



Voluntary Sector Studies Network

Luther College at the University of Regina

World Kafé Koffee Klatch Summary – Feb 27, 2015

Meeting held at First Nations University

On February 27, 2015, approximately 25 people met at the First Nations University for a World Kafé style Koffee Klatch to discuss the VSSN. The main goals of the morning meeting were a) to create opportunities for connecting and conversations among students, voluntary sector practitioners and university faculty/staff; and b) to share ideas, critique a draft of VSSN and modify it based on participants' experiences and knowledge. Our World Kafé style Koffee Klatch was made up of 6 tables, each with a specific question. Participants were able to choose a new table to join every 20-25 minutes which was signalled by the sound of a bell. Each table included flipchart paper where we invited our participants to doodle, draw and write on. The notes and flipchart doodles from the small groups have been organized into 5 main categories using each of the kafé tables.

Kafé Table

1

What do you need from VSSN (e.g., what course content areas are you interested in) and what do you, your volunteers and staff, and/or your organization have to offer VSSN? For example, do you have a special set of skills and knowledge that VSSN, and in turn the voluntary sector in Saskatchewan, can benefit from? (*This latter question was not answered.*)

Modes of course delivery:

Online	1-1½ day seminar/course	Affordable for students and staff
Job shadowing and mentorship	Own time/pace	Less traditional ways of learning
Seminars and workshops	Specific to the groups needs	Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition
Weeklong courses		

- Intentional cohesion - making connections/networking
- VSSN as a central conduit for bridging and making connections
- Course content connecting to business and government sectors
- Connecting to expertise is something the organizations need

Kafé Table

2

What do you believe are major challenges and opportunities facing the voluntary/nonprofit sector in Saskatchewan over the next 5-10 years?

Volunteer/board/committee recruitment:

- Must engage immigrant and First Nation populations (growing populations)
- Can use Open Door Society/Friendship Centres to build relationships and mentorships.
- Need to find family volunteer opportunities, need to replace aging volunteers.
- Boards need term limits to reduce the same repetitive cycle. How do boards find new people?
 - VSSN could get students to sit on a board as part of a class project ('board buddies')
 - This builds community capacity as students come out as 'ready-made' board members.
- Can engage high school students by encouraging students to see the impact/find what interests them (highlight 14 categories, inviting high schools to attend university volunteer fairs, having high school competitions to see who can volunteer the most hours)

Rural communities:

- Limited resources/volunteers however technology such as online training and webinars is useful

Funding challenges:

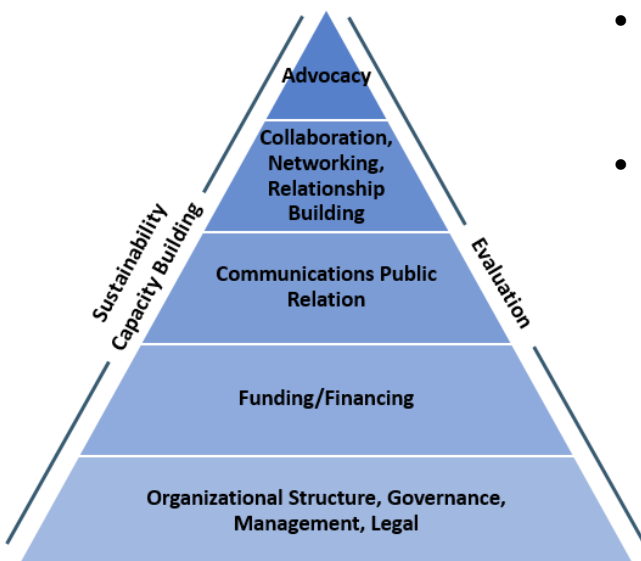
- Less funding, no sustainability, project based, pilot projects, term based funding
- Writing up applications and evaluating programs is very time consuming.
- There is too much time between filling out an application and finding out if you get the money
- There is an increase in the number of non-profit agencies which means there are far more agencies soliciting donor dollars and competing for funding
- The current trend of crowd sourcing may be contributing to donor fatigue.

Social capital:

- Volunteers do not get money, therefore it is not counted in society as financial capital
- Strategic way of using volunteers to sustain communities: meet community's essential needs
- Mobilizing people as human resources is easier than it is to get money.

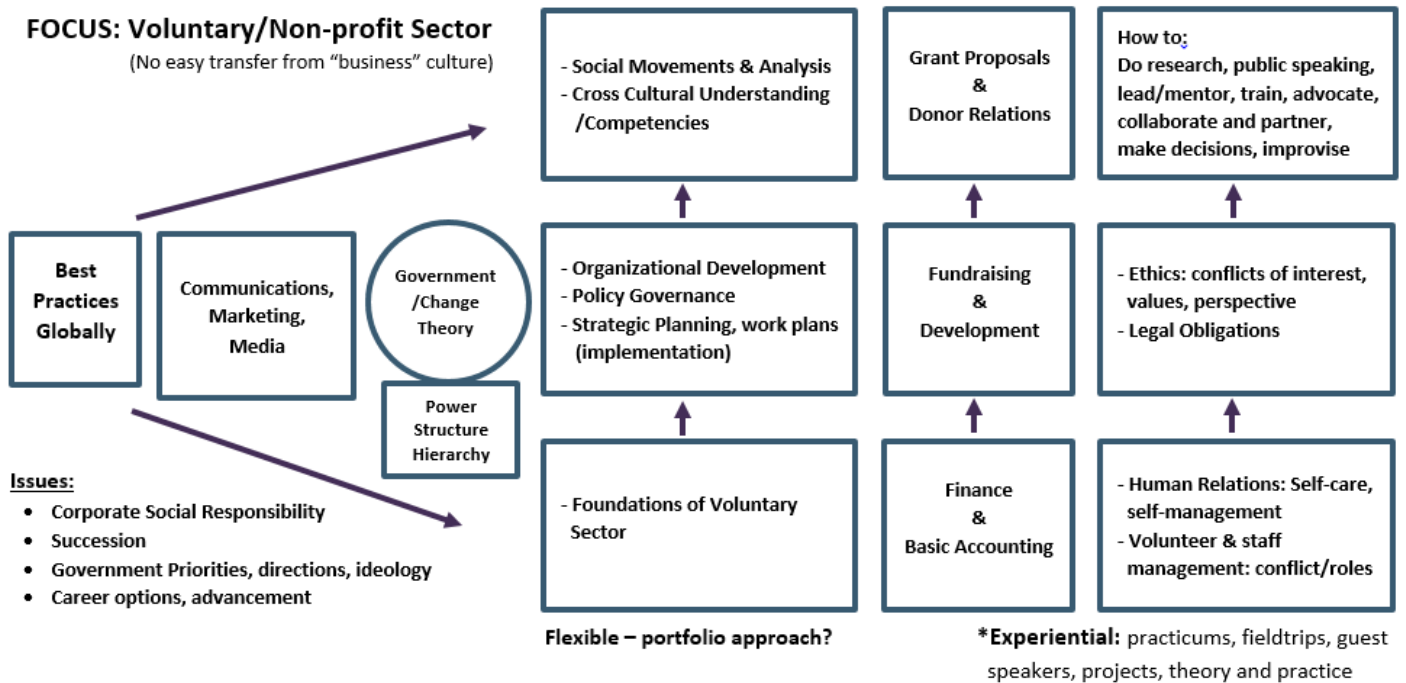
Kafé Table 3/4

VSSN "learn" pillar - What core competencies (e.g., knowledge, skills, etc.) do you think graduates should have as they leave university/college and enter careers in the voluntary/nonprofit sector?



- Coordinating student placements/practical experiences as part of the program
 - E.g., placing students on boards and committees of their choice
- Students are already learning: advocacy, research methods, technology, and cultural diversity. Therefore, we do not need to duplicate this.

- Funding & financial
- Evaluation & planning
- Human Resources
- Governance, leadership, & boards
- Project management
- Communications & marketing



- Students who volunteer through courses often get offered jobs in voluntary organizations
- Possible research project: the difference in organization development, etc.
 - Private for profit versus volunteer not for profit

Kafé Table

5

VSSN “research” pillar – What research ideas do you have that would make excellent real-world, course-based assignments for students?

Interdisciplinary research projects on living heritage:

- Measuring the impact of ‘reminiscence’ on an aging population. Reduces isolation, depression, cognitive abilities, and keeps people socializing; researching traditional diets of the past; etc.

Measure social intrinsic benefits of volunteers:

- What makes volunteering successful and how does it increase social capital.

Look at case studies of what makes some organizations successful and others not:

- Case studies from the voluntary sector helps improve undergraduates’ research skills.

Researching the needs associated with small rural communities:

- How do we find out what the community needs, supports, how organizations run, etc.?
- How do we contribute to building a sense of community?

Global aspect of how non-profits work in other places e.g., Sweden:

- Benefits of volunteering and sharing. Research that in itself builds social capital. Look at other

societies who do not know the concept of volunteering in the same sense that North America does. E.g., what replaces volunteering if it is not labelled as ‘volunteering’?

- Cross-cultural research projects; identifying traditional knowledge of keepers of all parts of our society; how do we work with newcomers; research the amount of racism occurring in SK.

Research at Indian Head Grand Theatre:

- Oldest continuously ran theatre in Canada: signatures on wall going back to 1904
- Registered non-profit, turning into movie-house and arts centre.

Research on hours and wages in the voluntary sector compared between provinces

Doing research for versus about the voluntary sector

Kafé Table

6

VSSN “innovate” pillar - What voluntary/nonprofit sector innovations or wildly new ideas do you think should be incubated and given life in Regina, in other communities and/or in Saskatchewan more broadly? Might VSSN be able to help?

The teaching environment:

- Tie theory into practice for students via university courses since there is currently a gap between university education and actual work in the field
- Community Service Learning, fieldtrips, assignments, practicums, options for applied research
- Each course needs applied assignments customized to student’s individual needs so that they are learning in the areas that they are actually interested in having theory married to practice.
- Pair students with organizations to accomplish needed tasks
- Mechanisms to collaborate with people in the sector and around the world
- Bring together faculties such as education, social work, kinesiology, psychology, etc.
- Include a forum with young people under 40 who have become leaders in these organizations
- Courses team-taught by practitioners (versus profs who have spent their whole life in academia)
- Courses that provide insight into how their education can be actually applied and used

Course topics:

Self-care
Power & change theory
Government bureaucracy
Social media/website design
Public Relations
Board/governance

Inventories:

Database of innovations in the sector globally
No need to ‘reinvent the wheel’
Best practices/analysis of effectiveness
New ways of teaching courses
Students can research ideas

Workshops/Talking circles:

For people in the field already
Grant proposal workshops
How Governments work
Mental health
Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition
(Variety of services already provided)

