

Snapshot of Bow Valley Non-profits and Community Groups: 2023 Survey Report

Overview

In August of 2023, Town of Canmore and Town of Banff-Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) invited 167 non-profit and community groups to complete an electronic survey. The intent of this survey was to increase our understanding of supports and resources that may be required as well as gaining a “snapshot in time” of the overall health of our local non-profits and community groups in terms of current human, financial and operational resources. The importance of this information cannot be underestimated as it is the Bow Valley non-profits and community groups that provide essential supports, services, and programs in our communities.

With a 51% response rate or 85 completed surveys we believe the details gathered on the health and vitality of Bow Valley non-profit and community groups is valid and useful in understanding what the current landscape is and possible areas for support. The findings from the survey indicate a relatively robust non-profit environment in the Bow Valley with 88% of respondents indicating that in the last 12 months their membership/participation/registration had increased (55%) or stayed the same (33%). Of the 55% who reported increased engagement, 74% noted this was due to increased demand and 39% noted this change was due to increased partnerships and collaboration.

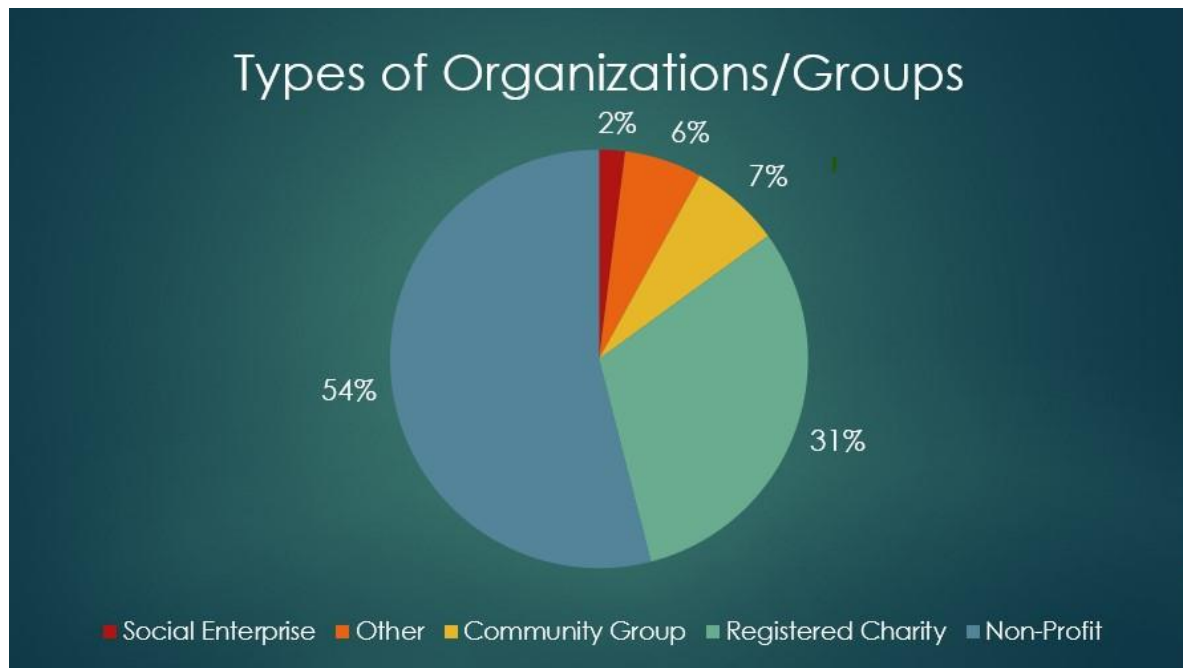
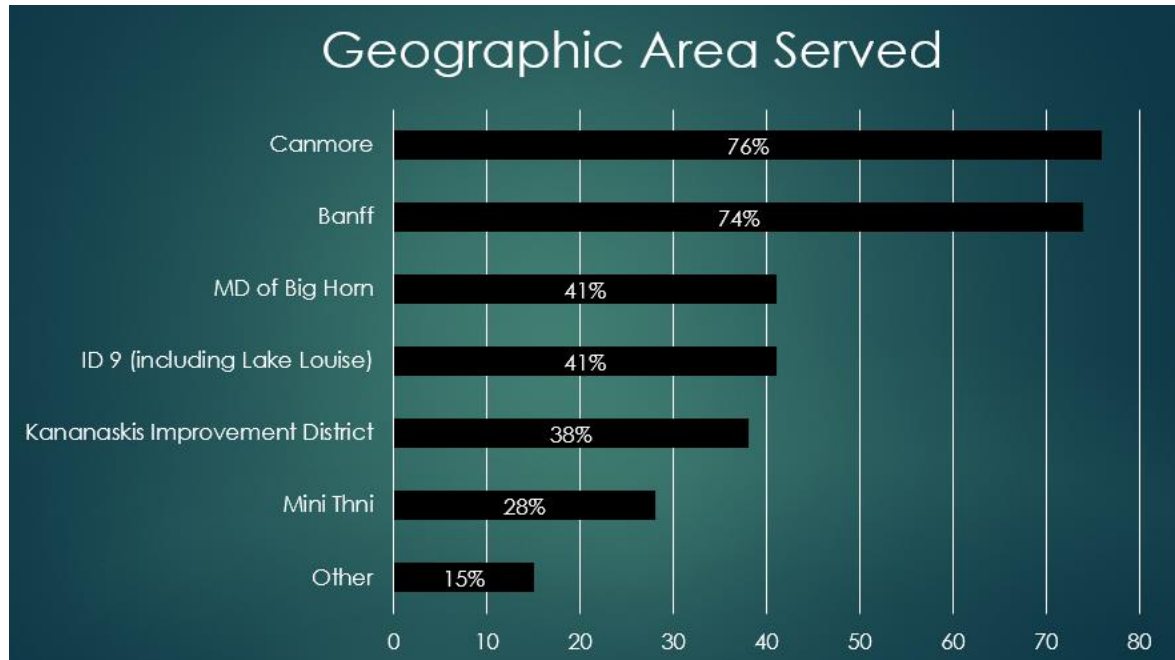
Additionally, when non-profits were asked about their financial stability, 60% of participants noted that their organization is financially stable; 30% described their organization as somewhat financially stable and 10% reported that their organization is not financially stable. Some key financial stability themes emerged from the data, namely, that participants noted being financially stable for this fiscal year but uncertainty for next; the need for un-restricted funding for ongoing operations is not readily accessible; heavy reliance on donations and grants to meet increasing demands; less government and non-government granting opportunities and a desire to keep membership fees low which requires subsidy from grants/donations.

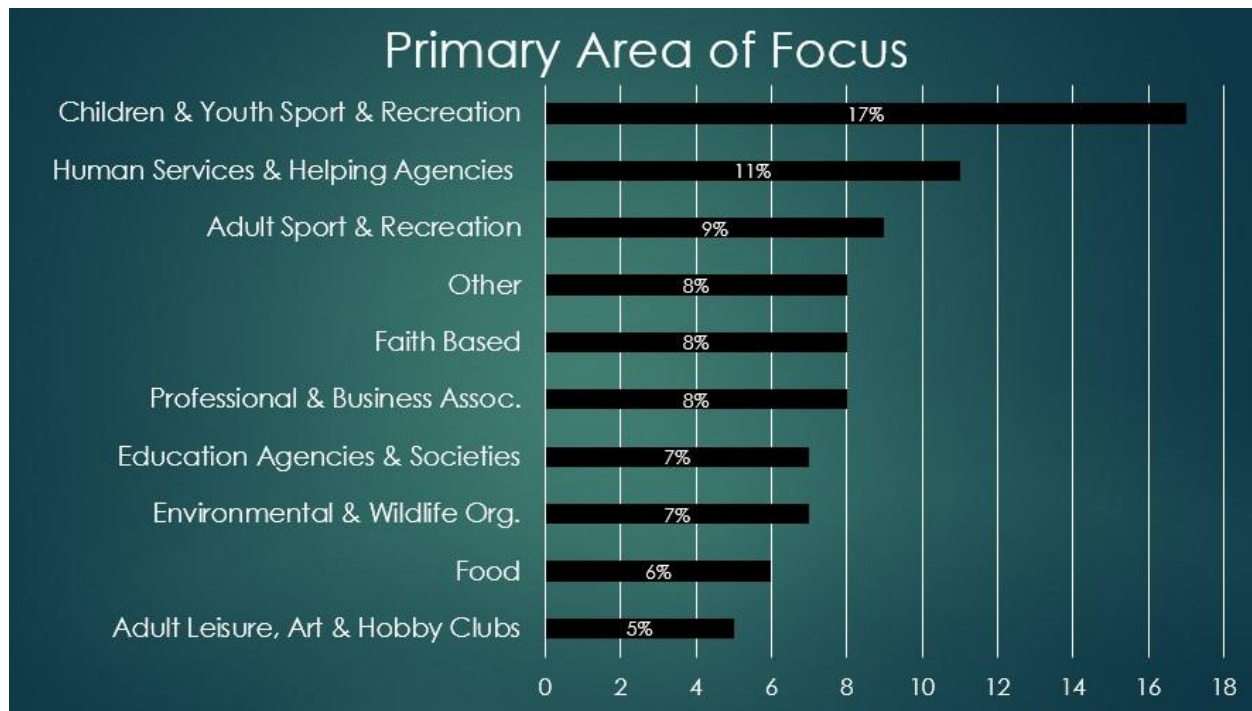
Bow Valley non-profits appear to be challenged the most with issues related to human resources. 85 participants were asked if the human resources their organization currently has (staff, volunteers and contractors) were sufficient and sustainable, only 29 % reported they were, followed by 38% noting somewhat and 33% reporting insufficient and unsustainable. The two key human resource themes that emerged from respondents are:

- ‘precarious resources’- namely that the loss of one granting source could rapidly destabilize the organization and most funding is restricted (primarily for one year and attached to specific projects); and
- more macro-market challenges including cost of living, such as inability to pay wages that keep people in the Valley; delays and challenges to hiring due to high cost of living which impacts ability for people to volunteer and challenges in filling leadership vacancies on boards with increasing financial demands on people to work multiple jobs leaving less time resource to volunteer.

Respondents

The survey responses were well distributed across geographic region, type of organization, and primary focus. The data indicates a good cross-section of the number and type of non-profits and community groups active within the Bow Valley.





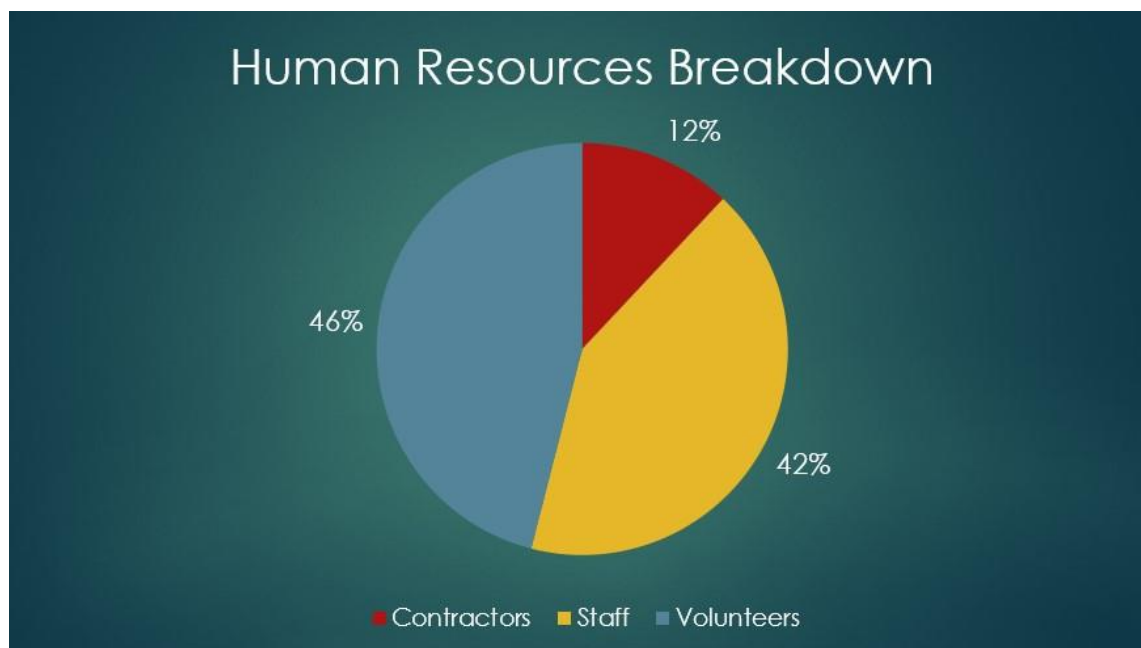
Membership

53% of respondents indicated that membership or participation in their organization had increased, 33% stayed the same, and 12% decreased over the last year. Some of the key reasons identified for a decrease in participation levels were less volunteer engagement (40%); staffing challenges such as less staff have been hired or hours have decreased (30%) and 40% reported “other” which included variables such as affordability and families being stretched for funds or inability to remain in the Bow Valley.

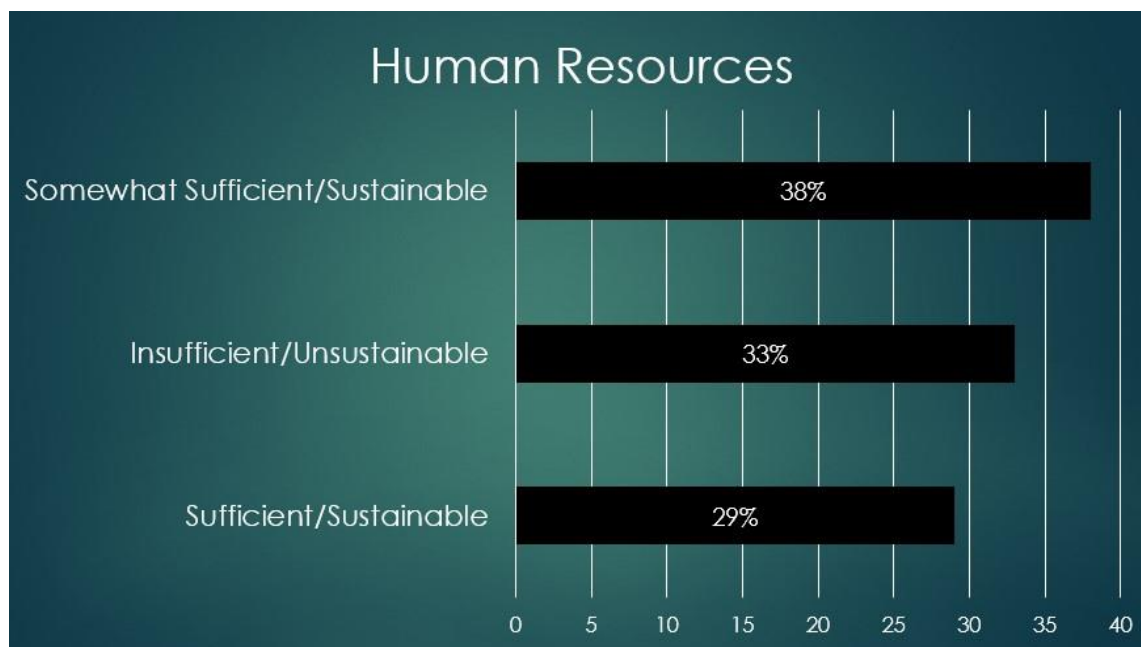
Staff/Volunteers

Of the 85 organizations that responded to the survey, 42% reported their work being completed by paid staff while 46% rely on volunteers and 12% of respondents indicated that they use contracted services to complete the work of their organization. Comparison with the 2015 Bow Valley Non-Profit and Community Group Survey Report highlights a significant change, noting that in 2015, 72% of participants reported their work being completed by paid staff while only 28% relied on volunteers.

The results highlight an identified need for increased volunteer and staff support by numerous organizations. The greater number of volunteers required is indicative of the number of organizations that rely solely or heavily on volunteers.



There were a multitude of reasons listed as to why groups lacked enough human resources, most frequently cited were: insufficient/precarious financial resources (loss of one granting source can destabilize the entire organization) and abundance of restricted funding (primarily one year and attached to specific projects) to hire or create a strong volunteer program; volunteer burnout due to market forces creating need to work multiple jobs; inability to pay wages to keep people in the Valley, lack of time available and an administrative burden preventing staff and volunteers from focusing on the operations of the organization.

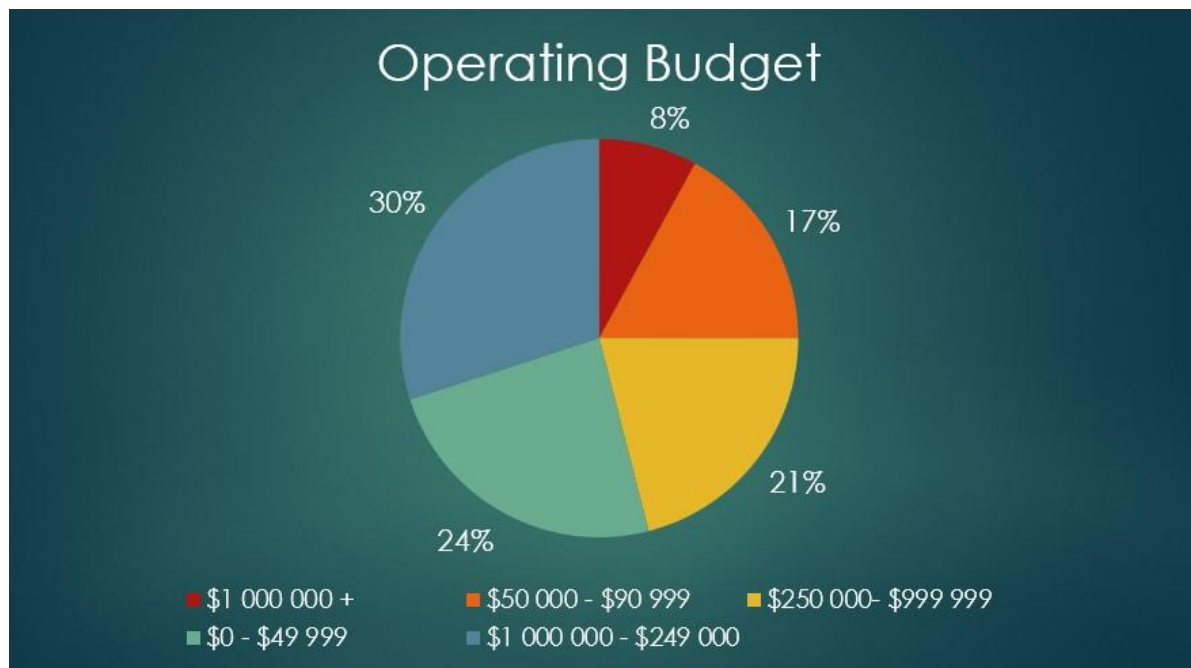


Finances

60% of respondents felt their organization was financially stable while another 30% felt they were somewhat stable (was 55% and 35% respectively in 2015). The 10% of organizations that reported financial instability indicated that reliance on fundraising, donations and volatile government grants were contributing factors to their instability. Some additional themes included:

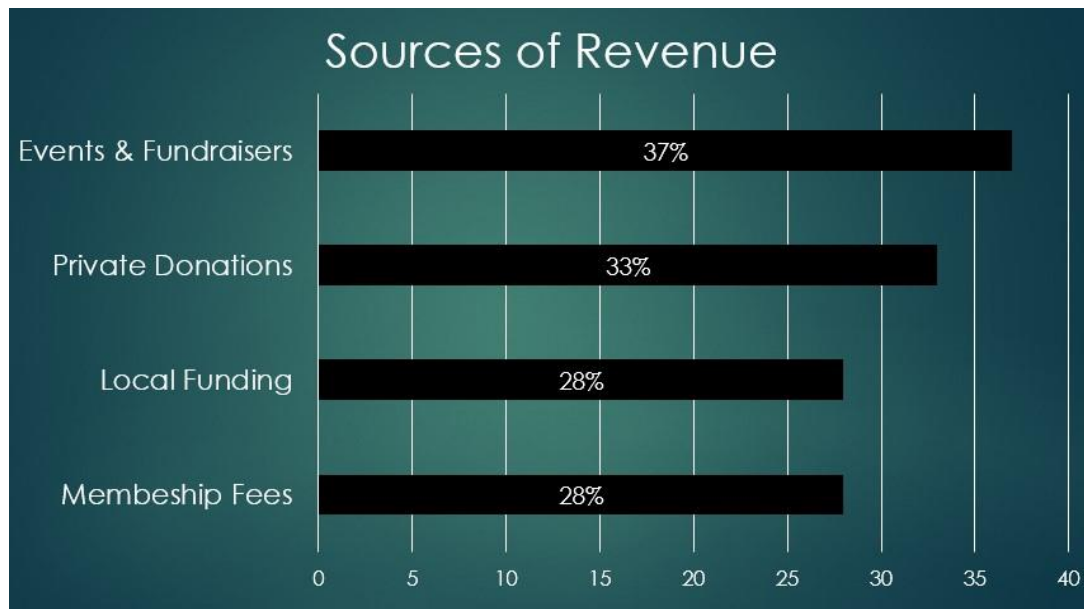
- organizations being financially stable for this fiscal year but uncertainty for next
- need for unrestricted funding for ongoing operations is not readily available and a desire to keep membership fees low which requires subsidy from grants/donations

Total operating budgets for survey participants are outlined in the chart below.



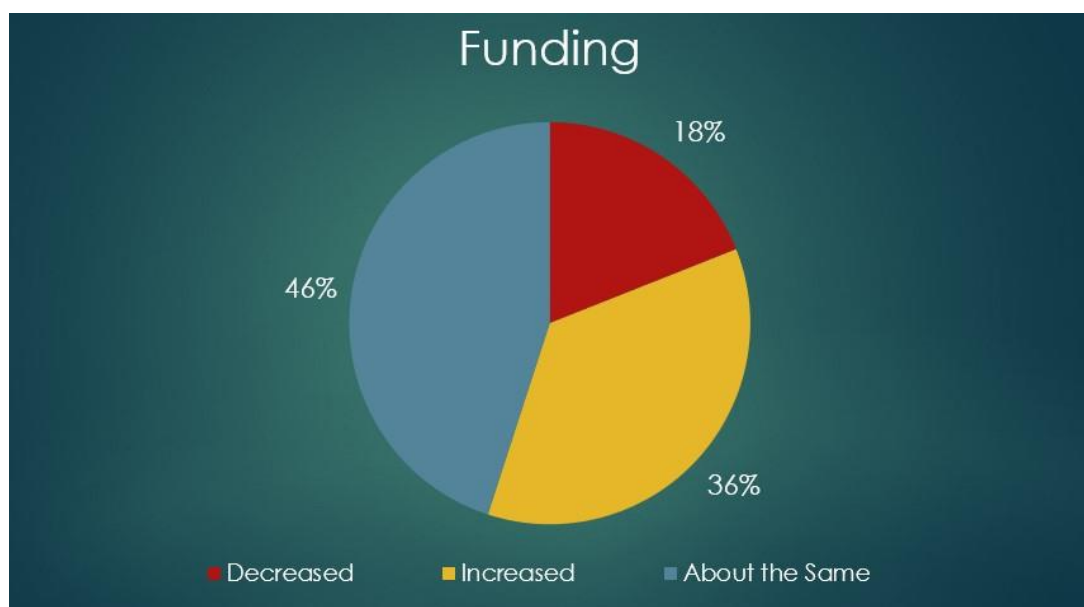
The top three expenses identified by respondents were: staffing costs at 64%, programming costs at 52% and facility costs at 40%. Other key expenses included equipment, supplies, and insurance.

Organizations were also asked to share their top three revenue sources which are outlined in the table below. Local funding includes Banff Canmore Foundation, Rotary, Town of Banff and Town of Canmore Community Grants and the Wim and Nancy Pauw Foundation.



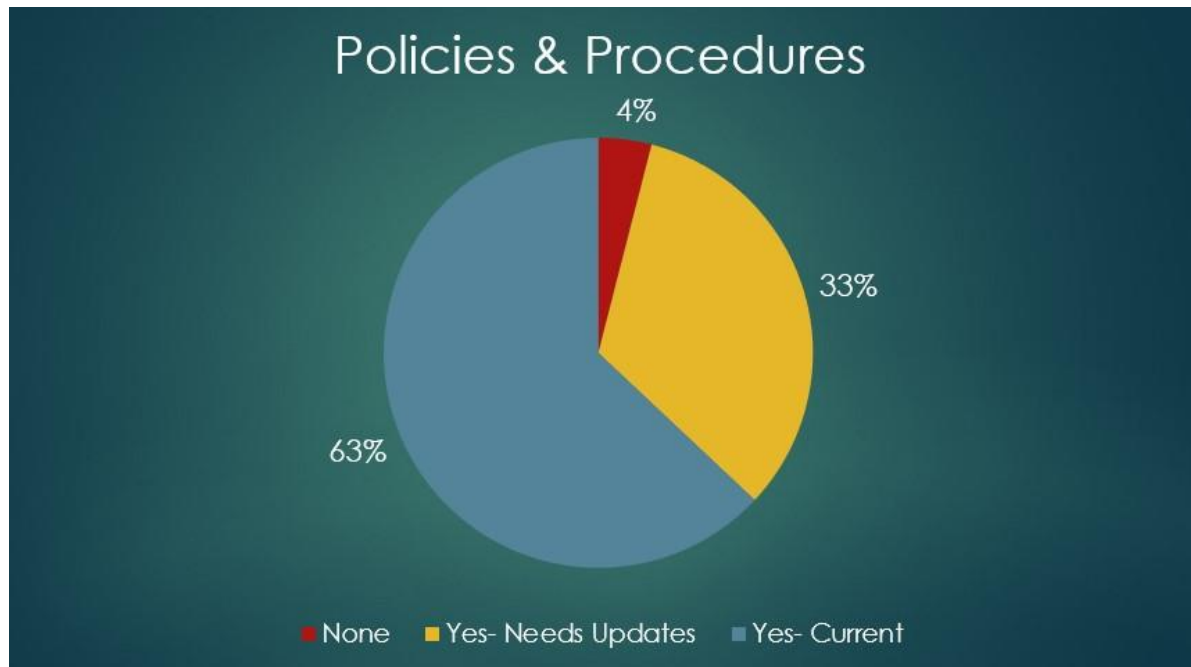
In addition to the top three: 22% reported provincial funding; 21% member donations; 21% sponsorship and 21% reported registration fees.

When comparing respondents' current funding to last year's funding, 82% reported that their funding had either increased or stayed the same (was 90% in 2015). Of the 18% that reported a decrease, the following reasons were reported: limited capacity to fundraise, increased competition/demand to receive grant funding and general decreased opportunities for funding. Some of the reasons provided for an increase in funding were rollover Covid funding, increased programming capacity and membership fees to offset increasing costs, access to Casino fundraisers post COVID and for some organizations it was noted that although funding on paper has increased slightly, it is matching rates of inflation and increasing costs- therefore no benefit is realized.



Policies and Procedures

Many organizations have well-developed (current) or fairly well developed (requires some update) policies and procedures as indicated in the graph below.



Resources

Space is reportedly a challenge for close to half of Bow Valley non-profits. 49% of respondents reported that their facility/space is insufficient and unsustainable (29% reporting somewhat insufficient and unsustainable and 20% reporting insufficient and unsustainable) to do the work of their organization. Of the 49% who reported challenges with access to sufficient facilities, some of the challenges include high dependence on volunteers using their own homes to complete the work of the organization, limited growth opportunities and inability to meet increasing demands due to space constraints and high costs for some available spaces.

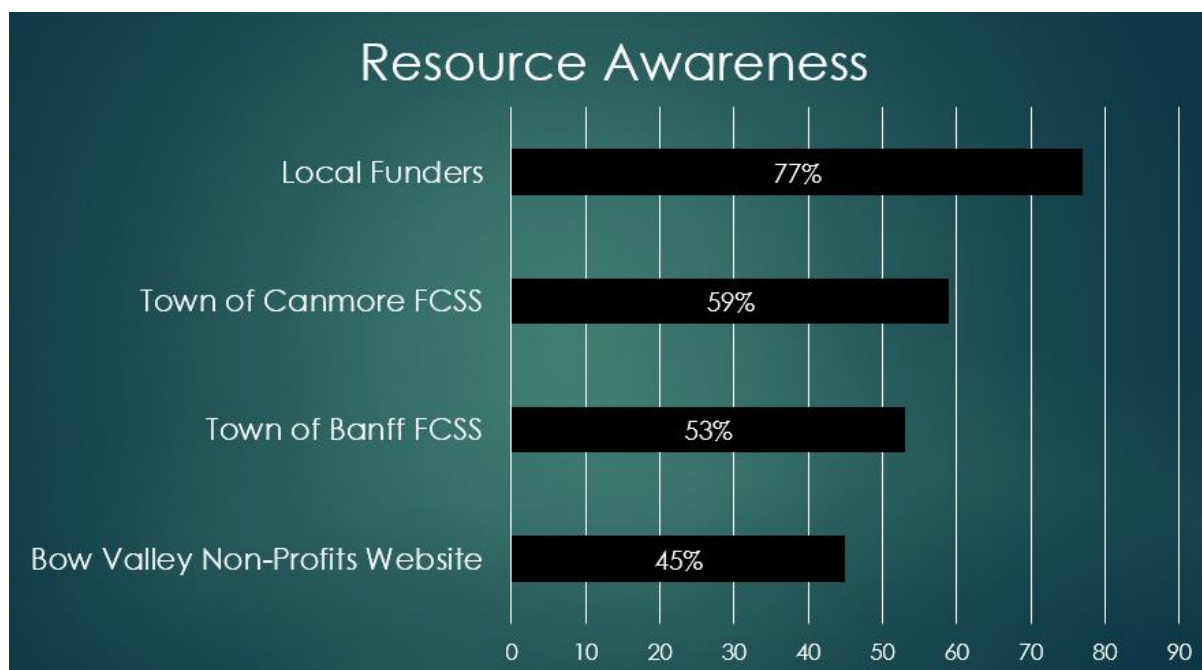
In terms of sufficient work tools (training resources, software, internet access, computers, equipment) 71% of respondents indicated that they had what they needed to be effective with 16% feeling that they have some tools to do their work. Of the 13% that indicated that they did not have what they needed, many noted that they were using their own personal resources and equipment to do the work of their organization. Participants were asked where they go to for support (ex. funding, recruitment, coaching, planning, etc.), the main places that organizations look to when they are in need of support were their membership/participants/registrants (59%), the community (59%), granting bodies (48%) and other non-profits and provincial government (46%).

A menu of possible topics related to non-profit and community group development were provided in the survey to determine interest, and the top desired learning opportunities were fundraising, succession planning, board recruitment and grant writing.

Participants were asked what their top 3 preferred ways of receiving information are and the responses were E-letters/newsletters, in-person/online workshops and networking events.

Respondents were asked what the top 3 needs were for their organization to be more successful & resilient. Flexible/sustainable funding, multi-year general operations funding (unrestricted) and marketing/promotion supports were indicated most often

Additionally, participants were asked about their level of awareness of the resources available to them in the Bow Valley. The results are highlighted in the below graph.



The final portion of the survey was intended to ask organizations to dream big. Imagine if your organization was granted one wish, what would it be and how would it impact the ability to achieve your organization's mission? A significant number of responses to this question were related to the development or re-development of facility/space, increased engagement (member/stakeholder/volunteer), access to unrestricted funding (flexible funding for operations/social enterprise/hiring of staff) and access to centralized resources and assets (volunteers, admin support, grant writing, standardized policies, economies of scale that help relieve volunteer members from having to take on the work of small businesses).

Recommendations

Based on the data collected and the themes identified through the survey, key recommendations include:

- Increase training workshops and website resources related to priority areas identified: fundraising, succession planning, board recruitment and grant writing.
- Create online and “guide type” resources related to topics of interest.
- Investigate options for the sharing of centralized resources and assets and research to further understand the specific types of space and equipment required by non-profits and community groups.
- Create opportunities and vehicles for nonprofits and community groups to connect for information sharing purposes and ideas generation on collective opportunities to advance relevant issues.
- Given the large percentage of organizations dependent upon fundraising for their operations, identify key supports including sharing of fundraising ideas, access to upcoming grant information and other funding opportunities and models.
- Host opportunities to dig deeper into the themes identified in the survey.

Need More Information?

If you have any questions about this survey or the data provided please feel free to contact Laura Wellmann, Family and Community Worker- Town of Canmore FCSS- laura.wellmann@canmore.ca or Jessica Labonte, Community Development Coordinator- Town of Banff- jessica.labonte@banff.ca