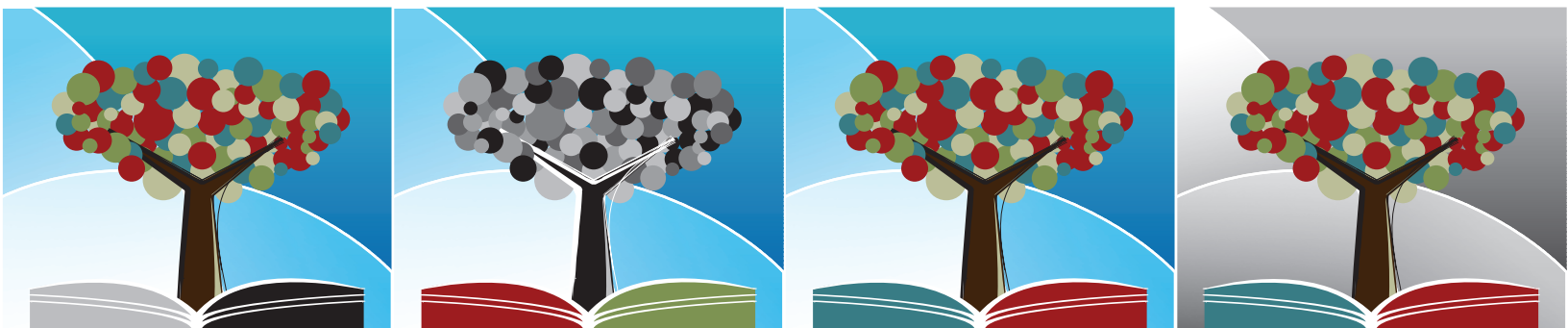


K N O W L E D G E D E V E L O P M E N T C E N T R E



A Study of the Training Needs of Volunteers On the Boards of Nonprofit Organizations Serving Francophone and Acadian Minority Communities in Canada

Research Report

Fédération des communautés francophones
et acadienne (FCFA) du Canada

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The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small Canadian flag icon above the letter "a".

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A Study of the Training Needs of Volunteers On the Boards of Nonprofit Organizations Serving Francophone and Acadian Minority Communities in Canada

Introduction

The voluntary and community sector represents the third pillar of Canadian society, and is of equal importance as both the public and private sectors. Approximately 6.5 million Canadians volunteer for 161,000 nonprofit voluntary and community organizations.

Volunteering is just as much important in Francophone and Acadian communities. These communities depend on voluntary and community organizations to ensure the civic institutional completeness that is essential to their survival (Breton, 1964; Landry and Allard, 1996). Because Francophones sometimes find themselves in a minority situation in an Anglophone environment where services are often provided in English, Francophone voluntary organizations must satisfy particular needs that governments are unable to provide. Therefore, volunteering in the Francophone and Acadian communities is so important. In Francophone communities, the voluntary organizations must not only contribute to the growth of their community within their specific sector (education, health, etc.), but they must do so in French while at the same time promoting the development and vitality of the Francophone identity. These factors explain why volunteering in a Francophone minority requires skills and competencies that are very specific in nature.

A changing society

In addition to these challenges, Francophone volunteers face the same issues as those in the Canadian society as a whole. The decrease in the number of Francophones (whose mother tongue is French), the increase in immigration and exogamy are profoundly changing Canadian society. These changes threaten the survival and vitality of French in Canada, possibly further transforming the landscape (Landry, 2003). Francophone volunteers in urban centres bear the additional burdens of the need for greater assimilation and the necessity for their structures to parallel those of the neighbouring majority language community (Beaudin and Landry, 2003). The services provided require constant change as both the client base changes and new problems occur in the community. The members of Francophone and Acadian community and voluntary organizations must possess the skills and knowledge necessary to meet these challenges. Therefore, it is essential that training programs for volunteer Board members be appropriate.

Existing examples

Three recent examples illustrate the potential lack of training for volunteers and underline the specific challenges that Francophone and Acadian organizations are faced with.

Firstly, early childhood. Since an agreement was reached by the Premiers in September 1999, thousands of volunteers working at the Commission nationale des parents francophones (<http://cnpf.ca>) have had to collaborate in order to convince government authorities to establish French-language daycare centres. Volunteers contributed to the implementation of early childhood and family daycare centres or spaces in each community.

Secondly, health. Over the past six years, Francophone volunteers have had to not only ensure that health related services and care that are in compliance with the federal health act, but they have also had to work on obtaining these services in French.

Over the past six years, Francophone volunteers (who created the national network Société Santé en français (<http://forumsante.ca>) along with provincial and community organizations have had to work with public authorities to obtain health-related services and care which are in compliance with the federal Health Act and they have had to get these services provided in French.

Economic development. Since 1998, volunteers from Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (www.rdee.ca) have worked with federal institutions to ensure that programs for improving employability and vocational training are provided in French for Francophone and Acadian communities. Anglophone volunteers did not have to tackle this task.

These examples demonstrate the extent to which Francophone and Acadian volunteers need training that is similar in context to the training offered to their

Anglophone counterparts. It is imperative that this training be provided in French. The training programs need to ensure that the Francophone and Acadian language, culture, and identity are not compromised by these training programs. Of notable urgency is training in the areas of political claims, representation and advocacy, as well as training in funding activities targeting minorities.

Needs and training

The training needs of volunteers with organizations devoted to the development of the Francophone and Acadian minority communities are not systematically documented. Recent surveys (for example, the CSGVP) did not ask about language. As a consequence, there is a lack of research regarding the needs for training programs for volunteers who work in francophone communities. For this reason, this research study is important and unique.

In addition, based on the results of the survey and the leadership workshop conducted in 2002 by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne (FCFA), it seems that the existing training programs are not meeting the needs of those in the Francophone community. The programs are either not offered in French outside Quebec, or they have not been adapted to the specific needs of the Francophone or Acadian organizations and volunteers. Finally, a survey conducted in 2004 by the FCFA in ten important volunteering sectors revealed, among other things, firstly that Francophone volunteers are given responsibilities that are increasingly complex and, secondly, that there is a significant lack of pertinent training. It is therefore necessary to check the validity of these affirmations. If these beliefs are correct, recommendations to

improve volunteerism in a Francophone environment should be formed.

This research study posed a general question: Are we meeting the training¹ needs of volunteers on the Boards² of organizations working for the development of the Francophone and Acadian communities in Canada? In order to answer this question, the research raised five specific questions:

1. What are the training needs of volunteers on the Boards of nonprofit organizations that working towards the development of Francophone and Acadian minority communities in Canada?
2. Which courses and programs that are currently offered could meet the training needs of these volunteers?
3. Are there any gaps between the training needs expressed by these volunteers and the training courses and programs currently offered?
4. Are there any needs that are specific to Francophone and Acadian organizations?
5. Which training tools that are currently being used by voluntary organizations that work towards the development of Francophone and Acadian minority communities are currently working?

Research objectives

The results of this research will help communities and their leaders to better identify and understand the training needs of those who sit on the Boards of their community organizations. Thanks to this research, the voluntary organizations working for the development of these Francophone and Acadian minority communities should be able to fulfill three objectives:

- Encourage Francophones in minority communities in Canada to become (more) involved in nonprofit organizations that are working for the development of their community.
- Use Francophone volunteers more effectively to ensure the survival and growth of these communities, their language and their culture.
- Enhance the Francophone voluntary experience.

The purpose of this research was to collect empirical data that will information for the Steering Committee created by the FCFA to consider regarding the training needs of Francophone and Acadian voluntary organizations. Imagine Canada's Knowledge Development Centre supported the study with the financial assistance of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative, within the framework of the Community Participation Directorate of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

¹ By "training" we mean: the formal or informal means used to acquire knowledge that can enhance the quality of volunteering and the efficiency of the Francophone and Acadian voluntary organizations. "Formal means" refers to courses, programs, workshops, etc. offered by training institutions, consultants, university or college institutions, and certain community organizations. "Informal means" refers to tools or practical processes developed "on the job," mentoring programs, discussion groups, etc. The training therefore involves new volunteers as much as experienced volunteers who have already acquired a significant level of knowledge.

² By "Board" we mean any final decisional authority of the nonprofit Francophone organizations working for the development of Francophone and Acadian communities in Canada. The generic concept includes the "Executive Committees," the "Management Boards," and other entities among these organizations that have final decisional authority in between general meetings.

Report content

This report is divided into three major sections. The first section presents the results of a mail survey which was either mailed and e-mailed to 858 Francophone nonprofit organizations (827 organizations selected by Industry Canada in 2005³, plus the 31 Francophone school boards). The post office returned sixty-seven questionnaires, either because some of the organizations no longer existed or because the mailing address was wrong. One hundred and seventy organizations responded, i.e. 21.5% of the 791 organizations that received the questionnaire. This rate of response is satisfactory for a survey conducted by mail; it represents, based on scientific practice, a confidence level of 7.5%, 19 times out of 20. The second section analyzes the responses obtained from the five above-mentioned research questions [based on the written responses and the questionnaires]. The conclusion makes four recommendations for meeting the specific needs of volunteers working for the development of the Francophone and Acadian minority communities in Canada.

Survey results

This first part is divided into three sections. Section 1 provides a profile of the organizations that responded to the survey. Section 2 outlines the priority training needs reported by respondents. Section 3 provides details about preferred schedules, formats and locations, and budgets for volunteer training programs.

Section 1 : Profile of the 170 organizations that responded to the survey

The profile of the respondents is based on nine sections⁴: 1) geographical area served; 2) organization type; 3) organizational structure; 4) operational budget; 5) budget for special projects; 6) number of volunteers on the Board; 7) percentage of women and men on the Board; 8) average age of the Board members; 9) type of personnel. We also included data regarding the amount of money organizations invested annually to cover training costs. This element is presented based on the second part of the questionnaire that dealt with the training offered to Board members. Section 1 presents the main findings from the questionnaire.

The results of the survey not only allow us to establish the respondents' profile, but they are also useful for comparative purposes. We wanted to know, for example, whether the training needs of national organizations are different from those of local organizations, whether the needs of cultural organizations are different from those of economic

³ Survey of the groups participating in the development of official language minority communities, Ronald Bisson et al., for Industry Canada, Ottawa (2005).

⁴ Our intention had also been to check the education level of the Board members, but the potential answers to this question could not have been taken into account adequately for analytical purposes.

organizations, etc. However, based on the responses from the questionnaires received⁵ there were no significant differences among organizations based on these factors. Therefore, regardless of the service area, sector, structure, size, proportion of males to females, age and level of education of the Board members of the 170 organizations surveyed, the training needs are similar. This is surprising because we normally expect to see significant variations given the different contexts in which these organizations are situated – rural or urban environments, communities in which Francophones represent the majority of the population as opposed to those in which they are in the minority, etc. One must conclude that despite these realities, Francophone and Acadian communities share the same training needs.

a) Geographical service areas

The majority of respondents are provincial and territorial organizations, which account for 40.6% of respondents, followed by regional (26.1%), local (21.2%), national (9.1%) and interprovincial (3.0%) organizations. Based on our estimates⁶, these rates are fairly representative of the makeup of nonprofit organizations in Canada.

Besides the 20 national and interprovincial organizations, the distribution of the other 150

organizations is fairly equitable throughout the country. Slightly more than one third (36.3%) are from the Atlantic provinces; 19.5% from New Brunswick and 16.8% from each of the other three Atlantic provinces. The Western provinces, i.e. British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, represent 38.9% of respondents. Organizations from Ontario represent 21.5% of respondents. Finally, the three boreal territories represent 3.4% of respondents (no responses were received from Nunavut). Based on our calculations, this is relatively representative of the situation in Canada.

b) Types of organizations

The three predominant types of organizations are arts and culture (44.7%), community development (40%) and education and training (36.5%), followed by youth (22.9%), health (22.4%) and “other” (18.2%) sectors⁷. Additional sectors indicated by the respondents were early childhood (15.9%), seniors (14.7%), politics (12.9%), the economy (12.9%), sports and leisure (10.6%), the legal field and rights (9.4%), social services (7.6%), immigration (7.1%), the status of women (5.9%), the environment (3.5%), religion and spirituality (2.4%) and international development (2.4%). As a general rule, this distribution is reflective of the national situation.

⁵ We examined all of the possible associations between the questionnaire's independent and dependent variables. With very few exceptions, no statistically significant relationship was detected. Any exceptions could simply be the result of chance sampling variations. What does this lack of relationship really mean? Let us explain: Firstly, dependent variables by nature offer little variability. They reflect the wishes and expectations of the individuals. In this case, we generally observe a high level of expectation. Secondly, independent variables, by nature, do not produce variations in the way the individuals respond to the question. The variability observed in the independent variables is not sensitive to the independent variables in the questionnaire. The dependent variables could be affected by variables that have not been measured in the questionnaire. Finally, the needs of the respondents are consistent, notwithstanding where they live, the size of their organization, the size of their budget, their main industry sector, etc.

⁶ It was difficult for us to establish the exact number of organizations on the basis of the service areas. The names of some of the organizations clearly identify their service area (for example, the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones), whereas others give no indication.

⁷ The question allowed for open-ended responses to identify the non-identified sectors. Respondents added the following sectors to our list: prevention of domestic violence, communications, community broadcasting, organizational development and assessment, promotion of the French culture, heritage, deafness, employability, the media and tourism. Some of the responses could have been included elsewhere, but “tourism” could just as easily have been categorized under “economy” as under “arts and culture.”

c) Operational and special projects budgets

Most of the organizations have a relatively important operational budget. In fact, only 22% indicated having an annual operational budget of less than \$50,000; 46.3% had an annual operational budget of between \$50,000 and \$299,999; 31.7% indicated having an annual operational budget of at least \$300,000.

With respect to their budget for special projects, 37.8% of the organizations received less than \$50,000, 40.4% received between \$50,000 and \$299,999, and 21.8% received at least \$300,000.

d) Training budget

Two-thirds of the organizations (65.9%) invest less than \$1,000 per year in volunteer training. At the other extreme, one out of five organizations (18.3%) invests more than \$3,000 per year in volunteer training (see Table 1).

Three quarters of the organizations invest less than \$500 in training, regardless of the type of training. A large majority of organizations invest in project management training (82.1%) and personnel relations (79.7%) respectively. One in ten (10.5%) invest between \$500 and \$2,000 in project management, whereas 22.1% invest the same amount for training in connection with Board activities. Eight percent (8%) of the organizations invest between \$2,000 and \$4,000 in information and communications, whereas only 5.2% invest in financial management. Finally, 4.1% of respondents indicated having invested \$4,000 and over in professional and personal development (see Table 2).

e) Number of volunteers on the Board

Slightly more than one in five (20.8%) organizations have between one and six volunteers on their Boards; 44.8% have between seven and nine volunteers; and 34.4% have at least ten volunteers.

f) Percentage of women and men on the Boards

The percentage of women and men who sit on the Boards of the 170 responding organizations is fairly equally distributed. Thus, 17.4% of the organizations have an equal number of women and men, and slightly more organizations have more women (45.9%) than men (36.6%). Thirteen of the 170 Boards are composed exclusively of women, whereas only one Board is composed exclusively of men. This is explained in large measure by the mission of the organization: several organizations are advocates for women's issues, whereas, to our knowledge, none of the organizations is devoted to men's issues (see Table 3).

g) Average age of Board members

Only 5.7% of respondents indicated that their organization's Board is composed of volunteers with an average age of 30. In comparison, 20.0% of the organizations surveyed indicated that their Board members were on average between 30 and 39 years of age; 50.6% of respondents indicated that their Board members were on average between 40 and 49 years old; and 23.8% of respondents indicated that the volunteer members of their Board were age 50 or older. These rates reflect the fact that Francophone minority population (Marmen and Corbeil, 2005) is ageing. However, it is important to note that several organizations have a significant number of young members.

Table 1 – Annual dollar amounts invested in training in the past three years

	Less than \$500	\$500 to \$999	\$1,000 to \$1,999	\$2,000 to \$2,999	\$3,000 to \$3,999	\$4,000 and over
<i>Total percentage</i>	52.4	13.5	11.8	3.0	5.3	13.0

Table 2 – Annual dollar amounts Invested in training in the past three years by type of training provided

Type of training	Percentage of organizations that invested the following amounts annually:					
	Less than \$500	\$500 to \$999	\$1,000 to \$1,999	\$2,000 to \$2,999	\$3,000 to \$3,999	\$4,000 and over
<i>1. Board operations</i>	70.8	12.4	9.7	2.7	2.7	1.8
<i>2. Personnel relations</i>	79.7	11.6	4.3	1.4	1.4	1.4
<i>3. Financial management</i>	77.9	13.0	5.2	–	2.6	1.3
<i>4. Information and communications</i>	77.3	12.0	1.3	6.7	1.3	1.3
<i>5. Work in the community</i>	73.7	10.5	6.6	3.9	1.3	3.9
<i>6. Project management</i>	82.1	7.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	1.5
<i>7. Professional and personal development</i>	74.0	8.2	4.1	5.5	4.1	4.1
<i>8. Concerns with respect to Francophones in minority communities</i>	72.5	12.5	5.0	5.0	1.3	3.8

Table 3 – Frequency and percentage of women and men who are Board members

Composition by sex	Frequency	%
Women = 25% or less; Men = more than 75%	21	13.0
Women = 26 to 49%; Men = 51 to 74%	38	23.6
Women and men = 50%	28	17.4
Women = 51 to 74%; Men = 26 to 49%	35	21.7
Women = more than 75% Men = 25% or less	39	24.2

h) Type of personnel and number of employees

The majority (86.7%) of respondents are organizations whose permanent or full-time personnel is remunerated: 37.1% of the organizations have between four and six permanent or full-time employees and 49.7% have between one and three permanent or full-time employees. One organization out of eight (13.3%) has no permanent or full-time employees.

More than three quarters of the organizations have temporary or part-time employees, or employees hired on a contract or project basis. In fact, of these organizations, two thirds have between one and three temporary or part-time employees (60.3%) and employees hired on a contract or project basis, respectively, whereas 18.1% have between four and six temporary or part-time employees (61.6%). Nearly one quarter (21.2%) have between four and six employees hired on a contract or project basis. In comparison, 21.5% of the organizations have no

temporary or part-time employees, and 14.2% of the organizations have no contract or project workers.

There are a number of cases where organizations that employ remunerated permanent or full-time employees also have temporary or part-time employees, or employees hired on a contract or project basis. In total, 96.5% of the 170 organizations have at least one employee, who may work on a permanent or full-time, or on a temporary or part-time basis, or on a contract or project basis. This total seems high. Based on other research projects we consulted, this figure is higher than the rate that applies to volunteering in a predominantly Anglophone environment. However, because we do not know the rates for Francophone and Acadian organizations with one employee, we cannot say whether these organizations are overrepresented in our sample.

Section 2 : Training needs of volunteers – Desired content

Based on our survey of the literature and questionnaires, we identified eight main training themes: 1) Board operations 2) the Board's relationship with the personnel; 3) financial management; 4) information and communications; 5) working with the community; 6) project management; 7) professional and personal development; and 8) the concerns of Francophones. Each theme is associated with a series of specific types of training. We asked the respondents to indicate the degree of importance attached to each of the 73 types of training needs, from not important (1) to very important (6). In general, the data does not show any significant difference in the median rating for each theme. The median ratings fall between 3.57 and 4.11. This

indicates that each theme is of relatively significant importance (see Table 4).

Three conclusions can be drawn from these results. Firstly, training regarding “Concerns of Francophones in minority communities” and “Board operations” were given highest priority by far. They rank first or second in each of the three categories. Secondly, “Relationship with personnel” and “Information and communications” were rated of very little importance. They occupy the last two positions at the bottom of the rankings. Finally, the four other themes were ranked of average importance. There was overlap among the categories and were ranked between the top two and the bottom two themes.

More than one quarter (26) of the 73 types of training were rated with a median 4.00 or higher, which shows that organizations have several training needs.

Table 5 shows the 26 most important types of training, in decreasing order based on importance rating.

The middle column indicates the theme to which each type of training is attached. There was a high level of importance attributed to the theme of “Board operations”. In fact, the first four types of training that were ranked as high priority and eight of the first nine that were ranked as high priority are connected with the “Board operations” theme. The importance of the theme “concerns of Francophones in minority communities” ranked second even though it ranked

Table 4 – Median rating out of 6, median rating for the top 5 for each theme and % of 4.00 and over (and ranking)

Training theme	Median rating out of 6 (and ranking)	Top 5 (and ranking)	% of 4.00 and over (and ranking)
1. <i>Concerns of Francophones in minority communities</i>	4.11 (1)	4.11 (2)	60.0 (1)
2. <i>Board operations</i>	4.04 (2)	4.49 (1)	56.0 (2)
3. <i>Professional and personal development</i>	3.93 (3)	3.97 (5)	33.3 (4)
4. <i>Financial management</i>	3.90 (4)	4.04 (4)	44.4 (3)
5. <i>Project management</i>	3.87 (5)	3.87 (6)	20.0 (6)
6. <i>Working with the community</i>	3.86 (6)	4.06 (3)	30.0 (5)
7. <i>Relationship with personnel</i>	3.57 (7)	3.85 (7)	11.1 (8)
8. <i>Information and communications</i>	3.39 (8)	3.77 (8)	16.2 (7)

Table 5 – The 26 types of training with a median rating of 4.00 and higher

Type of training	Theme	Median rating out of 6
1. Powers, roles and responsibilities of the Board	2	4.73
2. Orientation and training of new Board members	2	4.49
3. Legal obligations and responsibilities of the organization	2	4.48
4. Development and implementation of a strategic plan	2	4.38
5. Identity development of Francophone communities	1	4.36
6. Knowledge about the organization, its background, mission, objectives	2	4.35
7. Recruitment of succession staff, in particular youth	2	4.29
8. Valuing volunteers	2	4.26
9. Lobbying for grants	2	4.25
10. Skills development for Board members	3	4.25
11. Understanding financial results, account auditing and controlling/ monitoring revenue and expenses	4	4.24
12. Representations to the provincial/territorial governments	6	4.24
13. Collaborating/networking with other Francophone organizations	6	4.21
14. Management of a nonprofit organization	2	4.15
15. Representations to the federal government	6	4.15
16. Leadership, motivation and group dynamics	3	4.15
17. Awareness of the rights of Francophones living in minority communities	1	4.14
18. Knowledge of the specific realities of Francophone minority communities	1	4.13
19. Evaluation of results (effectiveness, efficiency, impact)	5	4.12
20. Maintaining good relations with donor agencies	4	4.11
21. Advertising and communications plan for the organization	8	4.10
22. Appraisal and assessment of employee performance	7	4.05
23. Preparation of an application for funding/grants for submission to various institutions	4	4.03
24. Ethical behaviour and conflicts of interest	2	4.01
25. Development of annual budgets for projects and programs	4	4.01
26. Marketing/promotional/advertising campaigns for projects	8	4.01

first based on the cumulative median rating and it was among the types of training that received a median rating higher than 4.00 out of 6.00. In fact, the first type “Board operations” appears on the list ten times out of twenty-six, whereas the second “concerns of Francophones in minority communities” appears only three times.

Finally, we note that three types of training (4.1% of the total) had median ratings lower than 3.00 out of 6.00: 1) working with unions – negotiations, collective agreements; 2) planning, administration and appraisal of the research; and 3) development of an Internet websites. These types of training are therefore of low importance to the respondents.

In conclusion, we can say that the types of training most desired by Francophone and Acadian volunteers are those related to living in a minority community and to Board member training. This is followed by professional and personal development, financial management, to working within the community. Nevertheless, several of the 26 types of training that were rated the highest in terms of priority can be categorized under one or another of the eight major themes identified.

Section 3 : Volunteer training – The format

In addition to the content, we also wanted to identify the preferred training format, i.e. the kind of training that was most relevant, the most appropriate schedule, the need for certification, the training location and the amounts the organizations are willing to invest for training purposes. In general, the responses were too varied to enable us to establish an ideal training format, but these were the highlights:

Firstly, team *coaching* and group training in a classroom environment are by far the most relevant training methods followed by coaching within the framework of a practical exercise. The respondents preferred interactive and on-the-job learning. They did not find distance training or training through the Internet or by conference calling to be very adequate training methods.

The question pertaining to the training schedule comprised four elements: duration of training, distribution, the time of year and the time of day during which the training was to be conducted. The responses suggested a preference for intensive training, two to four hours at a time, or even over an entire day, preferably on the week-end, spread out over several months, preferably in the fall.

Volunteers ranked training certification very low in terms of importance. In fact, none of the three types of certification were scored between 4.00 and 6.00. Therefore, even if certification obtained from a recognized university scores slightly higher than certification from a college, the data collected confirms that the type of training desired does not need to be attached to certification.

As for the appropriate location for the training to be held, and the distance the respondents are willing to travel, it is clear that the training must be offered in the communities or municipalities in which the organizations are located. The respondents are not much in favour of training offered on an interprovincial or national level.

Almost all of the organizations (95.7%) that responded to the survey would accept to share training with other Francophone organizations. This should make it possible to join efforts to allow for economies of scale, especially given that some organizations consider the cost of training too high.

Three quarters (77%) of the organizations are willing to cover the training costs for the volunteers on their Boards. However, the amount they have planned to spend is not very high. In fact, seven organizations out of ten (69.6%) said that they would not invest more than \$1,000 per year on the training of their Board members and only 16.8% are willing to invest more than \$2,000 per year.

Data analysis

This section of our report analyzes the data in order to respond to the five specific research questions:

1. What are the priority training needs?
2. Are there any needs that apply specifically to Francophone volunteers?
3. What training is offered to Francophone volunteers?
4. Does a gap exist between the needs and the training that is offered?
5. What are the best practices in terms of training for Francophone volunteers?

Section 1 : What are the priority training needs?

Section 1 of the report presented a list of the 26 preferred types of training identified on the basis of the median rating and the frequency of responses circled on a priority scale from 1 to 6. An evaluation using this type of six-point Likert scale allows for three response distributions. The responses can be divided into two blocks (unfavourable responses = 1 to 3, and favourable responses = 4 to 6), or into three blocks (weak responses = 1 and 2, average responses = 3 and 4, and strong responses = 5 and 6). These distributions reveal that, with very few exceptions, the first twelve types of training needs sorted by order of importance were consistently rated by respondents, as well as the last fourteen types. We can therefore state with certainty that not only are more than one

Table 6 – Median rating out of 6, proportion of unfavourable (1 to 3) and favourable (4 to 6) responses, and proportion of strong responses (5 to 6)

Training type	Median rating out of 6 (and ranking)	% = 1-3 / 4-6 (and ranking)	% = 5-6 (and ranking)
1. Powers, roles and responsibilities of the Board	4,73 (1)	19,4/ 77,7 (2)	67,7 (1)
2. Orientation and training of new Board members	4,49 (2)	18,9/76,5 (4)	54,1 (4)
3. Legal obligations and responsibilities of the organization	4,48 (3)	18,8/77,1 (3)	55,9 (2)
4. Development and implementation of a strategic plan	4,38 (4)	21,8/73,7 (9)	52,4 (6)
5. Identity development of Francophone communities	4,36 (5)	25,1/ 75 (8)	53,7 (5)
6. Knowledge about the organization, its background, mission, objectives	4,35 (6)	24,9/ 75,2 (6)	54,6 (3)
7. Recruitment of succession staff, in particular youth	4,29 (7)	27,4/ 72,5 (10)	51,2 (8)
8. Valuing volunteers	4,26 (8)	24,7/70,5 (14)	52,3 (7)
9. Lobbying for grants	4,25 (9)	31,2/64,1 (23)	51,2 (9)
10. Skills development for Board members	4,25 (10)	24,7/ 75,2 (7)	49,3 (11)
11. Understanding financial results, account auditing and controlling/ monitoring revenue and expenses	4,24 (11)	29,8/70,5 (13)	49,7 (10)
12. Representations to the provincial/territorial governments	4,24 (12)	21,7/78,3 (1)	49 (12)
13. Collaborating/networking with other Francophone organizations	4,21 (13)	50/50 (26)	28,7 (26)
14. Management of a nonprofit organization	4,15 (14)	28,3/67,6 (17)	47 (14)
15. Representations to the federal government	4,15 (15)	24,2/75,8 (5)	45,9 (20)
16. Leadership, motivation and group dynamics	4,15 (16)	28,6/71,4 (11)	45,9 (21)
17. Awareness of the rights of Francophones living in minority communities	4,14 (17)	31,6/69 (16)	46,2 (19)
18. Knowledge of the specific realities of Francophone minority communities	4,13 (18)	33,6/66,5 (18)	46,9 (15)
19. Evaluation of results (effectiveness, efficiency, impact)	4,12 (19)	29,7/70,3 (15)	45,8 (22)
20. Maintaining good relations with donor agencies	4,11 (20)	34,6/65,4 (22)	49 (13)
21. Advertising and communications plan for the organization	4,10 (21)	28,7/71,3 (12)	46,5 (16)
22. Appraisal and assessment of employee performance	4,05 (22)	33,9/66 (20)	43,1 (24)
23. Preparation of an application for funding/grants for submission to various institutions	4,03 (23)	37,6/62,6 (25)	46,3 (18)
24. Ethical behaviour and conflicts of interest	4,01 (24)	30/66,5 (19)	37,1 (25)
25. Development of annual budgets for projects and programs	4,01 (25)	36,8/63,3 (24)	44,3 (23)
26. Marketing/promotional/advertising campaigns for projects	4,01 (26)	34,4/65,6 (21)	46,5 (17)

third (26 of the 73 training types) were considered a high priority (with a median rating greater than 4.00 out of 6.00), which in itself demonstrates a significant need, but also that the twelve top priority training needs are very important needs.

Table 6 presents the 26 types of training needs, in decreasing order of importance based on the median rating (left column), the proportion of unfavourable and favourable responses (middle column) and the percentage of organizations that circled strong responses (right column).

We note that none of the 73 training types obtained a median rating higher than 5.00, leading us to conclude that no single need was exceptionally important.

Section 2 : Are there any needs that apply specifically to Francophone volunteers?

In order to respond fully to the question regarding specific needs for Francophone volunteers, we would have had to conduct a comparative study of Anglophone and Francophone organizations in minority communities using the same survey. However, it is not possible to carry out a comparative analysis because the research project's main objective was to establish the training needs of Francophone organizations. Thus, we were limited in terms of funding and time constraints to limit this

particular research to understanding the needs of Francophone organizations. We thought we might have been able to use the results of other studies to make the necessary comparisons, but that strategy failed. In fact, the national surveys⁸ that have been conducted on volunteering in Canada have included a linguistic variable, making any comparison between the needs of Francophone and Anglophone volunteers impossible.

Nevertheless, we were able to make several observations from two major studies that fit with our research. We will present four findings based on these studies, along with the data from our research either confirming or rejecting these findings. It is important to emphasize that these four findings are based on research that is founded on different methodologies and questions. Therefore, any parallels established are indirect and imperfect.

Funding

The first finding is that voluntary organizations lack funding. More specifically, close to half of the organizations report having difficulties receiving funding from other agencies, such as the government, foundations or corporations, as well as from individuals.⁹ In fact, funding represents the biggest problem facing the organizations surveyed in Canada.

Even if our research does not focus on the importance of funding, it nevertheless allows us to conclude that volunteers who sit on the Boards of nonprofit

⁸ *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2001. *The Capacity to Serve: A Qualitative Study of the Challenges Facing Canada's Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Ottawa 2003. *Cornerstones of Community: Highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2004. *The Volunteer Spirit in Canada: Motivations and Barriers*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Ottawa, 2004. *Where Canadians Volunteer: Volunteering by Type of Organization*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Ottawa, 2004. *Canadian NonProfit and Voluntary Sector in Comparative Perspective*. Imagine Canada, Ottawa, 2005.

⁹ *Cornerstones of Community: Highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2004, p. 11.

Francophone organizations in minority communities give little importance to training focused on how to meet their financial needs. According to the survey respondents, the type of training described as “collecting funds – donations, lotteries, special events and membership cards” is not among the list of the top 26 desired types of training, having obtained a median rating of only 3.73 out of 6.00. Furthermore, the theme “financial management,” of which fund collecting is a part, is itself rated to be of average importance, far behind needs such as Board operations and the concerns that are specific to Francophone minority communities. This does not mean that the Francophone and Acadian organizations do not need stable and sufficient funding; it means instead that the need for training in funding-related categories is not viewed as a priority.

This finding may appear a bit strange at first, because voluntary organizations have a twofold mission in the Francophone minority community: they must both ensure the development of their community and contribute to the vitality of their language, culture and identity. Yet our research indicates that the Francophone and Acadian organizations seem to be receiving sufficient funding from the government agencies to be able to fulfill their twofold mission. In other words, the Francophone voluntary organizations, in particular those that act as NGOs [non-governmental organizations], receive public funds to which the Anglophone organizations do not have access. This may explain why the great majority of organizations surveyed have a rather high number of employees and their operational and special

projects budgets are relatively significant. However, it would be necessary to conduct an empirical study to confirm this analysis.

Succession

The second finding highlights the fact that succession planning should be a major priority for organizations in Canada: “A majority [of organizations] report difficulty planning for the future, difficulty recruiting the types of volunteers the organization needs, and difficulty obtaining board members.”¹⁰ Our research shows that Francophone and Acadian organizations share this concern. In fact, the type of training involving the “recruitment of succession staff, in particular youth,” ranks seventh among the 73 training types. Furthermore, the relatively high average age of the Board members (age 40 for three-quarters of the organizations) also serves to confirm the urgency of this type of recruitment.

Board

The third finding focuses on the importance of the Board’s roles. This includes “the need for more targeted recruitment strategies so that organizations can develop boards with the right mix of people and skills, and the need for organizations to clearly define the role of their boards.”¹¹ Our study also shows that the training and retention of Board members are also matters of concern. In addition, several participants pointed out how important it is for Board members to understand the role and function of nonprofit organization Boards in general, and their own specific role and function within a particular organization.¹² As this report frequently emphasizes, according to the

¹⁰ *Cornerstones of Community: Highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 2004, p. 14.

¹¹ *The Capacity to Serve: A Qualitative Study of the Challenges Facing Canada’s Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Ottawa p. 39.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 45.

170 respondents, training focused on the role and responsibilities of the Board is essential.

Board member training

Finally, the final finding focuses on the need for Board member training. A previous study revealed that several participating organizations felt that “a standardized training and development program for nonprofit boards would be very helpful. Because cost and accessibility were frequently mentioned as barriers to training, in order for a standardized program to be useful, it would have to be reasonably priced and accessible¹³.” In addition, many participants said that “their organizations have difficulty finding the time, staff, and money to carry out the kind of training their board needs¹⁴.” Our research was not intended to examine the importance of training Board members; its purpose instead was to identify the most pressing needs. Nevertheless, we can conclude that training in this area is important, because more than one third of the types of training were rated higher than 4.00 out of 6.00. Furthermore, the fact that needs are similar throughout the country, independent of the organization’s sector, type or size, lent credence to the notion of implementing a standardized training and development program aimed at Boards of nonprofit organizations. However, the organizations expressed greater preference for on-the-job training or training in a location close to the place of employment. Therefore, any Canada-wide training initiative must be implemented in each community, wherever possible.

Lack of resources

In addition, the Francophone organizations (81.1%) pointed out that the lack of resources, whether material, financial or human, represents an enormous challenge. They say that there is a lack of relevant and good quality information that is adapted to their reality (the fact that they are a part of a minority community). Given that they often have fewer volunteers on whom to rely, it is sometimes difficult to reach the critical mass necessary to offer such information. Furthermore, the large distances separating Francophone volunteers who come from rural areas explains why group training is more difficult to provide.

Material printed in French, while it is expensive, is not always appropriate or available. The lack of French-speaking trainers is another challenge raised by the organizations. Some organizations have drawn attention to the linguistic challenges facing the Board when trainers come from the outside: they do not always speak the same French as individuals from the region, making comprehension more difficult. Furthermore, the organizations have to deal with a lack of work space and greater distances to cover in order to acquire their information. This makes access to information more difficult for organizations that are located in a rural environment.

Finally, the lack of financial support from provincial and municipal government agencies as well as from the general public, financial lobbying, funding campaigns and personnel recruitment all represent important challenges for the Francophone organizations in minority communities to overcome.

¹³ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 45.

Section 3 : What training is offered to Francophone volunteers?

This Section relates to issues regarding both the training offered and those who offer the training in French in provinces and territories with Anglophone majorities.

a) Training offered in French in Canada

We identified 45 providers of training in French to volunteers, including 37 in the provinces and territories with Anglophone majorities, and eight in Quebec. Sixteen of these providers are in Ontario, five in New Brunswick, three in Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Manitoba respectively, and two in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Alberta. Only one Francophone trainer was located in Prince Edward Island, and there were none in the three boreal territories.

The great majority of these providers are private contractors. In addition, six postsecondary educational institutions offer programs, courses or seminars aimed at volunteers. This is the case at the Université de Moncton, the Université Sainte-Anne (in Nova Scotia) in partnership with the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, the Collège communautaire de Dieppe, Concordia University (in Montréal), the Collège Boréal (in Ontario), Cité collégiale (in Ontario) and the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface (in Manitoba). Parapublic providers such as the Service fransaskois de formation aux adultes (in Saskatchewan), the Société éducative de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard, Centraide-Bénévole in Ottawa, the Acadia Centre for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (Acadia University in Nova Scotia), the Centre canadien de leadership en évaluation

(in Ontario), the Centre St-Pierre (in Québec), the Centre de formation populaire (in Québec), the Centre de Formation par l'Action inc. (in Québec) and the Niagara Institute (in Ontario) also offer training programs in French to volunteers.

b) Training offered to meet the needs of Francophone organizations

Although it is difficult to categorize the types of training available, certain themes occur naturally. Examples, of some of the themes include training about: the roles and responsibilities of the Board members; governance; leadership; strategic planning; risk management; and project management. It appears that the training that is provided on these subjects seems to meet several of the needs cited by the respondents. Most providers can offer timely and customized training programs. In other words, the voluntary organizations can specify their needs and participate in the preparation of their own training program.

There seem to be few training programs that are offered to organizations that exclusively train them about how to influence the provincial, territorial or federal governments, or to optimize their networking capabilities. Some associations, in particular the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique, the Commission nationale des parents francophones and the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta, offer training to their members focusing on the concerns of Francophones in minority communities. However, there does not seem to be any training available on identity development in Francophone communities, knowledge of the rights of Francophones living in a minority community, and awareness of the specific realities faced by

Francophones living in a minority community. A large number of organizations require this type of training, the lack of availability of these courses denotes a grave deficiency in the eyes of Francophone organizations in minority communities.

Section 4 : Does a gap exist between the needs and the training offered?

Our investigation shows that there exist several providers who offer training programs that focus on the powers, roles and responsibilities of the Board. Many providers offer training in leadership and strategic planning. However, none of the providers offer training on the concerns of Francophone minority communities. Nevertheless, two-thirds of the types of training, (16 out of the top 26) needs reported by respondents are met through these training programs; however, these programs do not focus on Francophone communities.

In addition, the majority of training providers are from the Western provinces, Ontario and Quebec, placing the Acadian and territorial communities at a disadvantage. Yet even in the Western provinces and in Ontario, distances are enormous, and Francophone communities in more remote locations cannot benefit from the training provided. The remoteness and the travel costs of the training providers represent serious challenges.

Section 5 : What are the best practices in terms of training Francophone volunteers?

We observed that nonprofit Francophone organizations have training needs which are not being met. Additional obstacles faced by Francophone organizations are the lack of training adapted to the reality of Francophones living in a minority community, the high cost of training, and the necessary travel due to the distance between organizations and training providers. However, some organizations nonetheless succeed in offering their volunteers training that is both sufficient and of good quality.

More than half (56.7%) of the 170 respondents produce training tools or resources such as manuals and information kits. Furthermore, 53.2% provide on-the-job training based on identified needs, where 18.8% favour intensive basic training for all new Board members. More than one third of respondents (35.5%), report using mentoring as a means to provide training. In addition, 30.3% of the organizations report teaming up with other organizations to provide training to their Boards. Finally, 11.4% of the organizations have implemented reward systems for volunteers who have taken a training program.

Several organizations with whom we communicated shared their best practices with us. One of the organizations stressed the importance of community access centres as places where training by computer and software can be offered at very affordable prices. Some local organizations indicated that training is offered by their association or provincial federation within the framework of their annual general meeting. One provincial organization said it offered training to

its local partners or members. Another noted that the Boards of member organizations get together and share information.

Some organizations noted that the presence of experts from various fields who work with their organization constitutes an essential training asset. These individuals are able to offer both continued and timely training. Certain organizations prefer to offer specialized and customized training (for example, the auditor-CA of one organization trained the organization's new treasurer). One CEO added that he is sometimes disappointed in the training that is offered and that it does not produce the expected results. That is why he is in favour of different methods that make certain tasks more accessible and less arduous. For example, instead of giving a training session on financial management, he works with his accountant on reorganizing his bookkeeping and budget estimates so that the Board members can read and understand them more easily. He adds that he encourages volunteers to seek expertise in their environment. In other words, the volunteers should draw from the strengths and skills available within the community itself, which could ultimately bring more volunteers to their cause.

Finally, one respondent noted that organizations can take advantage of grants offered within the framework of the Canadian Volunteerism Initiative or other initiatives for research and consultation purposes. Such research would help them define their needs in terms of training, their mission, objectives or organizational culture.

Although training exists that would fulfill certain needs, there are still a number of significant problems to settle with respect to distance and costs. Organizations that are located far away from large urban centres are potentially subject to high travel costs. Furthermore, the basic cost of training can vary between \$25 per hour and \$2,000 per session. When the great majority of organizations (70%) are currently investing less than \$1,000 per year in training, and a significant majority (69.5%) do not foresee increasing their training budget in the immediate future, it is highly likely that the sums invested in volunteer training will be insufficient to meet their needs.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

The data we have collected has allowed us to establish certain preliminary findings, and given us ideas for consideration, as follows:

Firstly, it is immediately obvious that there is an urgent need for training of Board members of nonprofit organizations devoted to the development of Francophone and Acadian minority communities. Of the 73 potential types of needs outlined in the research, 26 have been deemed important. Furthermore, two themes have been identified as high priorities: Board operations and the concerns of Francophones in minority communities. There should be a training program set up to meet the needs of the 858 organizations listed and to help improve volunteerism in Francophone minority organizations which would ameliorate the current situation where their needs are not being met.

On this topic, we add a word of advice: Francophone and Acadian organizations should use the first Board meeting of the year, especially if there are new members, to discuss pending files and to present relevant documents and information in the hopes of providing guidance to new members. A mentoring strategy should subsequently be added to provide new members advice and information from the experienced members. Eventually, training sessions should be provided based on the specific needs of each organization, with some sessions being shared among several organizations that have common needs.

Secondly, we note that needs identified by these organizations were similar despite their unique characteristics (such as the geographical location of the organization, type of service provided by the organization, and size of the organization, etc.). In fact, the statistical variations were not significant. Therefore, it is logical to recommend that the scope of the training program be Canada-wide.

But let us qualify the above. Firstly, there is no need to develop entirely new training programs. A number of Francophone volunteer training providers could satisfy many of the needs mentioned, especially those to do with Board operations, leadership and strategic planning. And the federal government's previous efforts, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, produced numerous training manuals and tools, often intended specifically for Francophones in minority communities, which means that we do not have to start from scratch. However, none of the providers meets the needs of respondents when it comes to the concerns of Francophones and Acadians, or the needs in terms of lobbying and networking. We would need to pair the training that is currently available with training focused on the needs that are still unmet. Our first recommendation is therefore the establishment of an integrated training effort to replace the dispersed and on-the-job training that is offered here and there throughout the country.

Let us add that since training needs of Francophone and Acadian organizations are relatively consistent throughout the country, a training program could benefit from the manuals and tools that have been developed in Quebec over the past several years. These tools would need to be adapted to the specific realities of the Francophone and Acadian communities, but in general they seem to meet many

of the needs expressed in our research, especially with respect to Board operations and leadership. Adapting the material from Quebec would seem more effective than starting from scratch.

It is also important to make a clear distinction between the elaboration of a training program and its actual delivery. It would be wise to develop content that is applicable to all of the Francophone and Acadian communities, while at the same time giving training professionals what they need to adapt the material and add complementary components based on the specific needs of individual organizations. Thus, a large part of the training offered to the Acadian and Ontarian organizations, for example, could be similar, but the training offered to the Acadians could explore the distinct realities of Acadians, such as the constitutional right that Acadians in New Brunswick have to establish distinct “educational and cultural institutions.” Finally, an organization whose volunteers are experienced might choose to skip any training aimed at new Board members. Even if the needs of the Francophone and Acadian organizations are the same throughout Canada, thereby justifying a standardized effort throughout the entire country, the actual training program delivered must be capable of adapting to the various realities.

Thirdly, the recommended Canada-wide training program does not have to be formalized. Firstly, most organizations do not require this training to be certified, and trainers are most often private contractors who usually provide training that has been adapted to the organizations’ immediate needs. Secondly, organizations want to receive local, group and practical training through *coaching*

and interactive learning, which makes it difficult to adopt a standardized approach. Furthermore, organizations may want the training to be provided in their own communities rather than in remote urban centres (often centres where the Francophone and Acadian universities and colleges are located). Nevertheless, it would seem logical to recommend that several components of joint training, in particular any content relating to issues that are specific to the Francophone and Acadian communities, be placed in the hands of postsecondary francophone educational institutions that are located in minority communities. These components should be provided mainly by professors of constitutional law, sociology, political science and public administration, in collaboration with volunteers and managers from the organizations and Francophone and Acadian professional trainers. This is not an official recommendation, but we feel that, if the training offered to volunteers does not require certification, then the training offered to the training providers (those who train the volunteers) must be certified. In other words, the Francophone and Acadian organizations should demand that those who provide training to their volunteers be certified by a postsecondary institution.

Fourthly, it would be wise to conduct a market study among the organizations. Our research shows that the 170 organizations that responded to our survey have a number of training needs and are willing to invest whatever is necessary to satisfy these needs. Overall, these organizations are willing to join their efforts with those of other organizations to ensure that the costs of a common training program are shared. That said, even if it is probable that the 688 other organizations¹⁵ have the same

¹⁵ We suggest that this market study also survey charitable organizations such as the Club Richelieu, parent-teacher committees, parish councils and any other Francophone organizations that have a Board, as well as Francophone members sitting on Boards of organizations that do not necessarily have a Francophone mandate, such as Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, etc. Training focused on Board operations and the concerns of Francophone and Acadian minority communities might also be of interest to these 1,000 other organizations and other volunteers.

needs and preferences, a market study would make it possible to determine not only the needs of these organizations in terms of the content and format of the training, but also the amount to be invested in order to develop, offer and establish the costs of such training. A market study could also look at distance training and other parallel methods of training delivery for organizations that cannot afford the higher costs connected with travel, even though they would prefer local training. Finally, a market study could help determine the potential sources of public and private funding which could reduce development and delivery costs. In addition to the interdepartmental partnership with the official languages communities, we feel that organizations should ask the Knowledge Development Centre and the Public Health Agency of Canada to offer financial support to cover the costs associated with the training of volunteers, through its Community Capacity Building Program. These organizations should also solicit support from the many Canadian foundations in existence. Keep in mind that most of the organizations will invest less than \$1,000 per year to cover training costs.

In this regard, our data confirms that some organizations might be willing to subsidize other organizations. It is a fact that even if the large majority of organizations plan to invest a maximum of only \$1,000 per year for this training, others are willing to invest more than \$4,000. For example, if one organization hosts, at a cost of \$2,000, a one-day training session on Board operations, and the other organizations cannot afford to do this individually, there is reason to believe that the host organization should not hesitate to sponsor the organizations that cannot afford these costs. Thus, the host organization could reduce its expenses because the four or five other organizations in the region interested in the

same training could contribute several hundred dollars each for training they would not be able to afford on an individual basis. In fact, our data indicates that 95.7% of organizations would agree to share training with other Francophone organizations.

Let us add a subjective comment: we were pleased to note the high degree of collaboration promised by the organizations. The agreement to share training would seem to indicate a collegial approach that would benefit the Francophone and Acadian community as a whole. There seems to exist an obvious willingness to adopt a collaborative approach for training volunteers who lead the Francophone and Acadian community organizations. We note not only that the needs are similar throughout the country and between the sectors but, even more importantly, that there seems to be added value in their positive gregarious attitude, which bodes well for volunteer training in the years to come.

Finally, it will be necessary to strike a balance between priority and immediate training needs and long-term, continued training needs. The program should quickly develop content relating to the Francophone and Acadian issues, and offer this training as soon as possible, not only because this issue has been identified as a priority, but also because it represents a fundamental need for many organizations. Seeing that training needs are fairly similar throughout the country, programs related to Board operations should be standardized, as much as possible ensuring the training professionals use their own discretion about content. Nevertheless, once these two themes have been dealt with and the needs have been met, secondary needs should be fulfilled in the mid term (rather than the long term). The program could therefore focus on the two priority themes in the

first year, and then the other types of priority needs in the second year, and repeat the cycle from then on. The objective is not to overly bureaucratize the training program, but to take advantage of the fact that the organizations all express the same training needs, in order to meet all of these common needs contemporaneously.

Recommendations

However, our recommendation to develop and offer a standardized training program for Francophone and Acadian volunteers throughout the country is firm. The Canada-wide program should be:

1. generic enough to allow several organizations throughout the country to share in the training, in particular training focused on Board operations and issues that are specific to Francophone and Acadian communities, while at the same time flexible enough to allow it to be adapted to the various geographic, sectoral and organizational realities;
2. developed using a consensual approach involving university, college and professional instructors, as well as elected representatives and managers from Francophone and Acadian organizations from various regions, while at the same time allowing the training to be provided by private trainers;
3. offered to a maximum number of organizations in as many communities as possible (at least two per province), where and when it is needed, while allowing as an alternative solution or complement the delivery of such training from a remote location;
4. implemented within the framework of a short-term integrated and intensive approach (two years), while taking into account the importance of continued training within the organizations;
5. provided by professional trainers who have taken the jointly designed training, and who are certified, preferably by the postsecondary institutions involved.

We would be wrong in thinking that the program could reinvent the wheel, except perhaps with reference to the issues that are specific to the Francophone and Acadian communities and the twofold mission (community development and collective growth of the minority community) that has been imposed on these community and voluntary organizations. As of yet, training needs to help these organizations have not been met. However, several training providers exist throughout the country and are already satisfying most of the other needs that were identified. It may simply be a matter of promoting these providers to the Francophone and Acadian organizations. It is important to ensure that this training is adapted to the specific needs of these organizations. The issues of affordability could be met either through government grants on the basis of their constitutional and statutory obligations, or through a collaborative effort offering the possibility of achieving economies of scale. On the other hand, the organizations attach very little importance to funding campaigns (3.73 out of 6.00), most likely because the large majority of organizations already receive funds from government agencies and have at least one employee; these organizations are therefore not likely to invest more in volunteer training by tapping into their own financial resources.

In addition, just prior to finalizing our research, we became aware of the results of a similar study conducted in the Franco-Ontarian community. The study of the training needs of organizations in the Franco-Ontario community, conducted by Centre canadien de leadership en évaluation (CLÉ) and funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, focused on 996 provincial, regional and local community organizations. The large majority of respondents were senior managers or presidents of their organizations. Although it is difficult to proceed with a legitimate comparison of the results of both studies given the significant difference in the nature of the questions asked and the scope of the survey, several relevant points are worth noting.

Firstly, the CLÉ research lists the most urgent training needs as being: 1) research and funding diversification; 2) organization of data collection activities; 3) marketing; 4) media relations; 5) needs, feasibility, impact and cost effectiveness study; 6) creation of new partnerships¹⁶. The training needs we identified (the powers, roles and responsibilities of the Board, the development and implementation of a strategic plan and the concerns of Francophones), were mentioned in the CLÉ study as representing important needs, but they are at the bottom of their list of training priorities.

The most useful training methods according to the study are similar to the types of training methods we identified, such as short workshops and team coaching (group work). However, training using kits or software is preferred by the participants in the CLÉ study, whereas the respondents to our study ranked this type of training method very low. Finally, the participants in both studies essentially mentioned the

same major barriers to training: cost, lack of time and distance.

In this regard, we note a kind of vicious circle with respect to the training of Francophone and Acadian volunteers: we acknowledge that we have important training needs and seem to think that this training is essential to the effectiveness of the organization. It seems that the problem is due to the fact that the individuals who work in the field of volunteering are unable to find either the time or the funding for training. Therefore, the volunteers often find themselves in a situation where they need to work on the most pressing projects. And without the training required, the time invested in projects needing focus on an immediate basis can be longer than it would have been had the proper training been provided. On the other hand, it is possible that the low priority given to funding by the organizations causes another vicious circle, complementary to the first one: the providers of training to the volunteers will perhaps hesitate to provide their training services in French to a limited number of organizations that wish to receive them and that are, most importantly, not inclined towards investing the amounts necessary to maximize the profitability for the training providers.

Since we were unable to find any national studies that would have allowed us to establish a distinction between the needs of Francophone organizations and those of Anglophone organizations, we recommend to the FCFA that it undertake the steps necessary to work with Statistics Canada, Imagine Canada and any other governmental or non-governmental institution whose mission is volunteerism, to include the linguistic variable in all of their surveys from now on. Thus, when a survey is conducted among

¹⁶ *Étude des besoins en formation au sein des organismes communautaires francophones de l'Ontario*. Centre canadien de leadership en évaluation (CLÉ), Ottawa, 2005.

individuals, two questions should be asked: a) What is your mother tongue? and b) What is the main working language of the organization? A survey conducted among organizations would ask the second question only.

We also recommend that further research be conducted on this subject. All organizations should, each year, administer a simplified version of our questionnaire to its new Board in order to determine the most pressing needs and adopt a plan of action. A similar approach should be taken among the personnel of the 858 voluntary and community organizations surveyed in order to determine the needs of the professionals. The questionnaire would have to be modified for that purpose, because the needs of the Board are clearly different, but it is possible that certain issues, in particular the concerns of Francophone and Acadian communities, are just as important to the professionals as to the volunteers. A survey of this type should be conducted every five years. Certain needs would most likely remain priorities, but an intensive program could result in some of the most pressing needs being met, which would lead to a modification of the priorities. A market study would be required to confirm the feasibility of the program.

Finally, it would seem useful to conduct more thorough research on the specific characteristics of volunteering in a minority community. As indicated, not much is known about this subject based on the national surveys that have previously been conducted, and our research barely touched on the subject. In fact, we are depending solely on the perceptions of the respondents with respect to the differences between the organizations that function in either one of the official languages. It seems logical

to us to feel that these organizations have specific needs, if only the possibility of receiving training in French. In fact, several respondents pointed out the absence of documents and training courses in French in their community. Others noted that they have to go through volunteer centres, most of which do not seem to offer any services in French. Furthermore, we note some problems related to the translation of these documents and training tools. According to some, the translation is often too literal and is frequently erroneous. According to others, the translation process sometimes takes years, which forces volunteers to take the training in English because it is more current.

In addition, it seems to us that the needs expressed in connection with the theme “concerns of Francophone minority communities” are more “information needs” than “training needs.” Therefore, several of these needs are focused on “knowledge” rather than “skills.” We do not wish to minimize these needs; they seem perfectly justified based on the parameters of our research. However, it seems necessary to us that we examine this issue with more judgment as to the exact needs attached to this theme in terms of volunteer training.

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