities like schools or parks (e.g., community sports leagues). This category also includes organizations that offer workshops or presentations booked by teachers for their schools (e.g., Green Thumb Theatre Society).



Photo courtesy of Steven Abraham from Unsplash



Photo courtesy of Sam Bayle from Unsplash

4. Networks and Coalitions

Organizations that coordinate other agencies or individuals around a common purpose. Includes umbrella organizations like the Association of Neighbourhood Houses of BC that oversees the operations of neighbourhood houses across the province. Includes advocacy organizations working to make systems change (e.g., First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, and TRRUST). Also includes organizations that work to build the capacity of other organizations (e.g., Vantage Point).

5. Online Program and Resources

Organizations that provide information and support for youth online or over the phone. This includes websites with passive resources youth can read for information, and programming youth can complete at their own pace (e.g., Wellness Together Canada). Includes services where a youth can interact with another person online or over the phone for support (e.g., Black Youth Help Line). Also includes online programming guided by a facilitator in real time (e.g., Canadian Mental Health Association's Bounce Back Coaching). Given the virtual platform, this category includes local and national organizations (e.g. Kids Help Phone).

It is noted that while organizations have been grouped into one category that describes their primary activities, they may have secondary activities that fall in another category. For example, while the BC Crisis Centre provides online programs and services for youth like Youthinbc.com that connects youth in crisis with support and resources, they also offer single workshops and multi-session programming that is offered in partnership with schools and delivered in classrooms. In this analysis, they have been categorized as an online program/resource. While all types of programs and services are important to ensure wrap around supports and advocacy for youth issues, the rest of the inventory analysis will focus on place-based programming.

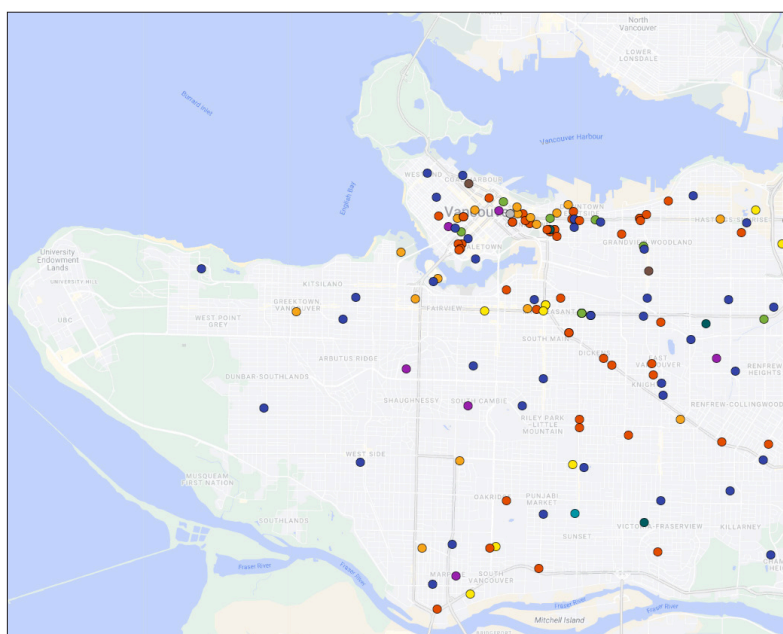
Distribution of Place Based Services

While the inventory examined the sector based on organization type, this component of the research seeks to provide analysis of the place-based services youth can access. **141 locations of place-based programming and services offered by 124 organizations were mapped.** Given the dynamic nature of youth programming and services this interactive map does not seek to provide a comprehensive list of all programs and services an organization offers. Rather, it seeks to identify locations of services that a youth in Vancouver could access in person, on a regular basis like youth centres in community centres co-operated by the Vancouver Parks Board and Community Centre Associations (CCA).

The author identifies that there may be gaps missing from the data for programming offered by organizations that do not own their own space but operate out of community spaces. For example, the Special Olympics offers a variety of programming across the city but does not have its own facility and as such those programs are not accounted for in this map. Further, this map does not include locations of community sports leagues or programming offered in schools in partnership with the Vancouver School Board. It also does not include the locations of services whose addresses are suppressed like safe houses.

When analyzing the distribution and clustering of service sites a few key patterns emerge. First is the clustering of organizations Downtown, in the Downtown Eastside, and in Mount Pleasant around Broadway and Main Street. **The Downtown neighbourhood has the highest number of service sites (26), followed by Strathcona (17), Mount Pleasant (15) and Kensington Cedar Cottage (12).** Community non-profit programs and services are primarily located on the east side of the city with very few organizations west of Granville Street. Given the high inequitable wealth distribution in the city, an assumption could be made that youth living on the west side of Vancouver have increased access to private sector services and therefore there is less need for non-profit programs and services. There is a trend in service sites being located along transit corridors like Broadway, Hastings Street, and Kingsway but the map also shows distribution within residential neighbourhoods where important community hubs like neighbourhood houses and community centre associations are generally located.

Figure 3: Distribution of Place Based Youth Services in Vancouver



Legend	# Sites
● Social services	50
● Development and housing	41
● Arts and Culture	19
● Education and research	9
● Sports and Recreation	8
● Health	6
● Environment	4
● Law, advocacy and politics	2
● Philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion	1
● Religion	1

Total place based service sites: 141

Key Findings on the Inventory of the Youth Sector

1. Gaps in Data

As the City of Vancouver (2020) notes, “data about Vancouver’s non-profit sector is sparse” (p.1) so narrowing the focus to organizations that serve a specific demographic group is even more challenging. While BC211 is a great resource for community, the data collected was not representative of the whole sector as only 126 organizations (65% of the final inventory) were sourced from this database. To add to the complexity of filling in gaps, there is no centralized information on non-profit youth sports leagues in the city. While sports are integral to the development and social connection of many youth, very little is known about their impact. Given the lack of centralized data on youth programming and services across the city, the author chose the Google My Maps platform due to its potential to be embedded into future BSCP materials and become a resource for youth.

2. Trends in Service Delivery

The inventory results reveal significant diversity in organization’s scope and approaches to serving and working with youth. The inventory analysis revealed five ways that organizations contribute to the wellbeing of youth, either directly through in person services, hybrid or online programming, or indirectly through the funding of organizations and advocating for issues affecting youth. While place based programs and services are the dominant delivery method, the author acknowledges how online, and hybrid programming are emerging since COVID-19. Further, while organizations were grouped into a primary delivery method, the author noted that many organizations are also actively engaged in advocacy and networking to work towards broader systems change.

3. Concentration of Services in East Vancouver

Spatial analysis reveals that there is a concentration of in person youth services in East Vancouver with the highest number of service locations in Downtown, Strathcona and Mount Pleasant. The spatial analysis shows while many organizations are located near transit corridors, there is consistent distribution within neighbourhoods which shows the importance of community hubs.

4. Gap in Research on Youth Organizing and Youth Governed Initiatives

While an in-depth analysis of programming was out of scope for this project, additional research should be conducted on how organizations approach youth work in relation to the Youth Engagement Continuum. It is recommended that further research be conducted on how organizations can support youth organizing “that trains young people in community organizing and advocacy and assists them in employing these skills to alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change in their communities.” (FCYO, 2000, p.10). The author also notes that the focus of this research was on non-profit organizations, but youth are organizing outside of non-profit spaces. Given the gap in research on grassroots initiatives created by youth (like Sustainabiliteens) it is recommended that further research examine youth led and youth governed initiatives.

Part 2: Strengths that Promote Service Capacity

Perceived Strengths of Organizations

This research seeks to promote the strengths of non-profits. Survey participants were asked to identify perceived strengths of their organizations (see Table 3), with the most selected answer being, **staff's ability to meaningfully connect with youth and meet their needs**. The second highest response was the sense of community in an organization and relationships between staff. This is notable because of the importance of organizational culture and staff having a sense of belonging to retention (Milbourn et al., 2019, McCole et al, 2012, 86). The third highest response was related to workplace diversity and having a staff team that represents community they work with. The last two strengths of note that received 50% or more response rate are related to structural and financial capacity including strong collaboration with other agencies and receiving consistent grant funding. Other strengths noted by participants included having a **philosophical approach to youth work "that it is about developing leadership and not dependency"**. This notion of shifting from an intervention approach to collective empowerment of youth was acknowledged by another participant who

noted a strength of their organization is **"having youth representation at decision making tables"** to ensure that youth give input on decisions that impact them.

What Staff Appreciate About the Youth Sector

During the focus group participants discussed what they appreciate about the sector and several patterns emerged. Most common was the sense of fulfillment in building relationships with youth and being a part of their personal growth. Similarly, other participants noted the personal significance to them about providing safe spaces and opportunity for youth. Other participants noted they appreciate the continuous learning, out of the box thinking and how every day feels like an adventure.

"Being able to create a space that I didn't have growing up where everyone feels safe. It's just nice to be in community with others and feel like you can just be yourself and be in your own skin."

(Focus group participant)

Table 3: What are the greatest strengths of your organization?

Category	Organizational Strengths	Response rate
Workforce	Staff's ability to meaningfully connect with youth and meet their needs	88%
Workforce	Strong community and positive relationships between staff	74%
Workforce	Diverse staff that represent community you work with	69%
Policies	Strong collaboration with other agencies	57%
Revenue	Consistent grant funding	52%
Expenses	Balanced budget	45%
Workforce	Ability to train and onboard staff	45%
Policies	Clear and well communicated HR policies and procedures	45%
Revenue	Consistent fundraising and sponsorships	40%
Volunteers	Committed and engaged volunteers	40%
Workforce	Strong retention of staff	38%
Volunteers	Ability to recruit and train volunteers	38%
Workforce	Ability to hire qualified staff	33%
Revenue	Healthy financial reserve	24%
Expenses	Low expenses	24%

Part 3: External Factors

Introduction

Literature on external factors influencing capacity often focuses on the funding and regulatory environment specific to non-profits, but there is a gap in understanding of how emerging social and community crises are affecting the sector. This section will explore the impact of the climate crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, movements for justice (like Black Lives Matter, and Every Child Matters) and the toxic drug crisis on youth and the youth sector. The author acknowledges that this is not an exhaustive list, and other crises like the affordable housing and homelessness crisis have considerable impacts on youth and the youth sector. Further, the author acknowledges these crises are interconnected and overlapping.

It is important to acknowledge that **equity seeking groups (including indigenous populations, immigrants, racialized folks, and people who use substances) are disproportionately impacted by the social and public health crises due to systemic racism and structural inequalities.** These crises have amplified, compounded, and created new forms of injustice, vulnerabilities, and burdens (Sultana, 2021, 447). The increased complexity of challenges community members face and how this impacts service providers will be discussed at the end of the section. The following sections will expand on topics that focus group participants discussed in more detail.

Climate Crisis

Increased Need

Focus group participants noted that unpredictable and increasingly extreme weather events add complexity to operations and create additional work for staff. While in some cases youth may have trouble getting to programs (due to extreme winter weather), participants noted that extreme weather also results in greater need. For example, during the heat dome many youth couldn't be at home due to their living conditions so attendance was higher in programs. Other participants noted that many organizations are providing crisis response for youth in unsafe situations during extreme weather but have a lack of resources to support this need.

Impact on Youth Mental Health

Participants discussed the impact on youth mental health with one participant saying many of the youth they work with have a mindset of “why bother even thinking what I want to do in the future, there won't be a future.” Other participants noted that many newcomer youth worry about their home countries.



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COVID-19

Innovation and Disrupting the Status Quo

As was seen in many sectors, COVID-19 forced youth sector organizations to examine how they operate and innovate. Some participants reflected on this positively as an “**opportunity** to figure out new ways to design and deliver programs”. Some participants discussed the challenges associated with developing new programming and services to meet emerging needs and finding creative ways to fund these programs. One participant noted that their organization was able to unlock new funding sources like donations from a hedge funder. Participants also noted that they saw lots of collaboration within the sector to problem solve emerging issues. Now that things have returned to a ‘new normal’, participants noted that many of their organizational processes have improved.

Many participants noted the innovation in programming and processes as a positive outcome, with some people noting their online programs have a further reach than their in-person ones. While virtual programming has its benefits, research points to how ‘third places’ (like libraries, community centres) support wellbeing through stimulation, support, protection and that the loss of these spaces have an impact on health (Finlay, 2019). The BCCDC notes that “young adults are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the closure of or restrictions on recreation facilities, fitness studios, parks, restaurants and cafes, and arts and cultural centres — spaces that are important to the facilitation of physical activity, social cohesion, and support.”

Stretched Operations

COVID-19 forced organizations to alter their operations overnight and with a lot of uncertainty. Staff from an

organization that continued their in-person programming throughout the COVID-19 pandemic noted that provincially mandated restrictions on maximum numbers required them to open more sites which resulted in higher operation costs for same number of people. Other participants noted that with more of their services online, their physical locations are less busy as less people are coming in person.

Changes in Volunteers

When restrictions were put in place in March 2020, altering in person programming included how volunteers engage in programs. Many organizations with in-person programming had to stop all volunteer shifts which has resulted in a loss of their volunteer base today. However other organizations noted that pivoting programming online resulted in an influx of volunteers because people had more time and could volunteer from home. They noted that many of these people have continued with the program and wait lists are now shorter than before COVID.



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Movements for Justice

Opportunity to Connect with Youth

While communities have been fighting for justice for decades, recent movements including Every Child Matters and Black Lives Matter have resulted in **“opportunity for youth sector staff to connect with youth on a different, deeper level.”** Participants discussed how having open and supportive conversation with youth are an opportunity for staff to learn from them and their experiences. For example, one participant noted that the youth they work with “teach [her] so much about gender equality”.

Trauma and Community Care

Participants noted that while movements for racial justice are essential, especially for Indigenous and racialized

folks, **“a lot of people face adversity because of the response to these movements and it’s causing a lot of trauma and hardship.”** One participant noted “increased political polarity can create unsafe environments for marginalized youth and staff, leading to student avoidance and staff burnout.” While participants noted how important these conversations with youth are there was also acknowledgment that there can be “pressure on folks supporting youth with these difficult conversations that are really emotionally bound, and in community care”.

Tokenism and Burden on Racialized Communities

It was noted that creating intentional space to speak about social justice movements and intersectionality in a facilitated space with someone that has lived experiences and is paid appropriately for their time is critical, but participants spoke to how requests to do this work can be problematic. A participant working with an organization that provide support for racialized communities noted they receive significant requests to facilitate events, trainings and workshops on anti-racism and anti-oppression. They noted that it’s very difficult not to agree to these requests because they know it’s important but “it’s making it very difficult to operate” because that’s not their organization’s main purpose. They also elaborated that not every racialized person is equipped to do training on anti-oppression or anti racism, “but **we’re almost treated like a monolith that everyone knows how it feels everyone knows exactly how to teach, it has the words for it.**” Participants noted that “anti-racism work is heavy and when it’s done on top of someone’s main role it can carry a burden.” There was a call from the group to increase awareness around not tokenizing people in those roles and to always pay them equitably for their labour.

Progress on Cultural Awareness

Many participants noted that movements for justice and calls to action have resulted in increased cultural awareness among staff and “opened a lot of conversations about the need to learn and unlearn.” One participant noted that “as people developing programing, we might unconsciously hold a lot of problematic and even harmful ideas about what is good, bad, right, wrong, useful” and that it’s important to challenge these biases to run programs that are responsive to community needs. One participant noted how increased conversations about neurodiversity has helped raise awareness about the importance of creating neuro affirming spaces. Participants also noted that these movements have encouraged the development of organizational equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies and created opportunity for professional development and training on topics like trauma informed response.

Toxic Drug Crisis

Grief in Community

Participants discussed how the toxic supply crisis is resulting in “so much loss in community” particularly in the Downtown Eastside but that there is not enough support or time for adults to grieve. One participant spoke to a trickle-down effect “when a parent is not given the time to grieve, they don’t take care of themselves, have lower capacity to spend with their kids but also their kids don’t go to school, and then you see absenteeism.” Participants noted that neglect and the involvement of child protection removing youth their homes can create a negative cycle that perpetuates issues. It was noted, the toxic drug supply and community grief in the Downtown Eastside has made the neighbourhood feel less safe and predictable.

Youth Experiencing Trauma

Participants discussed how many of the youth they work with witness drug use and overdose at home. Further, seeing family members and friends in “continual cycle of relapse and recovery” and losing loved ones has a devastating mental and emotional impact. It was also noted that with a high rate of youth overdose, youth having to revive each other which is traumatic.

Substance Use, Shame and Danger

A common theme throughout the focus group discussion was how shame and stigma around youth substance use can push youth into dangerous situations. Participants noted that the increased shame around substance use and “the isolation of youth from the pandemic has led to more youth substance dependence.” **One participant noted that because of shame, even if youth have relationships with staff, they may not ask for support.** They noted staff are seeing more youth overdosing in parks as there’s shame to use drugs in the building. Multiple participants noted the dangers associated with youth hiding substance use and getting pushed into adult spaces “where exploitation can be high knowing they’ll leave with a lower state of consciousness.”

Barriers to Action

Participants talked about frustration around the moralistic barrier to action because “even though we know its best practice, there are no youth overdose prevention sites in Vancouver.” Participants further discussed how their own organizations policies that ban the use of services if youth are under the influence can perpetuate issues of youth getting pushed into dangerous spaces. Participants noted that it can be challenging for youth to get safe supply because physicians may be reluctant due to their age. Participants assert, there is a need for harm reduction facilities for young people in Vancouver.



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Key Findings on External Factors:

1. Intersectionality and Increased Complexity

While the crises and movements for justice highlighted in this report are reported individually, in reality they intersect each other, and compound issues. These crises have undoubtedly impacted all youth across the city but for the most vulnerable youth it has increased the complexity of their challenges. One participant said, “the barriers and challenges that vulnerable youth were already facing before all of this have now increased tenfold.”

Building off this, another participant noted how increased complexity puts pressure on an already strained system and workforce. They said, “if staff don’t have the capacity, training, support, or compensation to be able to support and the system in itself is already really struggling, I think about the resultant impacts on staff and the snowball effect”. While many staff may not live in the community they work in, one participant who works in the Downtown Eastside noted the challenges their youth staff who are from the community face. They said, “these staff are never off the clock, they are working 24/7 because they live and work in the community. You can see when there’s a lot going on in their lives, they come to work late consistently or their going through mental health challenges.”

2. Impact on Youth and Staff Mental Health

It was noted that each of these environmental external factors (climate crisis, COVID-19, toxic drug crisis, and movements for justice) have exacerbated mental health issues of youth and staff working with youth. In regards to COVID, the observations of participants on the impacts of isolation on youth mental is re-inforced by research from the BCCDC (2021) that found COVID-19 resulted in declining physical activity, sleep disruptions, inadequate nutrition, increased substance use, disruptions to education and job training and decreased social connections which contributed to “a substantial increase in mental health concerns” among youth (p. 4).

One participant noted for their community “the external factors listed here are so serious on our end. It’s mentally debilitating and affecting their day to day lives. I get shocked sometimes about how they’re even surviving. Like, it’s really intense resistance every day.” Participants noted how given the deep relationships many staff build with youth, supporting them through difficult challenges like addiction, overdose and mental health crises can have a significant emotional impact and contribute to staff burnout. This then can perpetuate a cycle where youth lose connection with a trusted adult which can impact their development and growth.

3. Long Term Impacts on Youth

Further, it was noted that these crises and movements for justice will have significant lasting impacts. As one participant said, “it’s not just something that is happening in this moment, they’re going to have impacts and consequences for years to come.” While research on the long term impacts of COVID on youth is still emergent, there have been findings on the widespread learning loss among youth due to disruption of school and supports during the pandemic. Participants in our focus group working in the education field speculate that this “could impact youth for their lifetime”. These findings also “demonstrate that the pandemic increased educational inequality between youth from different social economic backgrounds” (Bronfenbrenner Centre, 2023, n.p.) as youth from lower-income families lost more learning compared to those from higher income families. Additionally, the climate crisis poses a significant long-term impacts on the lives of youth with “lifelong impacts of their physical and mental health” (Sanson et. al., 2019, 201). Research on Black Lives Matter shows that “adolescents did report stressful experiences and emotions when engaging with BLM. However, these experiences and emotions are essential for development and can motivate adolescents to address the injustices they witness and encounter in their lives” (Hathaway, 2021, n.d.)

4. Youth Passion and Mobilization

While much of the discussion was on the negative impacts of these crises, many of the participants noted how passionate many of the youth they work with are to tackle social issues and be agents of change in their communities. A trend in less apathy and more social involvement was noted with youth being engaged in dialogue and protest. Participants noted that the climate crisis, gender identity and LGBTQ rights have been a vehicle for staff to engage with youth engagement and involve in programming. Other participants talked about youth seeing gaps and driving projects themselves, including youth from a high school wanting to support the next generation of youth with a homework club at their local elementary school.



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Part 4: Capacity Challenges

Introduction

It has long been known that “non-profits are finding themselves having to do increasingly more with substantially less” (Levine and Joseph, 2019, 3) but the discussion on the impacts of social crises and movements for justice show this is more intensified than ever before. This section seeks to explore financial and human resources capacity issues in more depth.

Financial Capacity Issues

There is significant literature on how regulatory funding environments affect the financial capacity of non-profits. This includes the impact of government downloading and cutbacks, restrictions on funding that emphasizes project costs with little support for administrative and operating costs, difficulty accessing corporate sponsorship, and increased demand for financial accountability (Hall et al., 2003; Gregory and Howard, 2009). This research confirms these long-held issues effect the Vancouver youth sector and are further compounded by other external factors including inflation and the high cost of living in Vancouver. While organizations are facing many financial capacity issues (see Table 4), this section will expand on topics that focus group participants discussed in more detail:

Increase in Program Costs

Non-profits tend to operate on tight budgets, so it is unsurprising that sky rocking costs of consumable supplies like food, art materials or sports equipment are impacting capacity. Focus group participants noted that many youth and families are struggling to meet their basic needs as well, and from a service provider perspective “supporting basic needs on top of your programming is intimidating”. With tight budgets, increased costs, and increased need, focus group participants **“worry that [they] won’t have enough for everyone”**.

Time and Resources to Apply for Grants

While the burden to apply for grants is felt by most non-profits, this research shows unique challenges in the youth sector. Many youth sector organizations recognize the importance of planning programs by and with youth, and youth are coming to the table with ideas, but an issue arises with funding. One participant said, “granting is very restrictive and youth experience time in a different way so while to an adult working in this field it is understandable that if we receive the grant, we won’t get the money for four months. If a youth is excited about a project, you

want to have the momentum to get it started. If you must wait four months for the money the youth may lose interest.”

Restrictions on the Use of Grant Funding

Restrictions on use of funds has been well documented and is closely related to the non-profit starvation model. It is very common for grants to fund program expenses but not admin or capital costs. Participants expressed that “funders expect high levels admin support but don’t want to pay for it. There is an assumption that larger organizations have more undesignated funds to offset what funders don’t want to pay for.” These restrictions have a significant effect on an organizations ability to support their staff. One participant noted, provincial funding capped administrative costs at 10% which was “not enough to cover administrative costs, never mind funding to support retention and cost-of-living increases”.

Time and Resources for Grant Reporting

Related to the burden to apply is the burden to report back to funders. One participant gave an example and said “If I apply for a \$10,000 grant but there’s like, literally 50 hours in grant reporting for this. Is that even worth to for the hours?”

Table 4: Which of the financial capacity challenges effects your ability to offer services to youth?

Category	Financial Capacity Challenges	Percent
Expenses	Increase in program costs	83%
Expenses	Increase in staff salaries and/or benefit cost	79%
Revenue	Time/ resources to apply for grants	79%
Revenue	Restrictions on the use of grant funding	64%
Revenue	Time/ resources for grant reporting	64%
Revenue	Time/ resources for corporate and individual donor fundraising	57%
Expenses	Increase in professional development services:	48%
Expenses	Increase in technology /telecommunications costs	48%
Expenses	Increase in rent, renovation costs, utilities	43%
Revenue	Decrease in revenue due to COVID funding ending	40%
Expenses	Increase in insurance costs	40%
Revenue	Effects of decreased revenue from programs/services during COVID	31%
Expenses	Increase in marketing costs	21%

Human Resources Capacity

Issues

Human resources capacity challenges are common across the non-profit sector, however unique challenges arise in the youth sector. When comparing survey results to Statistics Canada (2022) Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, **issues related to recruiting and hiring staff are notably worse in the youth sector** (see Table 5). While 42.5% of BC non-profits surveyed in the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions noted challenges with recruiting skilled employees, 76% of respondents in our survey noted this as a challenge. An even large gap emerges with the retention of skilled employees. In the BC non-profit sector 28.5% surveyed noted this as a challenge while 64% of respondents in the Vancouver youth sector noted this as a challenge. The survey shows high rates of response to human capacity issues (see Table 6). This section will highlight some of the focus group findings related to some of the top human resources issues in the Vancouver Non-profit Sector.

Table 5: Challenges Facing BC NPOs Serving Individuals Compared to the Vancouver Non-Profit Youth Sector

Capacity Challenge	BC NPO	Vancouver Youth Sector
Volunteer retention	53.6% ¹	55%
Shortage of new volunteers	75.2% ¹	55%
Recruiting skilled employees	42.5% ²	76%
Retaining skilled employees	28.5% ²	64%

1. Data source: Statistics Canada. (2022). Table 33-10-0603-01
2. Data source: Statistics Canada. (2022). Table 33-10-0617-01

Table 6: Which of the following human resources capacity challenges effects your organization's ability to offer programs or services to youth?

Category	Human Resources Capacity Challenges	Percent
Workforce	Staffing levels and workload	83%
Workforce	Recruiting and hiring	76%
Work conditions	Burnout	76%
Work conditions	High levels of stress	74%
Work conditions	Staff training and professional development	69%
Workforce	Retention	64%
Volunteers	Recruiting volunteers	55%
Volunteers	Retention and lack of commitment	55%
Work conditions	Safety concerns related to COVID exposure:	31%
Work conditions	Safety concerns related to violence	29%
Policies	Lack of internal policies and procedures	24%
Policies	Lack of board policies and procedures	10%



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Staffing Levels and Workload

As discussed in the external factors section, compounding crises are resulting in increased challenges for vulnerable youth. Staff are seeing more complex cases and increased workload. This is then compounded by difficulties funding new positions and recruiting new staff. Being overworked then contributes to burnout and retention issues.

Recruiting and Hiring

The Vancouver youth sector faces multiple layers of challenges with recruitment and hiring. Not only do many youth sector jobs require post-secondary education, but compensation “has been too low for too long” (Federation of Community Social Services of BC) and in Vancouver specifically service participants expressed having “difficulty offering competitive wages for living in the City of Vancouver”. These issues are then compounded by a “shortage of time for management staff to recruit, onboard and mentor staff”. Low compensation and skill requirements are seen to affect people’s choice to enter a career in youth services in the first place. This was expressed by one participant who said, there is “not enough qualified staff to hire”.

Burnout

The Centre for Addition and Mental Health (2023) defines burnout as “a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress” (n.p). Burnout generally stems from being overworked and can make people feel emotionally drained, helpless, hopeless. Burnout is also a component of compassion fatigue which refers to the negative emotions that people feel from helping other at work. Focus group participants discussed the emotional impact that youth work can have on staff. One participant noted that “**staff are getting vicarious trauma through the situations they are dealing with on the ground**” and that a lot of staff struggle with the traumatic stress because they don’t know how to compartmentalize.

Staff Training and Professional Development

Participants noted issues with staff training and onboarding are related to management not having enough time and organizations lacking an HR department. Issues were noted with training seasonal staff with one participant saying, “even though we have great training it’s hard to teach some of these more complex strategies to clinicalize the work”.

Retention

The Federation of Community Social Services of BC notes that province wide the “community social services sector has a workforce that is stressed, overworked, and strained with high turnover rates”. Not only does turnover effect organizational efficiency but it is especially concerning in the youth sector due to the role of staff in supporting youth through difficult experiences. One participant said, **“when we’re thinking about trauma and attachment for youth, a lot of trauma happens in relationships but a lot of healing from trauma also happens in relationships. If there’s an issue with retention and people aren’t sticking with young people, it could affect their growth.”**



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Key Findings on Capacity Challenges

1. Issues are Interconnected and Compound

A reoccurring theme of the focus group was how financial capacity issues and human resources issues are interconnected. One participant gave an example of being able to “get funding but then not having staff to create the program”. It is clear how many of these challenges make other challenges worse as they feed into each other. For example, if staff are overworked, have high levels of stress but are poorly compensated and other staff don’t have capacity to support them, they may burnout and then leave the organization, but the organization may then struggle to hire someone new to replace them.

2. Organizations Face Many Challenges

The frequency of response to the survey questions on capacity challenges was high with majority (50% or more) of survey respondents selecting six or more financial capacity challenges out of a possible 13 choices. This pattern was also reflected in the human resources capacity challenge question where majority of respondents selected seven or more challenges out of a possible 12. This high frequency confirms the assumption that most organizations are dealing with many capacity challenges.

It was observed that seeing the survey results and being able to talk to other youth sector staff going through similar challenges resulted in a sense of relief in the focus groups. One participant said, “I actually feel better. This data like I should have searched for this earlier, because this is exactly what my organization deals with.”

3. Capacity Significantly Impacted by Crises

As noted in Part 3, the youth sector is being called on to support the increased challenges and complexity facing youth due to the climate crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, movements for justice and the toxic drug crisis. Service providers are seeing an increase in demand for services while already struggling with financial and human resources challenges. It is noted that these crises will have long term effects on youth and as such focus group participants worry about the snowball effect on youth if staff are not being compensated or supported to take on this increased need and complexity.

Part 5: Collaboration

Introduction

Collaboration can be defined simply as “two or more organizations working together to achieve the same goal” (Fish, 2019, n.p.). Research suggests that three core reasons non-profits collaborate is to increase operational efficiency, effectiveness and drive social and systems change (Samali et. al, 2016, n.p.). This is reflective in the survey findings in which participants overwhelmingly noted that their **organization collaborates with other agencies to better serve youth, learn from others in the sector and drive broader social change** (see Table 7). Focus group participants noted that while there may be barriers to engage in collaboration, it is worth it in the long run because collaboration is the way to move from band aid solutions to systems change. While there is consensus on the benefits of collaboration, there is a gap between current efforts and an ideal state. This section will identify what barriers inhibit efforts, what helps make collaboration successful, and what youth sector staff want to see.

Table 7: Why does your organization collaborate and coordinate with other agencies?

Collaboration strengths	Percent
To better serve youth	90%
To learn from others in our sector	81%
To drive broader social change	79%
To help problem solve	71%
To expand reach and visibility of our work	69%
To support professional development and career advancement	55%
Not applicable/ unsure	5%

Current Collaboration Efforts

Survey results show that common current collaboration efforts include joint programming and events (86%), network groups or policy tables (62%) and joint case management efforts like safety tables (52%) (see Table 8). Other coordination efforts include youth referrals to other agencies (76%) and sharing information through communication channels (64%). These efforts are not examples of direct collaboration between agencies but are important to consider when thinking about how the sector is working together to ensure youth are connected to appropriate services. While all types of collaboration efforts were acknowledged as important, participants went into depth about why round tables and networks

are valuable. Participants noted the importance for youth sector staff to have spaces to build networks, share issues they're facing, problem solve and process their experiences. It was noted that youth work can sometimes be emotionally difficult and “feel lonely” so meeting with people going through similar experiences can help people feel connected, fill up their cup and motivate them to keep going. Further, these spaces ensure people are not “reinventing the wheel”.

Table 8: How does your organization collaborate and coordinate with other agencies?

Types of collaboration	Percent
Joint events and programming	86%
Youth referrals to other agencies	76%
Sharing information through communication channels	64%
Round tables, network group or policy tables	62%
Case management and joint interventions	52%
Joint research projects	45%
Joint advocacy or policy initiatives	36%
Joint fundraising	31%
Sharing administrative functions	21%
Not applicable/ unsure	2%

Collaboration Challenges

Focus group discussion revealed that while staff are keen to collaborate putting talk into action can be difficult due to individual workloads, organizational resources, and issues with the systems in place. This section will explore three key collaboration challenges:

1. Going from Talk to Action with Collaborative Programming

Survey results showed the most significant challenge to collaboration is seen to be time to create and sustain connections. This was affirmed in the focus groups where participants acknowledged that building trust and maintaining relationships takes time but that many youth sector staff are overworked and are not able to dedicate the time relationship building requires. Participants also noted how turnover and retention issues in the sector can perpetuate this challenge by interrupting the process and making it difficult to regain momentum with a new staff member.

One participant noted in the case of funding opportunities that encourages collaboration but does not require it they probably won't seek to collaborate because they "don't have the time and resources to reach out to organizations". Even though they noted collaborative work is "awesome" they elaborated that these ventures are risky because of the extra time you need to spend to "figure out whether if [organizations are] actually going to work well together". Further, other participants noted even if you want to take the risk to collaborate usually "deadlines are so tight there is no time to meaningfully collaborate".

On top of the difficulty to get a collaborative effort up and running participants noted issues with implementation. While executive level staff are often the ones to apply for grants and organize partnerships, participants noted gaps between the plans and partnerships that are drawn up and the reality facing on the ground staff implementing programs.

2. Inequitable processes

While agencies, youth sector staff and youth may be keen partners in collaboration participants note issues with meaningful participation in the process. When bringing people into a collaboration effort moving at the speed of trust and meeting people where they are at is critical, but participants note that this was often a barrier. For example, participants expressed frustration with collaboration processes that "expect youth to step into adult spaces without building trust first". Further participants noted experiencing a lack of cultural understanding and resistance to deviate from status quo ways of doing things when sitting at collaborating tables and meetings. One participant noted that for Indigenous focused organizations they have to really advocate for the ways they do things and "when [they] explain why we want to use a different strategy or a different approach, it's met with a lot of resistance which is quite exhausting".

3. Access to Information and Privacy Laws

With case management collaboration participants noted frustration in the information they have access to. While a youth may have gone through multiple programs, services, and schools, information on their experiences with other organizations and the school board is bound by privacy laws. Participants noted that when a youth gets referred to their program staff have very little access information on their needs and background. One participant noted that if they were able to talk to a staff from an organization that the youth was with before to learn about what they need and what they respond best to, "that would change everything for a kid". They noted that the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) can share a youth's file, but it depends on the social workers and "it's so many hoops to jump through".

Keys to Successful Collaboration

While there are many barriers to collaboration, focus group participants touched on a few things that can help make collaboration between agencies successful:

- Honouring relationships between organizations.
- Moving at the speed of trust.
- Working towards a shared goal.
- Bringing in youth and folks with lived experiences to the decision-making table.
- Low barrier requests from agencies and in-kind support.
- Geographic proximity, because it's easier to organize when organizations are close together.



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What Youth Sector Staff Want to See

After discussing what's working, and what's not working focus group participants generated ideas on what they want to see in collaboration efforts moving forward. Three key themes emerged:

1. Improved Systems and Infrastructure for Collaboration

Focus group participants discussed how levels of government and advocacy organizations could support organizations in collaboration through improved systems. In thinking about grant applications, rather than organizations all re-inventing the wheel participants want to see more "spaces to see what each other has proposed and see if there is a way to combine forces." Alternatively, there was discussion around how the grantors could do some of that leg work. Since they're seeing all the proposals come in, participants noted that it would be helpful if they could find areas where there is replication and then connect those agencies to see if they are open to collaboration. It was noted that while this would help make connections and prevent duplicated efforts, it would be important to build consent into this process.

There was also a sense of a need for a change in mindset around collaboration. One participant noted that many organizations are insular in their growth and because of perfectionism are reluctant to discuss a new initiative until its done. In order to move past this, it was noted that organizations should adopt an “I don’t know what I don’t know” mindset. Being open to learn from other people and organizations without an expert mentality can help open communication and engage with the community further down the project line.

2. Spaces for Front Line Workers

It was noted that many organized collaboration efforts like networks and safety tables are organized for supervisors, senior management, funders, and policy makers. Focus group participants called for more spaces for front line staff to gather amongst themselves to help problem solve the challenges in their day-to-day work. In addition, it was noted that these staff with on the ground experience should be included in more making decisions spaces as they are generally interacting with youth in the most direct way.

3. Meaningful Inclusion of Youth

While much of the discussion on collaboration was looking at inter-agency coordinating, participants stressed the importance of collaborating and co-creating with youth directly. It was noted decisions for youth should be made with youth and therefore collaboration efforts in the sector should include youth at the table. One participant noted that they often see a disconnect between “what adults think youth want and what youth actually want” so it’s important to have their voices heard. Another participant said, “instead of just consulting [youth], apply their lived experiences”.

Key Findings on Collaboration

1. Organizational Capacity Challenges Resulting in Collaboration Challenges

There is strong consensus from youth sector staff on the benefits of collaboration but moving from talk to action is a challenge. Even though people want to collaborate in theory, organizational capacity challenges like staff having heavy workloads, limited time, and a lack of financial stability to take risks result in challenges to make collaboration happen. This can result in staff and organizations working in silos which runs the risk of people re-inventing the wheel. It was noted that given organizational capacity issues it is important for other levels of government and capacity building agencies to build more platforms and spaces for collaboration. However, these spaces and processes must move at the speed of trust and be culturally responsive.

2. Ideas to Foster Collaboration

Focus group participants noted three ways collaboration in the youth sector can be strengthened:

- Improved systems for collaboration including more meaningful funding and networking opportunities to connect, share ideas and prevent duplication.
- Spaces for front line workers to connect.
- Meaningful inclusion of youth to ensure decisions are centred in the lived experiences and needs of youth.



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Conclusion

Limitations

This research sought to offer a baseline assessment on a broad range of trends and challenges in the Vancouver non profit youth sector. The author notes that the findings for each section are not exhaustive but rather seek to understand the perceptions of Vancouver youth sector staff on a high level. The author notes sample size is a limitation of this research. In total 67 individuals were engaged in this research. With that said, since the survey was anonymous it is unknown how many people both responded to the survey and attended the focus groups, and are therefore counted twice. Further, the author notes potential error in the survey and focus group sampling. The author sought wide coverage with survey and focus group invitations rather than targeting specific organizations to ensure representation from all areas of the city, service function (ICNPO) or communities served. Due to the general approach some parts of the sector may not be represented in this research. For example no community youth sports leagues were contacted with an invitation. Therefore, the author acknowledges that the findings in this report reflect the experiences of the staff engaged in the process and the specific communities they work with. The author also acknowledges that this research did not consider youth's perceptions of the youth sector.

Key Messages

This research affirms that the youth sector is doing increasingly more with substantially less. While staff are immensely passionate about the work they do and the relationships they build with youth, they are generally undercompensated, overworked and participants noted many staff struggle with their mental health because of the job. This conclusion goes back to the research questions to identify key messages:

Research question 1: What organizations in Vancouver currently provide programs and services to youth (ages 12-24)?

It was found that 195 organizations are serving youth aged 12-24 in various ways (in person, online, providing funding, advocating for youth and issues effecting youth, and building networks/ coalitions). As for in person programs and services it was found that 141 in person service locations exist operated by 124 organizations.

Research question 2: What strengths of youth focused organizations promote service capacity?

Strengths that promote service capacity include staff's ability to connect with youth and meet their needs, a

sense of community in an organization and relationships between staff, workplace diversity, collaboration with other agencies and receiving consistent grant funding. Other strengths noted by participants included having a philosophical approach to youth work that it is about developing leadership and not dependency and having youth representation at decision making tables" to ensure that youth give input on decisions that impact them.

Research question 3: How are external factors impacting service capacity and service delivery?

External factors are having a significant impact on service capacity due to staff burnout and trauma, increasing need, changes to operations, and tokenism. Participants noted the many ways in which these crises and movements are having a profound impact on youth including an increase in mental health issues, trauma, increased substance use and shame that will likely have long term consequences. Youth sector organizations are being called on to support the increased complexity of challenges facing youth.

Research question 4: What organizational capacity issues are youth focused organizations facing?

Youth focused organizations are facing many financial and human resources issues that intersect each other and compound. The most common human resources challenges include: staffing levels and workload, issues with recruiting and hiring, burnout, high levels of stress and mental health concerns, low resources for training and professional development and retention. The most common financial capacity challenges include: increasing program costs, increasing staff salaries, time required to apply for grants, restrictions on the use of grants, and time required for grant reporting. The sector is being called on to do more with less but are facing significant human resources issues to do so.

Research question 5: How are youth focused organizations collaborating?

It was found that youth sector staff agree on the importance of collaboration but structural and organizational barriers exist to move from theory and talk to action. Organizations are collaborating through program partners and joint programming, networks and round tables and case management. It was found that to make collaboration more effective there needs to be coordination from levels or government and network based agencies, more opportunities for front line staff and more collaboration with youth directly - ensuring decisions made for youth and made by youth. This research focused on inter-agency collaboration but additional research should be conducted on collaboration between the public and non profit sectors.

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Appendix A: ICNPO Categories

Group	Description
Group 1: Culture and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media and communications. Production and dissemination of information and communication; includes radio and TV stations; publishing of books, journals, newspapers and newsletters; film production; and libraries. • Visual arts, architecture, ceramic art. Production, dissemination and display of visual arts and architecture; includes sculpture, photographic societies, painting, drawing, design centers and architectural associations. • Performing arts. Performing arts centers, companies and associations; includes theatre, dance, ballet, opera, orchestras, choral and music ensembles. • Historical, literary and humanistic societies. Promotion and appreciation of the humanities, preservation of historical and cultural artefacts and commemoration of historical events; includes historical societies, poetry and literary societies, language associations, reading promotion, war memorials and commemorative funds and associations. • Museums. General and specialized museums covering art, history, sciences, technology and culture. • Zoos and aquariums. • Sports. Provision of amateur sport, training, physical fitness and sport competition services and events; includes fitness and wellness centers. • Recreation and social clubs. Provision of recreational facilities and services to individuals and communities; includes playground associations, country clubs, men's and women's clubs, touring clubs and leisure clubs. • Service clubs. Membership organizations providing services to members and local communities, for example Lions, Zonta International, Rotary Club and Kiwanis.
Group 2: Education and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary, primary and secondary education: Education at elementary, primary and secondary levels; includes pre-school organizations other than day care. • Higher education: Higher learning, providing academic degrees; includes universities, business management schools, law schools, medical schools. • Vocational/technical schools: Technical and vocational training specifically geared towards gaining employment; includes trade schools, paralegal training and secretarial schools. • Adult/continuing education: Institutions engaged in providing education and training in addition to the formal educational system; includes schools of continuing studies, correspondence schools, night schools and sponsored literacy and reading programs • Medical research: Research in the medical field; includes research on specific diseases, disorders, or medical disciplines. • Science and technology: Research in the physical and life sciences and engineering and technology. • Social sciences, policy studies: Research and analysis in the social sciences and policy area.
Group 3: Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitals. Primarily inpatient medical care and treatment. • Rehabilitation. Inpatient health care and rehabilitative therapy to individuals suffering from physical impairments due to injury, genetic defect, or disease and requiring extensive physiotherapy or similar forms of care. • Nursing homes. Inpatient convalescent care, residential care, as well as primary health care services; includes homes for the frail elderly and nursing homes for the severely handicapped. • Psychiatric hospitals. Inpatient care and treatment for the mentally ill. • Mental health treatment. Outpatient treatment for mentally ill patients; includes community mental health centers and halfway homes. • Crisis intervention. Outpatient services and counsel in acute mental health situations; includes suicide prevention and support to victims of assault and abuse. • Public health and wellness education. Public health promotion and health education; includes sanitation screening for potential health hazards, first aid training and services and family planning services. • Health treatment, primarily outpatient. Organizations that provide primarily outpatient health services e.g., health clinics and vaccination centers. • Rehabilitative medical services. Outpatient therapeutic care; includes nature cure centers, yoga clinics and physical therapy centers. • Emergency medical services. Services to persons in need of immediate care; includes ambulatory services and paramedical emergency care, shock/trauma programs, lifeline programs and ambulance services.
Group 4: Social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child welfare, child services and day care. Services to children, adoption services, child development centers, foster care; includes infant care centers and nurseries. • Youth services and youth welfare. Services to youth; includes delinquency prevention services, teen pregnancy prevention, drop-out prevention, youth centers and clubs and job programs for youth; includes Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. • Family services. Services to families; includes family life/parent education, single parent agencies and services and family violence shelters and services. • Services for the handicapped. Services for the handicapped; includes homes, other than nursing homes, transport facilities, recreation and other specialized services. • Services for the elderly. Organizations providing geriatric care; includes in-home services, homemaker services, transport facilities, recreation, meal programs and other services geared towards senior citizens (does not include residential nursing homes). • Self-help and other personal social services. Programs and services for self-help and personal development; includes support groups, personal counselling and credit counselling/money management services. • Disaster/emergency prevention and control. Organizations that work to prevent, predict, control and alleviate the effects of disasters, to educate or otherwise prepare individuals to cope with the effects of disasters, or to provide relief to disaster victims; includes volunteer fire departments, lifeboat services, etc. • Temporary shelters. Organizations providing temporary shelters to the homeless; includes traveller's aid and temporary housing. • Refugee assistance. Organizations providing food, clothing, shelter and services to refugees and immigrants. • Income support and maintenance. Organizations providing cash assistance and other forms of direct services to persons unable to maintain a livelihood • Material assistance. Organizations providing food, clothing, transport and other forms of assistance; includes food banks and clothing distribution centers.

Group 5: Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution abatement and control. Organizations that promote clean air, clean water, reducing and preventing noise pollution, radiation control, treatment of hazardous wastes and toxic substances, solid waste management and recycling programs. • Natural resources conservation and protection. Conservation and preservation of natural resources, including land, water, energy and plant resources for the general use and enjoyment of the public. • Environmental beautification and open spaces. Botanical gardens, arboreta, horticultural programs and landscape services; organizations promoting anti-litter campaigns; programs to preserve the parks, green spaces and open spaces in urban or rural areas; and city and highway beautification programs. • Animal protection and welfare. Animal protection and welfare services; includes animal shelters and humane societies. • Wildlife preservation and protection. Wildlife preservation and protection; includes sanctuaries and refuges. • Veterinary services. Animal hospitals and services providing care to farm and household animals and pets.
Group 6: Development and housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and neighbourhood organizations. Organizations working towards improving the quality of life within communities or neighbourhoods, e.g., squatters' associations, local development organizations, poor people's cooperatives. • Economic development. Programs and services to improve economic infrastructure and capacity; includes building of infrastructure like roads; and financial services such as credit and savings associations, entrepreneurial programs, technical and managerial consulting and rural development assistance. • Social development. Organizations working towards improving the institutional infrastructure and capacity to alleviate social problems and to improve general public well-being. • Housing associations. Development, construction, management, leasing, financing and rehabilitation of housing. • Housing assistance. Organizations providing housing search, legal services and related assistance. • Job training programs. Organizations providing and supporting apprenticeship programs, internships, on-the-job training and other training programs. • Vocational counselling and guidance. Vocational training and guidance, career counselling, testing and related services. • Vocational rehabilitation and sheltered workshops. Organizations that promote self-sufficiency and income generation through job training and employment.
Group 7: Law, advocacy and politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy organizations. Organizations that protect the rights and promote the interests of specific groups of people, e.g., the physically handicapped, the elderly, children and women. • Civil rights associations. Organizations that work to protect or preserve individual civil liberties and human rights. • Ethnic associations. Organizations that promote the interests of, or provide services to, members belonging to a specific ethnic heritage. • Civic associations. Programs and services to encourage and spread civic mindedness. • Legal services. Legal services, advice and assistance in dispute resolution and court-related matters. • Crime prevention and public policy. Crime prevention to promote safety and precautionary measures among citizens. • Rehabilitation of offenders. Programs and services to reintegrate offenders; includes halfway houses, probation and parole programs, prison alternatives. • Victim support. Services, counsel and advice to victims of crime. • Consumer protection associations. Protection of consumer rights and the improvement of product control and quality. • Political parties and organizations. Activities and services to support the placing of particular candidates into political office; includes dissemination of information, public relations and political fundraising.
Group 8: Philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant-making foundations: Private foundations; including corporate foundations, community foundations and independent public-law foundations. • Voluntarism promotion and support: Organizations that recruit, train and place volunteers and promote volunteering. • Fund-raising organizations: Federated, collective fundraising organizations; includes lotteries.
Group 9: International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange/friendship/cultural programs: Programs and services designed to encourage mutual respect and friendship internationally. • Development assistance associations: Programs and projects that promote social and economic development abroad. • International disaster and relief organizations: Organizations that collect, channel and provide aid to other countries during times of disaster or emergency. • International human rights and peace organizations: Organizations which promote and monitor human rights and peace internationally.
Group 10: Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregations: Churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, shrines, monasteries, seminaries and similar organizations promoting religious beliefs and administering religious services and rituals. • Associations of congregations: Associations and auxiliaries of religious congregations and organizations supporting and promoting religious beliefs, services and rituals.
Group 11: Business and professional associations, unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business associations: Organizations that work to promote, regulate and safeguard the interests of special branches of business, e.g., manufacturers' association, farmers' association, bankers' association. • Professional associations: Organizations promoting, regulating and protecting professional interests, e.g., bar association, medical association. • Labour unions: Organizations that promote, protect and regulate the rights and interests of employees.
Group 12: [Not elsewhere classified]	

Appendix B: Survey

Project Background

On November 30 the City of Vancouver Social Policy and Projects Division launched the Building Safer Communities Program (BSCP) that seeks to prevent and address the root cause of youth violence, create safe spaces, and empower young people to develop and implement solutions. We are currently in phase 1 of this project including a capacity assessment of community-based youth-serving organizations in Vancouver. For the purpose of this project, we define capacity as the ability to deliver programming and services in a way that fulfills your organizations mission or goals. We are interested in the factors that constrain and build capacity.

In partnership with the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, staff seek to understand capacity challenges facing youth-serving organizations, how organizations are collaborating and coordinating, and the strengths that help organizations serve their community. Recognizing the integral role of the youth sector in supporting and mobilizing youth, this research hopes to centre the voices of service providers through responses from this survey and focus groups (to be held February 2023). We invite any staff that work with youth or supervise youth programming to participate as we value the different experiences and opinions that staff at the same organization may have. The survey is expected to take 10 minutes, and all answers are anonymous.

Introduction

1. What is your role? (Select one)
 - a. Front line staff
 - b. Supervisor (e.g., Program Coordinator)
 - c. Senior Management (e.g., Executive Director/Director)

2. What is the size of your organization? (Select one)
 - a. Small (annual operating budget under \$1M)
 - b. Medium (annual operating budget \$1M - \$5M)
 - c. Large (annual operating budget \$5M -\$10M)
 - d. Very Large (annual operating budget over \$10M)

Capacity Challenges

3. Which of the following financial capacity challenges affects your organization's ability to offer programs or services to youth? (Select all that apply)

Revenue

- a. Restrictions on the use of grant funding (e.g., restricted to programs and not operating expenses)
- b. Time and resources required to apply for grants
- c. Time and resources required for reporting and evaluation for grant funding
- d. Time and resources required for corporate and individual donor fundraising (monthly donors, corporate sponsorship, fundraising events)
- e. Effects of decreased revenue from programs and service during COVID
- f. Decrease in revenue due to COVID related funding sources ending

Expenses

- g. Increase in insurance costs
- h. Increase in marketing costs
- i. Increase in programs costs (e.g., food, art supplies)
- j. Increase in professional development services
- k. Increase in rent/ renovations/ utilities costs
- l. Increase in staff salaries/ benefit-related costs
- m. Increase in technology and telecommunications costs (e.g., zoom memberships, electronics)

Other – please explain

4. Which of the following human resources capacity challenges effects your organization's ability to offer programs or services to youth? (Select all that apply)

Workforce

- a. Staffing levels and workload (Do you have enough staff to meet needs?)
- b. Retention (Do you struggle with turnover?)
- c. Recruiting and hiring (Are you able to hire for open positions?)
- d. Staff training and professional development

Staff experiences

- e. Burnout
- f. High levels of stress
- g. Safety concerns related to COVID exposure
- h. Safety concerns related to violence

Volunteers

- i. Recruiting volunteers
- j. Retention or lack of commitment

HR policies and procedures

- k. Lack of internal policies and procedures (e.g., staff and volunteer onboarding, health and safety policies, equity and inclusion policies)
- l. Lack of board policies and procedures

Other – please explain

5. Which of the following service provision issues does your organization face (related to youth programming)? (Select all that apply)

- a. Difficulty engaging youth
- b. Changing program or service delivery methods (e.g., moving from in person to virtual or from virtual back to in-person/hybrid)
- c. Disruption to services (e.g., building closures, program cancellations)
- d. Scope shift (e.g., resources directed away from youth to other populations like seniors)
- e. Decreased demand for youth programming
- f. Increased demand for youth programming
- g. Difficulty conducting program evaluation
- h. Other – please explain

Collaboration and Coordination

6. How does your organization collaborate and coordinate with other agencies youth programming? (Select all that apply)

- a. Referring youth directly to other agencies
- b. Sharing information about other agencies' services through your organization's public communications (in newsletters, on social media etc.)
- c. Service provider network group or policy tables (to share updates, information, ask questions etc.)
- d. Joint advocacy or policy initiatives
- e. Joint events and programming
- f. Joint fundraising
- g. Other – please explain

7. Why does your organization collaborate and coordinate with other agencies? (Select all that apply)

- a. To expand reach and visibility of our work
- b. To help problem solve
- c. To learn from others in our sector
- d. To better serve youth
- e. To drive broader social change
- f. Other – please explain

8. Does your organization face any challenges in coordinating and collaborating with other agencies? (Select all that apply)

- a. Lack of time required to create and sustain connections
- b. Conflicting policies/procedures with other organizations
- c. Difficulty negotiating resources required for joint initiatives
- d. Competing programming
- e. Other – please explain

Building and Supporting Service Capacity

9. What are the greatest strengths of your organization in relation to youth programming?

Revenue

- a. Healthy financial reserve
- b. Consistent grant funding
- c. Consistent fundraising and sponsorships

Expenses

- d. Balanced budget
- e. Low expenses

Workforce

- f. Strong retention of staff
- g. Ability to hire qualified staff
- h. Ability to train and on-board staff
- i. Diverse staff that represent the community you work with
- j. Strong community and positive relationships among staff
- k. Staff's ability to meaningfully connect with youth and meet their needs

Volunteers

- l. Committed and engaged volunteers
- m. Ability to recruit and train volunteers

HR

- n. Clear and well communicated HR policies and procedures
- Collaboration and coordination
- o. Strong collaboration and coordination with other agencies

Other - please explain

10. Which of the capacity challenge areas are the highest priority to take action on?

- a. Revenue
- b. Expenses
- c. Workforce
- d. Experience of staff
- e. Volunteers
- f. Human resources
- g. Coordination and collaboration

Appendix C: Focus Group Plan

Item	Details	Questions	Purpose
Introduction and welcome (15 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land acknowledgment Community Agreement Confidentiality and use of this data Introductions 	Introductions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Your name (your pronouns if that's comfortable and safe for you) The organization you work for What you appreciate most about the youth sector... or what excites you about the youth sector? 	To break the ice and build trust.
Project Background (3 min)	Building Safer Communities Program Project Overview What we have done so far	n/a	To inform participants on the project context, scope and where we are at in the research
Organizational capacity (10 min)	Survey findings discussion 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of survey findings on capacity issues and organizational strengths 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Any surprises / comments? Do these findings resonate with you? 	To ground truth survey findings on capacity challenge.
Impact of external factors (25 min)	Activity 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small group discussion on external factors. Discussion with the whole groups. 	How have these external factors made your work more difficult or resulted in positive change? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 pandemic Overdose crisis Movement for racial justice (BLM, Every Child Matters) Climate crisis 	To understand impact of external factors on their community, capacity and operations.
Collaboration/ coordination (7 min)	Survey findings discussion 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of survey findings on collaboration strengths, challenges. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Any surprises / comments? Do these findings resonate with you? 	To ground truth survey findings on collaboration
Collaboration/ coordination (25 min)	Activity 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small group discussion on collaboration. Discussion with the whole groups. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What type of collaboration is working? What is not working? What would you like to see? How do we get there? 	To understand strengths, weaknesses and opportunities with collaboration
Closing (5 min)	Overview of next steps	Any final comments/ questions?	To provide space for final questions and comments.