



# Reaching Sustainability

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REACHING SUSTAINABILITY: A STUDY DESIGNED TO EXPLORE NON-PROFIT  
SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH TRAINING AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT.

Presented to: Sheilagh Seaton, Co-leader, Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence

Prepared by: Kelly Atamanchuk

Date of submission: March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Abstract

This report aims to identify ways in which non-profit organizations can be encouraged and engaged to participate in training activities.

The research is descriptive in nature and builds upon previous experience and knowledge of the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence. Data was collected from an Internet survey with 44 respondents from social serving non-profit organizations in Kelowna, B.C., Canada. Respondents were asked about the barriers they face prevents them from participating in training, how individuals prefer to learn and their awareness level of online training opportunities.

Respondents found that time, money and relevancy of current training offered created a gap in participation. The most preferred learning

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support I received from my professors, Lee Cartier and Dr. Lynn Sparling. Thank you to my client, Dr. Sheilagh Seaton, for letting me work with the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence and for answering all my emails. I am grateful for the respondents' participation who allowed me to complete the research. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the support I received from my fellow classmates including









The literature review shows previous research related to the topic completed by other researchers and organizations. The purpose of the literature review is to identify what is already known about the decision statement. The gaps found in the literature review formulate the research objectives. The background information presented in Chapter One and known gaps in research has formulated the following decision statement:

*In what ways can the people of non-profit organizations be encouraged and engaged in training and resource development?*

The literature review shows a gap in research towards increasing engagement in training for non-profit organizations in the Central Okanagan. The literature review begins with the decision statement of the



### 2.3.2 Limited Financial Resources

According to Ference Weicker (2014), 71% of employees' report spending less than three percent of their organization's annual revenues on employee and volunteer training. This figure also includes 41% of organizations that spend less than one percent on training (Ference Weicker & Co., 2014). On average, it is estimated that the employers spend \$13,180 annually on employee training (Ference Weicker & Co., 2014). This level of annual training expenditures does not accurately reflect many small non-profit organizations. Organizations are generally mission driven and if given extra funds, it seems they would likely put the money towards programs rather than employees.

### 2.3.3 Lack of Qualified People in Their Organization

There is a need to expand and enhance current employee skills (HR Council, 2008). According to a study conducted for Step Up BC in 2014, one in four employees working at a non-profit organization in British Columbia reported a skills gap (Ference Weicker & Co., 2014). While nine out of ten employees in Canada thought, their organization had

#### 2.3.4 Limited Access to Affordable Education and Training

Non-profit organizations have access to training resource databases on the Internet. Some courses are offered at no charge and others can range to thousands of dollars depending on the course and certification. Like Ference Weicker & Co (2014) mentioned, 71% of organizations spend less than three percent of revenue on training as most expenditures are on programs, employee salaries, property leases and administrative supplies.

#### 2.3.5 Difficulty Transferring Skills

There is a transfer of training skills gap amongst for-profit and non-profit organizations (Salas et al, 2012). Salas et al (2012) suggests that transferring of new skills is a barrier when employees are not given opportunities to perform or do not receive support from their peers or supervisors. When barriers are removed, employees can increase their skills transfer and decrease the chance of losing their new skill (Salas, et al., 2012).

#### 2.3.6 Difficulty Attracting Qualified Volunteers and Employees

There is a need to recruit more qualified applicants (HR Council, 2008) in non-profit organizations. As the Baby Boomer generation begins to retire, worsening skill shortages for non-profit organizations are expected (Salas et al, 2012). Recruiting employees to non-profit organizations is challenging because applicants must possess adequate knowledge and skills as well as believe in the organization's mission (Akingbola, 2006) Low job security is also a factor that affects recruitment due to the small size of many non-profit organizations and their short-term funding (Ference Weicker & Co., 2014).

The literature shows that employees and volunteers are attracted to the non-profit sector based on the importance of the sector, positive work environments and collaborative cultures (Ference Weicker & Co., 2014). Most employees of non-profit organizations are motivated intrinsically by the opportunity to serve their community and work in an organization that aligns with their personal values (Akingbola, 2006). They may have the heart to serve the organizations mission but lack certain job skills. These factors may also limit the employee's room for career advancement (Ference Weicker & Co, 2014).

“Training is essential to the effectiveness and survival of non-profit organizations” (Akingbola, 2006 p. 1711) especially, during a time of constant innovation and a changing environment. Research has identified that training that is properly designed works well, and the way training is designed, delivered and implemented plays a large role in its effectiveness (Salas, et al., 2012). When employees learn new skills, they can impact their organization by applying new knowledge and making more informed decisions (Ho, Yeung, 2015).

The use of effective training can positively impact organizational performance (Akingbola, 2006). For training to be effective, a team leader needs to initiate the following four practices: “(a) guide trainees to the right training, (b) clarify trainees’ expectations, (c) prepare trainees, and (d) reinforce learning objectives (Salas et al, 2012, p. 83). Salas et al. (2012) also determined that the way trainees are notified about training influences the actual training course.

Training effectiveness can vary on the persons’ level of engagement with the organization, position and age. Research has identified that the age of the trainee impacts the preference of the training method and its effectiveness (Salas, et al. 2012). An older worker may require a different method and a greater amount of time to complete training (Salas, et al, 2012). Salas et al. (2012), also suggest that sufficient time be given to older trainees to study, review, practice and master training content.

### 2.5.1 Barriers in the Central Okanagan

The research done by Step Up BC shows that one in four employees believed they had a skills gap at their organization (FERENCE Weicker & Co., 2014) and that employees believed that their skills in marketing, HR, finance and fundraising could be improved (HR Council, 2008). A conference proceeding at ANZAM 2015, looked at for-profit small businesses lack of participation in training and development. The findings showed





### 2.5.3 Online Training Awareness

There is also a research gap in how organizations access training. Salas et al. (2012) also determined the way trainees are notified about training influences the actual training course. There is no research that shows the level of awareness of online learning and training resources for non-profit organizations. This research looks to find answers regarding how well-aware employees are with access to e-learning resources and their availability. This gap in research has formulated the final research objective:

*RO 3: Determine the level of awareness around the training and learning resources available online for non-profit organizations.*

This literature review shows that previous research is relevant to the decision statement. Much literature has analyzed the barriers that affect the encouragement and engagement of training and resource development in non-profit organizations. How does this data relate to non-profit organizations in Kelowna, B.C.? With the research gaps addressed, the following research objectives aim to bridge the gaps:

*Ro1: To determine the common barriers that prevents non-profit organizations from participating in training and learning opportunities*

*Ro2: To determine the preferred learning methods of non-profit training from all levels of employment in organizations (executive directors, board members, staff, management/supervisors and volunteers).*

*RO3: Determine the level of awareness around the training and learning resources available online for non-profit organizations.*

The next section, Chapter Three, discusses the research strategy and methodology used to answer the research objectives.



with the people involved in these organizations. This group either use training already or could benefit from using training resources in the future. The unit of analysis looked at the individuals themselves, as the research aimed to identify individual preferences.

To

interest (Zikmund et al., 2013). Other elements of the research design included scholarly reports and industry statistics. Industry reports regarding sustainability in the non-profit sector provided background information to the research project. Secondary data was collected based on for-profit and non-profit organizations and their training practices.

Grouping questions were used to identify personal characteristics of respondents such as their age group and length of involvement in the non-profit organization. These demographic questions were used to analyze their willingness to participate in training based off their time in their role.

The questions created for the survey were based on previous research and the research objectives. The survey was made up of both quantitative and qualitative questions t 0.2 1



important, 3= important and 4= very important), respondents were asked to rate the importance of each factor. Each factor was rated to be important or very important.

#### 4.3.1 Time

The data shows that time was the most common barrier that currently prevents training in non-profit organizations. Of the respondents, 70.5% believed that time was a big factor in preventing training in non





#### 4.4.1 Current State of Training

To better understand the preferred learning methods of respondents, the research focused on the current training state at non-profit organizations. As discussed in section 4.3.1, time is the biggest factor that prevents training. From the data, most organizations currently spend zero to two hours per month on training. Table 4.4.1 shows how many hours individuals at non-profit organizations are currently spending on training per month. To find out how often each method was used in the past year, see Appendix C to view the cross tabulation. In the past year, articles were used more than 10 times by ten of the respondents. Articles were the highest used method, followed by reports (seven respondents have used reports more than 10 times in the past year).

Current Hours	Number of people
0-2	26
3 to 5	8
6 to 8	6
9+	2

#### 4.4.2 Preferred Learning Experience

Respondents were asked to select their most preferred method of training based on four different learning experiences.

Facilitated learning was selected to be the most preferred by respondents at 36.6%. Figure 4.4.2 shows how many of each respondent preferred each learning experience. A small number of people preferred individual (self-study) learning.

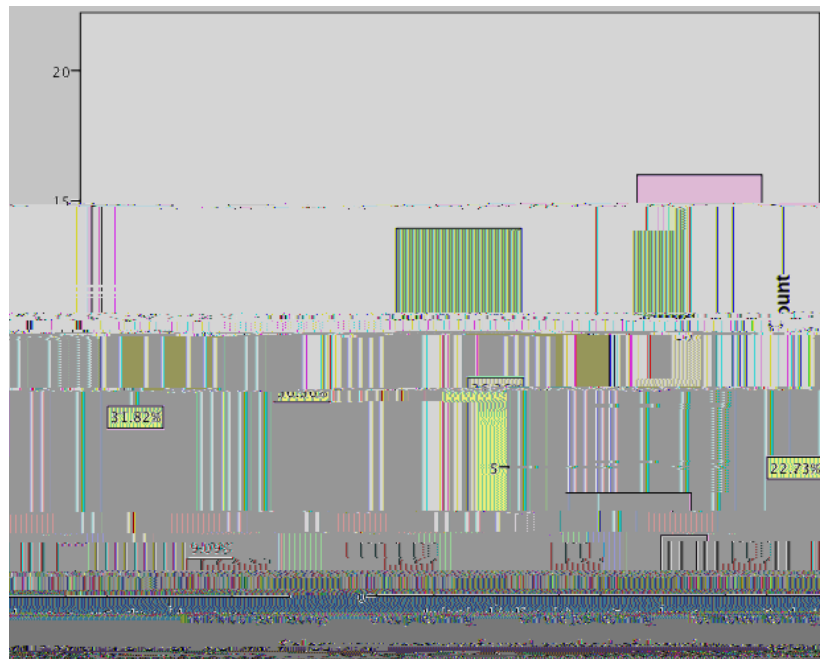


Figure 4.4.2 Preferred learning methods by individuals

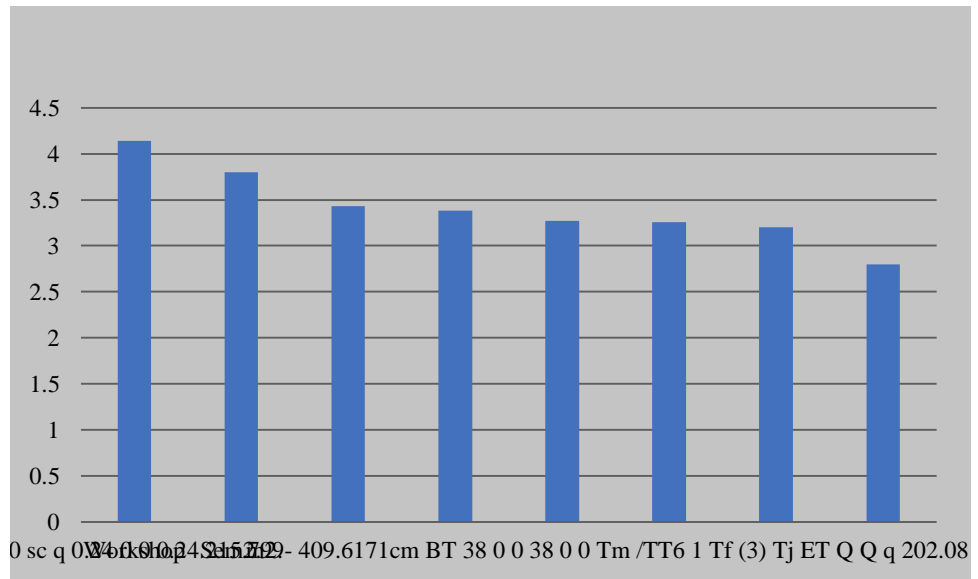
In addition to the most preferred learning experience, respondents were also asked to comment on how training could best be delivered. The responses collected reflected the facilitated learning preference. Common

themes included interactivity, hands on experiential learning, implementation plans, and face to face experiences. Other common themes included providing assessments and training refreshers to “ensure the training is being used and used correctly.”

#### 4.4.3 Preferred Training Method Delivery

Respondents were asked to rate their preference level for each training delivery method on a five-point scale (1= highly unpreferred, 2= unpreferred, 3= neutral, 4= preferred, 5= highly preferred). Workshops (mean= 4.14) had the highest average preference by respondents. This is reflected by the facilitated learning experience preference mentioned above. Both workshops and seminars involve in

person facilitation and discussion. Figure 4.4.3 shows the average preference for each training method. Except for reports, each method was positively (mean > 3, neutral) viewed by respondents. Even though reports were not preferred, they were used more than 10 times in a year by seven respondents.



Training methods that received positive preference such as articles, E- learning modules and webinars can all be accessed online.

#### 4.4.4 Online Training and Learning

Respondents were asked if they were willing to access and use training online. Figure 4.4.4 shows that 93% of respondents would likely be willing to use online resources in the future.



organization and their awareness of online resources. Figure 4.6 shows a cross tabulation of how each role is aware of online training resources.

*Table 4.6 Job Role and Online Awareness*

Role	No awareness	Low awareness	Moderate awareness	High awareness	Total
Other	0				

The barriers preventing training identified in research objective one gives the Scotiabank NPC an



### 5.2.2 The Preferred Learning Methods of All Levels of Employment in Non-Profit Organizations (Executive Director, Board Members, Management, Staff and Volunteers).

The survey shows the most preferred learning experience was through facilitated training. Client, Sheilagh Seaton of The Scotiabank NPC predicted that respondents would prefer face to face training because of interaction, in person and real life experiences, and hands on application. Respondents agreed that they would be interested in a combination of facilitated and online learning methods. This outcome aligns with what the Scotiabank NPC expected from their previous experience. On the job learning was also very popular amongst the respondents. The training design, delivery and implementation will impact the training methods preference and effectiveness (Salas, et al., 2012).

### 5.2.3 The Level of Awareness Around the Training and Learning Resources Available Online for Non-Profit Organizations.

The research shows awareness of online training resources needs to be increased. Fifteen of the 42 respondents agreed to having low awareness of online resources and 18 of the 42 said their awareness level was moderate. The survey determined that over 90% of respondents were likely to use online training resources. Affordable, online training can be completed at home or in short spurts of free time at the office which may help organizations gain access.

Non-profit organizations can be encouraged to participate in training if resource providers attend to the t



There are limitations to be considered when reading this report. The margin of error is 85% due to the smaller than expected sample size. The research is also limited by the administration of the survey through the Internet. Responses were collected anonymously and there is no way of knowing which type of organization the individuals are involved with, and how many responses were obtained from each organization.





[http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Programs/Areas\\_of\\_Study/Business/Research/NPC/Research.html](http://www.okanagan.bc.ca/Programs/Areas_of_Study/Business/Research/NPC/Research.html).

Zareie, B., Jafari Navimipour, N. (2016) Research Notes: The effect of electronic learning systems on the employee's commitment. *International Journal of Management*, 14167-175. Doi: 10.1016/j.ijme.2016.04.003

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## Survey

Scotiabank NPC Learning Methods Survey

Q0 January 16th, 2017

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study called Reaching Sustainability: A study designed to explore non-profit sustainability through training and resource development. This survey designed for the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence (Scotiabank NPC), will analyze learning methods and common barriers that prevent training in non-profit organizations. The goal of the Scotiabank NPC is to provide resources to help organizations become more sustainable. The Scotiabank NPC will base its facilitation of learning materials on how most people prefer to learn. This research is being conducted by Kelly Atamanchuk, an Okanagan College student, and is a course requirement for the Honours Bachelor of Business Administration Degree. The project is carried out under the supervision of professor Lee Cartier.

Your participation in the survey is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the survey at any time. You also have the right to leave any questions unanswered. Please be assured that your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality. No names

Q3 In the past year, how often have you used the following training resources in your non-profit role?

Q8 Do any of these factors prevent you from participating in training? Select all that apply:

- Time (1)
- Money (2)
- Level of interest (3)
- Level of awareness (4)
-





Q19 In general, how long have you been involved in the non-profit sector?

- 0-4 years (1)
- 5-8 years (2)
- 9-12 years (3)
- 13+ years (4)

The different barriers selected by individuals that commonly prevent training. Ranked by most occurring selection.

Method	# Selected	Percentage
Time	31	70.5%
Relevance	27	61.4%
Money	25	56.8%
Delivery	22	50.0%
Awareness	17	36.4%
Interest	16	36.4%
Motivation	5	11.4%

Methods of training used per year.

Usage per year	0-2 times		3 to 5 times		6 to 9 times		10+ times		Total
Toolkits	85.71%	30	8.57%	3	2.86%	1	2.86%	1	35
Other:	80.00%	4	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	20.00%	1	5
E -learning modules	78.38%	29	16.22%	6	2.70%	1	2.70%	1	37
Video conferences	75.68%	28	21.62%	8	0.00%	0	2.70%	1	37
Seminars	72.22%	26	13.89%	5	13.89%	5	0.00%	0	

Kruskal- Wallis test showing significant differences between Scotiabank NPC familiarity and

Hours spent training