

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

SURVEY OF AVAILABLE ONLINE TRAINING FOR CANADIAN  
VOLUNTARY BOARDS

BY

HEATHER HALPENNY

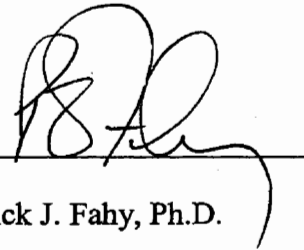
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# ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Athabasca University Governing Council for acceptance a thesis "SURVEY OF AVAILABLE ONLINE TRAINING FOR CANADIAN VOLUNTARY BOARDS" submitted by HEATHER HALPENNY in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF DISTANCE EDUCATION.



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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my mother Marion Halpenny who always told me that I could accomplish whatever I set my mind to do. In addition, I dedicate this thesis to my husband Stephen and my two daughters Jocelyn and Felicity. Thank you for your constant support of me in this and all of my enterprises. Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to the many people who strive to make a difference through their hard work in the voluntary sector without expecting thanks or recognition.

## ABSTRACT

There is a revolution underway in the voluntary sector in a number of overlapping arenas. After years of benign neglect government, political and academic attention has been directed to the information vacuum that surrounds this sector representing one eighth of Canada's Gross Domestic Product. Although a recent study revealed that Canadians hold a high degree of trust in the work and workers of charities, there is increasing pressure on voluntary organizations to articulate to their stakeholders all aspects of their accountability practices.

Cognizant of this pressure, a concerned group from the voluntary sector established the Voluntary Sector Roundtable to look at its governance and accountability practices. Through a series of roundtable discussions with voluntary organizations across Canada the Voluntary Sector Roundtable developed eight key governance standards to act as a guide for the governance practices of voluntary boards.

Despite the number of well-developed face-to-face training programs aimed at improving the governance practices of voluntary boards, the sheer size of the sector suggests that a technological solution in the form of online training will provide all boards the potential to access the training and information required to meet these emerging needs.

The purpose of this survey was to discover and examine Canadian online training directed at voluntary boards. The study compared existing online training materials with the eight key standards developed by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (the only existing standards of this nature in Canada). The study also closely compared existing online training to the key standards met by the Board Development Program text-based training materials.

The study used a combination of technologies to access online data-base, and to communicate and interact with key participants in the voluntary sector from across Canada.

Only one example of online training for voluntary boards in Canada was found. Few of the key participants were aware of this online training before they were consulted during the research. A comparison of the online training to the key governance standards revealed a number of “critical” gaps that were judged in need of immediate attention. A comparison of how closely the existing online training met the key standards with those met by the Board Development Program showed there were similarities in gaps in the materials. This is not surprising in light of the fact that both the online training and the Board Development Program materials had the same original authors. However, the Board Development Program materials appeared to have been re-written to a greater extent than the online training material.

The results suggest that there is an opportunity for the development of Canadian online training for voluntary boards that would reflect all aspects of the key governance standards. However, there is evidence that the current technological capacity of the voluntary sector does not readily facilitate online training. There are several federally funded initiatives aimed at changing the technological capacity of the sector in the next five years. Increased technological capacity as well as mounting pressure to provide increased levels of accountability to their key stakeholders may play a critical role in encouraging voluntary boards to access online training.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This page should be titled “Generosities Gratefully Received.” First of all thanks to my family, my friends and my co-workers who supported me so comprehensively as I completed this degree, and indeed, for all of my marathon projects. I could not have finished this thesis without their encouragement, their assistance with computer struggles, proof reading, and a host of other generosities. Special mention goes to Kathleen Anderson, Jeni Adler, Leslie Baker and Andy McCready who gave so generously of their time and talent. I am most grateful to Mike Cooper at the Board Development Program, Wendy MacDonald at the Voluntary Sector Management Program of Grant MacEwan Community College, Susan Phillips of Carleton University, and Bill Poole at the Cultural Management Institute at the University of Waterloo for their willingness to contribute to this research. To the thesis committee members, Dr. Pat Fahy, Dr. Mohamed Ally and Dr. Jonathan Baggaley, I offer thanks for their timely and thoughtful comments. For my thesis advisor and faculty advisor, Dr. Pat Fahy, I offer heartfelt thanks for his endless patience as he guided me through the myriad technical aspects involved in completing a thesis; but it was Dr. Fahy’s constant stream of small kindnesses over these past years that moved me across the finish line.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Research Problem

There is an increased awareness of and an interest in scrutinizing more closely the governance practices of voluntary boards of directors. Three recent initiatives of note affecting the voluntary sector are as follows:

- The federal government announced the creation of the Voluntary Sector Network Support Program (VolNet) in February 1998 in order to expand the technological capacity of the sector. Fifteen million dollars over three years were allocated with the target of offering connectivity to 10,000 voluntary organizations by March 31, 2001. The VolNet National Advisory Committee was established to engage the participation of the voluntary sector in the development of the program. The VolNet service pack includes an Internet account, computer equipment, discounts for software, hardware and access, and basic Internet skill development. One of the criteria to access the service was to have a voluntary board of directors.
- The Voluntary Sector Roundtable established The Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector in 1997. The Voluntary Sector Roundtable was an initiative of the voluntary sector intending to assist this process of adapting to change. The Voluntary Sector Roundtable issued its final report from the Panel in February 1999. The final report proposed a set of eight key standards of accountability and governance called “A Good Practice Guide for Governance” that voluntary sector organizations might use to improve their governing practices.

- In the spring of 1999 the federal government and the voluntary sector launched a joint initiative called Joint Tables. Government officials and leaders of the voluntary sector were given the task of addressing three primary issues: building a new relationship, strengthening capacity, and improving the regulatory framework.

At present, a number of online information clearinghouses, including the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and Volunteer Canada, provide organizational development information to voluntary organizations and boards.

Some of the resources and links cited are intended to assist voluntary organizations in meeting the recently established accountability and governance standards. The resources and sites listed are mainly print-based. Some of the sites listed are American, and while helpful, are not intended to meet Canadian legislative standards. None of the information clearinghouses list Canadian online board development training resources. A preliminary investigation revealed the existence of online training; however, the quality of the training was unknown.

#### Statement of the Problem

- No level of government is providing face-to-face board development training to assist nonprofit organizations in meeting the emerging expectations.
- As more voluntary boards of directors and organizations acquire online capabilities, the ability for groups to access training in this manner is significantly increased, although the resources may not be in place to meet this potential demand.
- Without online training opportunities voluntary boards of directors in some communities have few opportunities and resources for board development training.

- With better understanding of presently available resources and materials, online board development training and materials can be geared to meet the individual needs of boards more readily, allowing boards to access the information they need, when they need it.

### Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, the study was designed to critically examine existing online Canadian training for voluntary boards in order to establish a summary overview of the current situation. Secondly, the study was designed to create a resource for voluntary boards in Canada seeking information regarding current online training activities, resources and practices. Thirdly, the study was intended to make recommendations regarding perceived gaps in existing Canadian online training for voluntary boards.

### Research Questions

The process of inquiry considered the following questions as guidelines:

1. What Canadian online training for voluntary boards exists?
2. How well does the online training for voluntary boards meet the key standards proposed by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999)?
3. How closely does the existing online training compare to the key standards met by the Board Development Program training materials?

Each of the three questions explores a number of related sub-themes that form the context for considering Canadian online training for voluntary boards.

Question 1: What Canadian online training for voluntary boards exists? There are a number of print-based initiatives in Canada directed to the board development training needs

of voluntary boards of directors that are not currently available online. One of these training programs is the Skills Program, a partnership of the federal, provincial and territorial governments that produces materials and tools to assist voluntary boards of directors and organizing groups in leading their organizations/teams more effectively. The curriculum material was extensively re-written in 1997 and represents a comprehensive print-based training program that is largely unavailable throughout the country, although the materials are available for order online.

Board Basics, another print-based initiative, was produced in 1995 as a joint project of TVOntario and the United Way of Canada, with the financial support of the Trillium Foundation. This governance-focused training resource, which includes A Board Basics Video, Participant's Manual and Facilitator's Guide, is available in both English and French for under \$200.00. The existence of these materials is not widely publicized in existing information clearinghouses.

The Board Development Program is a program of Alberta Community Development, offered in partnership with the Muttart Foundation and Grant MacEwan Community College. In 1983 the Board Development Program developed a print-based governance focused face-to-face training program to be delivered by trained volunteers to voluntary boards of directors. Dwindling government interest in sponsoring direct service such as this has resulted in limits to the Program's level of service to voluntary boards throughout the province.

The Board Development Program curriculum has been extensively re-written since 1983 and currently provides a governance-based training program that considers:

- roles and responsibilities of the board of directors



- legal and ethical considerations of board members
- principles of policy governance
- organizing and directing the board's work
- building board and staff relations, and
- board recruitment and training.

The Skills Program, Board Basics and the Board Development Program are resources that have been recently developed to enhance skills of Canadian voluntary boards of directors. However, none of these resources is currently available online, although Skills Program and Board Basics are available for on-line purchase similar to any print-based resource.

While there are a number of print-based Canadian resources directed at assisting voluntary boards in their practices, the existence of online training is not known.

Question 2: Does the Canadian online training meet the key governance and accountability standards established by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999)? The Voluntary Sector Roundtable proposed the following eight key governance standards in good practice guide for effective stewardship (Appendix A). These are:

- Steering toward the mission and guiding strategic planning;
- Being transparent, including communicating to members, stakeholders and the public and making information available upon request;
- Developing appropriate structures;
- Ensuring the board understands its role and avoids conflicts of interest;
- Maintaining fiscal responsibility;
- Ensuring that an effective management team is in place and overseeing its activities;

- Implementing assessment and control systems; and
- Planning for the succession and diversity of the board.

Existing online training is examined against the key standards in order to determine an assessment of any gaps discovered.

Question 3: How closely does the existing online training compare to the key standards met by the training materials developed by the Board Development Program? The Board Development Program began in 1983 to develop a governance-based training curriculum that established principles of policy governance to serve as a guideline for training voluntary boards. Existing online training is compared the key standards met by the Board Development Program training materials

### The Design of the Study

What follows is an overview of the design of the study. The design for each of the questions is considered in sequence.

Question 1: What Canadian online training for voluntary board exists? For the electronic survey of existing materials, an Internet search was conducted of materials and programs in Canada. Using key phrases an electronic survey of Canadian universities, colleges, and continuing education centres was also conducted. Online resources for the voluntary sector were reviewed for possible links to existing online training.

In addition, key participants located across Canada with links to the voluntary sector were questioned about their awareness of any online training. The researcher provided the key participants with summary notes for their review and validation of their comments (Appendix B).

Question 2: How well does the online training for voluntary boards meet the key standards proposed by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999)? A key participant from the Voluntary Sector Roundtable provided an expert opinion on how well the online training meets the key standards established. After the researcher compared the online training to the key standards, the results were reviewed by a key participant from the Voluntary Sector Roundtable who also provided an expert opinion.

Subsequently, in a structured interview, the researcher interviewed the key participant using a set of questions that were sent in advance of the telephone interview, in deference to the key participant's work schedule. The key participant reviewed the summary notes from the interview for accuracy (Appendix C).

Question 3: How closely does the existing online training compare to the key standards met by the Board Development Program training materials? Two key participants who are acknowledged experts in the voluntary sector and are known to the researcher in a professional capacity agreed to review the researcher's findings. In order to accommodate the hectic work schedule of the key participants, materials and questions were provided to these individuals ahead of time for their consideration and comments. The key participants were interviewed face-to-face and following the interview the key participants reviewed the summary notes for accuracy.

The two key participants reviewed the research findings on the comparison of the Board Development Program materials with the online training and provided comments on the researcher's findings.

### Assumptions of the Study

- a) An examination of Canadian online training for voluntary boards is timely, and will be useful for voluntary organizations and related organizations because of recent changes in legislation and the emergence of powerful distributed learning and training tools.
- b) Voluntary boards of directors may be interested and willing to access online training.
- c) Very little training for voluntary boards of directors is critically examined against established objectives.

### Predicted Outcomes

Some but not all of the predicted outcomes of this study may include:

- a) A critical examination of existing training, which will add to the theoretical knowledge base of non-formal distributed learning.
- b) Identification and analysis of gaps in current voluntary board of directors training opportunities.
- c) The creation of online resources that may be distributed via online clearinghouses directed at voluntary organizations.
- d) Stimulation of interest at a government and foundation level of support for the development and enhancement of Canadian online training based on the study's recommendations.

### Limitations

The Canadian focus of the study excluded online training that may have been launched from Europe and the United States. (The review of relevant literature will attempt to address this issue.)

## Delimitations

The proposed study worked within the following delimitations:

- a) The survey was conducted during the year 2000, and as a result this research may have excluded online training in the development and pilot stage.
- b) The primary language of the research was English and this may have impacted the inclusion of Canadian online training in French. Effort was made to overcome this limitation through key participants located in the Province of Quebec.
- c) The comparison of existing Canadian online training, content, criteria and objectives to the curriculum of the Board Development Program was a delimitation. This approach was chosen primarily for practical purposes. Board Basics and Skills are programs not being offered at this time and there was an ease of access for the researcher to the resources and personnel of the Board Development Program.

## Definition of Terms

The following definitions will appear frequently:

**Board Development Program (BDP):** established by Alberta Culture in 1983, the Board Development Program provides training to boards incorporated under the Societies' Act or Libraries Act in Alberta to assist them in improving their leadership, governance and management skills. Trained volunteer instructors deliver workshops to boards participating in local, regional or provincial not-for-profit organizations in Alberta (BDP instructor guide, 1997, p. 2).

**Board Basics for Volunteers (Board Basics):** this is a video series and companion workbook available in English and French. The video series, created by TVOntario, United Way of Canada/Centraid Canada and the Trillium Foundation, shows 15 different boards in

action dealing with fundamental responsibilities. Board Basics is intended as a supplement to the Board Basic Kit, a Leadership Development Program for volunteers (Board Basics Manual, 1995, p. iii).

**Governance:** the way in which an organization chooses to organize itself to make sound decisions about the use of its resources and the delivery of its services (A Governance Handbook for Ministry Board Member, n.d., p. 15).

**Nonprofit Sector:** used interchangeably in literature with not-for-profit sector; nonprofit is the language of economists that view nonprofit organizations as a residual category of organizations that do not fit into the market-driven producers or government (Hall and Banting, n.d., p. 1).

**Not-For-Profit:** a not-for profit organization refers to a group of people organized for a joint purpose other than making a profit. The surpluses are applied to the purposes of the organization and not distributed to its board members or its membership. In Canada the term not-for-profit organization is used to distinguish non-governmental organizations from governmental agencies (Content, Concepts and Principles – Resource Guide, 2000, Module 1, p. 2).

**Online Training:** training delivered via the Internet (Burge and Roberts, 1998, p. 140). Alternately described by Haughey and Anderson (1998) as “Networked Learning” which describes “learning that happens when learner and instructors use computers to exchange messages, engage in dialogue and access resources as part of a learning endeavour.”

**The Skills Program for Management Volunteers (Skills):** this is a partnership of the federal, provincial/territorial governments which produced materials and tools to assist not-for-profit boards of directors and organizing groups in leading their organization/teams more

effectively (Canadian Sport and Fitness Administration Centre for the Skills Program for Management Volunteers, 1996, cover page).

**Voluntary Board of Directors:** a representative governing body comprised of community members who are in turn responsible for keeping the community apprised of organizational developments. The board provides the means by which the organization stays in touch with community priorities, a public obligation that requires it to act on behalf of the general society (Este, 1992, p. 6).

**Voluntary Sector:** voluntary sector refers to organizations that attract citizens to participate in them on an unpaid basis as an act of citizenship. The term is used in an inclusive manner to include registered charities, public interest groups primarily engaged in advocacy and some staff-led organizations.(Phillips, 1995, p. 1).

**Third Sector:** this term also includes the less used, “Independent Sector,” provides a distinction between government and the private or business sector by focusing on the sector’s independence from government and its differences from business (Hall and Banting, n.d., p. 1).

### Abbreviations Commonly Used

The following abbreviations will be commonly used throughout the study:

Board Development Program (BDP)

Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (CCP)

Centre for Cultural Management (CCM)

Developing Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)

Voluntary Sector Network Support Program (VolNet)

## Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR)

### Organization of Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is organized in the following manner:

Chapter One – Introduction

Chapter Two- Review of Literature

Chapter Three- Design of the Study

Chapter Four – Findings

Chapter Five – Conclusions and Recommendations

References

Appendices



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

*“It is more a matter of believing the good  
Than seeing it as the fruit of our efforts.” Unknown 3 B.C.*

#### Introduction

There is an oft-repeated refrain that emerges from literature directed at the voluntary sector. “Studies in the nonprofit sector currently take place within the vacuum that is the hallmark of research in the sector,” states Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC, 1998, p. 45). “In Canada, there has been a paucity of research on the voluntary sector,” observes Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR, 1999, p. 18), and “Research in the nonprofit sector lags well behind that on the public and private sectors, but this is especially true in Canada,” write Hall and Banting (2000, p. 2).

Professional journals dedicated to the voluntary sector are not readily available, although information sources such as the Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations in Alberta do exist. In an effort counter this scarcity, there is a growing body of contemporary theory and research that is available online through the support of the federal government and such foundations such as Kahanoff, Muttart and McConnell.

The literature review is organized to address issues in the following areas:

- Absence of a Consistent Nomenclature
- Membership and Numbers of the Voluntary Sector

- Role of the Voluntary Sector
- Role of a Voluntary Board
- Emerging Influences on the Voluntary Sector
- Issue of Accountability
- Case for Board Effectiveness
- Need for Board Development and Training
- Aspects of Board Development and Training
- Issues of Online Training for Voluntary Boards
- Summary

#### Absence of a Consistent Nomenclature

Research on the voluntary or nonprofit voluntary sector is hampered by the absence of a consistent nomenclature; Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC,1998), Phillips (1995), Hall & Banting (2000) and Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR, 1999). HRDC (1998) proposes the term “nonprofit sector” to describe organizations of interest. Hirshhorn and Stevens (1997, p. 1) define nonprofits to include “all organizations that are subject to nondistribution constraints and dedicated to an objective other than the pursuit of profit.” Hall and Banting (2000) remark on the lack of consensus on the terminology used to describe this group of organizations. They object to the term “nonprofit” as a definition because the language describes what is the sector is not, rather than what it is. McFarlane and Roach (1999, p. 12) rely on a definition found in the *Social Work Dictionary* that describes the nonprofit, voluntary or third sector as comprising organizations “established to fulfill some social purpose other than monetary reward to financial backers.” Phillips (1995) uses the language of “voluntary sector” to emphasize organizations that already do or might attract

citizens to participate in them on an unpaid basis as an act of citizenship. VSR (1999) describes the “voluntary sector” as organizations that may or may not have paid staff but rely on volunteers on their board of directors for their governance. Hall and Banting (2000) make the distinction that members of the governing boards of voluntary organizations serve without pay. In addition, voluntary organizations benefit from the contributions of individual volunteers. There proves to be implications for study and research on a sector that has no generally accepted nomenclature.

### Membership and Numbers of the Voluntary Sector

Equally unclear is what kind of organization is included in the term “voluntary sector.” VSR (1999) remarks that the term “nonprofit sector” includes almost every type of voluntary association, charity, church, trade, professional association and advocacy organization. They estimate that 175,000 organizations fit that category in Canada. Clear boundary delineation in the voluntary sector remains elusive. VSR (1999) acknowledges that the boundaries in the voluntary sector are “fuzzy”(p. 8). Hall and Banting (2000, p. 3) discuss the lack of consensus of what to include in the nonprofit, voluntary or third sector. They describe the boundaries as “fuzzy and permeable.” Hirshhorn and Stevens (1997, p. 1) call the place taken by nonprofits between public and market sectors as “that hazy middle ground.” HRDC (1998, p. 4) observes that the boundaries between the market, public and nonprofit sectors are “fuzzy and growing fuzzier.”

Hall and Banting (2000) and Hirshhorn and Stevens (1997) point to the widely used definition that offered by the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO). The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (1999) reviewed 22 nations (exclusive of Canada) in order to develop a profile of the key attributes of a nonprofit

organization. These are: organized, private, non-profit-distributing, self-governing and voluntary.

Hall and Banting (2000) make the point that in Canada there is a distinction between voluntary organizations that are registered as charities and those that are not. Registered charities can issue receipts to donors that can be used to obtain tax credits, while non-charities cannot do this. Charities file annual Public Information Returns that are the only source of detailed information about nonprofits in Canada. No central registry exists of nonprofit organizations that are not registered charities.

Along with a lack of clarity regarding the nomenclature and typology of the voluntary sector, the precise numbers of these organizations is also untracked. Hall and Banting (2000) report that in June 1999, according to Revenue Canada, Charity Division, there were 77,926 registered charities and an estimated 100,000 legally incorporated nonprofits. They estimated there may be as many as 870,000 unincorporated, grass-roots associations. However, VSR (1999) cautions that statistics reported on registered charities should be treated with caution, since approximately 41% of the numbers include quasi-government organizations, such as hospitals and educational institutions, as well as places of worship or other religious organizations.

Existing literature on the sector paints a hazy picture of a shimmering giant that VSR (1999) reports as having \$90 billion in annual revenue representing one eighth of Canada's Gross Domestic Product and assets of \$109 billion. Sixty percent of this sector's revenues go toward hospitals and teaching institutions. Two thirds of charities report revenues of less than \$100,000 and half have annual revenue of less than \$50,000. Sixty percent of the income comes from government, 10% from individuals and one percent from corporations, with the

balance from user fees, product sales, investment income and other fundraising activities.

The voluntary sector employs nine percent of Canada's labour force, with 56% of the number working in hospitals and teaching institutions.

### Role of the Voluntary Sector

Phillips (1995) describes the voluntary sector as having three specific roles in Canadian society:

- representation, as voluntary organizations are first of all groups of citizens,
- citizen engagement, in that it creates and reinforces citizenship through participation and representation, and
- direct service delivery of goods and services in the community, ranging from language training to food banks.

Hall and Banting (2000, p. 1) point to the role of the voluntary sector as the "chosen instrument of collective action." HRDC (1998, p. 21) identifies a role as filling gaps in government-provided services and social support. In addition, they describe the sector's relationship to the social capital of the economy. Fostering citizen engagement and helping individuals connect to their community are seen as a means to build social networks and social trust that benefit both the polity and the economy.

### Role of a Voluntary Board

Hall and Banting (2000) define voluntary organizations as those formed by volunteers and, if incorporated, by law - governed by a voluntary board of directors. Acting as a connecting agent to the community Este (1992, p. 6) describes the board of directors as a "representative governing body made up of community members, who are in turn responsible

for keeping the community apprised of agency developments.” Board Development (1998, p. 1) provides a technical outline of the board as “the governing authority of the organization and is responsible for the directing, influencing and monitoring the organization’s business.”

Harris (1993) finds the role of the voluntary governing body is often unclear and problematic. Carver (1991) asserts that the board’s role in fiscal planning is central to the board’s stewardship role. Baker (1996) outlines the comprehensive expectations of nonprofit boards as a) foundational responsibilities, b) functions and model in use, and c) holding ultimate responsibility for agency affairs and acting in a goal directed, rational, and efficient manner. Smith (1992) offers that trustees of the voluntary sector should be constrained by fiduciary duties, the common good, interpretive responsibility and some procedural norms. English, Alexander and Weaver (1999) present the position that nonprofit boards by definition have ultimate legal responsibility and authority for the conduct and performance of their organizations. Moral responsibility is reflected in the roles and functions carried out by these boards.

Weaver and English (1999) observe that the work of not-for-profit organizations is becoming increasingly complex as demands are placed on board members requiring them to consider new governance models, respond to the call by funders for strategic planning with outcome measures, and become more accountable in their operations.

### Emerging Influences on the Voluntary Sector

Hall and Banting (2000) attribute an upsurge of interest in and attention to the voluntary sector to be the result of government retrenchment in the 1990’s and the prospect that the voluntary sector might assume the role of filling gaps in the social safety net. Phillips (1995) argues that a romantic notion exists that voluntary organizations can become a

training ground for the unemployed by sponsoring workfare programs. Brock (2000) observes the combined burdens of reduced subsidies, rising citizen expectations and declining donations have strained the capacity of charities and the voluntary sector. In addition she adds that the 1990's witnessed an outbreak of concern about the accountability and capacity of voluntary sector organizations as governments transferred more responsibilities to them.

In 2000 the federal government announced its intention to work in partnership with the voluntary sector to explore new models for overseeing and regulating registered charities and enhancing their accountability to the public. As a consequence the Voluntary Sector Initiative was launched in June 2000, with the twin policy objectives of increasing the capacity of the sector to meet the demands Canadian society places on it, and improving the government's policies, programs and services towards the sector. Three strategic areas included improving the relationship between the government and the sector, enhancing the capacity of the sector, and improving the legislative and regulatory environment. In September 2000 the federal government announced a budget of more than \$90 million over five years to develop its relationship with the voluntary sector.

VSR (1999) stated that in the fall of 1997 an unincorporated group of national voluntary organizations appointed six individuals, serving as volunteers to lead a review of the voluntary sector. The stated goal of the report was to enhance the effectiveness and credibility of the voluntary sector. Brock (2000) reports that this demand for accountability causes consternation among the voluntary sector. She repeats the observation made by Salaman and Anheir, that many voluntary organizations have operated with a private mentality and resist pressures for transparency.

HRDC (1998) observes that in order to address concerns about fundraising practices in the charitable sector, the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy had developed an “Ethical Fundraising and Accountability Code (Code).” Briefly, the Code acknowledges the donor’s rights to truthful information as well as the organization’s adherence to requirements of financial accountability. VSR (1999) asserts that extensive accountability already exists in the sector, while providing a code of good governance practices requiring the board of directors to take active responsibility for eight key tasks. Wyatt (1998) wryly observes that VSR (1999) recommends that the voluntary sector, in an effort to be transparent and responsive, adopt a form of reporting that closely resembles that required of publicly traded companies on the Toronto Stock Exchange. He argues that VSR (1999) did not provide an adequate rationale for its conclusion that higher standards of accountability are likely to be required in the future, nor does it outline who will be making these demands.

In June 1998 the federal government announced the Voluntary Sector Network Support Program (VolNet) with the mission to enable 10,000 voluntary organizations to access and use Internet technologies by March 31, 2001. The use of the technology was meant to further the missions of the organizations by offering Internet connectivity, including computer equipment, new information technologies, network support and Internet skills development. Phillips and Laforest (2000) speculate about the future of VolNet past March 2001. They raise this question in light of the November 2000 budget announcement of \$10 million over five years. These funds are aimed at enhancing the technological capacity of the voluntary sector under the direction of the committee called the Table on Information Management and Information Technology of the Voluntary Sector Initiative.



## Issues of Accountability

VSR's (1999) stated objective was to provide help to the voluntary sector in articulating its challenges related to governance and accountability and to develop some approaches to meeting them. In establishing its credibility, the report points out that the Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector was conceived as a result of the knowledge within the sector that organizations face increased demands for accountability.

VSR (1999) defines accountability to include the elements of public trust in the exercise of responsibilities, a provision of detailed information showing how the responsibilities were carried out, and what outcomes had been achieved and acceptance of responsibilities for outcomes, including problems created or not corrected by the organizations, its officials and staff. Phillips (2000, p. 4) outlines a similar set of elements for accountability which include "strategic objectives, meaningful, reliable and practical performance indicators, outcomes linked to programs, public reporting mechanisms, adequate capacity and expertise within the sector, and an effective public complaints process."

VSR (1999) notes that voluntary organizations have multiple and competing levels of accountability that include their beneficiaries or clients, members, volunteers, staff, partners, affiliates, donors, funders and governments, as well as the general public. VSR (1999) also states that organizations in the voluntary sector already have to meet more and higher standards of accountability than does the private sector.

From whence does this concern for accountability come? Phillips (1995) views as frightening the rush to redefine governance and to carve out a greater role for the voluntary sector with minimal understanding of its nature and capacities. Brock (2000) traces this

outbreak of concern about the accountability and capacity of the voluntary sector to governments transferring more responsibilities to them. She states that government sought to justify the public downloading of service and program delivery, with the assurance the service would be more efficient and quality would not suffer. Phillips (1995) comments that the voluntary sector faces the double hit of greater expenditures due to the rising demands for services and smaller budgets, both a result of government cuts.

Hall and Banting (2000) point to a trend by the public to be less trusting of all organizations, including voluntary sector organizations which in turn requires more transparency and accountability in their management practices. They argue that this trend has been reinforced by aggressive media reporting of hints of scandal or misuse of funds, and by neo-conservative criticisms of many social groups and advocacy organizations as “special interests.” HRDC (1998) identifies the pressures to strengthen accountability from outside observers and stakeholders in Canada and the United States who have been alarmed by the number of scandals and the rise in aggressive fundraising practices. As a response to concerns about fundraising practices, the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy developed a “Code of Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability” which foundations like Muttart Foundation (2000) now require organizations to adopt as an eligibility requirement for a grant.

McFarlane and Roach (1999) point to evidence that accountability is a responsibility identified by the voluntary sector. They report that 72 voluntary organizations identified the purpose of accountability mechanisms to be ensuring that the goals of an organization are met and that public and private funds are used for their stated purposes and yield reasonable outcomes. Voluntary organizations reported that they used a variety of accountability

methods, some imposed by external agencies and some by the organizations themselves. These ranged from legal frameworks, government regulations, stewardship, professional standards, codes of ethical conduct, accreditation and outcome-based assessments of services.

Canadians hold a significant degree of trust towards the charitable sector. Following an October 2000 telephone survey of 3,863 Canadians on the topic of charities and issues affecting charities, Hall, Greenberg and McKeown (2000) report that 76% trusted charities “some” or “a lot.” Only doctors and nurses scored higher than charitable workers when respondents rated their trust in the various professions. They report that 84% of Canadians think charities are honest about the way they spend donations; however, few Canadians are willing to guess how much charities spend on administration and fundraising. More than 66% of those surveyed wanted more information about charitable programs and services, how they use donations, their fundraising costs, and the impact of their work on Canadians. Most Canadians surveyed (70%) agreed that an independent, non-governmental organization or agency should monitor the activities of charities.

#### Case for Board Effectiveness

Board Development (1998) identifies the role of the board as the highest level of decision-making and legal authority in a voluntary organization. By law, it is ultimately accountable for and has authority over the organization’s resources and activities. The board articulates and communicates the organization’s vision to the membership and the community. Through policy, the board defines the parameters within which the organization will carry out its work.

McFarlane and Roach (1999) find that voluntary organizations identify strong values and a strong philosophical base, a well-defined mandate and practical mission statement and clearly defined goals as prerequisites of effectiveness. They also state that effectiveness was indicated by the presence of a clear model of governance and management.

Although there is some agreement about what constitutes board effectiveness, Bradshaw (1992, p. 229) acknowledges that organizational effectiveness has not been clearly defined and may be more problematic in the voluntary sector. He states that the “very concept of effectiveness had been defined to be nothing but a social judgement created interactively through the process of reality construction.” In his study of twelve hundred voluntary organizations in Canada during December 1990 and February 1991 the correlation between the perceived effectiveness of boards and their characteristics was examined. The study revealed that voluntary boards can create an internal image of effectiveness that has an impact on the overall performance of the board. If a board involves itself in planning, developing a shared organizational vision and adhered to guidelines for good meeting management, then the image of effectiveness at a board level was perceived as high by both the board and the staff.

Carver (1991) posits that it is an article of faith that boards are the ultimately accountable policy-setting leadership bodies. Carver makes the case that his policy governance model is prescriptive versus descriptive and can be applicable to all governing boards with only slight modifications.

Holland (1991) observes that advisors of boards tend to stress idealized, even romanticized versions of what boards should be. He states that few boards undertake a systematic evaluation of their performance. To that end he presents an assessment tool to

assist boards to meet the challenge of assessing their competencies, and providing them with a set of findings that they could trust.

### Need for Board Development and Training

Weaver and Inglis (1999) comment that volunteers joining the board of directors of a voluntary organization often find themselves lacking the knowledge and training need to be effective board members. Holland and Jackson (1998, p. 22) write that few board members are “well prepared for the challenges of translating values into clear statements of mission and goals, shaping the organization’s future directions, setting priorities, working together as a team, and monitoring and assessing organizational behaviour”.

Weaver and Inglis (1999, p. 5) define the concepts of training and development as the “continuous commitment by the board as a whole to strengthening themselves so they can develop the board’s leadership capacities for both the organization and the community.” VSR (1999) observes that both training and research are needed to develop new methods for improving accountability and governance, and for communicating best practices in these areas. VSR (1999) points to a lack of research and training opportunities in the voluntary sector. HRDC (1998) observes that there had been no comprehensive assessment of current education and training programs to meet the current and emerging skill needs of the voluntary sector.

Weaver and Inglis (1999) report, based on their questionnaire to 22 executive directors and 219 volunteer board members, that no time had been spent in the last six months on training and development. That more time should be spent in this activity was voiced by over 65% of those surveyed. Weaver and Inglis (1999) show a relationship between board

satisfaction level and the amount of time spent by the board in training and development. It is their position that training and development can make a difference to a board.

### Aspects of Board Development and Training

Inglis, Alexander and Weaver (1999) present a model that encompasses all of the activities comprising the work of the board. Based on a theoretical framework for board roles reported by Inglis (1997), they propose an inverted triangle containing the three main areas of board work: strategic activities, resource planning and operations. External to the triangle they suggest a focus for each of the areas of work: external, external and internal and lastly internal in orientation. Applying this model to a board's work could work as a tool to assist with the development and training of board members.

Holland, Leslie and Holzhalb (1993) argue that improving the performance of voluntary boards requires an acknowledgement of the board's existing culture in order to effect change in its behaviour. Holland and Jackson (1998) describe findings from a study that shows boards that were engaged in development activities showed significant improvement in most areas, in contrast to the boards and engaged in no or limited activities. Brudney and Murray (1998) find as well that a systematic program of board development did result in more effective board governance.

When Brudney and Murray (1998) describe the circumstances that prompted boards to make intentional changes they found four main factors: role confusion, an absence of qualified board members, unclear decision making practices and a lack of an articulated board structure.

Weaver and Inglis (1999) report the topic of roles and responsibilities of the board was identified above all other areas as the focus for board training and development, followed by

strategic planning, understanding the agency, and fundraising. The top three preferred board training strategies identified were a facilitated workshop or retreat, followed by a board-led training session, and lastly, a workshop or seminar.

### Issues of Online Training for Voluntary Boards

The term “online training” represents one of several descriptions of training delivered via the Internet. Burge and Roberts (1998, p. 140) use the term “Information Highway” to refer to all online information and communication technologies, not just the Internet. They use the definition of “Networked Learning” generally attributed to Haughey and Anderson (1998) as “learning that happens when learners and instructors use computers to exchange messages, engage in dialogue and access resources as part of a learning endeavour.

Interaction can occur in real-time, when learners and instructors are present at the same time, or in delayed time when they are not linked at the same time.” Haughey and Anderson add the dimension of community to the meaning of “Networked Learning” that they describe as the use of “an electronic network to enhance communication, work collaboratively or access remote learning resources” (p. 152).

Khan (1997, p. 6) makes reference to “Web-based Instruction” for which he provides the following definition: “Web-based instruction (WBI) is a hypermedia-based instructional program which utilizes the attributes and resources of the World Wide Web to create a meaningful learning environment where learning is fostered and supported.”

Kerka (1996) provides an extensive description of the forms of activities that are involved with learning on the Internet.

- (1) electronic mail ( delivery of course materials, sending in assignments, getting and giving feedback, use a course listserv, i.e., electronic discussion group);
- (2) bulletin boards/newsgroups for discussion of special topics;
- (3) downloading of course materials or tutorials;
- (4) interactive tutorials on the Web;
- (5) real-time, interactive conferencing using MOO (Multiuser Object Oriented) systems or Internet Relay Chat;
- (6) “intranets,” corporate website protected from outside access that distribute training for employees; and
- (7) informatics, the use of online databases, library catalogues, and gopher and web sites to acquire information and pursue research related to study.

At present, the body of research that references online training for voluntary boards is scant. When Hill (1997) considers distance learning environments via the World Wide Web she presents her considerations under the headings of issues, prospects and challenges. The following discussion will make reference to those headings used by Hill (1997).

### Pedagogical Issues

Hill (1997) identifies several unique issues related to pedagogy and the Web. In particular she identifies the learner’s need to overcome the sense of being “lost in hyperspace” and of information overload. She recommends learning activities designed to create discussion and a sense of group cohesiveness.

Haughey and Anderson (1998), in their discussion of Networked Learning, identify learning based on an interactive model as one of the pedagogical advantages. In their opinion Networked Learning is more reliant on interactivity than are broadcast media such as television and radio. They indicate the potential of Networked Learning for interaction that



maybe multifaceted. As well they highlight the potential for just-in-time cooperative learning that can access a wide variety of professional assistance as well as learning resources.

Anderson (1998) points to the need for practicality of the learning event in its importance to the adult learner, in her study of Women and Computer Mediated Conferencing. This links closely to Weaver and Inglis' (1999) report about the topics identified by board members as areas of interest for board training. They find that respondents identified an interest in practical training activities that focus on a specific topic or issue, such as working on the mission of the organization as an inducement to participate in training activities.

### Technological Issues

Hill (1997) identifies technological issues as including concerns such as hardware, software, and bandwidth, speed of communication line, intuitive software applications and costs. She points out that the use of computer technologies is not widespread, and this is especially true for the voluntary sector. Hill remarks that fear of and intimidation by the technology, coupled with the frustration that accompanies many technological difficulties, are significant factors requiring consideration.

There is agreement from Phillips and Laforest (2000), who report that a 1997 survey in Canada found that more than half of voluntary organizations do not have access to new technologies. They argue that the gap in the use of computer and Internet technology is not surprising given that the bulk of the sector consists of small organizations, 40% have no staff at all, half have an annual budget of less than \$50,000 and two thirds less than \$100,000. Phillips and Laforest (2000) wonder whether VolNet, a federal government initiative targeted providing connectivity to 10,000 organizations by March 2001, will produce continuing and

better use of the Internet by voluntary organizations. They point out that, since the launch of VolNet in 1997, there has been a dramatic rise in the level of awareness of the value and the acceptance of the Internet for a variety of reasons.

### Organizational Issues

In issues related to the organization in Hill's (1997) discussion of program planning, the presence of on-going support, both technological and human-based, throughout the course is vital if the course is to be successful. Burge and Roberts (1998) state that key issues, such as clarity of needs, feedback, learner support, organization, comfort with technological skills, standardization, costs and ergonomic considerations, need to be addressed before the strengths of networked learning (convenience, potential quality of learning, affordability, equitableness, variety, creativity, reliability, expandability and convergence) can be fully utilized.

Burge and Roberts (1998, p. 37) offer ten planning questions, drawn from current adult educational thinking, as a model for program planning on the Information Highway. These include:

1. What are the learning needs?
2. What are the helping and hindering factors in the macro context?
3. Who is expected to participate? What are their characteristics?
4. What kinds of resources are available?
5. How will I get variety in learning activities?
6. Which mix of technologies will best support the learning?
7. How will the learners know what to do?
8. What will I do?

9. What kinds of problems might arise?
10. How will I know if things are working well?

### Prospects and Challenges

Hill (1997) points out that one of the goals of distance education is to create a community of learners. Electronic technology makes it possible to reach all types of learners by the Web. McLellan (1997) writes of Schrage's model of a virtual community as one that highlights the creation of a shared experience rather than an experience that is passively shared.

Spencer (1995) sees a role in distance education for social adult education as a means to enhanced participatory democracy. He acknowledges that computer and video conferencing may be used to make distance education a more social form of education. Spencer (1998) adds that the virtual classroom, when combined with an existing community, can support social objectives and do so across a wider terrain than is possible with traditional adult education means.

Taylor, Chait and Holland (1991) describe motivation as a factor that plays a relationship in effectiveness in voluntary boards. In their study they saw a relationship between boards that are deemed effective and those which have a high level of motivation among board members. This motivation appeared to spring from the board members' deep affection for and connection to the organization they serve.

Schreiber (1998) suggests that many of the barriers that previously isolated training from the workplace and society are being dismantled. She sees a role between technology and planned organizational change.

Uhryn and McGarva's (1998) findings would support this position. In their survey of 31 boards in rural Alberta, 80% of those surveyed would be interested in driving up to one-half hour to attend videoconference training on topics of concern to their boards, indicating a willingness of voluntary boards to utilize technology for training.

Phillips and Laforest (2000) identify the three problems of technology, information management and governance, as issues to be addressed in order to change the technology deficit of the voluntary sector. They describe technological capacity as a concept that is greater than up-to-date hardware, software and access to the Internet. Their position is there must be available online tools that assist the work of the voluntary organization. In their discussion the problem of information management refers to the question of who determines the needs of the voluntary sector, develops the portals and helps voluntary organizations make use of them. Lastly, they describe the governance issue related to capacity building as one that goes beyond buying computers, to including working collaboratively with the sector to identify the needs in the first place.

Phillips and Laforest (2000) question whether the VolNet initiative lived up to its potential for building a sustainable, technological capacity within the voluntary sector. However, they point to the exemplary selection process for membership in the VolNet collaboration that could serve as a model for other collaborations in the voluntary sector. The real legacy of VolNet may be the 28-member committee drawn from a cross section of the voluntary sector and could potentially be reactivated to provide future leadership.

The financial commitment of the federal government through the Voluntary Sector Initiative, and in particular the capacity building measure called Information Management-Information Technology (IM/IT), may be the impetus needed to create an increased

availability of online training resources, addressing concerns such as board effectiveness, role and responsibilities, and accountability of voluntary boards.

### Summary

What literature exists describes a sector with fuzzy boundaries, uncertain numbers with an inconsistent nomenclature. This shimmering giant of a sector plays a role in society that is currently under pressure by governments, who may improperly understand its limitations and nature. The sector is governed via volunteer board members who appear to identify accountability as a key consideration of their responsibility. Nonetheless, there is continued pressure on voluntary board to provide increased levels of accountability through their governance practices.

Some evidence exists that training for boards can provide the perception of an increased level of effectiveness. While the need for training is identified by some boards, few have identified online training as a preferred mode for training. This lack of awareness about online options may be a result of a lack of knowledge about online training, the lack of technical capacity or the absence of online training materials.

By March 2001 over 10,000 voluntary organizations will have achieved connectivity with the Internet through the work of VolNet. This level of connectivity, converging with the target to further improve the technological capacity of the voluntary sector through the Voluntary Sector Initiative, and a heightened level of awareness of the Internet in general, may create demand for increased online training for voluntary boards.

## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### Purpose of the Chapter

Chapter Three describes the overall design of the study, including development and pilot testing of the instruments, criteria for selection of subjects, methods and technologies used, and data collection and analysis strategies.

Chapter Three is organized in the following manner:

- Synopsis of the study;
- Background of the study;
- Description of the key participants;
- Procedures followed;
- Method of research utilized;
- Data analysis protocol; and
- A summary of the chapter.

#### Synopsis of the Study

The purpose of the study was to survey already existing Canadian online training for voluntary boards; to examine this online training against key governance and accountability standards (key standards) set by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999); and to consider how closely the online training compared to the key standards met by the training materials developed by the Board Development Program.

The study was conducted using a combination of technologies to access online databases, and to communicate and interact with *key participants* (defined as those persons

active in the field of volunteer board training who could provide information and opinions about the research questions). Methods and technologies used (described in more detail below) included Internet search engines, document analysis, as well as the key participants in the voluntary sector.

### Background of the Study

The researcher's experience in the voluntary sector in general, and her experience in providing training to voluntary boards in particular, created the background of this study. She surmised that in the future voluntary boards would be expected to report on their governing practices in greater detail than has been expected in the past. One example of increased expectation for reporting is the "Ethical Fundraising and Financial Accountability Code (Code)" developed by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. Briefly, the Code acknowledges the donor's rights to truthful information as well as the organization's adherence to requirements of financial accountability. The Muttart Foundation now requires all applications for funding to demonstrate that the board of directors has adopted the Code as part of their fund raising policy.

Also, the Voluntary Sector Initiative, a recent federal program, announced that one aspect of its mandate would be a review of the regulatory issues of the voluntary sector. These regulatory issues included access to public information on charities, clarification of guidelines on allowable related business, a shortened tax form for charities, regulatory institutions and voluntary board director's liability.

The researcher hypothesized that voluntary boards would be able to meet these increased expectations provided they have access to training opportunities, including online

training. This study was partially intended to determine the degree to which others shared this view.

### Key Participants

The researcher conducted interviews with key participants in the voluntary sector located across Canada, who were selected on the basis on the researcher's awareness of their work, her perception of their status in the field, the recommendations of other key participants, and their geographical location. When written agreement to participate was provided, the key participants were interviewed in a face-to-face setting, by e-mail and by telephone (Appendix B).

Approximately 21 individuals, whose distinguishing characteristics included their ability to speak English or French and their recognized knowledge and experience in the voluntary sector, were recruited personally by telephone, e-mail, and fax.

Key participants were identified based on their reputation in the voluntary sector field, through their publications, their position with key organizations, and the publication of their name in directories as key participants. Those who agreed to participate were provided with information and assurances of confidentiality, in the form of a letter from the researcher about the terms of participation (Appendix B).

### Procedures

An Internet survey of materials and programs in Canada for existing materials was used. An electronic survey of Canadian universities, colleges, and continuing education centres was also conducted. Online resources for the voluntary sector were reviewed for possible links to existing online training.



### Key Phrase Search

In order to discover what Canadian online training for voluntary boards exists, three key phrases in English and French were utilized. These were as follows:

1. Canadian online training for voluntary boards./ La canadien en ligne entraînement pour les conseils volontaires.
2. Canadian online training for nonprofit boards./ La canadien en ligne entraînement pour nonprofit monte.
3. Canadian online training for not-for-profit boards./ La canadien en ligne entraînement pour pas-pour-les conseils de profit.

### Role of Key Participants

Key participants located across Canada were identified by:

- Their contribution to voluntary sector research;
- Field experts known in a professional capacity by the researcher;
- Their role in the voluntary sector in their region of Canada, and
- Their leadership status with national organizations.

Four face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with key participants in a western Canadian city. Fifteen telephone interviews and two e-mail interviews were conducted in which participants were asked an open-ended question. The researcher provided the key participants with information gained from the research for their own use at their work. The researcher noted each respondent's reply to the open-ended question, and by return e-mail asked them to validate the summary notes from their interview, as well as return a completed "Consent to Participate" form (Appendix B).

The key participant in an eastern Canadian province provided assistance with the translation of the key phrases that were written in French and used to determine the existence of francophone Canadian online training. This is further described in the section titled “Method.” The results from key participant interviews are described in Chapter Four.

Some key participants known to the researcher in a professional capacity and acknowledged key participants in the nonprofit sector, were approached to validate the research findings through pilot testing of the instruments and review of the proposed methods.

This process involved initial contact with the individual both by telephone and, if possible, in a face-to-face setting. These individuals were provided with an overview of the research that included a description of the expectations, and timelines of the role they were asked to take in the research project. When they provided their verbal consent to participate, the materials to be validated were provided by e-mail and courier as well as a set of questions to be covered in an interview (Appendix C).

Often these busy individuals were unwilling to extemporize their comments. Materials and questions were therefore provided to these individuals ahead of time for their consideration and comments.

During the interview, the researcher spoke to individuals either in person or by telephone. Throughout the interview and the discussion, the researcher kept notes of the discussion, which were transcribed and returned for the subject to review. The participants were requested to provide corrections or additions to the notes where required.

## Method

The survey methods employed included Internet search engines, telephone interviews and e-mail correspondence. These methods were chosen in order to meet the following objectives of the study:

- To gain first-hand experience searching for online resources available to voluntary boards.
- To overcome geographical distance in a cost-effective manner in order to communicate with key participants about their experiences and opinions. In-person interviews were financially impossible; thus, technology was used for this purpose.
- To facilitate participation by key participants in a manner that maximized their available time and expertise.

Next is presented the method used to research each of the three central research questions.

Question 1: What Canadian online training for voluntary boards exists? A series of key phrases both in English and French were employed to determine the existence of Canadian online training. The phrases were:

1. Canadian online training for voluntary boards./La canadien en ligne entraînement pour les conseils volontaires.
2. Canadian online training for nonprofit boards./ La canadien en ligne entraînement pour nonprofit monte.
3. Canadian online training for not-for-profit boards./ La canadien en ligne entraînement pour pas-pour-les conseils de profit.

Employing the above phrases the following search engines were used:

- a) Lycos English and French Language
- b) Google English and French Language
- c) Metacrawler English only
- d) Dogpile Web Metasearch.

Utilizing the same key English phrases the online search included a survey of universities, colleges and continuing education programs, ensuring representation from all regions in Canada. Particular attention was paid to online distance education, public policy studies and continuing education programs (Appendix D).

Online resources for the voluntary sector that were reviewed, some of which included: the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, CharityVillage, Volunteer Canada, Henson College, Cultural Management Institute, The Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations, Board Development by United Way of Canada – Centraide Canada, Canadian Policy Research Networks, Canadian Society of Association Executives, Skills Online, and volunteer centres across Canada. The sites for these resources are listed in Chapter Four.

Other Canadian online resources that were closely examined included: Canadian Rural Information Services, Canadiana – The Canadian Resource Page, Human Resources Development Canada -Interactive Training Inventory Guide, Links to all existing Government Search Facilities, National Library of Canada, The Node learning Technologies Network, Office of the Learning Technologies, VolNet, the Voluntary Sector Initiative, and Web Networks Community. Provincial government voluntary sector initiatives reviewed included: Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia (Appendix E).

A document analysis based on public materials identified by the Internet search was conducted. The protocol that was used included:

1. Each site location was authenticated as Canadian and the site noted;
2. If present, the site search engine was engaged using the same key phrases;
3. Research studies/reports containing dates, sources, and references were printed;
4. Potential links were viewed, following protocols 1 – 3.

Next is described the method used to research Question 2: How well does the online training for voluntary boards meet the key standards proposed by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999)? A key participant and previous member of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable provided an expert opinion on how well the online training met the key standards established by the VSR (1999).

The protocol for validation was as follows:

- Online training materials were compared to the performance indicators following each of the eight key standards. The materials were judged as either “Meets Standard” or “Does Not Meet Standard” (Appendix G).
- Gaps in the online materials indicated by “Does Not Meet Standard” were prioritized as “critical” (needing immediate attention), “very important”(should be resolved in the next year) and “for future consideration” (not critical or urgent; Appendix G).
- The key participant from the Voluntary Sector Roundtable provided an expert opinion and discussion regarding the alignment of the researcher’s analysis and prioritization of the gaps in the online training materials.
- The key participant communicated with the researcher by both telephone and e-mail correspondence
- The researcher kept notes of the contacts and the interview and provided the notes to the key participant for validation their accuracy.

What follows is the presentation of the method to research Question 3: How closely does the existing online training compare to the key standards met by the Board Development Program (BDP) training materials? Key participants from the Board Development Program and from the Voluntary Sector Management Program at Grant MacEwan Community College reviewed the comparison of face-to-face training with the online training.

The protocol for validation was as follows:

- BDP training materials and online training materials were compared to the performance indicators following each of the eight key standards. The materials were judged as either “Meets Standard” or “Does Not Meet Standard.”
- Gaps discovered in both sets of training materials were prioritized as “critical” (needing immediate attention), “very important” (should be resolved in the next year), and “for future consideration” (not critical or urgent).
- A comparison of the gaps found in both materials was undertaken.
- The key participants from the Board Development Program and the Voluntary Sector Management Program provided an expert opinion and discussion regarding the alignment of the researcher’s analysis, prioritization and comparison of the gaps in the BDP and online training materials.
- The key participants communicated with the researcher by telephone, e-mail correspondence and in a face-to-face setting.
- Notes taken during the interviews were provided by e-mail to the key participants for their review and revision if needed.

## Data Analysis

The study principally addressed three research questions as described in Chapter One. The data analysis was based on these three questions.

1. What Canadian online training for voluntary boards exists? This was revealed by the electronic search as well as by consulting key participants from across Canada for their knowledge of any existing online training.
2. How well does the online training for voluntary boards meet the key standards proposed by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999)? This was accomplished by the researcher analysing and prioritizing the gaps between the key standard performance indicators and the existing online training. A key participant who was a member of the Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector, and who is an acknowledged scholar and researcher in the voluntary sector, critiqued and commented on the researcher's analysis and prioritization of the gaps.
3. How closely does the existing online training compare to the key standards met by the Board Development Program training materials? This was accomplished by the researcher analysing and prioritizing the gaps between the key standard performance indicators and the training materials. Expert opinion was sought from a key participant at the Board Development Program, as well as a key participant from the Voluntary Sector Management Program at Grant MacEwan Community College.

## Chapter Summary

Chapter Three described the design of the research study. The role, selection and protocols used for the key participants and the Internet search were detailed. Methods and technologies for the development, pilot testing and analysis of the results were provided.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### Review of the Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study was to survey already existing online Canadian training for voluntary boards; to examine this online training against key governance and accountability standards (key standards) set in the report from Broadbent Panel on Governance and Accountability in the Voluntary Sector to the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR,1999); and to consider how closely the online training compares the key standards met the training materials developed by the Board Development Program (BDP).

#### Purpose of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter was to analyze the information found regarding online training. Existing online training was compared against key standards and performance indicators established by the VSR (1999). Gaps in the online training were prioritized: critical, important and for future consideration. The alignment of this information was validated by an expert opinion recruited from the Panel.

The gaps in the online training were compared to the BDP training materials, firstly for the gaps in the materials, and then prioritized: critical, important and for future consideration. Key participants provided validation for the assigned assessment and comparison of the materials. Interpretation and discussion of the results is reserved for Chapter Five.



## Organization of the Chapter

The findings of the research are organized in the following order. The results from the online search of available online training are listed first, as well as the results provided by the key participants. Following this is a comparison of the online training materials to the key standards. Perceived gaps in the online training materials are prioritized and the assessment is reviewed by an expert opinion. Next the gaps in the online training are compared to the training materials of the Alberta Board Development Program. Two key participants comment on the assessment and the comparison of the gaps in the online training versus the training materials of the BDP. A summary concludes Chapter Four.

## Online Training Search Results and Procedures

In order to discover what Canadian online training for voluntary boards exists, three key phrases in English and French were utilized. These were as follows:

1. Canadian online training for voluntary boards./ La canadien en ligne entraînement pour les conseils volontaires.
2. Canadian online training for nonprofit boards./ La canadien en ligne entraînement pour nonprofit monte.
3. Canadian online training for not-for-profit boards./ La canadien en ligne entraînement pour pas-pour-les conseils de profit.

The results of the search were as follows:

- Lycos showed zero matches.
- Google showed zero matches.
- Metacrawler showed 32 hits with zero matches.

The metasearch engine Dogpile Web cross-referenced the search using key phrases that were as follows:

1. Canadian online training for voluntary boards.
2. Canadian online training for nonprofit boards.
3. Canadian online training for not-for-profit boards.

Using the following engines, GoTo.Com, FindWhat.com, Dogpile Catalogue, Google, Yahoo, Infoseek, Lycos, up to five pages and 40 sites were reviewed for matches to the key phrases. Only one match, CharityVillage.com, was observed from the results of a minimum of 6 sites to a maximum of 27,381,906 web sites retrieved.

The search engine found web sites in which one or more of the words from the key phrases appeared. For example Yahoo found for the phrase “Canadian Online training for voluntary boards” a web site with the following description: “Quine Online- Scottish Women, Meet the Women of Scotland. Group invites voluntary sector representatives to...a quarterly online journal of...is a Canadian living in... the Health Boards will publish...a coop training centre at...”

Each word of the key phrase appeared to be searched as a single site. For example the word ‘Canadian’ showed web sites such as Canadian Living Online or Canadian Apartment Online. Most, although not all web sites with the words “nonprofit and not-for-profit,” appeared to be American in origination. Identification of the origination was facilitated by the use of the spelling of the word “center,” versus the Canadian spelling of “centre.”

Even with the repetition of the online search using Dogpile Web, it was observed that there was no direct hit for online training for voluntary boards. The online training may exist

but it did not appear accessible using the search engines employed for the research with the key phrases in both English and French that were employed.

### Validation of Online Findings

Twenty-one key participants were contacted and asked if they were aware of the existence of Canadian online training for voluntary boards. Contact was made with key participants in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia. In addition key participants from the national organizations of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Muttart Foundation, VoNet, Volunteer Canada and the Broadbent Panel were contacted. The key participants provided representation from the voluntary sector, university, college, journalism, sports and recreation organizations, resource centres for voluntary organizations, foundation, government at provincial and federal level, and online information and referral services for the voluntary sector. Following contact by telephone, each key participant received an e-mail correspondence that confirmed their comments as well as a “Consent-to-Participate” form that they were asked to return by e-mail.

Of the people contacted, three key participants were contacted a second time by e-mail correspondence to ask for their response and two of these replies were forthcoming. Despite a language barrier, the third key participant spoke on the telephone to the researcher three times. Although the key participant e-mailed an address to the researcher, this did not appear to be a personal e-mail address. After three telephone calls the researcher faxed the permission form to the key participant. In early January a new staff person contacted the researcher by e-mail. They confirmed that their own research in December 2000, had found no existing francophone online training for voluntary boards.

Of the 21 key participants contacted, three participants were aware of the existence of online training. Two of these participants were directly involved in the provision of online training to voluntary organizations and the other participant was the director of an online resource for voluntary organizations (Appendix F).

### Related Findings

The online search did reveal a number of sites addressing issues and concerns of the voluntary sector. These sites were examined closely.

Charityvillage.com, an online clearinghouse for resources directed at the voluntary sector in Canada, provided a link to Henson College of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University. This site provided the link to the Centre for Cultural Affairs, University of Waterloo, and the online training for cultural organizations. One module, called “Developing Cultural Boards That Work,” was reviewed and found to contain board development training directed at voluntary boards of directors.

### Online Training for Voluntary Boards

The research showed that there is one current example of Canadian online training for voluntary boards. “Developing Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)” is part of a series of online training opportunities provided by the Centre for Cultural Management found at ([http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/ccm/programs/ccm\\_cpdp.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/ccm/programs/ccm_cpdp.html)).

The Centre for Cultural Management (CCM) at the University of Waterloo has been in existence as an academic department since 1989 for the purpose of providing cultural management education and research to the Canadian arts community.

In February 1999 CCM, via its web site <http://ccm.uwaterloo.ca>, opened a virtual school named the Cultural Management Institute. Mid-career professional development training is offered free-of-charge. The current online interactive learning modules are:

- “Toward Greater Self Reliance,” by Graeme Page
- “Business Planning for Cultural Organizations,” by David Barr
- “Understanding Labour Relations in the Cultural Sector,” by Robert Johnson
- “Developing Cultural Boards that Work,” by Marion Paquet.

“Developing Cultural Boards that Work (CBTW)” is an interactive learning module adapted from “A Handbook for Cultural Trustees” by Marion A. Paquet (with Rory Ralston and Donna Cardinal), published in 1987 by the University of Waterloo Press. Subtitled “A Guide to the Roles, Responsibilities and Functions of Boards of Trustees of Cultural Organizations in Canada,” the publication was funded by the Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Family Foundation in cooperation with the Board Development Program of Alberta Culture, and Grant MacEwan Community College.

“Developing Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)” first went online in June of 1999. The interactive web application was developed by Distributed Educational Systems Inc., on behalf of the Centre for Cultural Management. As of December 2000 there were 22 registrations reported for the module.

**Figure 1: Sites of Interest to the Voluntary Sector**

Name of the Site	URL	Resource/Reference
Board Development	<a href="http://www.boarddevelopment.org">www.boarddevelopment.org</a>	Board development training information. Under construction.
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy	<a href="http://www.ccp.ca">www.ccp.ca</a>	Links, research, publications
Canadian Policy Research Networks	<a href="http://www.cprn.org">www.cprn.org</a>	Research, publications
CharityVillage Online Resources	<a href="http://www.charityvillage.com">www.charityvillage.com</a>	Links, Henson College education, publications
Cultural Management Centre, University of Waterloo	<a href="http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/ccm">www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/ccm</a>	“Cultural Boards That Work” online training for boards.
Henson College of Public Affairs, Dalhousie University	<a href="http://www.dal.ca/~henson">www.dal.ca/~henson</a>	Links ,“Cultural Boards That Work”
Kahanoff Foundation	<a href="http://www.kahanoff.com">www.kahanoff.com</a>	Research, voluntary sector
Muttart Foundation	<a href="http://www.muttart.org">www.muttart.org</a>	Links, research
Not-for-Profit and Charity Law Pages	<a href="http://www.extension.ualberta.ca/lawnow/nfp">www.extension.ualberta.ca/lawnow/nfp</a>	Legal resources directed at charities and voluntary sector
Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations	<a href="http://www.rcvo.org">www.rcvo.org</a>	Links, publications, journals, articles
Saskatchewan School Trustee Association	<a href="http://www.ssta.sasknet.com">www.ssta.sasknet.com</a>	Online handbook for school trustees
Skills Program for Management Volunteers	<a href="http://www.cdnsport.ca/skillsprogram">www.cdnsport.ca/skillsprogram</a>	Management and training tools available for purchase
Third Sector Initiative, Queen’s University	<a href="http://policy.queensu.ca/sps/ThirdSector">Http://policy.queensu.ca/sps/ThirdSector</a>	Links, research, publications
VolNet, Connecting Voluntary Organizations to the Internet	<a href="http://www.volnet.org">www.volnet.org</a>	Online training resources directed at voluntary sector
Voluntary Sector Initiative	<a href="http://www.vsr-trsb.net">www.vsr-trsb.net</a>	Federal initiative directing resources to the voluntary sector.
Volunteer Canada	<a href="http://www.volunteer.ca">www.volunteer.ca</a>	Volunteer centres in Canada

Comparison of CBTW Online Training to VSR (1999) Key Standards

The CBTW training materials were compared to the key standards established by VSR (1999). Training materials were described as “Meets Standard” or “Does Not Meet Standard.” Training materials that provided information directly related to the governance standard was judged “Meets Standard”. In the absence of normative research establishing

standards directed at the training materials for voluntary boards, the researcher worked from the assumption if the training materials demonstrated any similarity in language or approach to the key standard, then materials were judged as “Meets Standard”.

“Does Not Meet Standard” was judged in the absence of any mention in the materials to an individual performance indicator listed under each of the eight tasks.

Prioritizing the gaps was the next aspect to be considered. VSR (1999) provided no prioritization for the recommended implementation of the standards beyond the order that they were presented, nor has a legislated standard been set. In defining accountability VSR (1999) referred to three elements that included a consideration of public trust, a provision of detailed information showing outcomes that have been achieved, and an acceptance of the responsibility of outcomes.

Working with the assumption that VSR (1999) listed the key standards in order of priority, the following assessment values were assigned to the perceived gaps in the training materials:

- “Critical” (needing immediate attention)
- “Very important” (should be resolved in the next year), and
- “For future consideration” (not critical or urgent)

What follows is a discussion of the assessment assigned to each of the identified gaps in the CBTW online training.

#### Discussion of items judged “critical”

CBTW online training appeared to have “critical” areas in four out of eight key standard indicators. The Mission and Strategic planning processes were not linked to key elements demonstrating success. The planning process did not describe a risk assessment

process nor was there a consideration of setting measurable goals defined in terms of the desired outcomes or impacts on clients. This was ranked as critical because the mission and strategic process need to be meaningfully linked to the outcomes in order to assess the process of the organization.

The articulated processes reflecting Transparency in Communication were a significant deficiency in the training materials. There were no processes articulated that represented a two-way flow of information from the community and stakeholders to the organization, nor was there a grievance process detailed, nor was there any means to respond to requests for information. The intention to be accountable requires a means to do so.

In the Structural component of the materials, no governance or management function is assigned to perform an audit function or systemic review of the entire organization, such as an audit committee. A broad overview of the organization ensures that functions that may be overlooked by staff or committees are caught.

No mention of Assessment and Control systems that would direct the organization to monitor and respond to complaints, especially those which might arise out of a breach of the code of ethical conduct. Directly linked to the role of the audit committee and the need for assessment and control systems is the demonstrated absence of a process for an organization to monitor and respond to non-compliance of control systems and rules governing the organization.

#### Discussion of items judged “very important”

CBTW online training provided no materials that showed contemporary volunteer performance management policies should be reflected in the key standard indicators. Unpaid



staff policy currently reflects similar levels of articulated professionalism demonstrated for paid staff.

#### Discussion of items judged “for future consideration”

CBTW online training under Structures of the Organization failed to discuss the need for an independent nominating committee although the training provided ample information on the topic of the process of board recruitment.

In the area of Fiscal Responsibility specific mention of the reporting of registered charity was omitted, although there are other systems which ensure this reporting takes places.

Similarly in the area of the Oversight of Human Resources, while not directly mentioned by CBTW online training, the compliance of the organization with specific legislation is often monitored by outside agencies.

In the area of Planning for Succession and Diversity, the board recruitment process omits mention of the issue of diversity, a contemporary concern in Canada. This is a factor to be considered because addressing the issue requires long-term strategies linked to the mission and strategic outcomes of the organization.

#### Summary

CBTW online training materials reflect a development process for voluntary boards that fall “critically” short in the four key standards of Mission and Strategic Planning, Transparency and Communication, Structures and Assessment, and Control Systems. The areas judged “very important” and “for future consideration” may form the basis for a future review aimed at closing the gaps identified in the online training.

### Validation Provided by Expert Opinion from Voluntary Sector Roundtable

Expert opinion was sought from a key participant who was a previous member of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable, and who is an acknowledged scholar and researcher in the voluntary sector. The key participant was asked to consider whether the utilizing an assessment measure “Meets Standard,” and “Does Not Meet Standard” was appropriate. Next, the key participant was asked to critique the prioritization of the gaps in the training materials as:

- “Critical” (needing immediate attention)
- “Very important” (should be resolved in the next year), and
- “For future consideration” (not critical or urgent).

Lastly, the key participant was asked to validate the assumption that VSR (1999) listed the key standards in an order of priority.

### Comparison of CBTW with BDP and Key Standards

In order to answer the third study question of how closely CBTW online training met the key standards found in the training materials of the Board Development Program (BDP), CBTW online training materials were compared to BDP training materials. Materials were judged to either “Meets Standard,” or “Does Not Meet Standard.”

Material judged as “Does Not Meet Standard” was further assessed as “critical,” “very important,” or “for future consideration.”

**Figure 2: Summary of Performance Indicators**

(n = 36)

	Met	Failed	Total	Critical	Import.	Future	Total
CBTW	18	18	36	9	3	3	18
BDP	23	13	36	7	2	4	13

Discussion of items judged “critical”

Neither CBTW nor BDP linked the key success elements to the Mission and Strategic Planning. Neither described a risk assessment process in the planning process, nor was there a consideration of setting measurable goals defined in terms of the desired outcomes or impacts on clients. This was judged critical based on the premise the mission and strategic process needs to be meaningfully linked to the outcomes in order to assess the process of the organization.

BDP described both a feedback process as well as a grievance process for human resources. In the CBTW materials the articulated processes reflecting Transparency in Communication were absent. There were no processes articulated that represented a two-way flow of information from the community and stakeholders to the organization, nor was a grievance process detailed. Neither CBTW nor BDP described a systematic process to respond to requests for information. This two-way communication speaks to the issue of accountability.

In the structural component of the key standards, CBTW and BDP failed to highlight the audit function or systemic review of the entire organization. A broad overview of the organization ensures no important functions have been overlooked by staff or committees.

Neither CBTW nor BDP mentioned assessment and control systems that would allow for the organization to monitor and respond to complaints, especially those which might arise

out of a breach of the code of ethical conduct. Directly linked to the role of the audit committee and the need for assessment and control systems is the demonstrated absence of a process for an organization to monitor and respond to non-compliance of control systems and rules governing the organization.

#### Discussion of items judged “very important”

While the BDP did address the issue of performance management policy for volunteers, CBTW provided no materials of this nature. Unpaid staff policy currently reflects similar levels of the professionalism expected for paid staff. Both CBTW and BDP provided no information or guidance regarding volunteers in a work place with a labour agreements, or guidelines on the claiming of expenses.

#### Discussion of items judged “for future consideration”

Neither CBTW nor BDP identified the need for an “independent” nominating committee, although the training provided ample information on the topic of the process of board recruitment. Although CBTW and BDP made no specific mention of the reporting of registered charities, there are external systems that ensure this reporting takes place. Only BDP mentioned ensuring compliance with specific legislation. However, the compliance of the organization with specific legislation is often monitored by outside agencies.

BDP provided direction in the area of planning for succession and diversity. CBTW omitted the issue of diversity in the material addressing the board recruitment process. The issue of diversity is a contemporary concern in Canada. This is a factor to be considered because addressing the issue requires long-term strategies linked to the mission and strategic outcomes of the organization.

Both CBTW and BDP fell “critically” short in four out of eight key performance standards of: a) mission and strategic planning, b) transparency and communication, c) structures and assessment and d) control systems.

The areas assessed as “very important” and “for future consideration” bear thoughtful, future review in order to keep pace with current voluntary sector issues.

### Validation of Key Participants

A key participant drawn from the Board Development Program, as well as a Manager of a Voluntary Sector Management Program at a community college were asked to:

- critique the comparison of the training materials with the key standards established by VSR (1999);
- comment on the judgement of materials as “Meets Standard” or “Does Not Meet Standard;”
- comment on the assumption that the key standards were listed in an order of priority;
- comment on the prioritization of the gaps as “critical,” “very important,” and “for future consideration.”

### Validation Process and Procedures

The purpose of the validation process was to seek expert opinion from key participants who have acknowledged expertise in the voluntary sector in general and the training of voluntary boards of directors in particular. A key participant and former member of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable agreed to provide comment on the assumptions and the alignment of the online training materials against the key standards presented by VSR (1999). Two key participants located in a western city agreed to provide expert opinion on

the comparison of the online training resources to the training resources of the Board Development Program. They considered the appropriateness of the key standards set by VSR (1999) as a measurement device, and also provided comment on the prioritization of the gaps in the materials, against their acknowledged experience in board training and development in the voluntary sector.

After each key participant agreed by the telephone to participate in the research, each person received a package of information both by e-mail correspondence, and in person, to provide them with:

- An overview of the research;
- The findings of the research; and
- The aspect of the research on which they were asked to provide comments.

After receiving the information packages, two key participants were interviewed in person, and one interview took place over the telephone. Following the interview the key participant was provided with notes to review, approve or correct, and to return any changes to the researcher.

#### Findings of Expert Opinion from VSR (1999)

The key participant:

- Indicated that there were a number of scandals in the charitable sector, both in Canada and in the United States in 1997, that had received significant media attention. There was a concern that the perception of public trust in the charitable sector might be affected by the report of these scandals.

- Stated that the Voluntary Sector Roundtable initiative was formed as a proactive measure in response to the concern that political pressure would force the government to impose draconian measures on the voluntary sector.
- Stated that the “Good Practice Guide,” in which the key standards are presented, was not meant to be prescriptive for all boards, reflecting a recognition by the Panel of the diversity of the voluntary sector. The guide was meant to include all of the important issues for boards to address.
- Stated that the key standards were organized starting from the broader issues to the more specific issues of importance for boards to address.
- Questioned the assumption of the value of online training for voluntary boards as a stand-alone measure. The key participant suggested that online training, coupled with an accreditation system, might be of value to voluntary boards.

In summary, the researcher found that the application of the key standards as an assessment tool may not have been an original intention of VSR (1999). The key standards were meant to provide a sense of broad direction for boards to consider versus a precise prescription. They form one part of the various recommendations made regarding the voluntary sector.

#### Findings of Key Participant from Board Development Program

The key participant stated with reference to VSR (1999) that:

- The ordering or priority of the key standards was an assumption that needed to be checked with a Panel representative.
- VSR (1999) recommendations appear to be directed to larger national organizations in Ottawa and Toronto, and may have lesser relevance for smaller voluntary organizations.

- This apparent bias toward the needs of larger, urban voluntary organizations may critically skew the focus of the VSR (1999), and may result in some aspects being applicable to smaller organizations but not all.
- When the direction being taken by VSR (1999) was discussed at a Roundtable discussion in 1998, a number of groups raised the concern that the issue of accountability was a non-issue given the levels of reporting required for voluntary organizations. The key participant stated that one participant called the exercise, “Accountability on a shoestring.” Groups with multiple funders report numerous times, usually in different formats. The key participant reported that the groups in the Roundtable advised the Panel representatives to back off the smaller voluntary organizations with respect to requiring further reporting.

With reference to the comparison of the key standards to the BDP training materials the key participant stated that he:

- Agreed with the observations as they stand regarding how the BDP materials fit the key standards.
- Agreed with the valuation of the gaps as critical, very important and for future consideration.
- Stated that he is not sure that the comparison of the Board Development materials to the key standards is relevant or definitive, given the market that the BDP materials are directed toward.
- Stated that the purpose of the BDP is to provide voluntary organizations with basic roles and responsibilities. He stated that the training is not usually directed at the highest level of governance as the training is meant to be a rudimentary approach to governance.



- Stated that groups in an environment governed by a collective agreement are provided with a specific set of materials.

In summary the researcher found that the specific application of the key standards may have been an inappropriate set of standards to apply to BDP materials, given the broad based intent of the key standards, and the purpose and target of BDP training. However, the findings still point to a gap in the materials that describes a feedback mechanism between groups and their key stakeholders.

#### Findings of Key Participant from Manager of Voluntary Sector Management Program

With reference of the use of the key standards established by VSR (1999) the key participant made the following observations:

- The use of the key standards appears reasonable, given that the standards are Canadian, widely understood and generally accepted and there are not a lot of rigid criteria associated with the voluntary sector.
- Other professional associations have developed standards of practice that may have been helpful in this context. However these standards may not have been so definitive about the practice of boards as those developed by VSR (1999).
- Linking the performance indicators from the panel to the training was sound in its approach.

The key participant found that criteria of “Meets Standard” or “Does Not Meet Standard” may have been too harsh and critical. The judgement may have benefited from a mid-ground assessment. She stated that in her experience training voluntary boards is not akin to setting an accounting standard measurement or measuring a chemical reaction.

The key participant questioned what evidence there is that online training for boards is effective. She stated that regardless of how good the materials are for board development training there should be a process that engages people.

In general the key participant agreed with the assessment of materials that were judged “critical.” The key participant stated that there needs to be an articulated step or a concrete link to connect the groups to the community to assess the impact of their actions

With respect to her view on emerging issues facing the sector the key participant:

- Observed that the sudden, increased research attention coming from the academic sector has not necessarily translated into any benefits for front line voluntary group. She added that this attention may result in some needed systemic change at the federal level for the sector.
- Commented that there is a small body of formal knowledge associated with the voluntary sector. But, while theoretical research plays an important role, there needs to be more emphasis on applied research. While significant resources are being targeted at the Voluntary Sector, at least one third of these funds are being spent at post-secondary institutes to study the voluntary sector. She observed that there does not appear to be a will from the academic sector to disseminate their findings to the voluntary sector.

The key participant made some general references based on her experience about some of the attributes of the voluntary sector as follows:

- Observed from her experience the voluntary sector may place a greater value on the name, reputation and the cited practical experience of the person over that of an individual who had developed a theory based on solid academic credentials but who had little practical experience around which their theory is built.

- Stated that in the voluntary sector there is a kind of service learning that is at the heart of the voluntary commitment to service. She described volunteerism as a form of learning.

In conclusion, the outstanding concern raised by the key participant was the lack of discussion about the difference between the content of board training materials and the process by which the materials are delivered. In her opinion the process of the delivery is what takes the content into practice for boards. She questioned whether a comprehensive curriculum would ensure that a board's effectiveness would be enhanced.

In summary, the researcher found that using the key standards a sound approach, given the lack of an established criteria in the voluntary sector. Questions regarding the effectiveness of online training for voluntary boards were raised, pointing to the need for more applied research as well as theoretical research on the sector.

### Learning from the Findings

The research provided one example of Canadian online training for voluntary boards. Key participants located from coast to coast in Canada, with three exceptions, were unaware of the existence of any online training. All key participants were interested in the possibilities of online training for voluntary boards. Five key participants knew of online training projects currently in the planning stage of development.

Validation provided by an expert opinion from the Panel affirmed that the key standards were meant to be inclusive of the important issues for boards to address, with the order of priority starting from the broader issues to the more specific issues of importance. The role of online training for voluntary boards was questioned as a stand alone measure to improve board performance.

Validation provided by the key participant from the Board Development Program suggested that the key standards set by VSR (1999) may be appropriate for voluntary sector groups located in larger, urban settings in eastern Canada, but may have little relevance for smaller voluntary organizations. The key participant agreed with discussion of how BDP materials fit with the key standards, as well as the assessment of the gaps as “critical,” “very important” and “for future consideration.” He did not agree that the findings were relevant or definitive given the target groups for the BDP materials have been developed to address. He stated that BDP training was meant to provide a rudimentary approach to governance for voluntary organizations.

Validation provided by the key participant from the Voluntary Sector Management Program suggested that the use of the key standards, for want of any other generally accepted criteria, was sound in principle. The key participant found the lack of middle ground in assessing the materials harsh in its approach, given the nature of voluntary boards. The key participant questioned whether effectiveness of online training for voluntary boards had been properly established.

In summary the use of the key standards to examine CBTW online training materials and BDP training materials was found to be acceptable, given the lack of any other established criteria. The key standards, which were organized from the broadest to the most specific, were meant to be applied broadly and inclusively.

Comparing the key standards to “Cultural Boards That Work” online training module may have excluded materials from other online modules that may have altered the assessment of areas that “Did Not Meet Standard.”

Comparing the key standards to the Board Development Program training materials may have identified gaps in the training which are irrelevant to the intention of BDP to provide basic governance information to voluntary organizations. Use of the key standard may have been too broad a tool to assess training either training in fine detail, but may have served to create an awareness of areas needing development and attention.

Judging the gaps in the materials as “Meets Standard” and “Does Not Meet Standard” may have been too severe a methodology. However, “Meets Standard” represented a very generous interpretation of any discussion, tool or comment on the topic of each of the key performance indicators. “Does Not Meet Standard” represented no discussion or reference to the key performance indicators.

#### Chapter Summary

Chapter Four presented the analysis of the information found regarding online training. Existing online training was compared against key standards and performance indicators established by VSR (1999). Gaps in the online training were prioritized, with validation of this alignment provided by an expert opinion.

The gaps in the online training were compared to gaps found in materials used in face-to-face training. Key participants provided validation for the assigned assessment and comparison of the materials. In comparison there were fewer gaps in the face-to-face training than were found in the online training materials. Both sets of materials showed “critical” gaps in demonstrating a) key success elements related to strategic planning, b) risk assessment strategies related to the planning process, c) setting measurable goals for strategic planning and, d) a systematic process to respond to requests for information.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Purpose of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss, interpret and evaluate the findings of the study presented in Chapter Four. Conclusions will be drawn in answer to the study's three research questions, as presented in Chapter One. Recommendations will be based on the conclusions. Suggestions for further research will be made from the study's conclusions and limitations.

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

What follows are conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

1. The discovery of one existing online training appears to be closely related to the current lack of technological capacity and connectivity of the sector. While there may be other existing online training the lack of accepted nomenclature for the voluntary sector both in French and English may have affected the key word search. The researcher recommends that existing and future online training, collaborate on the key phrases used to describe the sites to facilitate easier access for the intended users.
2. The components of effective voluntary board training are not clear. The researcher recommends that applied research take place to establish a range of components to develop indicators and outcomes representing effectiveness for both small and large voluntary boards.
3. The key governance standards from VSR (1999) represent a significant starting point in establishing a broad and inclusive good practice guide directed at the voluntary sector.

Refinement of these standards to align with the needs of smaller rural voluntary boards could be helpful.

4. Voluntary boards may be interested and willing to access online training but there is no existing data at present that supports that premise. The researcher recommends that a needs survey be conducted to determine to what extent, if it were available, voluntary boards would seek online training.
5. The Skills Program, Board Basics, the Board Development Program and “Cultural Boards That Work” should combine their resources to develop English and French online training for voluntary boards available at no or little cost to voluntary organizations.

### Discussion of Findings

#### Existence of Online Training

The following discussion addresses the findings of the first research question: What Canadian online training for voluntary boards exists? The implications of the results are also discussed.

The findings of the first research question suggest there has been scant attention paid to development and delivery of Canadian online training for voluntary boards. Varied search engines provided no direct hit to the existing site at the Cultural Management Institute at the University of Waterloo. Phillips (1995), Hall and Banting (2000) and the Voluntary Sector Table (1999) point to an absence of an accepted nomenclature for the voluntary sector that may have limited the capacity of the search engines to find any other sites. Various competing terms for the voluntary sector in French for the sector may have created the same effect on the search engines.

From coast to coast in Canada key participants were unaware of any existing training, with remarkably few exceptions. The three key participants who expressed an awareness of the existing online training were either involved in the administration or development of the existing online training or were instrumental in developing a web site that provided a link to the online training. Since the launch of the module in June 1999 the number of people registered for the online was reported as 22. However, it is important to point out that more people may have accessed the site as visitors and not taken the additional step to register in the module.

Many of the key participants wished to be provided with further information about the existing online training, indicating a high level of interest in the area. Three key participants described online training sites under construction in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. Each of these provinces has established departments that provide coordinated assistance to the voluntary sector through programs and funding initiatives. This implies the presence of a political attitude that both recognizes the value of the voluntary sector and fosters its development.

Phillips and Laforest (2000) point out that few voluntary sector organizations have either the capacity or the connectivity to the Internet, although The Voluntary Sector Initiative (2000) has targeted funds over the next five years to change that profile.

The existing online training for voluntary boards is available free of charge to individuals. This aspect may have affected the numbers and variety of online training of this nature. Other training and development provided to the sector is available at a cost to the learner. Two of the experts expressed concern that online training as a stand-alone measure may not provide voluntary boards with the kind of group process needed for changing the



board's governance practices. Spencer (1998), however, acknowledges a potential role for distance education in social adult education.

There is a growing awareness in the voluntary sector of the potential of the Internet, observe Phillips and Laforest (2000), that may lead to increased demand for online training for voluntary boards.

### Comparison of Online Training to Key Standards

The following discussion addresses the findings of the second research question: How well does online training for voluntary boards meet the key standards proposed by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999)? The implications of the results are also discussed.

VSR (1999) provided a set of eight key governance tasks in the form of a practice guide for effective stewardship. The eight key standards were developed and refined through a process of cross-country round table discussions with voluntary organizations large and small. For example, the researcher coordinated one set of these consultations that took place in via videoconference in October 1998 with voluntary groups located in Athabasca, Brooks, Provost, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie, Alberta.

A key participant from VSR (1999) provided some background to the thinking of the key governance standards. The key participant allowed they were developed to insure that the federal government did not act precipitously and develop draconian legislation for the voluntary sector in response to political pressure. The key standards were intentionally developed to be broad and inclusive in nature, in order to reflect the diversity of the voluntary sector in Canada.

The key participant from the Board Development Program articulated his concern that the key standards may not apply to smaller organizations, located outside of larger urban

areas. This concern was voiced at a 1998 Round Table, as well as by individuals in the groups that participated in the October 1998 videoconference consultations.

The VSR (1999) key standards appear to represent a broadly based, but sound point of departure into a largely uncharted area in the voluntary sector. Some refinement of these key standards may be required in order to ensure that smaller, rural voluntary organizations can use them to properly assess their governance practice.

Use of VSR (1999) key standards to assess the CBTW online training may be argued as a misalignment of ideas. However, given that VSR (1999) developed these key standards after detailed process of consultation with the voluntary sector, and the absence of any other comparable standards, there appears to be ample support for this approach. Validation provided by the expert opinion from VSR (1999), as well as the key participant from the Voluntary Sector Management Program, concurred that the use of these key standards for assessment of training materials was sound.

The key participant from VSR (1999), as well as the key participant from the Board Development Program, agreed with an approach that assessed the training materials as “Meets Standard” and “Does Not Meet Standard,” as well as the subsequent prioritization of the failure to meet the standards as “critical,” “very important” and “for future consideration.” However, the key participant from the Voluntary Sector Management Program disagreed with the use of two standards and argued for the use of a mid-ground assessment.

In part the concern expressed by the key participant appeared to represent a lack of willingness to apply a standard they found harsh and critical without adequate access to the training materials. Additionally, the key participant found that the “excluded middle” of the

assessment may have presented aspects of both sets of training materials that are currently under review. The two standards would not adequately reflect that progress.

The researcher acknowledges that the use of a “forced choice” in the judgement of the training materials may have resulted in a loss of data a mid-ground assessment may have provided. While there is some merit to providing an area in the assessment that allowed for any partially developed aspects of training, the issue of copyright of training materials represented a significant hurdle for the researcher in reviewing materials. In order to show how the materials partially represented an aspect of a key standard, the materials needed to be replicated in some manner and permission for any replication was unavailable. In this research use of the assessment “Meets Standard” was generously and broadly applied for both the online training and the BDP training materials.

The gaps in the online training materials that were judged “Does Not Meet Standard” in general appear to represent the lack of application of current systems thinking to materials as well as the trend to articulated outcome measurements. There was an absence of an articulated process to address two-way communication between the voluntary organization and various stakeholders, including donors, volunteers and community. Additionally there was no evidence of how a voluntary organization would establish outcome measures to serve as self-assessment tools. The inverted triangle model proposed by Inglis, Alexander and Weaver (1999) reflects a systemic view of board development and training that articulates the feedback relationships between the voluntary organization, its key stakeholders and the environment in which it exists.

“Cultural Boards That Work” online training currently holds a unique position in Canada since it provides the only online training to voluntary organizations that is free of

charge. “Cultural Boards That Work” as well as other online training in the development phase may wish compare their materials both to the key standards, as well the theoretical model proposed by Inglis, Alexander and Weaver (1999), in order to insure that the materials provide direction to voluntary organizations that include emerging practices and issues in the voluntary sector.

### Comparison of Online Training and Board Development Training

The following discussion addresses the findings of the third research question: How closely does the existing online training compare to the key standards met by the Board Development Program training materials? The implications of the results are also discussed.

Comparison of the online training to the training materials of the Board Development Program provided an unexpected finding. Both sets of materials acknowledge their shared origins to the same authors in 1987, although clearly both training materials continued to be revised and changed in the past 13 years, and both “Cultural Boards That Work” and Board Development Program training continue to be available at no cost to voluntary organizations.

When the key participant from the Board Development Program reviewed the identified gaps he found no fault with the findings. He argued that the existing gaps were irrelevant to the intention of the Board Development Program training materials, that is to provide an opportunity for voluntary boards to learn and practice rudimentary governance.

The key participant from the Voluntary Sector Management Program added that whether or not critical gaps in either training existed, the process by which the group learned and implemented the materials was more important than completeness of any materials.

Another aspect not addressed by either comparing both sets of materials to the key governance standards is the lack of recognition of the existing knowledge a group might

bring to the training materials. Holland et al. (1999) argues that an understanding of the board's existing culture is fundamental in order to affect change in its practices.

Board Development Program training materials reflected a higher number of areas that were assessed as "Meets Standard" than that of "Cultural Boards That Work." The Board Development Program materials appeared to reflect an influence from the Carver Model of Governance (1992) more directly than the materials of "Cultural Board That Work," pointing to an inclusion of recent thinking in the voluntary sector. However, "Cultural Boards That Work" was launched in 1999 as an interactive web site in anticipation of future connectivity in the sector, but also as a reflection of broader changes in modes of learning in Canada.

Both training programs lacked evidence of an articulated feedback process. The key participant from the Voluntary Sector Management Program argued that criteria and standards in the voluntary sector are not well served by rigid measurement. Certainly VSB (1999) points to the need for recognition that the diversity of the voluntary sector plays a role in its strength and capacity. Bradshaw (1992) offers a bridge between these two positions when he suggests that organizational effectiveness is a social judgement. By implication training materials directed at the voluntary sector need to include a mechanism to reflect this aspect of social judgement both in the planning and in the way that a voluntary group creates feedback links to its stakeholders and its environment.

#### Implications of Findings for Distance Education

The implications of the findings for distance education are structured around the acronym "ACTION," coined by Bates (1995) as criteria for decision-making for technology-based open learning and distance education.

- Access: There is little doubt that the lack of technological capacity in the voluntary sector appears to have had an impact on the availability of online training opportunities. Given the commitment of federal dollars the future holds brighter prospects. Along with resources directed at improving the technological capacity, there is an expected increase in the numbers of online resources for the voluntary sector. Hand in hand with improved technological access for voluntary organizations, the projected increase in the rate of home-based connectivity of individuals in Canada may result in a greater demand for online training opportunities from individual members of voluntary boards from their homes. A significant opportunity exists for the development of online training resources for voluntary boards to meet the key standards established by VSB (1999).
- Costs: “Cultural Boards That Work” and the Board Development Program are available for little or no cost to the voluntary organization. A collaboration of federal and provincial governments, and interested foundations could result in the means to share the expense of the instructional design of online training materials suitable for voluntary boards across Canada. There appears to be no concrete data on how much voluntary organizations are willing and able to pay for online training. Nonetheless, distance education with its potential for economies of scale may be a means to keep the cost of online training to a minimum and therefore more accessible for voluntary boards.
- Teaching and Learning: The instructional design of online training for voluntary organizations would need to factor in the key standards for governance practice developed by VSB (1999). As well, the design should include as a learning outcome that each individual board members would be able to bring their skills and knowledge back to the group in order to translate their learning into the board’s practices. Two experts

consulted in the study queried the effectiveness of online training for voluntary boards.

One expert stated that the process of learning is as important as the content of the training materials. However the researcher holds the premise that distance education could develop a bank of skills and knowledge among the board members that are needed for effective board governance practices. The researcher's experience has shown that one of the biggest difficulties for a board is to get the group to commit to a training date, given each board member's competing adult concerns. Distance education would allow the individual board members to customize their learning to a greater extent than is currently possible.

- **Interactivity and user-friendliness:** Online training for voluntary organizations has much potential to enhance the skills and knowledge of boards, provided the individual board members have the literacy and computer skills needed to access distance education in this format. Key to the success of online training would be careful consideration of the diversity in the level of skills and literacy of individual board members in Canada.
- **Organizational issues:** A central coordinating institution such as Charity Village might be an appropriate site for online training of this nature. The Charity Village site currently provides basic Internet skill training for individuals that may assist some individuals before they might embark on further online training. From the perspective of the individual voluntary board there may be a requirement that all members of the group access the online training in a similar time frame. An incentive in the form of accreditation for the individual or the group might add the needed motivation to achieve this goal. Alternatively, the online training might form part of a continued funding

requirement such as is the adoption of the Code of Fundraising Practices required by the Muttart Foundation.

- **Novelty:** Online training for voluntary organizations may be reasonably described as “new,” especially in the face of the current lack of connectivity and technological capacity. But online training as a format for distance education is not new and there is an opportunity to translate the experience of online training found in industry and education into a benefit for the voluntary sector. The researcher found a high degree of interest across Canada in online training for voluntary boards that argues strongly for a future role for distance education in the voluntary sector.
- **Speed:** Online training for voluntary boards could be mounted in a relatively short period of time assuming that adequate resources are applied. Course materials once developed could be refined and modified quickly. However, speed of modification of materials in this context does not appear to be an issue, given the lack of existing resources.

The implications of the findings for distance education point strongly to an emerging potential of online training for voluntary boards. Along with the prospect of the improved technological capacity needed to access online training, voluntary organizations face increased scrutiny by funders and the public on their accountability and governance practices. Future instructional design of online training materials would need to include factors such as the key standards developed by VSB (1999), the cost of online training, the diversity of the levels of literacy and computer skills of board members across Canada, and the ease with which the online training could be implemented in the board’s governance practice.



### Suggestions for Further Study

It is recommended that:

- More research be conducted on what constitutes effective training approaches for the voluntary sector.
- A multi-leveled assessment tool of board training and development needs be developed and made accessible to voluntary boards.
- An online resource that provides examples of best practices and/or case studies and applied research focusing on smaller Canadian voluntary boards be launched.
- There be improved access to journals and publications about the voluntary sector for students and scholars through university and college libraries.
- Research on the voluntary sector be registered with CharityVillage Online, to avoid future duplication in areas of study and to ensure the dissemination of results to the sector.
- Further voluntary sector studies whose stated aim includes an attempt to define the correct name of the voluntary sector be avoided.
- Models of networked learning for the voluntary sector be developed and disseminated.

### Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss, interpret and evaluate the findings of the study presented in Chapter Four. Conclusions and recommendations were presented based on the findings of the study. A discussion of each of the research questions with corresponding implications took place. Suggestions for further study growing from aspects of the findings and recommendations was provided.

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## **APPENDIX A**

**A Good Practice Guide for Governance**

**Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada's  
Voluntary Sector**

Final Report – February 1999

A Good Practice Guide for Governance

Every board should explicitly assume responsibility for stewardship of the organization, and as part of this stewardship, be responsible for each of eight key tasks that are:

1. Mission and Strategic Planning

- Establish the mission; communicate it with members and stakeholders; and periodically review its appropriateness
- Identify key elements to success in sustaining this mission and establish a strategic planning process as to how to get there;
- Approve a process for risk assessment and management to assist the board in anticipating risk, assessing, and managing the outcome of risky actions; and
- Oversee and monitor the achievement of the mission by setting measurable goals, defined in terms of desired outcomes or impacts on clients, rather than as inputs or activities.

2. Transparency and Communication

- Establish policies for communicating and receiving feedback from stakeholders
- Ensure, as part of a code of ethical conduct, that the complaints and grievance procedure works effectively;
- Hold regular board meetings to provide an opportunity for discussion;

- Provide a collective memory of the organization by ensuring that appropriate minutes and documents are kept; and
- Respond appropriately to requests for information.

### 3. Structures

Ensure that the organization has at least three basic elements in its structure:

- A board capable of providing objective oversight;
- An independent nominating committee to ensure the appropriate succession of the board; and
- An audit committee, whose primary responsibility is to report whether the organization is in compliance with the laws, rules, regulations and contracts that govern it. It also reviews whether the management, information and control systems are organized and implemented to carry out these rules and regulations, and as well is responsible for supervising external financial reporting.

### 4. The Board's Understanding of Its Role

- Decide upon and communicate its philosophy of governance;
- Develop a code of conduct for board member to help the directors understand and ensure they agree to the obligations which they are undertaking;
- Establish and enforce a written conflict of interest policy governing board members and staff or volunteers who have independent decision making authority over the resources of the organization;

- Provide job descriptions for board members that outline general duties and how the board's work will be evaluated;
- Invest in board members with orientation and ongoing information sessions;
- Recognize the contribution of board members and provide feedback on the board's performance; and
- Use the time of the board members efficiently.

#### 5. Fiscal Responsibility

- Approve a budget that reflects the organization's priorities, and that is based on realistic assumptions (revenues, costs, and other factors such as inflation);
- Monitor and control expenditures, based on appropriate accounting procedures;
- Oversee the stewardship of the organization's assets and liabilities'
- If registered charity, provide oversight of the issuance and record-keeping of receipts for charitable donations; and
- Approve annual reports, including financial statements.

#### 6. Oversight of Human Resources

- Ensure the organization complies with employment legislation, workplace safety regulations and reviews its employment arrangement periodically to ensure they comply with good practice;
- Ensure staff are provided with job descriptions, orientation, management, training and performance appraisals;
- Recruit staff, openly, fairly and systemically;

- Review periodically the staff structure and effectiveness of the working relationship between the board and staff.
- Have in place a clear set of policies addressing the recruitment, preparation, oversight and recognition of volunteer resources; (Volunteer programs should be designed and assessed with the same stringency as other programs.)
- Give volunteers a clear statement of the tasks and activities that they are to carry out, perhaps including job descriptions or volunteer agreements.
- Adopt and adhere to codes of ethical conduct for managers of volunteers and volunteers themselves;
- Provide adequate orientation, training, and evaluation;
- Publicly recognize the contributions of volunteers;
- Screen volunteers particularly if the organization works with vulnerable populations;
- Provide direction, in unionized environments work with the unions to reach agreement, on how the paid or non-voluntary volunteers are to be integrated into the organization;
- Establish explicit expectations about the claiming of expenses.

#### 7. Assessment and Control Systems

- Adopt and enforce a code of ethical conduct and an effective monitoring and complaints process;
- Establish a framework for internal regulations, including a constitution and bylaws, (these might be quite simple in small organizations)
- Ensure that compliance audits are carried out as an integral part of the annual evaluation cycle to regularly check that the rules governing the organization are being followed and

that the control systems are functioning and adequate;(This would normally be supervised by the audit committee. Upon receiving the report of the audit committee, the board has a responsibility to respond, indicating how it has addressed issues of noncompliance identified by the committee.)

- Evaluate the performance of the board collectively; and
- Evaluate the performance of staff and volunteers.

#### 8. Planning for Succession and Diversity

- Appoint a nominating committee, independent of management, which is charged with responsibility for assessing the qualities of board members desired, developing criteria and proposing suitable candidates; and
- Discuss whether the representation of constituencies and users on the board is important to the organization's mission and credibility and, if appropriate, work toward increasing the diversity of representation on the board. It should be recognized, however, that token representation is not an adequate response to the issue of diversity.

## **APPENDIX B**



Information Provided to Key Participants

Example of E-mail Sent to Key Contacts Across Canada

**Sent:** Tuesday, November 14, 2000 9:29 AM

**Subject:** Thesis Research Consent Form

This is Heather Halpenny e-mailing you as follow-up to our conversation of some weeks ago about the availability of any Canadian online training for voluntary boards. When I spoke to you I said I would give you a contact for the Cultural Management Institute at the University of Waterloo. Here it is: <http://ccm.uwaterloo.ca/>

There are two more parts to this e-mail. First of all I am confirming that you are not aware of any existing Canadian online training for voluntary boards.

And secondly, because this project must work within the ethical guidelines of Athabasca University, I am asking you to take a moment to review and complete the following consent form. To send this back by return e-mail, please forward the message and scroll down and type in your name and so on. Thanks again for your help and I look forward to being in touch with you again in the future.

Heather Halpenny

*Consent Form for Participation in Survey of Available Online Training for Voluntary Boards*

Thesis topic: Canadian online training for voluntary boards.

Principal Researcher: Heather Halpenny

Affiliation: Graduate Student, Master of Distance Education Program, Athabasca University

Study conducted in partial fulfillment of the MDE Program

Supervisor: Dr. J. Fahy, (780) 675-6216

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. A verbal description of the research study, given to you by the principal researcher, should have given you an idea of what the research is about, and what your participation will involve. The interview you will be involved in will be recorded in writing, and the summary notes will be returned to you for validation. If you would like more details about the study, you should feel free to ask.

All participation in the study is voluntary, and agreement to participate may be withdrawn by you at any time. All information will be kept confidential by the principal researcher, and any reporting of findings will guarantee complete confidentiality to the provider. (No identifying information of any kind will be reported.) All data gathered will be kept secure by the principal researcher and will be destroyed when the need for it no longer exists. If you have any concerns or questions regarding this research, please contact:

Heather Halpenny

9139 – 74 Avenue

Edmonton, Alberta T6E 1C9

(780) 432-1009

E-mail: Halpenny@home.com

Participant's Signature..... Date.....

Researcher's Signature..... Date.....

Witness' Signature..... Date.....

## **APPENDIX C**

Information Provided to Key Participants Providing Validation of Findings

November 15, 2000

Key Participant/ Board Development Program/Manager of Voluntary Sector Training Program/Voluntary Sector Roundtable

Re: Survey of Available of Online Training for Canadian Voluntary Boards

Dear Key Participant:

Thank-you for considering my request to provide an expert opinion on the results of one aspect of the research I am conducting as partial fulfillment of the Master of Distance Education Program at Athabasca University. (Attachment - Precis of Project)

The following three questions guided the study:

1. What Canadian online training for voluntary boards exists?
2. How well does online board training for voluntary boards meet the key standards established by the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999)?
3. How closely does the existing online training compare to the key standards met by the Board Development Program?

The research showed in answer to the first question that there is one current example of Canadian online training for voluntary boards. "Developing Cultural Boards That Work" (CBTW) is part of a series of online training opportunities provided by the Cultural Management Institute housed at the University of Waterloo. The web site is:

[http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/ccm/programs/ccm\\_cpd.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/ccm/programs/ccm_cpd.html)

For copyright reasons I am not allowed to download and forward any of their materials and so direct you to above URL.

For the second question I compared the online training materials with the key governance standards established the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999).Under each

standard an individual performance indicator is described. Materials were reviewed for key phrases that could be aligned with each indicator. The training materials were assessed as either "Meets Standard" or "Does Not Meet Standard". "Does Not Meet Standard" indicated a gap if there was no reference in the training materials that could be aligned with the performance indicator.

Prioritizing the gaps was the next aspect to be considered. Final Report (1999) provided no prioritization for the recommended implementation of the standards, nor has a legislated standard been set.

Working with the assumption that the Report listed the key standards in order of priority the following assessment values were assigned to the perceived gaps in the training materials:

- "Critical" (needing immediate attention)
- "Very important" (should be resolved in the next year)
- "For future consideration" (not critical or urgent)

In order to answer the third question the study compared how closely CBTW training met the key standards with the training materials of the Board Development Program (BDP). CBTW training materials were compared along side of BDP training materials. Materials either met the standard or did not meet the standard. Where there was a failure to meet the standard, a further assessment was assigned of critical, very important or for further consideration. (Attachment – Comparison of CBTW with BDP)

Summary of Performance Indicators (n = 36)

	Met	Failed	Total	Critical	Import.	Future	Total
CBTW	18	18	36	9	3	3	18
BDP	23	13	36	7	2	4	13

Both CBTW and BDP fell critically short in four out of eight key performance standards of mission and strategic planning, transparency and communication, structures and assessment and control systems. The areas deemed very important and for future consideration bear thoughtful, future review in order to keep pace with emerging voluntary sector issues.

Would you give me your view on this thinking? To do this, I propose that I call you in a few weeks for a discussion of about 20 minutes. I will record your impressions and provide you with a copy of what I have recorded for your validation. (Attachment – Consent for Participation)

Thank you very much for considering this request. Please advise me if you are unable to detach any of my attachments and I will send them by fax or in the body of an e-mail. I look forward to hearing your response.

Yours truly,

Heather Halpenny

(Halpenny@home.com) B. (780) 427-3275

## **APPENDIX D**

Universities, Colleges, Continuing Education Programs, Public Policy Institutions

Nonprofit Management and Voluntary Sector Programs  
Viewed on the World Wide Web September 2000 – December 2000

Banff Centre for Management: Community and Not-For- Profit Leadership  
[www.banffmanagement.com/non\\_prof.asp](http://www.banffmanagement.com/non_prof.asp)

Canadian Policy Research Network  
[www.cprn.com/cprn.html](http://www.cprn.com/cprn.html)

Canadian Social Research Links  
[www.canadiansocialresearch.net](http://www.canadiansocialresearch.net)

Canadian Society of Association Executives  
[www.associationplace.com](http://www.associationplace.com)

Dalhousie University: Non-Profit Sector Leadership  
[www.dal.ca/~henson/n\\_profit.html/](http://www.dal.ca/~henson/n_profit.html/)

Grant MacEwan Community College: Voluntary Sector Management Program  
[www.business.gmcc.ca.ca/vsm/](http://www.business.gmcc.ca.ca/vsm/)

Humber College Volunteer Management  
<http://cecal.humberc.on.ca/volunt/index.html>

McGill-McConnell Program: Master of Management for National Volunteer Sector Leaders  
[www.management.mcgill.ca/exec/vleaders/index.html](http://www.management.mcgill.ca/exec/vleaders/index.html)

Queen's University: Public Policy and the Third Sector  
<http://policy.queensu.ca/sps/ThirdSector>

Ryerson Polytechnical University: Certificate in Interdisciplinary Studies in Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Management <http://ce-online.ryerson.ca/ce>



Simon Fraser Management Program for the Non-profit and Voluntary Sectors  
[www.sfu.ca/continuing-studies/bus/nonprofit/index.html](http://www.sfu.ca/continuing-studies/bus/nonprofit/index.html)

Vancouver Community College: Nonprofit Sector Management Certificate Program  
[www.vcc.ba.ca/ce/non\\_profit.html](http://www.vcc.ba.ca/ce/non_profit.html)

York University: Nonprofit Management and Leadership Program  
[www.schulich.yorku.ca/nmlp.nsf](http://www.schulich.yorku.ca/nmlp.nsf)

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Canadian Online Resources Reviewed**

Canadian Online Resources Reviewed  
Viewed on the World Wide Web – June 2000 – December 2000

Canadian Rural Information Services [www.agr.ca/cris/](http://www.agr.ca/cris/)

Canadiana – The Canadian Resource Page  
[www.cs.cmu.edu/unofficial/canadiana/README/html](http://www.cs.cmu.edu/unofficial/canadiana/README/html)

Human Resources Development Canada -Interactive Training Inventory Guide  
[http://209.47.1.53.9010/iti/ow9/users.opening\\_screen](http://209.47.1.53.9010/iti/ow9/users.opening_screen)

Links to all existing Government Search Facilities [www.canada.gc.ca/search/srcind\\_e.htm](http://www.canada.gc.ca/search/srcind_e.htm)

National Library of Canada [www.nlc-bnc.ca/cagov/egovinfo.htm](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/cagov/egovinfo.htm)

The Node Learning Technologies <http://node.ca/>

Office of the Learning Technologies [www.olt-bta.drhc.gc.ca/seek/search.html](http://www.olt-bta.drhc.gc.ca/seek/search.html)

Provincial Government Voluntary Sector Initiatives

- Alberta [www.gov.ca.ca/wrf/index.html](http://www.gov.ca.ca/wrf/index.html)
- British Columbia [www.gov.bc.ca/cdcv/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/cdcv/)
- Nova Scotia [www.gov.ns.ca/](http://www.gov.ns.ca/)
- Ontario [www.trilliumfoundation.org](http://www.trilliumfoundation.org)

VolNet [www.volnet.org](http://www.volnet.org)

Voluntary Sector Initiative [http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/volunteer/vstf\\_e.htm](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/volunteer/vstf_e.htm)

Web Networks [www.community.web.net/index.html](http://www.community.web.net/index.html)

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Grid of Key Participants Contacted**

Key participants contacted from July 2000 – December 2000

Province	Type of Organization	Knowledge of Online Training
British Columbia	Public Administration Program University	No
	Voluntary Initiative Provincial Government	No
Alberta	Provincial Resource Centre for Voluntary Resources	No
	Voluntary Sector Management Program Community College	No
	Voluntary Board Training Program Provincial Government	No
	Provincial Contact for Voluntary Sector Initiative	No
	National Journalist for Voluntary Sector	No
	Executive Director, National Foundation	No
	Executive Director, Voluntary Organization	No
Saskatchewan	Professor, Voluntary Sector Training Initiative	No
	Researcher of Board Training University	No
Ontario	Officer of Future Online Training Volunteer Centre	No
	Director, Centre for Development of Online Training for Cultural Organizations University	Yes
	Development Officer of Online Training for Cultural Organizations University	Yes
Quebec	Skills Representative Conseil du Loisir	No
Nova Scotia	Director of Online Voluntary Resource, Henson College	Yes
	Skills Representative – Nova Scotia Sports and Recreation	No

National Organizations	Researcher Canadian Centre for Philanthropy	No
	Board Trainer Volunteer Canada	No
	Advisory Committee Member VolNet	No
	Researcher/Panel Member Voluntary Sector Roundtable (1999)	No

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Prioritization of Gaps in Training Materials**

Priorization of Gaps Between Training Materials and Key Standards

Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard							
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future			
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP		
<p><b>1. Mission and Strategic Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish the mission; communicate it with members and stakeholders and periodically review its appropriateness.</li> <li>Identify key elements to success in sustaining this mission and establish a strategic planning process as to how to get there.</li> <li>Approve a process for risk assessment and management to assist the board in anticipating risk, assessing and managing the outcome of risky actions.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>								
			X	X						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key elements of success not isolated as factors monitoring the strategic planning process. A process to assess not articulated.</li> <li>Process for risk assessment not described. Risk is a stated factor to be considering when setting the rate of growth for the organization.</li> </ul>									
			X	X						



Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oversee and monitor the achievement of the mission by setting measurable goals, defined in terms of desired outcomes or impacts on clients, rather than as inputs or activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achievement of goals not related to impact on clients or outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achievement of goals related to impact on clients or outcomes.</li> </ul>	X	X				
<b>2. Transparency and Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish policies for communicating and receiving feedback from stakeholders.</li> <li>Ensure, as part of a code of ethical conduct, that the complaints and grievance procedure works effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No feedback process from stakeholders was described.</li> <li>No description of a process by which any grievance or complaint could be received, recorded or provided an appropriate and timely response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>	X					

Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond appropriately to requests for information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No description of a process by which any grievance or complaint could be received, recorded or provided an appropriate and timely response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No description of a process by which any grievance or complaint could be received, recorded or provided an appropriate and timely response.</li> </ul>	X	X				
<b>3. Structures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the organization has at least three basis elements in its structure:</li> <li>A board capable of providing objective oversight.</li> <li>An independent nominating committee to ensure the appropriate succession of the board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> <li>Board membership recruitment is dealt with in a substantive manner, without discussion inclusion of the term ‘independent.’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> <li>Board membership recruitment is dealt with in a substantive manner, without discussion inclusion of the term ‘independent.’</li> </ul>					X	X

Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An audit committee, whose primary responsibility is to report on compliance with the laws, rules, regulations and contracts that govern it. It reviews whether the management, information and control systems are organized and implemented to carry out these rules and regulations, and as well is responsible for supervising external financial reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The term “audit committee” is not identified by any of the Governance Functions as representing a wider scope of responsibility for the organization.</li> </ul>		X					
<p><b>4. The Board’s Understanding of Its Role</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide upon and communicate its philosophy of governance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>						

Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a code of conduct for board member to help the directors understand and ensure they agree to the obligations which they are undertaking.</li> <li>Establish and enforce a written conflict of interest policy governing board members and staff or volunteers who have independent decision making authority over the resources of the organization.</li> <li>Provide job descriptions for board members that outline general duties and how the board's work will be evaluated;</li> <li>Invest in board members with orientation and ongoing information sessions;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> <li>Meets standards</li> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>						

Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize the contribution of board members and provide feedback on the board's performance; and</li> <li>Use the time of the board members efficiently.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>						
<p><b>5. Fiscal Responsibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve a budget that reflects the organization's priorities, and that is based on realistic assumptions (revenues, costs, and other factors such as inflation).</li> <li>Monitor and control expenditures, based on appropriate accounting procedures.</li> <li>Oversee the stewardship of the organization's assets and liabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>						

Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If registered charity, provide oversight of the issuance and record-keeping of receipts for charitable donations.</li> <li>Approve annual reports, including financial statements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting as a registered charity not highlighted as a function of financial governance.</li> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting as a registered charity not highlighted as a function of financial governance.</li> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>						
<b>6. Oversight of Human Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the organization complies with employment legislation, workplace safety regulations and reviews its employment arrangement periodically to ensure they comply with good practice.</li> <li>Ensure staff are provided with job descriptions, orientation, management, training and performance appraisals.</li> <li>Recruit staff, openly, fairly and systemically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No evidence this responsibility assigned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> </ul>					X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure staff are provided with job descriptions, orientation, management, training and performance appraisals.</li> <li>Recruit staff, openly, fairly and systemically.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> <li>No description matching these terms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards</li> <li>No description matching these terms.</li> </ul>						X



Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<p>7. Assessment and Control Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt and enforce a code of ethical conduct and an effective monitoring and complaints process.</li> <li>Establish a framework for internal regulations, including a constitution and bylaws, (these might be quite simple in small organizations)</li> <li>Ensure that compliance audits are carried out as an integral part of the annual evaluation cycle to regularly check that the rules governing the organization are being followed and that the control systems are functioning and adequate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No process to monitor or enforce the code was evident, nor was there any process to receive, record, or respond to complaints.</li> <li>Meets standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No process to monitor or enforce the code was evident, nor was there any process to receive, record, or respond to complaints.</li> <li>Meets standards.</li> </ul>	X	X				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of an articulated compliance audit, nor was the board's response to non-compliance outlined.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of an articulated compliance audit, nor was the board's response to non-compliance outlined.</li> </ul>	X	X				



Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the performance of the board collectively; and</li> <li>Evaluate the performance of staff and volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards.</li> </ul>						
<p><b>8. Planning for Succession and Diversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appoint a nominating committee, independent of management, which is charged with responsibility for assessing the qualities of board members desired, developing criteria and proposing suitable candidates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The independence of the nominating committee is not an isolated factor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The independence of the nominating committee is not an isolated factor.</li> </ul>					X	X

Standards	Comparison of Training Materials to Key Standards		Assessed Value of Failure to Meet Standard					
	Cultural Boards That Work (CBTW)	Board Development Program (BDP)	Critical		Important		Future	
			CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP	CBTW	BDP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss whether the representation of constituencies and users on the board is important to the organization's mission and credibility and, if appropriate, works toward increasing the diversity of representation on the board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversity of the board membership is not addressed in the Board Recruitment Process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets standards.</li> </ul>						X