

City of Nanaimo

COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: July 3, 2026
Contact: Marina Miller
Contact No.: 123 456 7890
ID: 12345
Meeting Date: July 3, 2026

TO: CITY OF NANAIMO CITY COUNCIL
FROM: GENERAL MANAGER OF PLANNING
SUBJECT: OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT NANAIMO NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR

Recommendation

THAT Council,

- i. Receive the City of Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study for information.
- ii. Direct staff to undertake the program of work described in this report to identify and analyze options for addressing the issues identified in the City of Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study and to report back to Council with recommendations.

Summary

This report seeks Council's direction to undertake a program for work which explores options to support Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector. Informed primarily by the 2024 Not-for-Profit Sector Study, staff recommend a program described in the Analysis section of this Council Report. Actions include creating proposed strategies, scoping a training program, identifying potential strategic partnerships, and drafting a communications plan. It also seeks direction to scope the next study which aims to be completed by late 2029.

Should Council support the recommendations, staff will initiate a work program which conducts further study of, and proposes strategies for potential policy options stemming from the Sector Study, and bring forward the associated reports for Council's consideration at future meetings.

Council Authority/Previous Direction

A comprehensive study of Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector was identified as a key priority during the 2021 Economic Development Strategy community consultations. City staff developed the scope of the study and organized a meeting with key stakeholders in December 2023 to gather input. The study was carried out by Nordicity consultants and completed in October 2024.

Context Background

As part of Nanaimo's ongoing commitment to sustainable development, the City has embraced the Doughnut Economics framework, which aims to build a thriving, socially just, and environmentally sustainable community. The not-for-profit sector is essential for achieving these goals, but its size, economic impact, and scope were not formally measured before. A comprehensive study was completed in 2024 which measures the impact of the sector, and provides opportunities for future action.

Nordicity was selected as the lead consultant through a competitive process. **The final report is included in Appendix A.** The study created an inventory of Nanaimo's not-for-profit organizations and examined the local sector's economic, social, and environmental impacts using mixed methods. A steering committee made of sector leads was formed to guide the study, ensuring timelines and budgets were met. Staff aim to commission a follow-up study five years from its completion, by late 2029.

Methodology

The overall approach of the study was centred around the [Five Dimensions of Impact Framework](#), which tries to understand the relationship between goals, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Mixed methods, both quantitative and qualitative, were used for the analysis. Data was sourced from existing databases, primary surveys, and interviews, some of which was used for an Economic Impact Analysis (EIA).

- **Survey:** Online survey lasting approximately one month, with a 24% response rate amongst not-for-profits, advertised through multiple communications channels.
- **Interviews:** 22 one-on-ones conducted with not-for-profit staff and Nanaimo City staff in relevant departments.
- **Economic Impact Analysis:** Advanced analysis method which used a multi-tiered approach, 'gross-up' methodology, and a proprietary model from the consultant.

Economic Impact Analysis Methodology

An Economic Impact Analysis is a measure of the spending and employment associated with a sector in the economy. It assumes that changes in spending can have ripple effects through the economy, and tries to estimate the impact. The underlying assumption is that a decrease in spending results in economic contractions, and vice-versa.

For this study, Nordicity used their own proprietary model called “MyEIA”. Their methodology involved the following steps, not necessarily in this order:

- Estimated the number of not-for-profits in Nanaimo through online searches, and special databases which sort organizations by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes.
- Used each not-for-profit’s annual expenditures data collected in the primary survey to calculate an average, then use a ‘gross-up’ method to estimate the expenditures for the entire Nanaimo sector. All inputted data was anonymized before this step.
- Used input-output tables from Statistics Canada combined with industry wages and other economic data to estimate how increased expenditures in Nanaimo’s not-for-profit sector affects the economy. Output measures include things like full time employment, income, and GDP.
- The MyEIA model estimates additional tax revenue which is generated by additional economic activity in the target sector, even though the input data from Statistics Canada does not include a not-for-profit category. This is a key aspect of Nordicity’s proprietary model.
- The model uses the [Inverse Leontief Matrix](#) based on purchase of goods and services data. This matrix is a key concept for input-output analysis, modeling how changes in one economic sector affect others.
- [Type II impact ratios](#) are used as part of the impact analysis, calculating three types of impacts:
 - Direct: Economic impacts on the target sector itself
 - Indirect: Impacts that are a result of the direct impacts, supporting other businesses
 - Induced: Impacts that result from the spending of wages, salaries, and profits
- The final outputs are usually at a provincial or federal level, but for this case the consultants incorporated sub-provincial location quotients to estimate local economic impacts. Location quotients are a measure of a local industry’s level of specialization compared to the province.

Key findings

The study shows that the not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo contributes significantly to the local economy. It also delivers benefits which are aligned with Nanaimo's municipal goals.

Some key figures from the Economic analysis include:

- 193 not-for-profits in Nanaimo estimated to exist which;
- Earned an estimated \$67 million in 2023;
- Generated \$64 million towards the 2023 Nanaimo GDP and;
- Generated 720 direct full time employees, many with additional volunteer labour.

See the table below for a summary of the direct, indirect, induced, and total impacts measured.

Table 10. Economic Impact Summary

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Total Employment (FTEs)	720	140	80	940
Total Labour Income (\$)	40,530,000	8,266,000	4,590,000	53,386,000
Total GDP (\$)	39,855,000	13,969,000	10,200,000	64,024,000

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey, Analysis, and MyEIA Model™

In addition to economic benefits, the not-for-profit sector also has social and environmental impacts. Organizations play a vital role in health, education, social justice, environmental sustainability, youth development, and Indigenous relations. They are key advocates who provide direct and indirect benefits to vulnerable groups like seniors, youth, and low-income families.

Despite all of the benefits, the sector faces many challenges. Not-for-profits in Nanaimo have limited funding, staffing shortages, rising operational costs, and difficulties in documenting their own impacts on society. Additionally, they struggle to ensure that Indigenous communities are receiving services.

Opportunities for action

The study identifies opportunities for future action, grouped into three main themes:

1. **Bolstering sector capacity:** The City could reduce donor fatigue, simplify the funding process, create affordable workspaces, and support governance training for organizations.
2. **Fostering innovative partnerships:** Building stronger collaboration between the City and not-for-profits could leverage their expertise to co-develop programs and services that benefit the community.

3. **Amplifying sector impact and advocacy:** Raising awareness of the sector's contributions and advocating for increased support from provincial and federal governments is key for sector resilience.

Analysis (Rationale for Recommendations)

Staff recommend the following work program to further investigate and begin drafting strategies for addressing the issues identified in the City of Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study.

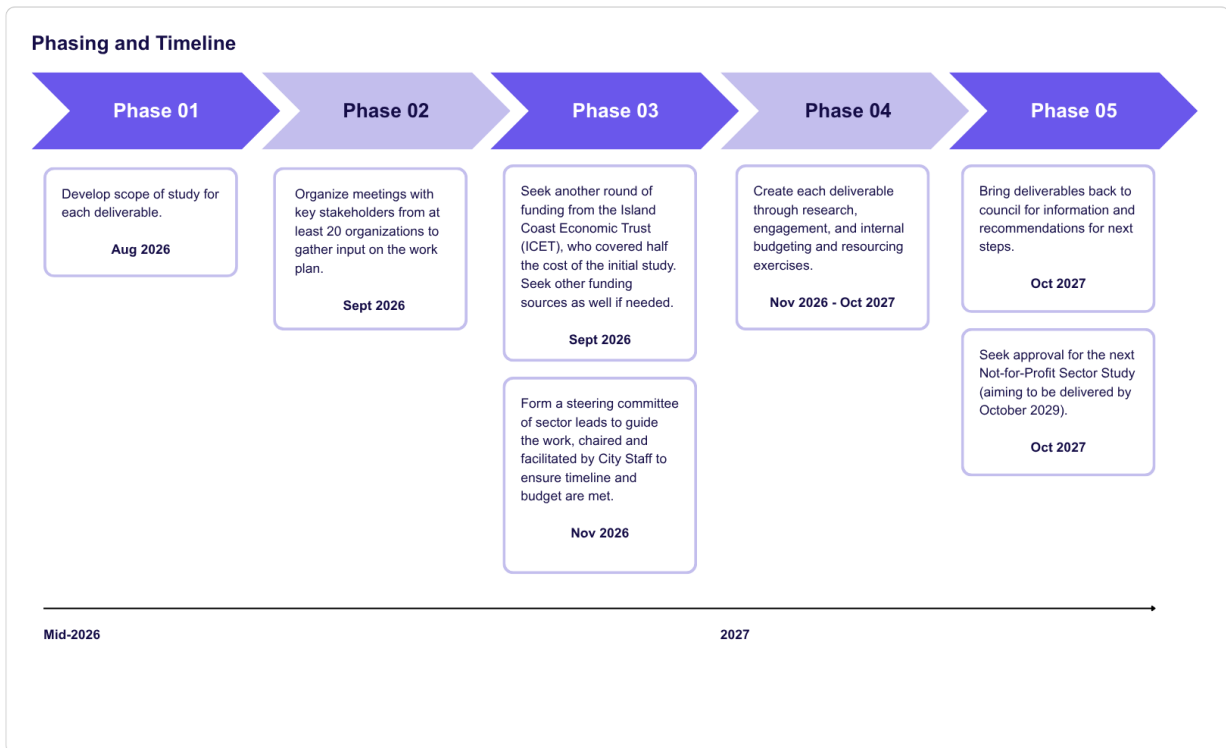
Deliverables

There are several initiatives identified in the study's opportunities section which can be explored by City staff. Specific deliverables as part of the work plan include:

- Strategies for reducing donor fatigue
- Strategies for simplifying the funding process
- Pathways for affordable not-for-profit workspaces in the city
- Scope for governance training which could be taken by not-for-profit staff
- Identify potential partnerships and program co-development opportunities
- Draft communications plan for provincial and federal advocacy
- Scope for the next Not-for-Profit Sector Study

Continues on next page

Phases and timing



Financial Implications

If Council approved the recommendations in this report, associated costs will be sourced from existing staff resources and budget. There is potential for partial costs, particularly for the next study, to be covered by outside funding from organizations such as the Island Coast Economic Trust (ICET).

Legal Implications

If Council approves the recommendations in this report, Council will fulfil its legal obligations under the Community Charter.

Conclusions

The City of Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector is an important contributor to the local economy, as well as providing social and environmental benefits. Despite this, the sector faces challenges such as funding limitations and capacity constraints. The recommended work program will further explore the opportunities identified in the study and begin proposing tangible actions. This program aligns with the City's goals and positions it to better support essential community services.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Not-for-Profit Sector Study

Sources used for this exercise

City of Nanaimo. n.d. "Economic Data." Accessed July 9, 2026.

<https://www.nanaimo.ca/doing-business/economic-development/business/economic-data>.

Fiveable. 2024. "Leontief Inverse | Intro to Mathematical Economics Class Notes."

Accessed July 9, 2026.

<https://fiveable.me/introduction-to-mathematical-economics/unit-5/leontief-inverse/study-guide/OMI4DSF8Im9CrK67>.

IMPLAN Support. 2023. "Economic Effects & Multipliers." September 20.

<https://support.implan.com/hc/en-us/articles/18944332362523-Economic-Effects-Multipliers>.

Manhas, Amrit. 2024. "Council Report December 2, 2024." City of Nanaimo.

<https://pub-nanaimo.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=56562>.

Nordicity. October 2024. "City of Nanaimo Not-For-Profit Study".

https://www.nanaimo.ca/docs/doing-business/economic-development/nanaimo-not-for-profit-sector-study---final-report_nordicity.pdf

Sheth, Umesh. 2026. "Five Dimensions of Impact: IMP Framework Practical Guide." n.d.

Accessed July 9, 2026. <https://www.sopact.com/use-case/five-dimensions-of-impact>.



City of Nanaimo: Not-for-Profit Sector Study

Final Report

October 25th, 2024

Submitted to

The City of Nanaimo

Submitted by

Nordicity

Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Project Introduction	4
1.1.1 Objectives	4
1.1.2 Approach	4
1.1.3 Methodology	5
1.2 Not-for-Profit Sector Context	6
1.2.1 Global Context	6
1.2.2 Canada and British Columbia Context	7
1.2.3 Nanaimo Context	9
2. Profile of Nanaimo's Not-for-Profit Sector	10
3. Impact Findings	14
3.1 Economic Impact	14
3.1.1 Revenue Profile	14
3.1.2 Expenditure Profile	15
3.1.3 Labour Income and Employment Impact	16
3.1.4 GDP Impact	18
3.1.5 Real Estate Impact	19
3.2 Social and Environmental Impacts	19
3.2.1 Health and Wellbeing	21
3.2.2 Social Justice and Human Rights	21
3.2.3 Environmental Sustainability	22
3.2.4 Education and Advocacy	24
3.2.5 Youth Development	24
3.2.6 Social Cohesion and Cultural Exchange	25
3.2.7 Community Empowerment	25
3.2.8 Indigenous Relations	26
3.3 Impact Beneficiaries and Engagement	27
3.4 The Not-for-Profit Sector's Contributions to Nanaimo's Five City Goals	31
4. Sector Priorities	32
4.1 Securing Funding	32
4.2 Fulfilling Staffing and Governance Needs	33

4.3	Documenting Social and Economic Impact	33
4.4	Accessing Affordable Space and Facilities	34
4.5	Advancing Visibility of Smaller Organizations and Their Services	34
4.6	Accessing Services for Indigenous People	34
5.	Looking Ahead: Future Opportunities	36
5.1	Bolstering Sector Capacity	36
5.1.1	Funding	36
5.1.2	Facilities	36
5.1.3	Human Resources	37
5.2	Fostering Innovative Partnerships with the Sector	37
5.2.1	Extending Service Agreement Models with Not-for-Profits	37
5.2.2	Enhancing Program Co-development	37
5.3	Amplifying Sector Impact and Advocacy	37
5.3.1	Increasing Community Awareness	37
5.3.2	Documenting Sector Impact	38
5.3.3	Advocating for Provincial and Federal Support	38
Appendix A.	Economic Impact Assessment Methodological Notes	39
Appendix B.	Vignettes of Selected Organizations	40
	Nanaimo Youth Services Association (NYSA)	40
	Nanaimo Family Life Association (NFLA)	41
	Nanaimo Art Gallery	42
	Loaves and Fishes	44
	Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre (TLAFC)	45
	Nanaimo & District Hospital Foundation	47
	Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS)	48
Appendix C.	Additional Findings: COVID's Impact on Nanaimo's Not-for-Profit Sector	50

Executive Summary

The Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study, conducted by Nordicity, presents the substantial economic, social, and environmental impacts of local not-for-profit organizations, while outlining future opportunities to strengthen this critical sector.

Impact Findings

- **Economic Impact:** Not-for-profit organizations are pivotal economic actors in Nanaimo. In 2023, the sector generated substantial economic outputs, including \$67.5 million in total economic impacts and contributing \$64 million to the GDP. This economic vitality is supported by the employment of nearly 940 FTEs, resulting in over \$53 million in total labour income. The sector not only supports direct economic activities but also induces further financial benefits through its extensive interactions with supplier industries and the re-spending by employees, emphasizing its integral role in sustaining Nanaimo's economic prosperity.
- **Social and Environmental Impacts:** The not-for-profit sector plays a critical role in advancing health and wellbeing of Nanaimo's individuals and community, supporting social justice and human rights, environmental sustainability, education and advocacy, youth development, social cohesion, empowered communities, and contributing to Indigenous relations. Beneficiaries of the not-for-profit services (e.g. seniors, youth, equity-deserving communities, low-income families) are also frequently engaged – either online or in-person.
- The not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo delivers substantial benefits that align with **Nanaimo's Five City goals**. The sector supports a **Green** Nanaimo through environmental sustainability efforts, contributes to a **Connected, Healthy, and Empowered** Nanaimo by supporting education, human rights, social cohesion and Indigenous relations, and fosters a **Prosperous** Nanaimo through vibrant economic activities.

Sector Priorities

Despite their impact, not-for-profits face critical challenges in areas such as funding accessibility, availability and sustainability, staffing and governance challenges, documenting social and environmental impacts, increasing costs of space, advancing the visibility of smaller organizations and their services, and ensuring access to services for Indigenous communities.

Future Opportunities

Considering Nanaimo's City Goals and the diverse needs of not-for-profit organizations, several areas of future opportunities surfaced.

- **Bolstering Sector Capacity:** Opportunities exist in implementing initiatives to alleviate donor fatigue and streamline the granting process. There is further potential to facilitate more affordable space initiatives and develop shared spaces, and support training programs that improve organizations' governance and skill development.
- **Fostering Innovative Partnerships:** Drawing on the success stories of existing partnerships and collaborative efforts, the City could expand service agreements model with not-for-profits and enhance program co-development, leveraging the organizations' expertise and on-the-ground knowledge.
- **Amplifying Sector Impact and Advocacy:** Efforts could be made to further enhance community awareness of not-for-profit organizations and their services; support documentation of the sector's impact; and advocate for increased provincial and federal support based on robust impact assessments and documentation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Introduction

1.1.1 Objectives

Nordicity was engaged by the City of Nanaimo to conduct a study of the local not-for-profit sector. This study is to provide an understanding of the economic, social, and environmental impacts generated by not-for-profit organizations in the community, along with strategies to further strengthen this sector. The objectives of the study are to:

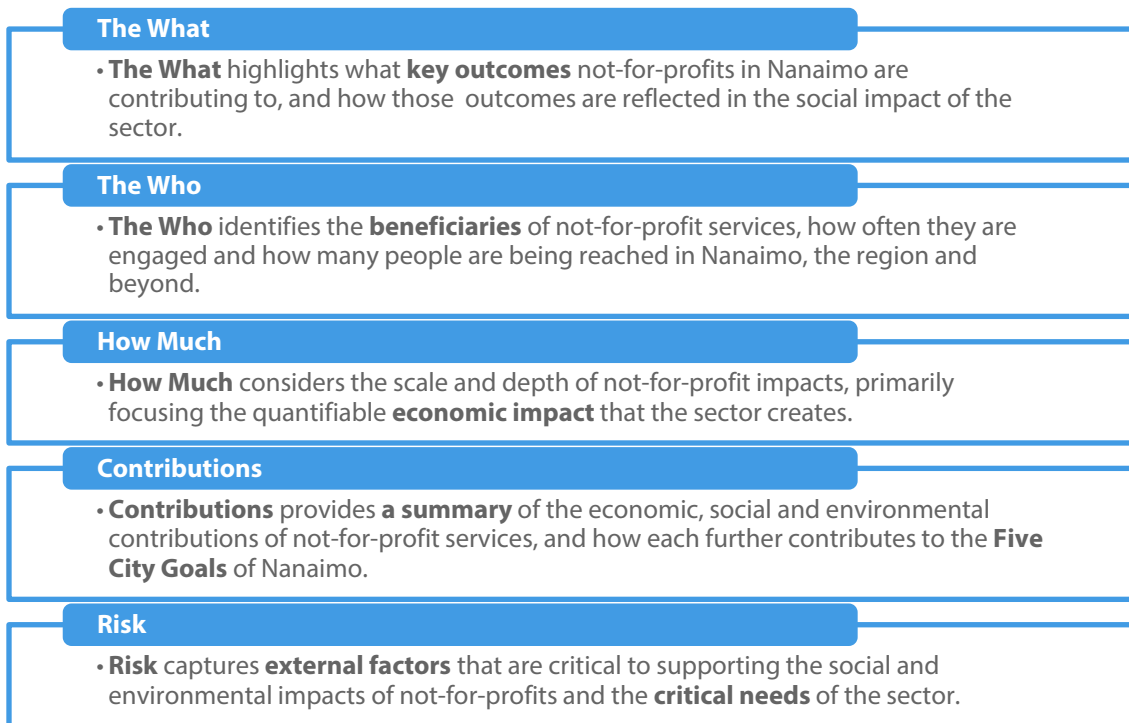
- Assess the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the not-for-profit sector;
- Identify priority needs relating to the not-for-profit sector; and
- Propose areas of future opportunities to strengthen the sector.

1.1.2 Approach

The overall approach of the study was centered around the **Five Dimensions of Impact Framework**,¹ which provides a structured format to understanding the relationships between goals, outputs, outcomes, and impacts of Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector. The framework further enables an understanding of the broader economic, social and environmental benefits provided by the not-for-profit sector. The following figure represents the key components of the framework that was adapted for this study.

¹ For more on the Five Dimensions of Impact Framework see: [Five dimensions of impact for actionable result | Sopact Perspective](#)

Figure 1. Five Dimensions of Impact Framework



1.1.3 Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Data was drawn from existing databases, primary surveys, and interviews. A sector analysis was undertaken, including assessments related to social and environmental impacts, as well as economic contribution. Below is a brief description of the methodological approaches utilized in the study.

- **Survey:** The online survey questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool, gathering input and insights from a wide range of local not-for-profit organizations. The survey was deployed from July 3rd, 2024, to August 5th, 2024, and had a response rate of 24% of the universe (**47/193 organizations**). The survey was widely circulated through various channels, including social media, email blasts, word of mouth, and via the City's engagement platform 'Get Involved Nanaimo.'
- **Interviews:** For the study, 22 one-on-one interviews were conducted with key individuals involved with the not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo to capture nuanced and in-depth experience and insights from those in the sector². Interviewees included leaders of not-for-profit organizations focusing on different subsectors; program beneficiaries and service users; and representatives of City departments involved with the not-for-profit sector.

² Among the 22 interview sessions, 11 of the organizations (50%) also participated in the online survey questionnaire. The one-on-one interviews provided nuance and depth insights from these organizations.

- **Economic Impact Analysis (EIA):** To analyze economic impact, the project team used a multi-tiered approach. First the work involved generating a “universe” list or identifying all the organizations that exist within Nanaimo (using the definition of “not-for-profits” identified in the following “Key Terms”). The survey was used to collect important fiscal and employment data from the sector. To calculate impacts generated, a ‘gross-up’ methodology was used to apply results to our universe. Finally, the direct impacts were inputted into MyEIA Model™ (Nordicity’s proprietary economic impact assessment tool) to calculate the indirect and induced impacts created by the sector. Further information on Nordicity’s economic impact methodology can be found in Appendix A.

Key Terms

The research followed [Statistics Canada](#) definitions for “Non-profit Institutions and Volunteering”, focusing on two categories of not-for-profits in Nanaimo:

- **Community Organization:** Organizations that provide services such as community food services, community housing, emergency relief, religious organizations, advocacy and sports, arts and culture, and recreation. These organizations are not heavily influenced by the government and provide goods and services to households for free or at minimal cost. They are referred to as non-profit institutions serving households in standard macroeconomic measures.
- **Business Organization:** Organizations such as chambers of commerce, business associations, protection services and condominium associations. These organizations do not fall under the direct control of the government, offer goods and services at low cost, and are constrained in their ability to redistribute any surplus they may generate. In standard macroeconomic measures, they are classified into the business sector.

Note, this study did not cover Statistics Canada’s third definition of not-for-profits, government organizations:

- **Quasi-Government/Government Organization:** Such as hospitals, universities and colleges. These organizations are self-governing and exist independently of the government but are heavily influenced by it. They are classified as part of the government sector by conventional macroeconomic measures.

1.2 Not-for-Profit Sector Context

1.2.1 Global Context

Not-for-profits, also known globally as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), are at the forefront of social change. From environmental protection to humanitarian aid, healthcare, and economic development, a wide range of not-for-profit organizations advocate for justice, the advancement of better social practices, inclusion, accessibility, and more. Over the years, the sector has been subject to social, political, and economic changes and has adapted accordingly.

Some of the main trends over the past 20 years are reflected in the fundraising mechanisms, marketing strategies, evaluation processes, and a more human-centered approach. For instance, not-for-profits, once reliant on fundraising and grants, have increasingly **diversified their revenue streams** by engaging in commercial activities such as for-profit subsidiaries and acquiring social

finance, driven by rising interest in socially responsible investing. Similarly, **social media has become an essential tool** for promoting causes and fundraising for movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. Additionally, **there has been a shift towards evidence-based evaluation to measure the sector's impact** and a growing **emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and access**.

Moreover, **the not-for-profit sector is a major economic force** across several countries, contributing significantly to employment and GDP. For example, in the US, according to the Census Bureau, not-for-profit organizations passed local government to become the second-largest source of employment in the country, behind the for-profit sector,³ employing around 13 million Americans in 2022.⁴ In the UK, the voluntary sector's workforce employed approximately 930,000 people in 2023,⁵ while in Canada, the sector employed 2.8 million people that same year.⁶

The not-for-profit sector has also experienced a significant **rise in demand for services** over the past few years due to various global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change-related disasters such as floods and wildfires, and increased immigration driven by forced displacement. For instance, in 2023, 71% of organizations reported an increase in demand for their services in the US,⁷ compared to 81% in the UK⁸ and 46% in Canada.⁹ However, despite the heightened need for services, the sector has struggled to meet these demands, largely due to resource constraints, staffing shortages, and financial challenges. To ensure the sector's continued adaptation and resilience, new solutions and opportunities must be explored to support its sustainability and capacity to serve vulnerable populations effectively.

1.2.2 Canada and British Columbia Context

Not-for-profits in Canada play a crucial role in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, contributing significantly to community wellbeing and the national economy. This sector not only **supports vital services such as healthcare, education, and social justice but also generated approximately 8.5% (\$216.5 billion) of the country's GDP in 2022**, employing millions of Canadians and fostering civic engagement through volunteering and advocacy.¹⁰

Major **funding sources** in 2023 included individual donations (21.7%), membership fees (17.7%), and provincial/territorial government transfers (10.5%). Health and social services not-for-profits received the most funding from provincial/territorial transfers (43.6% and 42.5%, respectively). Smaller organizations rely heavily on individual donations, while larger ones depend more on government

³ Washington Post (2023). [The real reason America's nonprofit sector is seeing massive growth, and more!](#)

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024). [Nonprofit Sector Research Data](#).

⁵ National Council for Voluntary Organizations (2023). [UK Civil Society Almanac 2023](#).

⁶ Statistics Canada (2023). [Non-profit institutions and volunteering: Economic contribution, first quarter to fourth quarter 2023](#).

⁷ Forvis Mazar (2024). [2024 State of the Nonprofit Sector Report](#).

⁸ Charities Aid Foundation (2023). [Cost of living: Charities still struggling to meet demand and cover costs](#).

⁹ Statistics Canada (2023). [National Insights into Non-profit Organizations, Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, 2023](#).

¹⁰ Statistics Canada (2023). [National Insights into Non-profit Organizations, Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, 2023](#).

transfers and fees for goods/services. Notably, municipalities in Canada provide more funding to the not-profit sector than the federal government. Despite the unpredictability of provincial and federal funding, municipal funding has steadily increased over time.¹¹

In BC, as of 2024, there are approximately **33,000 not-for-profit organizations**, including community, business, and government not-for-profits. These organizations represent 360,000 jobs (with the sector predominantly employing women) and contributed approximately \$30 billion to BC's economy in 2022. Specifically, the community **not-for-profit sector employed 92,000 workers** and contributed around **\$4.87 billion to BC's GDP**. Notably, Volunteers are crucial, with 81.8% of not-for-profits utilizing volunteers.¹²

As is the case globally, not-for-profits in BC are **feeling the pressure of operating in increasingly uncertain conditions**, stretched by the need to meet the ongoing demands of the communities they serve. Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, 64% of organizations reported a decreased ability to deliver programs, services, and activities, while demand increased for 58% of organizations. While some organizations received increased government support during this period, more than half reported a drop in volunteer involvement, and over a third experienced a decrease in staffing levels. Smaller organizations were particularly affected by the pandemic.¹³

Furthermore, not-for-profits in BC are facing **rising expenses** (e.g., salaries, benefits, programs, services, and general administration). While revenue streams remain fixed, all revenue sources decreased in 2023, except for government funding, which has remained stable. Higher costs for essentials like insurance, supplies, utilities, employee benefits, and technology, along with short funding cycles and excessive reporting, have reduced funds available for programming. Furthermore, the inability to offer competitive or living wages often leads to significant **staff turnover**, hindering the sector's ability to meet increasing demand for services.¹⁴

With **declining charitable donations across the country**, particularly in rural BC, not-for-profits are under immense pressure to reduce programming, diversify funding sources, or close their doors. **Volunteerism has also not returned to pre-COVID levels**, further exacerbating the challenges. The sector faces an increase in demand for services while its capacity to deliver programs remains stagnant. Nationally, while nearly half (46.1%) of not-for-profits reported increased demand for services in 2023, less than a quarter (24.3%) saw an increase in capacity to meet this demand.¹⁵ Remarkably, BC has one of the largest numbers of local governments in the country, with a high degree of autonomy. However, their impact on the not-for-profit sector is limited by four common funding practices including sector prioritization, funding concentration, lack of sustainable funding, and limited support.¹⁶

In this context, despite the resilience of the sector, there is a **need to explore opportunities to strengthen its capacity** to serve the community. For instance, fostering an ecosystem of

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Vantage Point. (2024). 2024 State of BC's Non-Profit Sector.

¹³ Vantage Point. (2021). UNRAVELING: Nonprofits, COVID-19, and the Fabric of BC Communities.

¹⁴ Vantage Point. (2024). 2024 State of BC's Non-Profit Sector.

¹⁵ Statistics Canada (2023). [National Insights into Non-profit Organizations. Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, 2023.](#)

¹⁶ Dominique Clement. (2021). [Municipal Funding for the Non-Profit Sector.](#)

collaboration across different subsectors, involving diverse government ministries, funders, and the private sector. This approach aims to reduce redundancy, maximize impact, leverage relationships, provide mutual support, and optimize costs through the pooling of resources and services.¹⁷

Alternatively, the City of Prince George has also adopted a direct distribution approach. Every year, an average of 70 to 100 not-for-profit groups receives direct funding support from the City of Prince George. Additionally, in 2024, its City Council approved an increase in funding for the myPG Community Grant Program, reallocating \$263,152 to maintain multi-year agreements with key arts organizations. An additional \$313,152 will be phased in over three years to enhance grants for other not-for-profits, including quick-response grants of up to \$2,500.¹⁸

These initiatives reflect a broad trend of municipalities exploring collaborative opportunities sustaining investments in not-for-profit funding, which are essential for the will help ensure long-term resilience and social impact of these organizations within the community.

1.2.3 Nanaimo Context

The City of Nanaimo adopted the "**Doughnut Economics**" framework in **December 2020**, becoming the first city in Canada to do so. The framework emphasizes the creation of a prosperous, socially just, and environmentally sustainable community, ensuring that no one falls short on the essentials of life while avoiding the overshooting of planetary boundaries.

Within the "Doughnut Economics" Framework, the City developed **five key goals** in their "City Plan: Nanaimo Reimagined", aimed at promoting sustainability, inclusivity, and economic resilience:

- A **Green Nanaimo** focuses on building resilient and regenerative ecosystems.
- A **Connected Nanaimo** aims to provide equitable access and mobility.
- A **Healthy Nanaimo** prioritizes community wellbeing and livability.
- An **Empowered Nanaimo** emphasizes reconciliation, representation, and inclusion.
- A **Prosperous Nanaimo** is dedicated to fostering a thriving and resilient economy.

The City recognizes that a community functions as a complex, interconnected organism, where no single goal can be fully realized in isolation. This approach emphasizes collaboration and thoughtful decision-making to move the community closer to where it aspires to be.

In 2023, the City of Nanaimo allocated **over \$6 million in grants and subsidies to support the not-for-profit sector**, including business and community organizations. The City offers **a variety of grants**, including culture grants, environmental sustainability project grants, and social planning grants. These grants are designed to support cultural initiatives, community development, and environmental sustainability, helping organizations and individuals improve the social and economic fabric of the city. Additionally, there are special grants like the Heritage Façade aimed at specific projects or groups. This funding is part of the City's ongoing commitment to enhance local development and support essential services provided by these organizations. By supporting the not-for-profit sector, the City actively advances the principles of the Doughnut Economics framework,

¹⁷ Vantage Point. (2024). 2024 State of BC's Non-Profit Sector.

¹⁸ Prince George Citizen (2024). [City council boosts budget for myPG grant program to fund arts groups and not-for-profits.](#)

demonstrating that investing in these organizations is a key action to achieving a more sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous community.

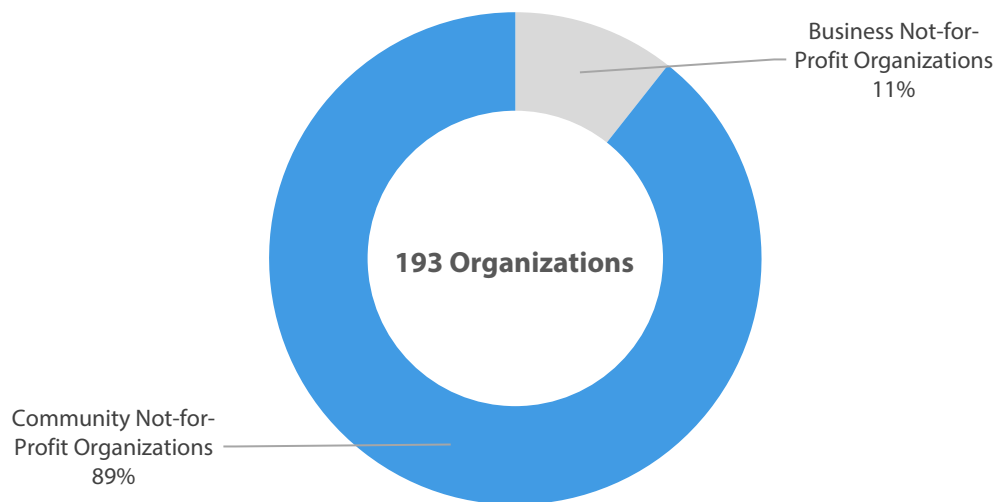
In addition to the granting programs, the City maintains service agreements with various not-for-profit organizations, including partnerships with organizations focused on housing, food security, and youth-serving agencies. The City maintains multi-year co-management agreements with its cultural partners which are not-for-profit organizations that operate city-owned cultural sites. These agreements are evaluated annually to ensure their effectiveness. Feedback from local not-for-profit organizations also highlights a growing trend towards collaboration and community engagement, aligning with the City's objectives under the Doughnut Economics Framework to enhance sustainability, inclusivity, and economic resilience.

2. Profile of Nanaimo's Not-for-Profit Sector

This section presents a snapshot of Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector for 2023, including the number of organizations, their self-identified categories and subsectors, their legal status, as well as other relevant demographic details.

The Nanaimo not-for-profit sector is comprised of **193 organizations**. Figure 2 identifies that the industry is mainly comprised of **community not-for-profit organizations (89%)**, while a much smaller proportion are **business not-for-profit organizations (11%)**.¹⁹

Figure 2. Total Number of Not-for-Profit Organizations by Type (n=193)

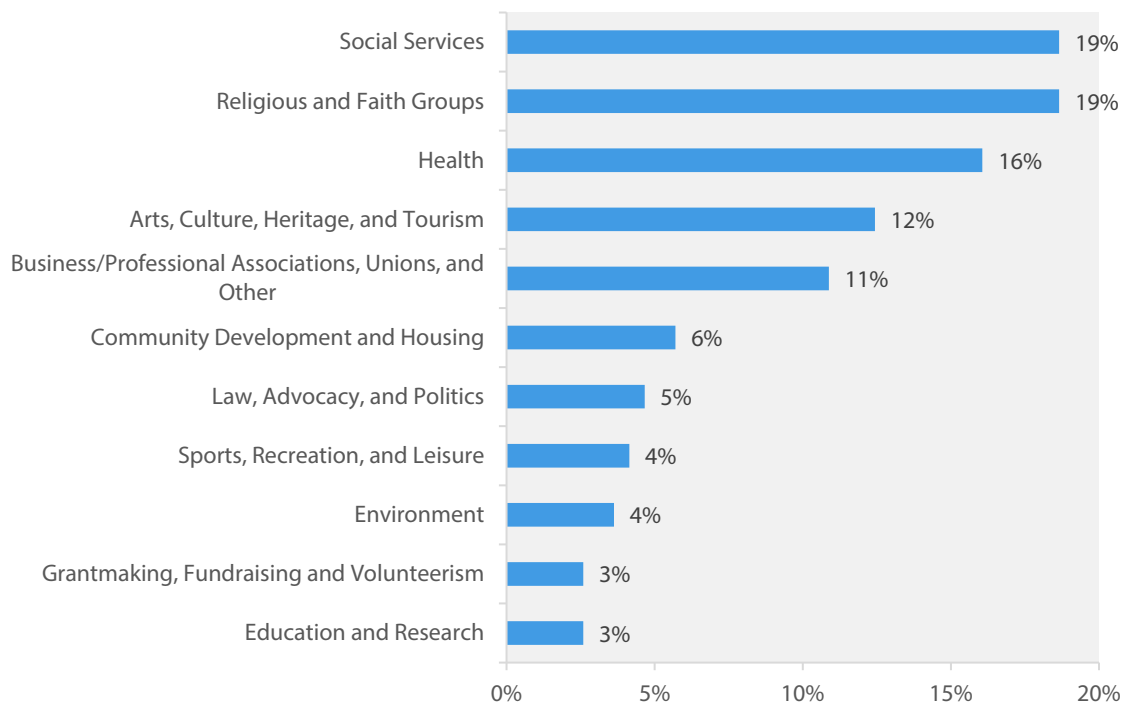


Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Universe and Survey

Nanaimo's not-for-profit organizations operate across a variety of **subsectors**. While it is understood that many organizations operate within and in collaboration with multiple subsectors, survey respondents were asked to identify the primary subsector within which they identify. The top three subsectors of not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo are **social services (19%)**, **religious and faith groups (19%)**, and **health (16%)**.

¹⁹ Definitions of community not-for-profit organizations and business not-for-profit organizations can be found in section 1.3 Key Terms.

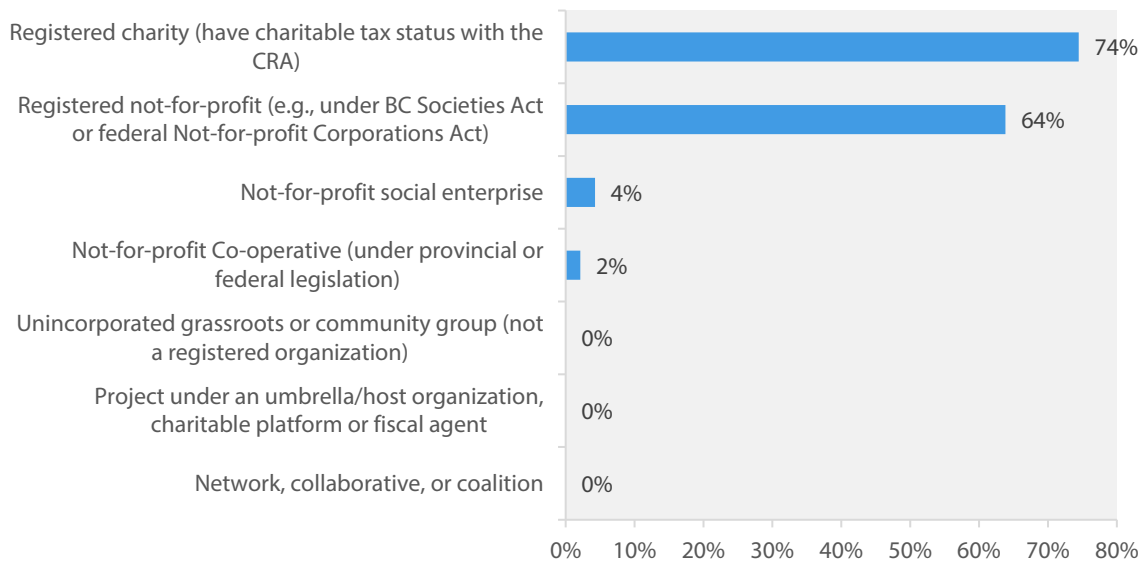
Figure 3. Organization Primary Subsector (n=193)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Universe and Survey

Survey respondents were asked to identify their organization's **legal status**. Most identified as both a **registered charity (74%)** and **registered not-for-profit (64%)**. Notably, no survey respondents selected/stated "Network, collaborative, or coalition"; "Project under an umbrella/host organization, charitable platform or fiscal agent"; or "Unincorporated grassroots or community group (not a registered organization)."

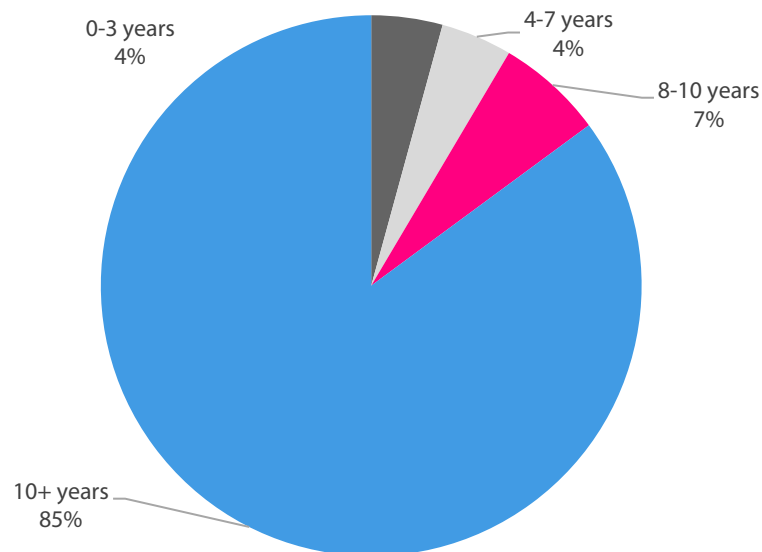
Figure 1. Organization Legal Status (n=47)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

When asked **how many years organizations have been established**, it was found that the majority of not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo have operated for over 10+ years (85%). This finding points out that Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector is primarily made up of well-established, mature organizations.

Figure 2. Years Established (n=47)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

Survey respondents were asked to specify to which **equity groups their organization leadership belongs**. Note, respondents were asked to "select all that apply"; hence, the percentages do not add up to a 100. Responses indicate a broad range of identities represented in organizational leadership, including **women, 2SLGBTQIA+, people with disabilities, racialized and Indigenous people**. For

example, of those who identified diversity in leadership, on average, approximately 80% of organizations reported having women in their leadership. Those who mentioned **seniors** corroborate what we heard in consultation about some current staff nearing retirement age and hence the need for succession planning. Moreover, some respondents may note individuals that identify as a few of the identities, while some respondents may not at all, or only fall under one identity.

Table 1. If possible, please specify what group(s) the leadership of your organization identifies with. Select all that apply. (n=44)

Identity	Average %
Woman	80%
2SLGBTQIA+	32%
Person with a disability	32%
Black/Racialized/Person of color	27%
Indigenous	27%
Youth (under 25)	14%
Prefer to describe (open ended)	2%
Prefer not to answer	9%

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

Survey respondents were also asked to provide a breakdown of the percentage of their **workforce diversity**. Note, respondents were asked to “select all that apply”; hence, the percentage does not add up to a 100. Diversity types are not necessarily exclusive, as respondents were able to multi select. Similarly to leadership breakdown, on average, organizations employ a high level of women.

Table 2. The City of Nanaimo is interested in understanding the diversity of the city's not-for-profit sector. If possible, please indicate the percentage of your company's workforce as follows. Select all that apply. (n=42)

Identity	Average %
Women	63%
2SLGBTQIA+	22%
Low income (i.e., household income under \$32k a year)	22%
Disability	12%
Black/Racialized/Person of colour	11%
Indigenous	11%
Youth (under 25)	9%
Newcomer to Canada	5%

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

3. Impact Findings

This section brings together economic, social and environmental impact findings from the survey, interviews, and economic impact assessment. The findings are discussed in line with the Five Dimensions of Impact Framework.

3.1 Economic Impact

The activities of Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector have a substantial impact on the local and regional economy. The different types of impact assessed can be broken down into three categories:

- **Employment** refers to the number of jobs supported by the sector, measured in full-time equivalents (FTEs). A full-time equivalent, on average, is considered a 40-hour work week.
- **Labour income** includes wages, salaries, and benefits earned by employees within the sector.
- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** refers to the total value of goods and services produced by an industry. It is a key measure of economic activity and health.

These impacts can be further broken down into the following three levels:

- **Direct impacts:** Employment, labour income, and GDP generated directly by the Nanaimo not-for-profit sector.
- **Indirect impacts:** Employment, labour income, and GDP resulting from spending by the Nanaimo not-for-profit sector in supplier industries (e.g., printing).
- **Induced impacts:** Employment, labour income, and GDP that can be attributed to the re-spending of income households that earned income at both the direct and indirect stages of the economic impact.
- **Total Impact:** The sum of direct, indirect, and induced impacts.

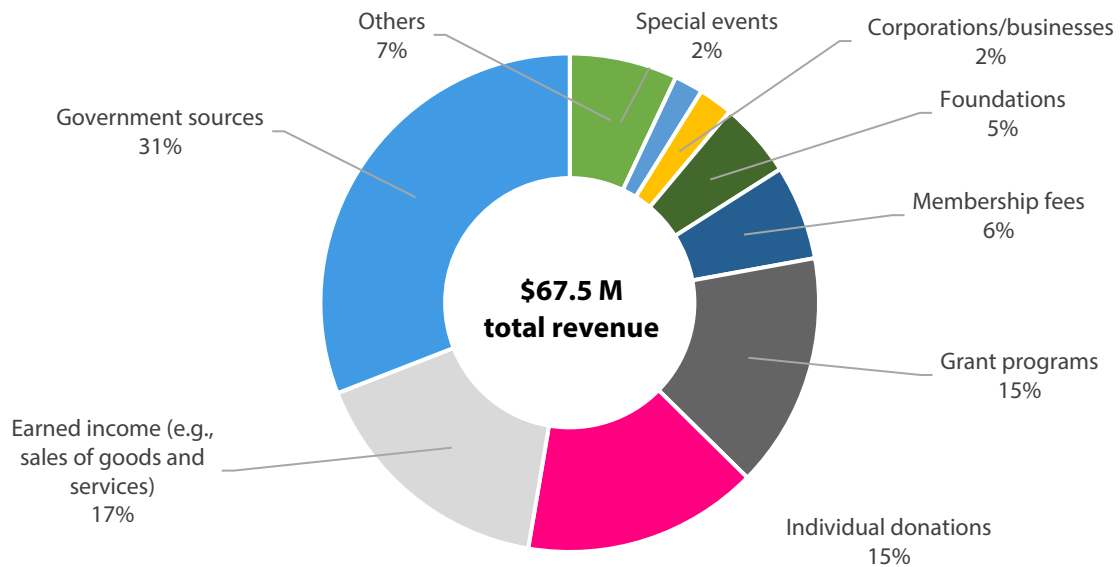
3.1.1 Revenue Profile

Along with the number and types of companies that exist in Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector, a key measure of industry activity is its annual revenue generation. According to survey findings, **Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector earned an estimated total of \$67.5 million in 2023.**

Looking at earned revenue on an individual organization basis, reported revenues reported varied significantly. Note, to mitigate outliers in our sample, we have chosen to emphasize and focus on median revenue figures. Nanaimo not-for-profit organizations earn approximately \$350k a year. Notably, it was found that 57% of organizations make under \$1 million per year.

In terms of revenue sources, **government sources are the largest single source of revenue (31%).** This source is not so closely followed by earned income sources (16%), individual donations (15%), and grant programs that are not funded by government (15%). This finding suggests that while not-for-profit organizations rely on government funding, they are also effective at diversifying their revenue streams, with the majority of their income coming from a variety of sources.

Figure 6. Revenue profile (n=45)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

3.1.2 Expenditure Profile

Typically, economic impacts arise from the spending activities of a sector. Nordicity estimates that the **expense ratio for Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector is approximately 101%**. In other words, on average, **expenses exceeded revenues by 1% in 2023**. This finding is not surprising given the nature of not-for-profit organizations and the sector, as it is common to assume not-for-profits retain breakeven operational models. Notably, many organizations identified expenses significantly higher than revenues. Therefore, it is understood that this ratio can fluctuate.

Table 3 presents the average **distribution of expenditures** across various spending categories for Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector. As portrayed, **salaries and wages account for 60% of companies' spending, which includes regular full-time and part-time (43%) and freelance and contract workers (17%)**. Operating expenses account for the remaining expenditures (40%), with the greatest operational expense category being other non-labour expenses (14%) and supplies and materials (13%).

Table 3. Expense Profile

Expense Type	Expense Category	Allocation
Salaries and wages (60%)	Labour (FT and PT)	43%
	Freelance and contract workers	17%
Operating expenses (40%)	Supplies and materials	13%
	Rent	10%
	Advertising and marketing	4%
	Other non-labour expenses	14%
Total		100%

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

The majority of the Nanaimo not-for-profit **expenses (by jurisdiction) are spent within Nanaimo (76%)**. This finding is significant, as it means that much of the sector's impact remains within the Nanaimo community, with minimal leakage.

Table 24. Organizational Jurisdictional Spend (n=44)

Location	Percent of Spend
Within the City of Nanaimo	76%
Outside the City of Nanaimo but within the Regional District	5%
Elsewhere on Vancouver Island	10%
Elsewhere in British Columbia	6%
Outside of the Province	3%

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

3.1.3 Labour Income and Employment Impact

A significant part of the economic impact of Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector arises from the employment it supports for the local and regional economy, expressed in full-time equivalents (FTEs). As described in Table 5, the **industry supported an estimated total of 940 FTEs in 2023**, resulting in over \$53 million in total labour income. The **industry directly accounted for 720 FTEs²⁰ in not-for-profit organizations, generating over \$40 million** in labour income, with the remainder accounted for indirect (~\$48 million) and induced (~4.5 million) impacts.

Table 5. Labour Income and Employment Impact

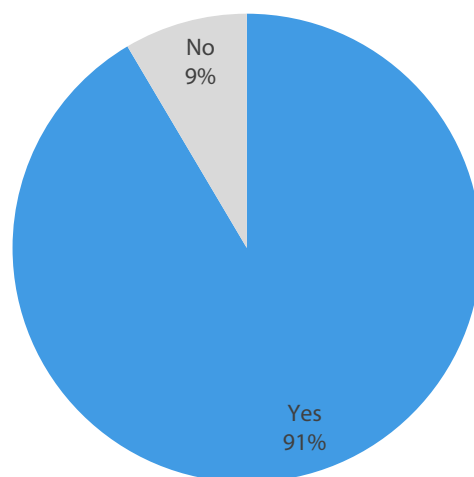
	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Employment Impact (FTEs)	720	140	80	940
Labour Income (\$)	40,530,000	48,266,000	4,590,000	53,386,000

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey, Analysis, and MyEIA Model™

It is found that over 90% of not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo have paid staff, while a handful (approximately 9%) are volunteer-led and operated.

²⁰ This finding is consistent with Statistics Canada's BC Not-for-profit employment data 2023 and other business database estimates.

Figure 7. Does your company have paid staff? (n=47)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

The following table provides a breakdown of **average annual salaries** for full-time, part-time and temporary/contract employees, reported by average hours (per week), average wage (hourly), and average annual salary. For those organizations that do have paid employees, it is estimated that a full-time employee working in Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector earns approximately **\$64,400 a year**.

Table 6.3 Average Annual Salaries in Nanaimo

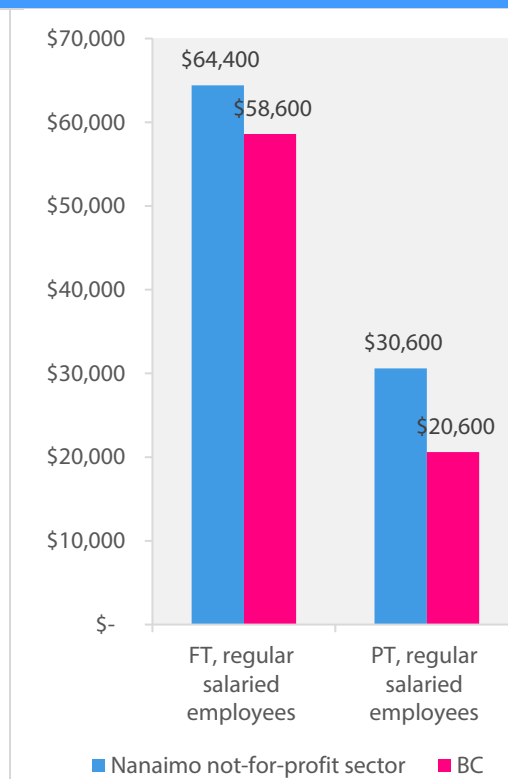
Employment Type	Average # hours (week)	Average wage \$ (hourly)	Average salary \$ (annual)
Full-time, regular salaried employees	37.5	\$35.30	\$64,400
Part-time, regular salaried employees	22	\$27.50	\$30,600
Temporary/contract employees (average monthly count)	24	\$34.80	\$40,300

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

The following figures provide a comparison of Nanaimo not-for-profit sector salary averages (for wages and annual salaries) against Statistics Canada BC Provincial figures for the not-for-profit sector.²¹ **Nanaimo not-for-profit employees earn slightly higher wages** (both at a wage and annual level) than the provincial averages.

²¹ [Employment in the non-profit sector by type of worker – British Columbia](#). Statistics Canada. Figures for Community and Business Organizations used. Data last updated 2023.

Figure 8. Average wage (hourly)

Figure 9. Average wage (annually)


Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey, Analysis, and Statistics Canada Data

In terms of volunteers, it was found that on average, organizations with paid employees have a larger pool of volunteers (average of 70) compared to volunteer-operated organizations (average of 40). This suggests that volunteer-led organizations may rely more on a smaller, dedicated core group of volunteers, rather than drawing from a larger volunteer base.

Overall, it was estimated that in 2023, Nanaimo not-for-profit volunteers contributed **over 14,000 hours of volunteering in the sector.**

Table 7. Volunteerism

Average # of volunteers	
Organizations with paid employees	70
Volunteer operated organizations	40

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

3.1.4 GDP Impact

GDP impact represents the **total value added** by an organization or industry in creating and producing goods and/or services. Revenues, expenditures, and labour income and employment figures are used in such calculations. Nordicity estimates that Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector directly contributed approximately \$40 million to Nanaimo's GDP in 2023. In addition, the industry generated \$14 million in indirect GDP through its purchase of supplies and services, as well as generated an additional \$10 million in induced GDP impact, as workers employed in the not-for-profit sector and its supply chain re-spent their labour income across the wider local economy. **In total, the not-for-profit sector contributed \$64 million in GDP to the economy in 2023.**

Table 8. GDP Impact

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
GDP (\$)	39,855,000	13,969,000	10,200,000	64,024,000

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey, Analysis, and MyEIA Model™

3.1.5 Real Estate Impact

The following finding is reported on at the survey sample level and not grossed-up to the not-for-profit universe. Note, it is also not included in GDP impact calculations in the previous section.

The Nanaimo not-for-profit sector operates out of a variety of different types of spaces. When asked what **type of property organizations occupy**, it was found that most occupy spaces they own or lease. Note, many organizations identified that they occupy more than one type of space, such as owned and leased space. Twelve organizations identified that they “Do not currently have a commercial/business facing space.” It was found that from the survey sample of 31 organizations who identified that they have a commercial/business facing space, they currently use a total of 121 spaces, with an approximate total estimated assessed value of \$204 million. Five organizations noted that they operate out of City-owned buildings. One respondent mentioned that they “recently moved from Nanaimo to Parksville as they could not find space that was suitable [for their needs] or affordable.”

Table 9. What type of property is your organization currently occupying? (n=4331)

Type	Number of organizations	Total number of spaces (#)	Total space assessed Value (\$)
Owned	18	79	190,700,000
Leased	18	27	8,100,000
Donated	5	5	3,300,000
Other	7	10	2,000,000
	Total	121	204,000,000

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

In summary, the **total economic impact is equal to the sum of the direct, indirect and induced economic impacts** summarized in the table below. Organizations contribute more than \$64 million in GDP to the region. This figure is over 10 times the City’s investment in grants and subsidies (over \$6 million) to the sector in 2023. In addition, the sector supports some 940 FTEs of employment and over \$53 million in labour income.

Table 10. Economic Impact Summary

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Total Employment (FTEs)	720	140	80	940
Total Labour Income (\$)	40,530,000	8,266,000	4,590,000	53,386,000
Total GDP (\$)	39,855,000	13,969,000	10,200,000	64,024,000

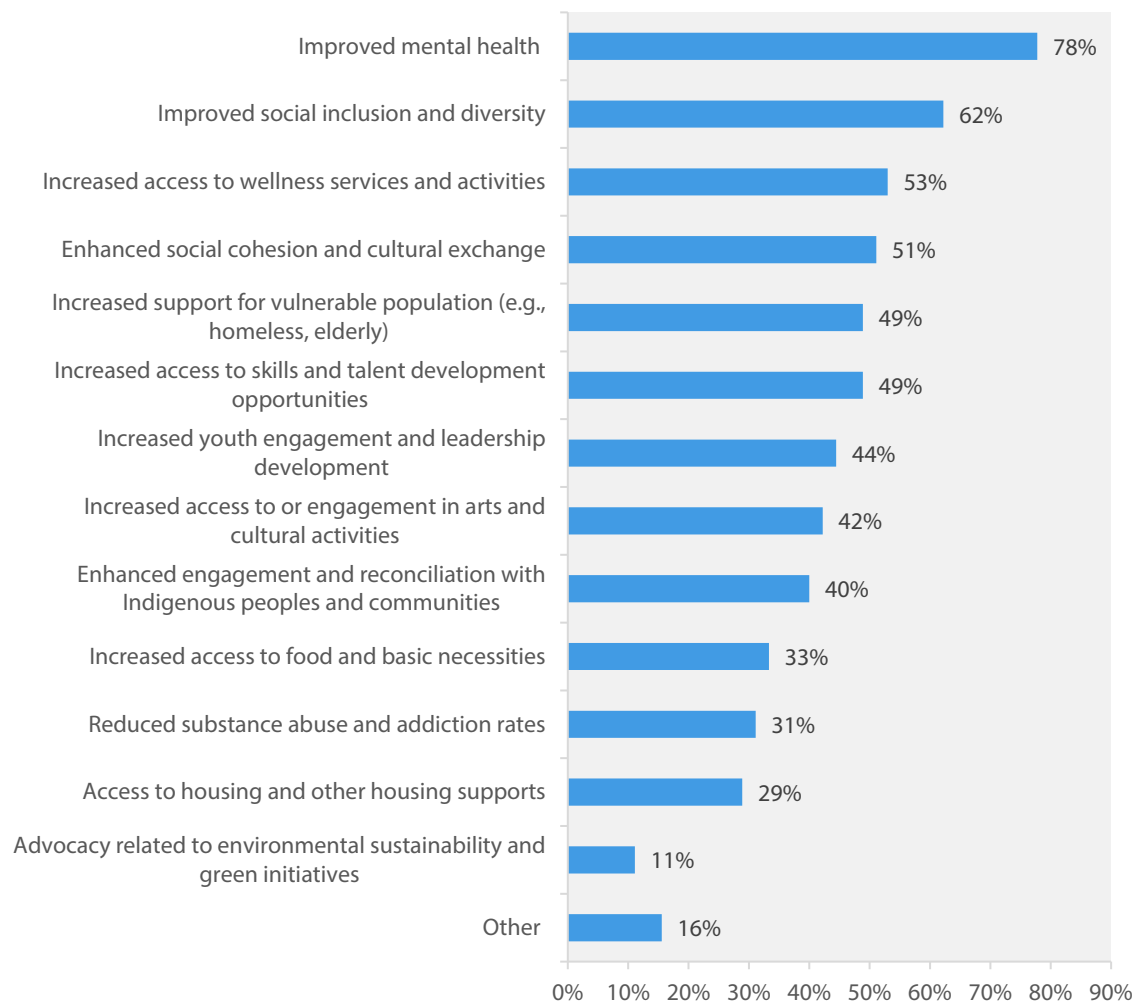
Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey, Analysis, and MyEIA Model™

3.2 Social and Environmental Impacts

Participants were asked to describe the program outcomes of their organizations. Most organizations aim to improve mental health (78%), improve social inclusion and diversity (62%), increase access to wellness services (53%), and enhance social cohesion and cultural exchange (51%). Other program

outcomes reported include increases in economic diversification and business development through the creation and expansion of small to medium-sized enterprises.

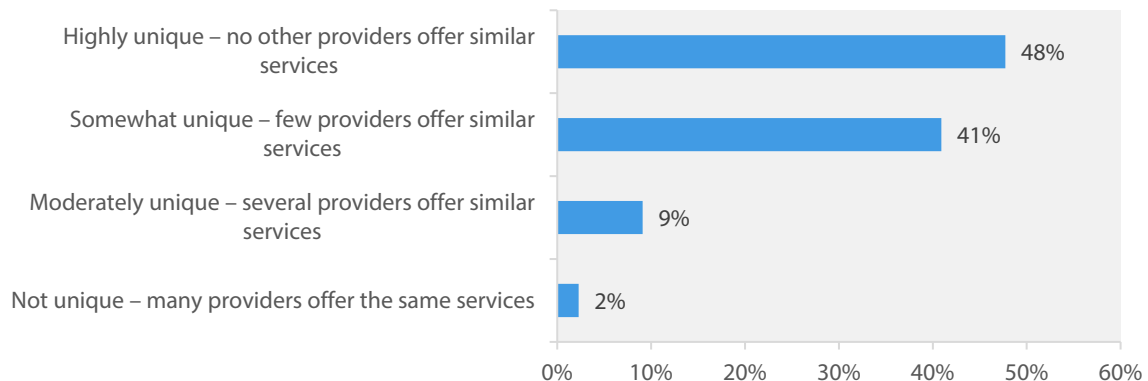
Figure 10. How would you describe the key program outcomes of Not-for-Profits in Nanaimo? Select all that apply. (n=45)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

According to survey respondents, almost half of organizations (48%) believe their services are highly unique with no other providers offering similar services, while more than a third believe their services are somewhat unique with few providers offering similar services.

Figure 11. How unique do you believe your organization's services are compared to other providers in the community? (n=44)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

The following subsections illustrate participants' reports on how some of these outcomes are reflected in the social and environmental impacts of the not-for-profit sector.

3.2.1 Health and Wellbeing



Not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo play a crucial role in enhancing the overall **quality of life** for individuals and the community including mental health support, through a range of services offered.

One standout initiative is the extensive **volunteer counseling program** offered by Nanaimo Family Life Association. The program is the largest of its kind on Vancouver Island and boasts over 70 dedicated volunteers who offer counseling services either free of charge or at a minimal cost to the community. The value of this program is immeasurable, especially in a landscape where professional therapy and counseling services can be prohibitively expensive, with rates starting at \$140 per hour and reaching up to \$250. For many individuals without access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) or other funding sources, these not-for-profit provided services are a lifeline.

Participants reported that while the volunteer counselors may not be professionally trained therapists, they offer vital support and address the same critical issues that individuals encounter in clinical settings. The effectiveness of this program is underscored by the positive feedback and outcomes reported by those who utilize these services. The program fills a crucial gap in mental health support, while fostering a sense of community and belonging among its participants.

3.2.2 Social Justice and Human Rights



Not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo play a pivotal role in advancing social justice, racial equity and human rights, addressing the needs of various vulnerable populations with a deep commitment to feminist principles and inclusive support. Through targeted support for vulnerable populations, dedicated shelter and housing initiatives, and innovative food security solutions, these organizations demonstrate an unwavering commitment to equity and inclusivity. Their work alleviates immediate hardship and fosters long-term systemic change, reflecting a deep-seated dedication to the principles of social justice and human rights.

Central to the mission of local not-for-profits is the support for individuals facing significant challenges or **vulnerable populations**. Organizations such as the Haven Society exemplify this

commitment by providing targeted assistance to women fleeing violence. Their programs address domestic violence, offer support to individuals who have exhibited violent behavior, and cater to the needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This comprehensive approach acknowledges and responds to the diverse experiences of those affected by violence and marginalization. In addition to gender-specific support, these organizations also serve newly arrived Canadians and older adults, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the community are met with sensitivity and respect. The emphasis on feminist values underscores a broader commitment to social justice, advocating for equality and human rights across all programs.

The provision of **shelter and housing** is another cornerstone of not-for-profits' work in Nanaimo. The operation of two shelters - the Unitarian Shelter and a seasonal winter shelter by the Nanaimo Family Life Association - demonstrates a focused response to homelessness. These shelters offer crucial support to individuals experiencing housing instability, reflecting a compassionate and practical approach to addressing immediate needs.

Furthermore, not-for-profits are deeply involved in housing projects specifically designed for **youth**. The two key initiatives include the Nanaimo Youth Services Association's 22-unit apartment building for youth aged 16 to 19, in collaboration with BC Housing and the Ministry of Child and Family Development, and a 14-unit rooming house for young adults aged 19 to 25. These projects provide essential housing while creating stable living environments for youth transitioning out of care or seeking affordable accommodation.

Food security is addressed through a Loaves and Fishes' food recovery program, which exemplifies the organizations' commitment to sustainability and equitable resource distribution. By partnering with local grocery stores to recover and redistribute surplus food, this not-for-profit organization effectively combats food waste while ensuring that those in need receive nutritious sustenance. This initiative addresses immediate food insecurity while also contributing to broader environmental and social justice goals.

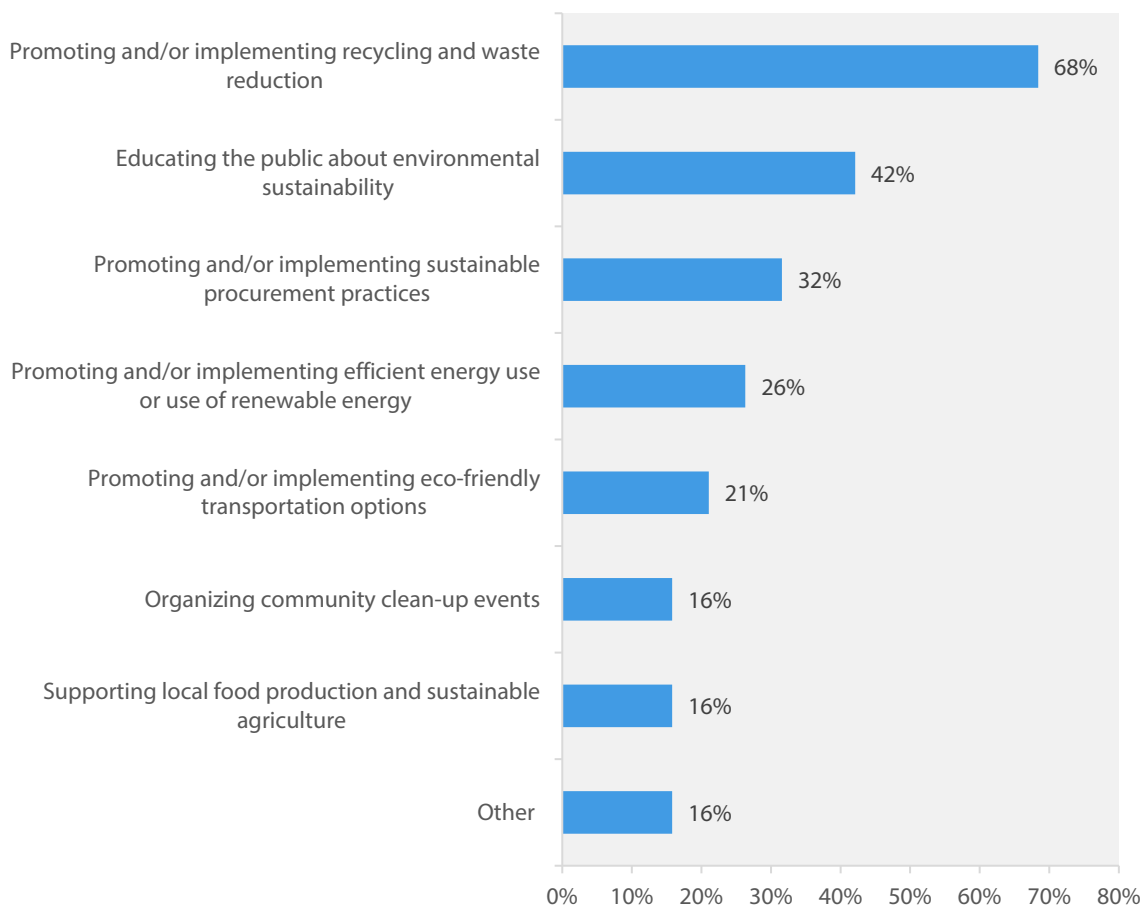
3.2.3 Environmental Sustainability



In the not-for-profit sector, organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of environmental sustainability as a core element of their mission. More than a third (44%) of survey respondents noted their organization is currently working on environmental initiatives or contributing to environmental sustainability.

In terms of environmental initiatives that not-for-profit organizations are working on, most organizations are promoting recycling and waste reduction (68%), while more than a third (42%) are educating the public about environmental sustainability. Other initiatives include those led by Indigenous communities, which center on caring for the land and honoring their relationship with Mother Earth. Other efforts also include protecting and restoring natural areas, safeguarding species, practicing water stewardship, and creating habitats for pollinators. In the theatre space, organizations like Western Edge Theatre, are collaborating with and supporting local groups by sharing resources and capacity, under the principles of a 'Green Theatre' operating system, which guides their commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility.

Figure 12. What types of environmental initiatives or contributions is your company focusing on? Select all that apply. (n=19)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

Not-for-profit organizations' commitment to environmental sustainability is evident across various sectors, including housing, conservation, and waste management, where organizations are actively working to reduce their ecological footprint and promote environmental stewardship.

In the housing sector, not-for-profit organizations like the Nanaimo-based Canadian Home Builders Association – Vancouver Island are leading the way by focusing on **sustainable building projects**. These projects aim to lessen the environmental impact using eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient designs, as well as strive to reduce costs for consumers. By prioritizing sustainability, these organizations are making a significant contribution to creating a more environmentally responsible housing market, which benefits both the planet and the people they serve.

Environmental **conservation** is another critical area where not-for-profits are making a difference. In Nanaimo, for instance, the Nanaimo Area Land Trust is dedicated to preserving ecosystem biodiversity using **conservation covenants**. These legal tools ensure that the natural values of a property are protected in perpetuity, even as ownership changes hands. By holding conservation covenants on properties, the organization is safeguarding vital ecosystems, ensuring that the land remains protected for future generations.

Waste management is yet another domain where not-for-profits are having a tangible environmental impact. One organization, Loaves and Fishes in Nanaimo is actively involved in diverting food waste from landfills. By collecting food that is unsuitable for human consumption and providing it to local farmers for animal feed or composting, the organization reduces landfill waste and supports sustainable agricultural practices. The measurable impact of this initiative is significant, as it quantifies the amount of food kept out of landfills, demonstrating a clear and positive environmental outcome.

Through these diverse initiatives, not-for-profit organizations are playing a crucial role in fostering environmental sustainability. Their efforts highlight the sector's capacity to drive meaningful change and contribute to a healthier, more sustainable future for all.

3.2.4 Education and Advocacy



Not-for-profit organizations play a vital role in both **education and advocacy**, driving significant impact in the communities they serve. These organizations often act as the voice for marginalized and vulnerable groups, engaging with local governments to advocate for policy changes that directly address the needs of their communities. For instance, the Canadian Home Builders Association-Vancouver Island was instrumental in advocating for housing policies, such as the reinstatement of the 30-year amortization in the housing sector, which has a profound impact on housing affordability and accessibility.

Many not-for-profits support their members and the broader community through comprehensive **education platforms**. They offer a wide range of programs, from language and conversation classes for newcomers and refugees, ways to support environmental sustainability, to specialized knowledge-sharing sessions on critical topics like home buying and building.

One remarkable example of educational outreach in Nanaimo is Nanaimo Area Land Trust's **school water stewardship program**. This initiative takes students out of the classroom and into local watersheds, where they learn about water stewardship through curriculum-connected lessons. This hands-on approach enhances students' understanding of environmental issues while fostering a sense of responsibility towards their natural surroundings.

In addition, not-for-profits are **raising awareness about critical health issues**. For example, the Nanaimo Brain Injury Society's program focuses on brain injury awareness, providing essential education on prevention and symptom management. Similarly, the Vancouver Island Construction Association's "[tailgate toolkit](#)" project, initiated five years ago, brings attention to the dangers of toxic drug supplies, particularly within the construction industry. This harm reduction strategy is crucial for promoting health and wellness among construction workers, a group often at high risk in Nanaimo and Vancouver Island.

Through these advocacy and educational efforts, not-for-profit organizations are driving policy changes and equipping individuals and communities with the knowledge and tools they need to thrive. Their work is a testament to the power of grassroots initiatives in creating lasting, positive change.

3.2.5 Youth Development



Not-for-profit organizations play a pivotal role in the development of youth by providing opportunities for engagement, skill-building, and leadership growth. These organizations recognize that young people are the leaders of tomorrow, as well as active participants in shaping their communities today.

Many not-for-profit organizations have established youth development programs specifically designed to equip young people with essential skills and leadership

abilities. These programs are more than just extracurricular activities; they are structured experiences that empower youth to take charge of their futures. Through these initiatives, participants learn critical skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making, skills that are essential for personal and professional success.

One exemplary initiative is the Vancouver Island Construction Association's "[Construction Future Program](#)," a youth employment program that provides hands-on experience in the construction industry in Nanaimo and Vancouver Island. This program offers technical training that instills a sense of responsibility and work ethic among its participants, preparing them for long-term careers in a high-demand field.

Additionally, many organizations focus on holistic development by addressing the broader needs of youth. For instance, services that offer housing, life skills, and employment readiness training are crucial for supporting young people, particularly those aged 16 to 30. Programs like the Nanaimo Youth Services Association's training initiatives, including 'Bladerunners' (employment training program focused on helping those with employment challenges succeed in the local job market), and L2N (learner drivers' program), exemplify this approach by providing essential support that ensures youth are prepared for employment and equipped to lead more independent lives.

Through these diverse programs, organizations make a significant impact on youth development, fostering a generation of confident, skilled, and empowered young leaders ready to contribute to their communities and beyond.

3.2.6 Social Cohesion and Cultural Exchange



Not-for-profit organizations play a vital role in fostering cultural impact within communities. Through arts and cultural programs, they create spaces where **social cohesion and cultural exchange** flourish, contributing significantly to overall community wellbeing. These organizations support exhibiting artists, offering them platforms to share their work and engage with diverse audiences.

For instance, in Nanaimo, Nanaimo Art Gallery provides programs such as children's camps, classes, and drop-in sessions like Art Lab Sunday, where they reach families and individuals across various age groups. These initiatives nurture creativity and strengthen the bonds within the community, making the arts accessible and inclusive for all. Organizations such as the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society also run activities and programs for newcomers that foster cultural exchange. In doing so, not-for-profits ensure that culture remains a vibrant and integral part of community life, enriching the social fabric and enhancing collective wellbeing.

3.2.7 Community Empowerment



Not-for-profit organizations play a vital role in fostering a strong, inclusive, and resilient communities. Their efforts reach across various sectors, creating profound impacts on the lives of residents and the community. The community impact of these organizations in Nanaimo is multifaceted. From integrating newcomers into the community to fundraising for vital community needs, supporting volunteerism, and fostering collaboration, not-for-profits are at the heart of

building a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient Nanaimo.

Not-for-profits are instrumental in **community integration** i.e., helping residents, particularly newcomers and refugees, integrate into the community. Through settlement services (such as those offered by Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society), these organizations offer essential support such as family services, language classes, volunteering opportunities, and community outreach programs. By facilitating social inclusion, these organizations ensure that all residents, regardless of their background, could become active and engaged members of the community. In some cases,

these organizations also provide programs that promote social reintegration, helping individuals rebuild their lives and reestablish their place in society.

Some not-for-profit organizations hold **award programs** - for example, the Canadian Home Builders Association's Vancouver Island Building Excellence Awards - **to acknowledge milestones and celebrate the exceptional services and individuals** in the community. These celebrations honor the hard work and dedication of these organizations while inspiring others to contribute to the community, fostering a culture of appreciation and collective achievement.

Not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo are often at the forefront of **fundraising efforts to address critical community needs**. A notable example is the successful fundraising campaign led by the Nanaimo Area Land Trust to purchase Linley Valley Cattle Lake Park, preserving a vital green space for the community. These initiatives demonstrate the power of collective action in meeting community needs and enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

Some larger organizations in Nanaimo also possess the capacity and structure that enables them to provide crucial support to smaller community groups. For example, the Nanaimo Area Land Trust offers loans to neighborhood stewardship groups for projects on city-owned property, enabling these groups to carry out important community-driven initiatives. Such support strengthens the overall community fabric, allowing smaller groups to thrive and contribute to the city's wellbeing. Other larger not-for-profits that support their members or smaller groups include the Chamber of Commerce, Vancouver Island Economic Alliance, and Canadian Home Builders Association – Vancouver Island.

Volunteering is at the heart of the not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo, providing community members with opportunities to give back, develop skills, and connect with others. The sector creates pathways for residents to engage in meaningful volunteer work, enriching both the lives of volunteers and contributing to a stronger, more connected community.

3.2.8 Indigenous Relations



Indigenous led not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo work to **promote justice, fairness, equality, and cultural, economic, social, educational, and recreational access** for Indigenous people, children, and urban communities, among others. From health programs to self-determination and promoting healing, personal growth, and community interaction, they offer a range of services to the community. This includes sharing knowledge with non-Indigenous people who perceive barriers to working with Indigenous communities through a variety of workshops, ceremonies, and land-based traditions.

In recent years, there has also been a growing commitment among non-Indigenous not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo to **foster meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities**. This is particularly evident in the increasing efforts to engage with Indigenous Elders, a critical step in building trust and understanding. Participants reported that within the immigration and settlement sector, this commitment is reflected in how they are connecting with Indigenous communities through collaborative and regular activities, demonstrating a genuine interest in reconciliation and shared learning.

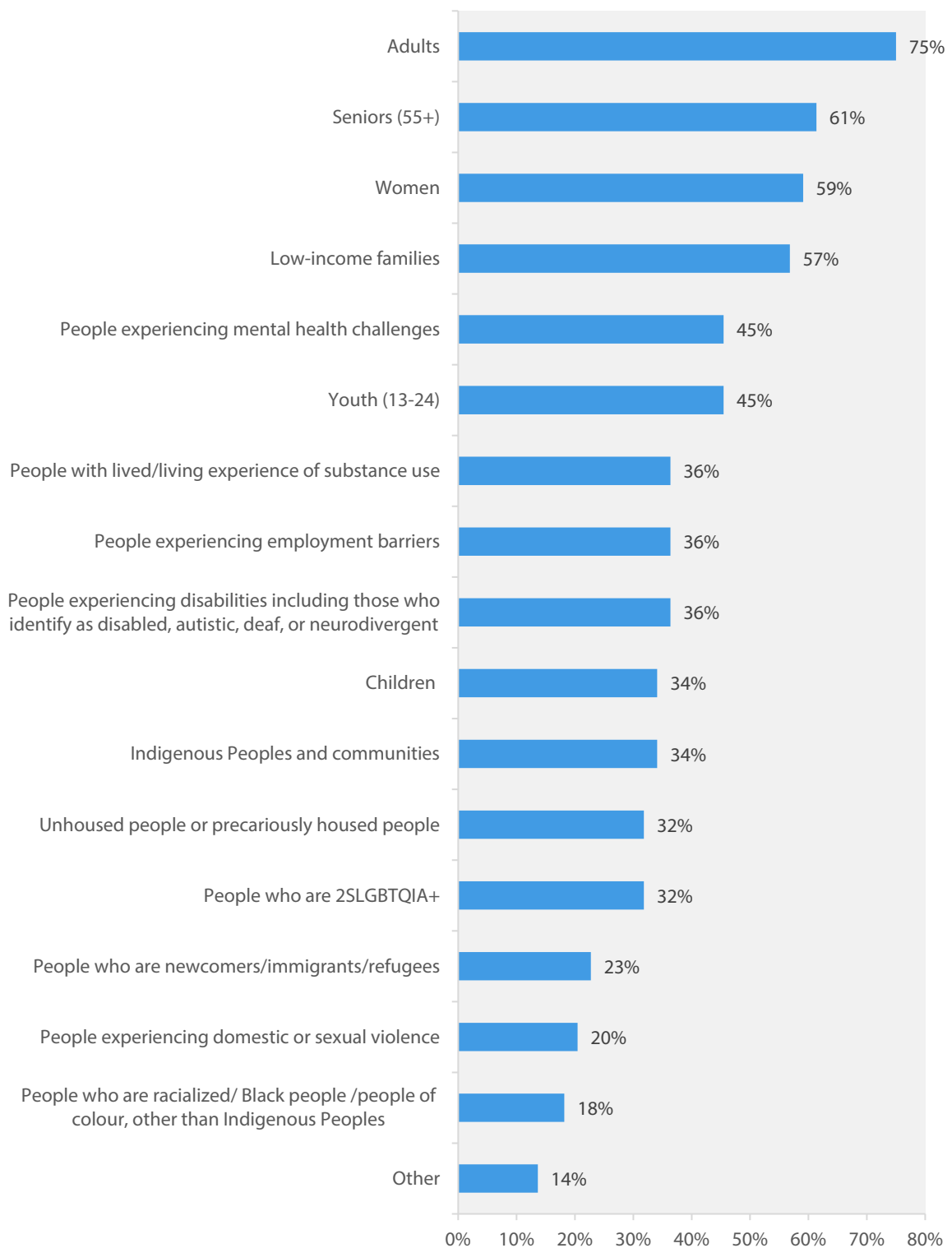
Moreover, many not-for-profits have **integrated reconciliation into their core programming**. These organizations recognize the importance of acknowledging the land and its history and have developed various initiatives that celebrate and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and ways of being, a case in point is Nanaimo Art Gallery. From land acknowledgment workshops to Indigenous-focused programming, the Gallery's efforts represent a broader movement within the sector towards supporting reconciliation and fostering stronger, more inclusive communities.

These initiatives are not just symbolic but are part of a sustained effort to bridge gaps, build respect, and work towards a future where Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities can thrive together. The not-for-profit sector's commitment to Indigenous relations is a vital component of its broader mission to promote social equity and community wellbeing.

3.3 Impact Beneficiaries and Engagement

Survey respondents were asked to identify the population and communities primarily served by not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo. Responses suggest a broad range of beneficiary groups are being served by these organizations. Top of the list includes adults, seniors, women, low-income families, and youth. Others include entrepreneurs, caregivers, and small business.

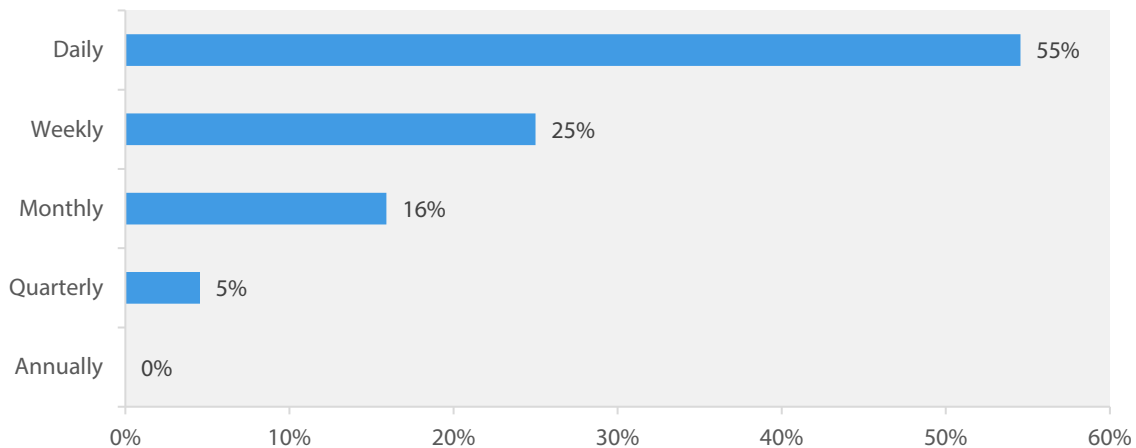
Figure 13. Which of the following populations and communities does your company primarily serve?
 Select all that apply. (n=44)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

Survey respondents reported not-for-profit organizations frequently (i.e., daily – 55%, weekly – 25%) serve or engage with their target population and communities through programs, services and other forms of outreach.

Figure 14. On average, how frequently does your organization engage with its target population or communities through programs, services and/or other forms of outreach? (n=44)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

Organizations were asked to estimate **the number of beneficiaries they reach annually**, either in-person or via communications. The majority of outreach for an organization is concentrated in the Nanaimo region, reaching an average of 8,600 people within the city and 3,700 in the surrounding Regional District of Nanaimo a year. Beyond this, an average of 1,700 beneficiaries are reached elsewhere on Vancouver Island, 1,800 across the rest of British Columbia, and about 900 outside the province a year. These numbers suggest that **the focus of not-for-profits' outreach and communication efforts are targeted to the local community.**

Table 11. Beneficiaries being reached by organizations annually (e.g., through attendance of programs, events and/or communications and outreach)? (n=42)

Outreach	Annual Averages
Within the City of Nanaimo	8,600
Outside of the City of Nanaimo but within the Regional District of Nanaimo	3,700
Elsewhere on Vancouver Island	1,700
Elsewhere in British Columbia	1,800
Outside of the Province	900

Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

Youth Beneficiaries – The Case of Nanaimo Youth Services Association (NYSA) Impact

The not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo has played a pivotal role in empowering young people, particularly newcomers, to integrate into Canadian society and develop vital skills for their personal and professional growth. The NYSA offers transformative programs that bridge gaps in experience and education for youth, providing them with opportunities that would otherwise be inaccessible. The following paragraphs present youth impact gleaned from interviews with beneficiaries of NYSA's programs.

One notable impact is **employment support**. For newly arrived youth, navigating the job market can be daunting, especially without prior Canadian work experience or a network of connections. Through programs such as 'Blade Runners', participants receive certifications like First Aid, FoodSafe, and WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System), which make them more attractive to potential employers. Many participants have shared how these programs not only provided practical job skills but also helped them secure their first jobs in Canada, whether in retail, hospitality, or healthcare. The structured guidance of job coaches and interview preparation sessions further boosted their employability.

Beyond job placement, these programs foster **personal growth and confidence building**. For young immigrants, entering the workforce in a new country can be intimidating, but with the assistance of organizations like NYSA, many have gained the confidence needed to thrive. One participant shared how their work as a cashier and barista helped them build self-esteem and feel like they were finally fitting into their new community. This confidence snowballs into other areas of life, as youth create connections, build networks, and explore further career opportunities. Another participant emphasized how learning essential life skills, such as workplace conflict resolution and professional behavior, has helped them adjust to Canadian work culture and feel more at ease in social situations.

Programs that address **emotional and mental wellbeing** also have a profound impact on youth. Workshops on self-care and managing stress are woven into many programs, equipping participants with the tools they need to handle the emotional challenges of transitioning into adulthood, starting a career, and integrating into a new community. One participant describes the feeling of achievement and belonging that came with securing their first job, contributing to improved emotional wellbeing. Others mentioned the social benefits of building networks and making new friends through the programs, which further eased the isolation many felt as newcomers.

These programs also address the **practical needs of youth** by providing transportation assistance and access to driving lessons through initiatives like the 'L2N Program'. Learning to drive has been described by participants as a game-changer, enabling them to access better job opportunities and significantly improving their quality of life.

Overall, NYSA's programs have been crucial in helping at-risk and newcomer youth not only survive but thrive in a challenging environment. For youth, these programs serve as the first steppingstone toward self-reliance and confidence in a new country, fostering a positive ripple effect in their long-term integration.

3.4 The Not-for-Profit Sector's Contributions to Nanaimo's Five City Goals

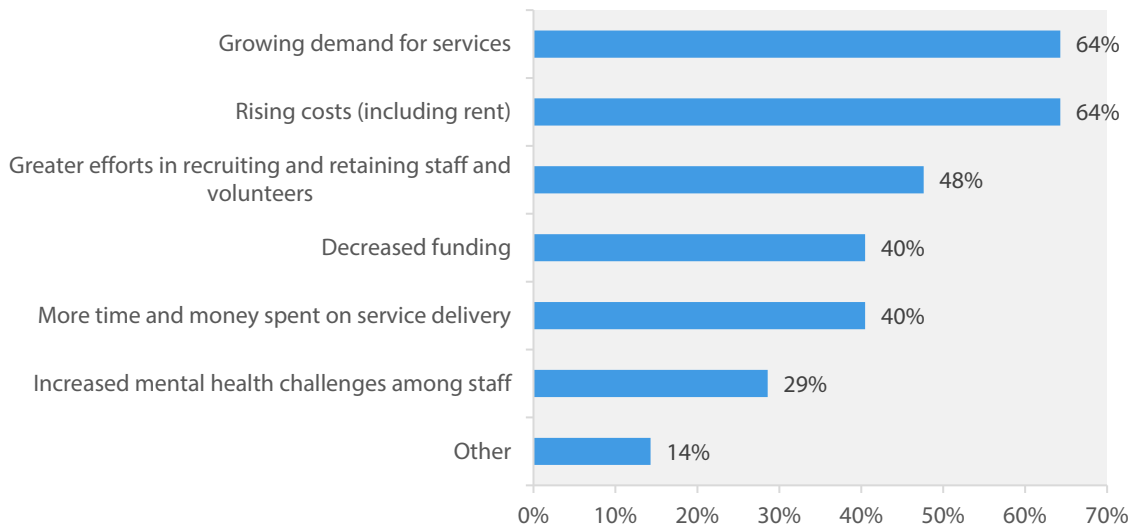
In summary, the not-for-profit sector contributes significant economic, social and environmental benefits to Nanaimo.

- Through initiatives that promote environmental sustainability, the sector aligns with the City's goal of maintaining a **green Nanaimo**.
- Socially, the sector supports human rights, education, and Indigenous relations, directly enhancing community empowerment and fostering a healthy community with strong social cohesion and cultural exchange, contributing to a **connected, healthy, and empowered** Nanaimo.
- Economically, not-for-profits in Nanaimo contribute to economic capital, creating a **prosperous** Nanaimo.

4. Sector Priorities

Survey respondents were asked to identify the **top three challenges** facing organizations in the past year. Those identified include the growing **demand for services (64%)**, **rising cost of operations including rent (64%)**, and **recruitment/retaining of staff and volunteers (48%)**. Other challenges reported include inadequate funding (particularly for new initiatives), access to capital funding from the federal government, audiences' slow return to performances, and suitable performance spaces.

Figure 15. Over the past year, please identify the top three challenges faced at your organization. Select top 3. (n=42)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis

In addition to those identified in the survey above, the following challenges emerged from consultations with key not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo.

4.1 Securing Funding

Funding accessibility, availability, and sustainability remain critical challenges for not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo. Participants noted that the limited availability of funding significantly hinders their ability to operate effectively. Many not-for-profits struggle to secure consistent, multi-year, and adequate funding, which is essential for long-term planning and sustainability. The reliance on grants and donations introduces a level of unpredictability that can destabilize operations, especially when funding sources fluctuate or diminish unexpectedly.

Donor fatigue is another pressing issue, particularly in a smaller community like Nanaimo, where multiple organizations often compete for the same pool of donors. The frequent and simultaneous fundraising efforts can overwhelm potential contributors, leading to diminished returns for everyone involved. Oftentimes, funders dictate priorities, leading to a misalignment with actual community needs. This fatigue, coupled with the lack of sustainable funding opportunities and misaligned priorities, puts not-for-profits at risk of not meeting their financial needs. When these needs are unmet, it can lead to

"... not-for-profits can lose significant focus if their funding needs are not met... and then we not only have a not-for-profit that could be failing but also spills over to the services they deliver."

Interview Participant

the failure of the organization itself, which in turn jeopardizes the essential services they provide to the community.

4.2 Fulfilling Staffing and Governance Needs

The not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo is facing significant challenges in staffing and governance, which are impacting its ability to effectively meet the growing demand for services.

Limited staffing and human resources have become a significant strain on many organizations, making it increasingly difficult to keep up with the rising needs of the community. One of the key challenges identified by participants is the **recruitment and retention of employees**. Not-for-profit organizations struggle to compete with the private and public sectors, where benefits and wages are often more attractive. This financial constraint is a major factor contributing to limited staff capacity within these organizations. Additionally, the high cost of housing and transportation in Nanaimo further complicates hiring and retention efforts, as these factors deter potential employees from committing to roles within the sector.

Many existing staff members in the not-for-profit sector feel **overworked and underpaid**, which has led to burnout in some cases. The inability to offer competitive salaries, benefits (e.g., RRSP contributions, pension plans), and long-term career stability are major deterrents in retaining talented individuals. The sector's financial limitations often prevent organizations from providing the necessary support and development opportunities for their employees, further exacerbating the staffing crisis.

In addition to staffing issues, not-for-profit organizations are also struggling with **governance challenges**, particularly in recruiting and retaining qualified board members.

Organizations are finding it difficult to attract board members who possess both the lived experience, and the professional skills needed to effectively support and guide the organization. This gap in governance expertise poses a significant risk to the sustainability and effectiveness of these organizations.

Succession planning is another critical area of concern. Many of the current leaders in Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector are approaching retirement, yet there is a noticeable lack of younger individuals prepared or willing to step into these leadership roles. This impending leadership vacuum threatens the continuity and stability of the sector, as there may not be enough qualified or willing candidates to take on these essential positions.

4.3 Documenting Social and Economic Impact

In the not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo, the **ability to document social and economic impact varies** widely among organizations. Some are equipped with robust tools for tracking outcomes, conducting surveys, and collecting stories that highlight the differences made by their services. These methods allow them to quantify their impact, present clear data to stakeholders, and refine their programs based on evidence. However, many organizations, particularly smaller ones, face significant challenges in this area. Limited capacity and resources often restrict their ability to systematically document their impact. Instead, they rely heavily on word-of-mouth feedback and anecdotal evidence.

"It is difficult to retain staff when you cannot offer them longevity within their careers. When you cannot pay them what they are worth."

Interview Participant

"If the client stopped talking to me or coming to see me, it means that they've fully integrated into the community and no amount of paperwork or survey can speak to that."

Interview Participant

For instance, one organization noted that if a client stops communicating or attending services, it is often seen as a sign that they have successfully integrated into the community. This kind of success, deeply rooted in personal experience and human connection, is difficult to capture through traditional surveys or paperwork. This reliance on informal methods of impact assessment underscores a critical gap in the sector: while personal testimonials and client interactions can provide powerful insights, they often go undocumented, leaving a significant portion of the social and economic impact unmeasured.

4.4 Accessing Affordable Space and Facilities

Renting space presents a significant challenge for not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo, as increasing costs and limited financial resources often make it difficult to secure affordable facilities. This issue is particularly pressing given that many organizations struggle to maintain their operations due to the high cost of real estate. In some cases, the financial strain has forced organizations to move out of their real estate holdings and lease alternative spaces, as maintaining ownership became untenable. Further information on spaces can be found in Section 3.1.5 (Real Estate Impacts).

“We actually moved from our real estate, and we leased it out because as a nonprofit, we can't afford it.”

Interview Participant

4.5 Advancing Visibility of Smaller Organizations and Their Services

In the not-for-profit sector, visibility plays a crucial role in the success and sustainability of organizations. For smaller organizations, however, **raising awareness about their services often presents a significant challenge**. Unlike larger, more established entities, these smaller groups frequently lack the resources to effectively promote their work, which can severely impact their ability to reach those in need and attract much-needed support from donors and the community.

The struggle for visibility is not just about marketing; it directly affects the organization's mission and its capacity to serve. When potential beneficiaries are unaware of the services available, critical needs may go unmet, leading to further social and economic consequences. Similarly, the lack of awareness among potential donors and volunteers can result in missed opportunities for funding and collaboration, both of which are essential for sustaining operations and expanding impact.

“Smaller organizations often struggle to raise awareness about their services, which can impact their ability to reach those in need.”

Interview Participant

The cost of visibility, therefore, is twofold. On one hand, there are the tangible financial costs associated with marketing, outreach, and public relations efforts. On the other hand, there are the intangible costs, like missed connections, unmet needs, and the lost potential for growth and innovation. For smaller organizations, these costs can create a cycle where limited visibility leads to limited resources, which in turn perpetuates their struggle to gain the recognition they need to thrive.

4.6 Accessing Services for Indigenous People

One of the key challenges identified by Indigenous-led organizations in Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector is the unequal distribution of resources, particularly in serving Indigenous communities. For instance, one gap identified is the lack of funding for urban Indigenous populations, which in turn limits equitable access to essential services across the **entire Indigenous community**. This misallocation also highlights the need for more consultation with these communities to ensure a more inclusive approach to resource distribution that reflects the diverse needs of the population.

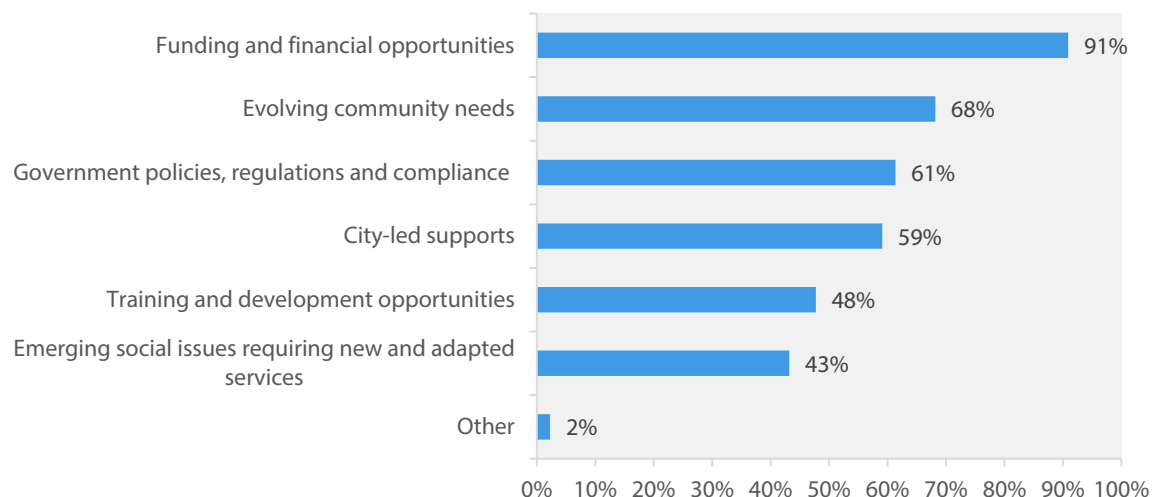
Other challenges in serving Indigenous populations include the need for increased funding to support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations and address critical gaps in infrastructure, such as offices, gathering spaces, housing, and healthcare facilities. Indigenous populations are rapidly growing, but there is insufficient budget allocation to meet their unique needs, exacerbating existing disparities.

The not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo faces a range of challenges that impacts its operational effectiveness and ability to service the community. When asked about the types of external factors that can support them, **the majority identified funding and financial opportunities (91%), evolving community needs (68%), government policies (61%), and City-led support (59%)** as crucial to supporting the sector's impacts. Other factors reported included having a space or facility where not-for-profits can share resources such as boardrooms, reception, copiers, administration staff for things like bookkeeping, social media etc.

"While many programs are available, they're difficult to navigate and access. We see this as an opportunity for growth and improvement, with the potential to better map all resources to address the various social determinants of health and meet the community's needs."

Interview Participant

Figure 16. What types of external factors are crucial to supporting the social and environmental impact of not-for-profit organizations? Select all that apply. (n=44)



Addressing these critical needs requires a proactive and strategic approach for Nanaimo's not-for-profit sector to build resilience and continue to make a positive impact in the face of evolving needs.

5. Looking Ahead: Future Opportunities

Considering the City of Nanaimo's goals and the diverse needs of the not-for-profit organizations, several future opportunities surfaced throughout the course of analysis. Although not an exhaustive list, the following three thematic areas of future opportunities are intended to inspire ongoing dialogue.

5.1 Bolstering Sector Capacity

As described in Section 4 (Sector Priorities), not-for-profit organizations in Nanaimo are in need of funding opportunities, affordable space solutions, staffing and governance strategies. This section discusses how the City can support these areas to strength sector capacity.

5.1.1 Funding

Despite the City's substantial support through grants, subsidies, and various forms of partnerships, not-for-profits continue to face significant financial challenges. Almost every not-for-profit organization consulted in this study is seeking ways to maintain its financial sustainability. The following proposed points aim to alleviate these challenges.

Addressing Donor Fatigue

The City could consider to support and acknowledge macro sector challenges such as donor fatigue. By supporting city-wide fundraising coordination initiatives, the City and not-for-profits can help mitigate donor fatigue through organized campaigns to raise awareness about the value of philanthropy and by fostering collaboration between organizations. Such initiatives will not only prevent overwhelming the donor base but also allow a more equitable distribution of funds across various sectors, promoting sustainability and broader support within the not-for-profit community.

Streamlining Process and Technology Infrastructure for Grant Programs

To further reduce the administrative burdens for securing funding, one opportunity lies in the adoption of a more unified system for managing grant applications, streamlining the entire application and review process. A centralized portal would save not-for-profits considerable time and resources, particularly by eliminating the need to allocate human resources solely for managing grant applications. This streamlined approach would not only expedite the funding process but also incentivize organizations to register as a not-for-profit with the City, allowing them to focus more on their core services and activities and less on bureaucratic navigation.

5.1.2 Facilities

From the survey and interviews, some organizations reported that they had to move out of their building due to a lack of funding and are seeking innovative ways to reduce the facility-related burden.

Facilitating Affordable Space Initiatives

Exploring collaborative opportunities with local real estate developers and property owners could lead to the creation of affordable rental programs specifically designed for not-for-profit organizations. The City already offers tax incentives to property owners who lease spaces at reduced rates, providing a financially viable way for them to aid not-for-profits. This strategy not only reduces overhead costs for the not-for-profits but also ensures they remain close and accessible within the community.

Further Developing Shared Facility Spaces

Identifying and developing community hubs where multiple not-for-profits share office and event spaces at reduced costs is an avenue for fostering collaboration while minimizing overhead expenses.

These hubs promote a community of sharing and learning, enhancing the collective impact of these organizations on the community.

5.1.3 Human Resources

In light of the challenges presented within the context of Nanaimo not-for-profit sector, this section addresses human resources needs relevant to senior-led leadership, professional development, and the fostering of resilient teams ready to respond to changing community needs.

Supporting Succession Planning and Leadership Development

Long-term sustainability is crucial for not-for-profits, especially as many organizations report that their staff and leadership are nearing retirement age. One area for future focus could be the enhancement of governance skills among not-for-profit leaders, particularly to prepare for succession. These programs could be managed through partnerships with specialized not-for-profit organizations, equipping sector leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective governance and future planning.

5.2 Fostering Innovative Partnerships with the Sector

There have been several successful cases in Nanaimo involving various forms of partnerships. Drawing on these success stories, this section suggests further implementation of meaningful partnership models, such as service agreement and program co-development.

5.2.1 Extending Service Agreement Models with Not-for-Profits

Cities often contract not-for-profits to deliver specific services on their behalf, a practice that has proven efficient and essential in Nanaimo, especially in areas like community safety where government plays a significant role. Given the budget and human resource constraints within City departments, Cities can consider partnerships with not-for-profits through service agreements that clearly outline roles, responsibilities, funding, and performance metrics. The City of Nanaimo has established a significant number of service agreements with not-for-profits, especially in the areas of public safety, and arts and culture. Such models could be expanded to include services such as food security and services for the elderly, thereby leveraging the unique capabilities of not-for-profits, all the while strengthening their operational capacity.

5.2.2 Enhancing Program Co-development

Not-for-profits possess specialized expertise and flexibility in their programs and service offerings, along with on-the-ground knowledge that positions them closely with the populations they service. For example, the City of Nanaimo has collaborated with not-for-profit organizations to develop and deliver programs aimed at preventing gun and gang violence among youth. These programs, co-designed by the City and the not-for-profits, focus on upstream and midstream interventions to reduce City's need for downstream responses. The City could consider replicating these successful program co-development partnerships in other service areas – particularly to support equity-deserving communities – by leveraging not-for-profits' deep community ties and innovative approaches to address social issues.

5.3 Amplifying Sector Impact and Advocacy

5.3.1 Increasing Community Awareness

Exploring ways to increase community understanding about the not-for-profit sector's services and impact could involve showcasing available services and programs through a targeted social media campaign or webpage inventory. This approach would make it easier for residents to access support, and for smaller organizations to gain visibility. Additionally, investing in marketing and public

awareness campaigns could help amplify the contributions of smaller not-for-profits, ensuring that their services reach potential beneficiaries and supporters in the community.

5.3.2 Documenting Sector Impact

Regularly documenting and updating the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the not-for-profit sector is essential for demonstrating value and progress. A key opportunity may be to develop an impact documentation and assessment tool that organizations can easily adapt to use on their own. This setup would simplify the process for smaller organizations to document outcomes, and enable stakeholders to access aggregated data about the sector's contributions.

5.3.3 Advocating for Provincial and Federal Support

Having robust impact assessments and key metrics allow for more effective funding advocacy campaigns to regional governments that better align with the growing needs of the community. Such advocacy is vital for securing the resources necessary to sustain and expand the reach of not-for-profit services. Over time, sustained efforts can help to amplify the sector's voice at higher levels of government, ensuring that local needs and priorities are adequately represented and supported.

Appendix A. Economic Impact Assessment Methodological Notes

This appendix outlines the key components of the approach used in creating the economic impact assessment.

i. “Universe Generation”

- To estimate the total number of not-for-profit organizations, Nordicity leveraged a multi-faceted approach that combined online listings with access to proprietary databases of registered not-for-profit organizations using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes.

ii. Economic Activity Aggregation and Modelling

- To estimate aggregate economic activity, Nordicity leveraged the findings of the survey to establish a profile of Nanaimo’s not-for-profit sector by estimating the number of organizations and approximate average and annual expenditures. These averages were then grossed up to the ‘universe’ described above.
- To model the indirect and induced economic impacts and GDP contributions, Nordicity leveraged MyEIA™, Nordicity’s proprietary technology.
- All data collected and used in analysis is presented in anonymized and aggregated form to ensure privacy and security of participating organizations.

About the MyEIA Model™

Nordicity’s MyEIA Model™ is a customized economic impact analysis tool that utilizes Statistics Canada’s Input-Output tables, along with other economic data (e.g., industry wages) to estimate how increased expenditures in any industry translate into additional employment, labour income, and GDP. The MyEIA Model™ also provides estimates of the additional federal, provincial, and local tax revenue generated by any additional economic activity.

The customized nature of MyEIA Model™ means that it can provide reliable estimates for any industry, even if the industry is not among the industries that comprise Statistics Canada’s Input-Output tables. With detailed data on expenditures within an industry or any type of economic shock, the MyEIA Model™ can generate estimates of direct, indirect, and induced impacts.

The MyEIA Model™ uses an inverse Leontief matrix based on Stats Canada Input-Output tables to derive estimates of the indirect impact generated by purchases of goods and services. The model uses Type II impact ratios published by Statistics Canada to derive induced impacts.

The MyEIA Model™ generates estimates of provincial/territorial and Canada-wide impacts. It also incorporates sub-provincial location quotients to estimate local regional economic impacts.

Appendix B. Vignettes of Selected Organizations

Nanaimo Youth Services Association (NYSA)

NYSA provides learning opportunities and support to youth so that they can succeed on their path to independence, while acknowledging that individuals are affected by their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.



Mission: To provide youth aged 16 to 30 with support and opportunities for learning, personal development, and independence.

Vision: Modeling a culture that instills independence, self-worth, and a sense of agency in young people in a welcoming, secure, and respectful environment.

Year Established: 1969

Services:

- **Housing Centre:** NYSA has been involved in housing for nearly 55 years, expanding from basic living quarters to offering a broad range of support services.
- **Wellness Centre:** A new facility offering direct services and referrals to help youth address physical, mental, and emotional challenges.
- **Futures Centre:** Combines job readiness programs with life skills training, financial assistance, and extended support to ensure long-term success for clients after program completion.
- **Enterprise Centre:** Focuses on developing social enterprises to create job opportunities for clients and provide financial support for programs.

Doughnut Economics Impact:

Organizations like NYSA help provide a social foundation for the community by offering housing, water, food, education, and opportunities to youth. By doing so, they promote participation, collaboration, and reciprocity, while strengthening community networks and caring for the wellbeing of the community.

"Kids, that really didn't think they had a chance of being anything, get into the programs and then quite often we have 35- or 40-year-olds come into the office and go 'oh, **I came through your programs and now I run a construction company here.... now I have my own store'.**"

Keith Wilson, Chief Administrative Officer

NYSA's programs are comprehensive, addressing a wide range of needs from essential services like housing to educational programs that help individuals navigate society. For instance, the BladeRunners program is an employment training initiative for youth aged 16 to 30, while DiverseFutures helps youth find full-time employment through the Government of Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS). The L2N program, in partnership with the Snuneymuxw First Nation, provides driving practice for youth aged 16 to 29, while Supporting Young Families offers young parents (ages 15 to 30) resources and supplies during pregnancy, birth, and post-partum. Caring for the community's youth through these holistic programs is essential for building a more equitable and prosperous future in Nanaimo.

Nanaimo Family Life Association (NFLA)

For over 50 years, the NFLA has provided programs that address individuals' unique needs with respect, inclusion, and compassion. Their services include counseling, personal and professional development, and volunteer opportunities, helping individuals grow and connect with their community.

Mission: NFLA is a passionate, dynamic, and inclusive community-oriented organization that delivers interconnected personal and professional growth services, responding to the needs of the community at all stages of life.

Year Established: 1967

Services:

- **Counseling:** Offers counseling services to individuals, couples, and groups for various needs.
- **Seniors/Elders Programs:** Provides programs designed to help older adults stay mentally healthy and maintain independence.
- **Youth Programs:** Delivers programs, workshops, and events focused on fostering personal growth and insight for youth.
- **Volunteering Opportunities:** Encourages community building through volunteering, offering opportunities to support others while receiving high-quality training.

Doughnut Economics Impact:

As a multi-service organization, NFLA is committed to filling service gaps in the community. Their strong grassroots approach has enabled them to successfully launch programs that are otherwise not widely available. Furthermore, as one of the oldest not-for-profits in Nanaimo, NFLA has played a critical role in the development of many other local not-for-profits.

Guided by the belief that healthy individuals, family, and community relationships form the foundation of a strong and resilient society, NFLA prioritizes support for individuals who have historically been marginalized. This includes women, seniors, and those facing challenges such as poverty, homelessness, homophobia, and transphobia. While youth services represent a smaller part of their work, they offer a program specifically for young people in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. NFLA also operates two shelters in Nanaimo, the Unitarian shelter and an annual winter shelter focusing on individuals who are unhoused, experiencing homelessness, or struggling with addiction. Supporting this vulnerable population is central to their mission. Through its leadership and community impact, NFLA continues to be a driving force for social support and innovation in the region.



"We have the largest volunteer counseling program, I believe, on Vancouver Island. We have over 70 volunteers that are providing counseling services free or at very low cost to our community and that is a really important program because as we know counseling is now running anywhere as you know, starting [from] \$140 an hour up to \$250."

Deborah Hollins, Executive Director

Nanaimo Art Gallery

Nanaimo Art Gallery fosters new understandings of contemporary art through an inquiry-based approach. A dedicated team delivers exhibitions and educational programs rooted in the region, resonating locally and globally. They are committed to honoring the territory and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities, particularly the Coast Salish people. The Gallery offers accessible programming for all ages and is working toward expanding its facilities for the future.



Mission and Vision: We engage and inspire community through art. Nanaimo Art Gallery is a creative hub for Vancouver Island, where we build relationships, connect communities, and effect change through art.

Year Established: 1976

Programs: Beyond the ongoing growth of the permanent collection, which features works by local, national, and international artists, and the temporary exhibitions that include artwork focusing on local narratives and Indigenous art, the Gallery offers a wide range of programs for the community, including:

- **Learning and Engagement Programs:**
 - Children: Artists in the Schools, School tours. Studio classes and art camps (e.g., Saturday Studio, ProD Day, March Break, and Summer Art Camps)
 - Teens: Teen Art Drop-In (weekly), and Dazzle Camouflage
 - Adults: Exhibition tours, Hul'q'umi'num language classes, Workshops, artist talks, and public programs (e.g., Making Waves, FAM tours)
 - Community Outreach: throughout the year at local events
- **Accessibility Initiatives:** Pay It Forward Program (bursary funding for those needing financial support to participate in programs)

Doughnut Economics Impact:

Nanaimo Art Gallery has made a significant impact on the local community, fostering artistic engagement and cultural dialogue. In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the gallery reached over 25,620 people of all ages through exhibitions, learning programs, and outreach activities. Through exhibits like 'Fielding Road' and 'Tides & Moons: Herring Capital', the gallery connected local history and cultural narratives to contemporary art, creating meaningful connections between the past and present.

In addition to showcasing art, the gallery has also enhanced its role as an educational and community hub. Programs like the 'Artists in Schools' initiative, revamped for better accessibility and increased engagement, provide opportunities for youth to interact with local artists and explore creative skills. With its dedication to inclusivity, the gallery also introduced the 'Pay It Forward Program', which funds bursaries for those needing financial assistance to participate in its programming.

These efforts, combined with the gallery's long-term goal of developing a new, purpose-built facility, demonstrate its commitment to serving the community through art, education, and cultural preservation. Nanaimo Art Gallery's growth and its wide-reaching impact highlight the vital role that dedicated spaces for art and culture play in fostering community connection, education, and inclusivity. These spaces not only preserve cultural heritage and provide platforms for artistic expression, but they also strengthen the fabric of a community by promoting dialogue, collaboration, and understanding across diverse groups.

"It's the place that parents will tell us, 'my teenager won't go to school anymore, but I can get them out to the gallery once a week or twice a week. And that's their safe place. That's where they light up. That's where they become themselves.' **It's a mix of trying to make an impact across the broad community and then trying to have those really special interactions where you can make a difference in someone's life.**"

Carolyn Holmes, Executive Director

Loaves and Fishes

Founded and based in Nanaimo, Loaves and Fishes provide food bank services across Vancouver Island.



Mission: Loaves & Fishes Food Bank is committed to serving as many people as possible. Currently over 15,000 people in more than 44 communities, including 15 Indigenous communities, across Vancouver Island benefit from the food Loaves & Fishes provides, free of charge.

Year Established: 1998

Programs:

Loaves and Fishes provides services in two main ways:

- Food is given directly to people through our Nanaimo, Cedar, Port McNeill and Port Hardy free food markets. Everyone is welcome regardless of their income or where they live.
- Food is also provided, free of charge, to over 100 Community Partners which are other charities, schools, food banks and Indigenous Communities across Vancouver Island.

Doughnut Economics Impact:

Loaves and Fishes not only supports those facing food insecurity but also contributes to the community by ensuring a responsible cycle for the food they receive, engaging farmers, and caring for the land. Their food is primarily sourced through a food recovery program, where the organization partners with local grocery stores to collect items that would otherwise be discarded, regardless of quality. They have partnerships with over 35 grocery stores, offering seven-day-a-week pickups, not only in Nanaimo but also in Chemainus, Ladysmith, Parksville, Port Alberni, and, on holidays, in the Comox Valley. Additionally, the organization provides daily grocery pickups in Port Hardy and Port McNeill, where they have a building and staff stationed.

“So how do we see it changing over the next 5 to 10 years? You see centralized food collection by Loaves and Fishes across Vancouver Island, and **that means that there's more food for all the nonprofits and ultimately more food for the people in need of those services.**”

Peter Sinclair, Executive Director

Moreover, since a significant amount of the food collected is not suitable for human consumption, the organization ensures that this food is kept out of landfills. Unsuitable food is provided to local farmers for animal feed or is composted. Since 2012, they have diverted over 22 million pounds of food from the landfill and saved over 54 million pounds of CO₂e. In this way, Loaves and Fishes not only provides a social foundation for the community but also helps protect Earth's life-supporting systems by preventing the overshooting of planetary boundaries.

Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre (TLAFC)

Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Society is dedicated to promoting justice, fairness, and equality for urban Indigenous people through a comprehensive and holistic approach to programming and services. Their philosophy is inclusive, welcoming all community members who seek assistance.



Mandate: Within a network of 117 Friendship Centres across Canada, Tillicum Lelum has a Federal Government mandate to provide essential services to the urban (off-reserve) Aboriginal population of Nanaimo and the Regional District.

Mission: Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre aims to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people living in urban environments. Guided by Aboriginal teachings, the Centre focuses on providing holistic services that address the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of both clients and employees. The organization fosters teamwork internally and collaborates with community partners, believing that modeling healthy lifestyles and creating balance can establish trust and respect with those accessing their services.

Year Established: 1968

Services:

TLAFC offers cross-cultural training workshops to the community, businesses, and organizations as needed. Their Health Centre provides community health programs and holistic health services, focusing on health promotion and prevention through education, both in individual consultations and group settings. These services are open to all.

Their services range from Traditional Healing Elders Support, Healing Circles, Sweats and Smudges, and adult and child immunization, to Well Baby Clinics, breastfeeding clinics, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects support and education, diabetes support, nutrition counseling, birth control education, self-care education, and STI/HIV & TB testing.

Doughnut Economics Impact:

With over 54 years of service, six locations, and 80 staff members, TLAFC provides culturally trauma-informed support that addresses the various social determinants of health experienced by participants. TLAFC also works to strengthen family relationships by promoting healing, personal growth, and community interaction. All services are free, easily accessible, and available to everyone, including those who may not be supported by mainstream programs due to bureaucratic barriers. The organization employs a two-eyed approach, allowing community members to engage in cultural ceremonies and land-based teachings throughout the year. While their mandate is to support urban Indigenous people, their open-door policy ensures programming and services are available to all who need them.

"We have built trust and credibility within our community for the past 54 years and always consulted our community members to ensure that our services are responding to their needs. We continuously revise them, which has ensured a high volume of engagement without any marketing or publicity."

Claudio Aguilera, Health & Wellness Manager

For many reasons, TLAFC is a critical component in achieving a safe and just space for the community. First, the organization has long supported the growth of other organizations within the community. It also provides essential services for the urban Indigenous population, which is often overlooked but is vulnerable, large, and growing. Their open-door policy fosters diversity, intercultural dialogue, and



education, creating strong networks within the community. Additionally, the organization provides a space for different worldviews in practice, addressing both physical and cultural needs that reflect the region's history, relationship with the environment, and reconciliation efforts. Through their services, TLAFRC plays a vital role in building a more inclusive, resilient, and interconnected community for all in Nanaimo.

Nanaimo & District Hospital Foundation

The Nanaimo & District Hospital Foundation supports the purchase of medical equipment, facility upgrades, and community health programs, while fostering donor engagement and partnerships with local organizations.

Mission: Improving healthcare for central Vancouver Island communities today and into the future.

Year Established: 1977

Programs:

- Supporting purchasing advanced medical equipment for the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital and other healthcare facilities.
- Funding programs such as family health, cancer care, mental health, and heart and stroke care.
- Providing scholarships and funds advanced medical training for healthcare workers.
- Supporting initiatives for patient well-being, including chronic pain items and equipment for families.
- Collaborating with organizations to raise awareness and improve healthcare services.
- The Foundation also operates social enterprises, such as Code Brew Café and Nanaimo Lifeline, which generate additional funds for healthcare initiatives.



Doughnut Economics Impact:

The Nanaimo & District Hospital Foundation plays a crucial role in supporting community healthcare ensuring that medical professionals have the tools and training necessary to deliver exceptional care. In recent years, the Foundation has completed several significant projects, including the expansion of the Cardiac Department, Endoscopy Surgical Suite, and Emergency Department at NRGH. They have also installed a new CT Scanner, opened two additional operating rooms, and established a Renal Unit, improving access to critical healthcare services and reducing patient wait times. Moreover, in the past year, the Foundation raised approximately \$5 million – a 50% increase in fundraising due to donor growth.

"Nanaimo could take off its blinders and see the **incredible potential it has**. It should encourage those who want to spread their wings."

Barney Ellis-Perry, CEO

Access to healthcare promotes social equity by ensuring that all individuals, regardless of socioeconomic status, have the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives, thereby enhancing community resilience and well-being. Through community engagement, events, and innovative fundraising, the Foundation has expanded and continues to expand access to quality healthcare, allowing people to fully participate in social, economic, and civic life. This approach not only improves individual health outcomes but also strengthens the overall fabric of the community, ensuring everyone can participate fully in social, economic, and civic life.

Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS)

CVIMS offers support to newcomers and refugees through a range of services, including settlement, employment, family, and language programs.



Mission: We are leaders in providing services to our community, with a focus on newcomers. We are committed to promoting the values of equity, diversity, inclusion and respect for all peoples.

Vision: We ensure that immigrants and diverse peoples flourish in this community.

Year: 1979

Services:

- **Settlement:** Case Management, Resettlement Assistance Program, Information Sessions and Citizenship Classes
- **Employment:** Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants, Hire an Immigrant, Video Profiles, ASCEND and Newcomers Job Fair
- **Family:** Youth Connections, SWIS – K to 12 Support, HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters), Childcare
- **Language:** LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) Classes

Doughnut Economies Impact:

According to the 2021 Census, 16.1% of the population in Nanaimo are foreign-born (immigrants).²² Additionally, immigration rates have been continuously rising over the last decade, making it even more essential to have organizations like CVIMS supporting their transition, including employment, language, and family support.

For instance, CVIMS' language programs, particularly the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), have been crucial in helping immigrants overcome communication barriers, which is a vital aspect of settling into a new environment. Additionally, their employment and family services empower individuals by providing opportunities for personal and professional growth, enabling them to contribute to the local economy while maintaining family stability. Through these efforts, CVIMS has built strong support systems, making a lasting difference in the lives of those they serve.

Furthermore, many newcomers and refugees to Canada have faced their own traumas, much like the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the country. Recognizing this shared history of adversity, there is a desire among newcomers to learn about Indigenous history directly from Indigenous people. By facilitating direct connections between Indigenous individuals and settlement agencies, the organization empowers Indigenous people to tell their own stories, making the message stronger

"People at the beginning [...] come to our agency for that service. And when you slowly start seeing that, 'OK, well, you know, we haven't seen them for a while' and suddenly you make a follow up phone call because you haven't seen them and they say, '**oh, I got a full-time employment!**', **that's another measurement of success that we do.**'"

Angelika Valchar, Director of Client Services

²² Statistics Canada (2021). [Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population: Nanaimo, City.](#)

and more authentic. This approach enhances the impact of their services and programs, providing a more meaningful experience for newcomers.

Not only does CVIMS provide essential support to newcomers and refugees, but they also adopt a client-driven approach, fostering a welcoming environment. By focusing on accessibility and responsiveness, they ensure that their services reflect the diversity of the community, contributing to social cohesion. This approach furthers the organization's mission of helping immigrants participate in their own adaptation process and integrate into the larger community.

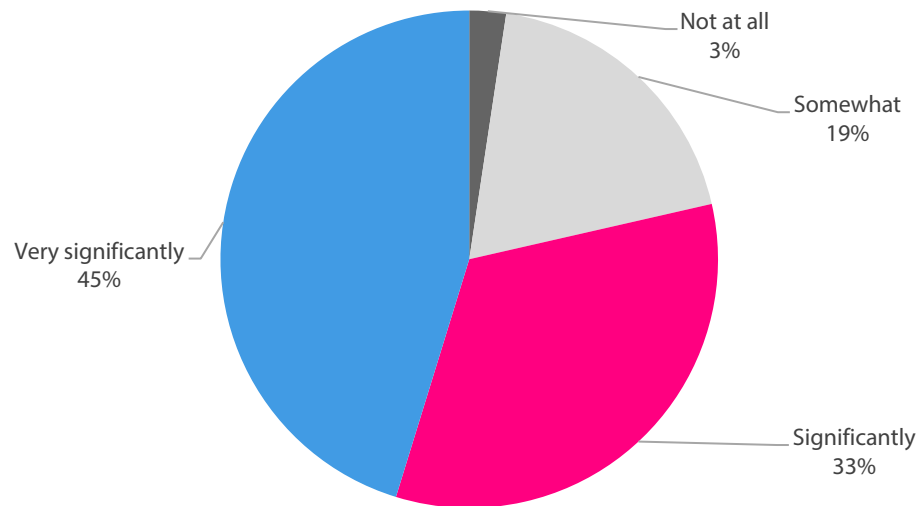
Appendix C. Additional Findings: COVID's Impact on Nanaimo's Not-for-Profit Sector

COVID-19 had an immense impact on the not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo, including its staff, individuals, organizations, and the community more broadly. Most survey respondents reported that COVID-19 significantly affected their organizations (78%) (Figure 17). Respondents note that the pandemic's far-reaching impacts on the sector led to a variety of challenges and adaptations across different organizations, according to survey participants. These include:

- **Economic Strain and Adaptation:** Many businesses and organizations in the not-for-profit sector faced significant financial strain during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to limited temporary financial support from the government and a decrease in donations. This financial pressure added complexity to the services these organizations provided. Some programs had to ramp up significantly during the pandemic to meet growing needs, while others struggled to resume normal operations post-pandemic due to ongoing hesitancy among people to gather in-person, which remains a barrier to growth. Funds were limited to support such programs and organizations suffered financial strain as a result.
- **Operational Disruptions and Innovations:** Several organizations had to suspend activities, leading to social and mental health losses for their members or beneficiaries. Volunteer events were curtailed, and the loss of volunteers was a common issue during and after the pandemic. Churches and other community-based organizations that relied heavily on personal interactions found their community impact significantly reduced, as they had to resort to technical solutions that were less effective in maintaining spiritual and mental health.
- **Impact on Service Delivery and Community Needs:** The pandemic disrupted service delivery for many not-for-profit organizations, leading to beneficiaries missing out on essential services and creating long-term impacts. Additionally, the increased isolation of individuals had severe repercussions on families and programs, with many organizations facing staff turnover and struggling to re-engage their communities. While some organizations saw a return to pre-pandemic levels of service, others continued to face significant challenges due to ongoing inflation, cost of living increases, and a lack of funding to offset these pressures.
- **Sector Resilience and New Opportunities:** Despite the difficulties, the pandemic also highlighted the resilience of the not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo. Resilience funding played a crucial role in helping organizations survive the initial crisis, though there were concerns about the sustainability of these gains as funding continues to decrease. The pandemic underscored the importance of not-for-profit organizations, which saw a surge in demand for their services as people sought leadership and support during the crisis. This has led to new opportunities for collaboration, technological improvements, and creative initiatives that continue to shape the sector's future.

Overall, while the not-for-profit sector in Nanaimo faced unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, it also demonstrated remarkable adaptability and innovation, laying the groundwork for a more resilient and connected community in the future.

Figure 17. How did COVID-19 Impact your organization? (n=42)



Source: Nanaimo Not-for-Profit Sector Study Industry Survey and Analysis