

# SCENARIO PLANNING WORKSHOP REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *August 27, 2007*



**Supported by:**

Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Initiative (ANVSI)  
Leaders Council



Wild Rose Foundation  
Alberta Nonprofit Voluntary Sector Initiative

*Future of the Nonprofit Voluntary Sector in Alberta*

Scenarios - Executive Summary

Project

A scenario development project organized by the *Alberta Nonprofit Voluntary Sector Initiative* (ANVSI) in cooperation with the *Wild Rose Foundation* to identify a range of possible futures for the nonprofit voluntary sector in Alberta.

Purpose

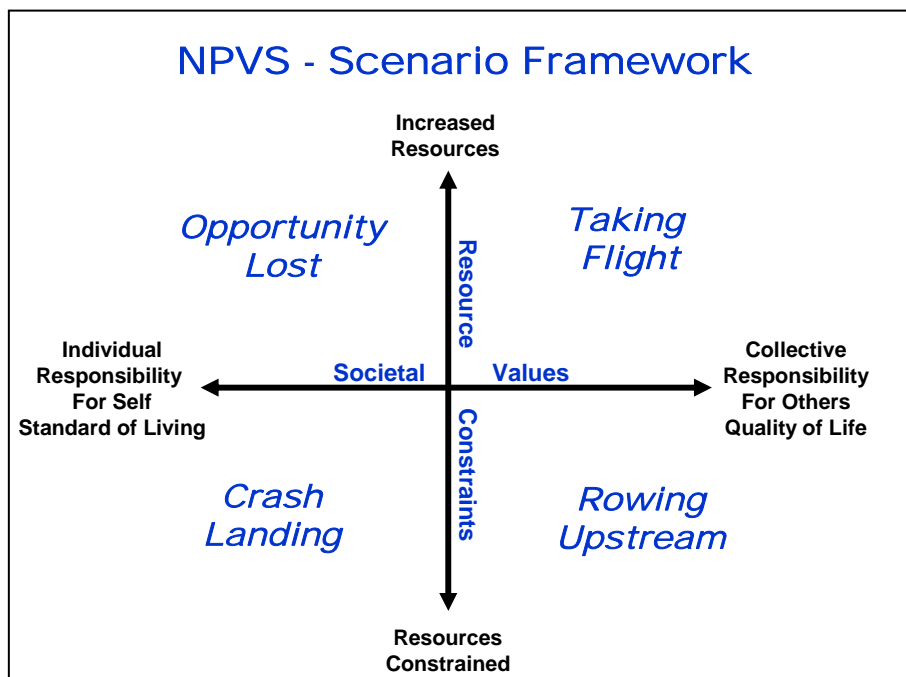
To build shared understanding and gain insight on the future of the nonprofit voluntary sector in Alberta over the next 10 years (2017).

Focal Question

Key question addressed by the scenarios: *How can Alberta achieve a strong, vibrant and sustainable Nonprofit Voluntary Sector (NPVS) for our future generations?*

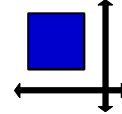
Scenario Framework

The scenarios reflect two critical uncertainties: *resource constraints* and *societal values*. These were used to develop the scenario framework shown below.



## Opportunity Lost

---



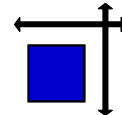
*In “Opportunity Lost” wealthy donors and profitable corporations contribute to a growing pool of funding. Donors are generous but not personally engaged. Despite a growing economy, social disparity and social problems increase. Government and society views emphasize that individuals are responsible for their own actions. This precludes broad increases in government funding affecting many organizations. Demands on organizations increase and competition for funds, people and priority of issue intensifies. Collaborative relationships and partnerships are undermined; self-interests dominate; trust is lacking and efforts to deal with major complex issues are ineffective. Despite more funds, a fractious, fragmented and ineffective sector emerges.*

### Key Observations

- Self-interest rather than society needs can lead to destructive competition.
- Unengaged donors, disconnected from causes, are part of a fragmented civil society.
- Financial resources do not guarantee success; human resources are critical.
- Collaboration may be difficult and costly but the lack of collaboration, cooperation and trust is devastating.

## Crash Landing

---



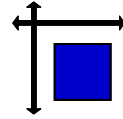
*In “Crash Landing” financial, accountability and human pressures lead to an environment of destructive competition, divisiveness, frustration and resentment. Collaborative and partnership initiatives collapse. Disparity in society increases. Social issues multiply. The “sector” becomes fragmented and dysfunctional. A series of closures of nonprofit voluntary organizations and facilities providing a range of services raises social hardship but only becomes a “crisis” when business and the economy is threatened. Government reaction leads to a costly bureaucratic model of direct service provision with limited participation by nonprofit voluntary organizations. By 2017, constrained funding and self-inflicted destructive competition has lead to a smaller, fragmented and dysfunctional “sector”. The sector, government and society have all lost.*

### Key Observations

- Inadequate funding could trigger a downward spiral of destructive competition that destroys the sector and translates into a crisis for society.
- The sector and nonprofit voluntary organizations become “victims” controlled by and unable to control events around them.
- Chronic under funding is the main factor affecting the sector, but lack of leadership, confidence and trust are the supporting cast.

## Rowing Upstream

---



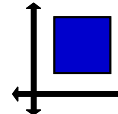
*In “**Rowing Upstream**” funding and people challenges put pressure on the nonprofit voluntary sector. Creative responses, often driven by desperation, focus on renewed mission, increased volunteer participation, engaged donors and new ways of collaborating to address complex social issues in integrated ways. New technologies enhance communication and networking and the growth of social capital. A high performance sector emerges based on collaboration and partnerships, sharing and trust and increased engagement and leadership. Under financial pressure organizations become more strategic and effective. Sector-serving infrastructure organizations play a major role in enhancing sector identity and facilitating integrated approaches to complex issues. Relationships with governments, however, remain strained as frustrated sector leaders are treated with indifference and suspicion by many political leaders. They view the sector, always asking for money, as a cost to be controlled and not a value-adding sector of the economy. Although the sector sustains capacity for a long time, inevitably the effects of chronic under funding took their toll. Adaptation and dedication is not enough. Burnout of managers, staff and volunteers hollows out the sector. Many organizations persevere. Others fail. The sector is in decline.*

### Key Observations

- Lack of funding can stimulate creativity and change.
- Collaboration, cooperation and sharing of resources are critical for the sector to accomplish its ends.
- Human resources – staff and volunteers – are critical; chronic burnout is a major challenge.
- Good intentions, collaboration and hard work are not enough: financial resources are needed.

## Taking Flight

---



*In “**Taking Flight**” a collaborative, long-term partnership between government and the nonprofit voluntary sector, supported by business, leads to the development and implementation of a strategic framework that supports an effective and sustainable nonprofit voluntary sector. An assertive sector, led by champions and advocates from the sector, business and within government, helps establish a new relationship of equality and mutual respect. This leads to a government commitment to provide stable, long-term financial and resource support to the NPVS. These financial commitments include both project and core funding, thereby creating a new level of stability for many organizations who are able to focus on values and mission and plan more effectively. Alignment between policy and programs and actual needs of the sector creates significant benefits to society. Creative new approaches to building strong communities and addressing major issues are encouraged. High levels of trust support collaboration and effective partnerships, in and out of the sector, leveraging resources and enhancing outcomes.*

*A buoyant and healthy sector contributing to healthy, caring and connected communities emerges attracting new talent and visionary leaders. A “wellness” rather than a “needs” model prevails. Mutual respect and shared responsibility underpins healthy communities. .*

### **Key Observations**

- Convergence of purpose, commitment and respect are critical in reframing the sector’s relationships with government, business and society as whole.
- The sector is vital in moving toward vibrant and healthy communities.
- A great future is possible with a common community agenda, a focus on wellness as well as needs, collaboration and trust, adequate resources, leadership and confidence.
- Collaboration to address complex social issues is critical.
- Advocacy and leadership, as well as a partnership agreement with government, supported by business is urgently needed. The sector must also perform.
- The scenario maps out a path: how can we get on it for the sector and society?

## Concluding Messages

### ***Convergence of Partners and Purpose***

- The government has a critical role to play in recognizing, funding and supporting the nonprofit voluntary sector as a vital partner in creating vibrant and healthy communities in Alberta.
- There needs to be a convergence of objectives, commitment and respect.
- There needs to be a reframing of the role and importance of the sector in society.

### ***Slippery Slope of Inadequate Funding***

- The current level of funding and support cannot sustain the level of service and range of programs being provided.
- Inadequate funding has the potential to undermine trust and cooperation to the point of destroying the sector itself.
- Funding comes with responsibility. The sector must perform and be accountable to society.

### ***Collaboration Critical***

- Collaboration across sectors and within the sector is vital to the long term health and effectiveness of the sector.
- Working together is increasingly important as communities and issues become more complex.
- Organizations working in concert can be much more effective than alone.

### ***Shared Leadership***

- Shared leadership is necessary to engage both sectors in a trusted relationship that builds leadership capacity and a dialogue of constructive and informed advocacy.
- This shared leadership model needs to constantly seek out win-win solutions that enhance the overall quality of life of Albertans.