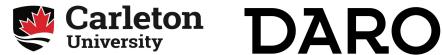
A historical perspective on the nonprofit data deficit





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Funded by the Government of Canada's Strategic Engagement and Research Program



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Agenda



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Who we are

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A <u>quick</u> look



A lack of progress

Two steps forward, one step back over the last 25 years

A period of stagnation No continuity between 2006-2015

No established infrastructure

Any developments are subject to shifting political climates and governmental priorities



Missing easy access to timely, relevant data



- 2. Need for more technical and human capacity to do research guided by the sector's perspective and priorities
 - 3. Absence of sustained collaborative leadership from government and the sector to maintain investments in data products and initiatives





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25 years of research and policy asks point to the ongoing need for better data about the nonprofit sector.

Four themes **interconnected** by data are recurrent:

> Lack of comprehensive and coordinated 4. policy development within the federal government



Introduction

What about recommendations?

Establish a Federal Home for Nonprofits and Prioritize Data Collection

Enhance Sectoral Leadership

Improve Data Provision and Access





Introduction

L Methodology

Discovery

Sector experts were consulted on relevant reports, policy asks, and initiative reports on sectoral and regional data strategies

Desk Research

We wrote report summaries and created a timeline of **identified gaps** and **proposed solutions**

Synthesis

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We used this overview to identify recurrent themes and analyse the proposed solutions, show how the **asks remain unfulfilled** and what should come next.

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What We Read

- **1999**: A Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative
- 2000: National Voluntary Sector Research Report
- **2000–2009**: Reports from the Voluntary Sector Initiative
- 2003–2005: Reports based on the National Survey of Nonprofit & Voluntary Organizations
- 2015: ONN's Data Strategy
- 2018: Mowat, NPC & Imagine's Data Ecosystem
- 2018: ESDC's Recommendations of the Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy & the Senate's Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector
- **2021:** Reports from the Advisory Committee on the Charitable Sector
- 2019–2024: Powered by Data; PolicyWise; PFC; Trillium; DISC/DEAL; Federal Nonprofit Data Coalition Pre-budget Submissions



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Introduction Limitations

This presentation & research paper are a *retrospective* of sector priorities.

Our current knowledge, opinions, and biases alter the lens through which we read and understand papers from the past.

We are presenting a mix of outputs: *proactive* strategies and *reactive* policy asks.

Context matters. As does the context in which we present this research: at <u>this</u> point in time, which is all part of the story.











- Quality data provides insights to effectively address community needs and emerging issues.
- Existing data on the sector is limited to snapshots.
- Data access barriers prevent the nonprofit sector from leveraging systems like Statistics Canada's Research Data Centres.

Challenges

- No commitment to maintaining long-term data sources.
- Statistics Canada does not have a explicit mandate to collect data about the nonprofit sector.
- Lack of alignment hinders a complete understanding of the sector's financial ecosystem, along with the risk of duplicative work.
- Lack of technical and internal capacity to handle data strategically.



Gap 1: Easy access to timely, relevant data

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- Many nonprofits lack the technical skill sets and/or organizational capacity to manage and analyze data.
- Sectoral capacity gap doesn't allow the nonprofit sector to get strategic value from data.
- Research bodies & institutions can facilitate capacity & advocacy.

Challenges

- Building capacity requires financial and human resources.
- Building capacity requires collaboration: sector efforts at the provincial level are often not replicated at the federal level.
- Different interpretations of building capacity: basic skill sets vs. advanced expertise.
- Concerns regarding research dissemination, accessibility, and relevance to inform decision-making processes.

Gap 2: Capacity

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- Building Buy-in: Momentum often stalls when projects end.
- **Coordination and Collaboration:** Unify initiatives and maintain progress.
- Financial: Funding has been inconsistent and project-focused.

Challenges

- A complex and diverse sector makes it difficult to coordinate goals and approaches across organizations, funders and sectors.
- Funding and grants dictate staff commitment and cohesive strategy development at nonprofit/voluntary level.
- Lack of financial commitment limits sustainability.

Gap 3: Sustained Collaborative Leadership

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- Government provides ongoing funding and an enabling policy & regulatory environment.
- Effective collaboration results in positive outcomes and vice versa.

Challenges

- Lack of impact data restricts our ability to understand the effectiveness of government collaboration & support of the sector, as well as potentially reduce the sector's reliance on public funding by attracting diverse funding sources.
- Lack of sustained funding and mandate for Statistics Canada for nonprofit data collection.
- Different perspectives of public and nonprofit sectors.
- Need for continuity and sustained funding of infrastructure rather than initiatives.



Gap 4: Comprehensive and coordinated policy development

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The Way Forward

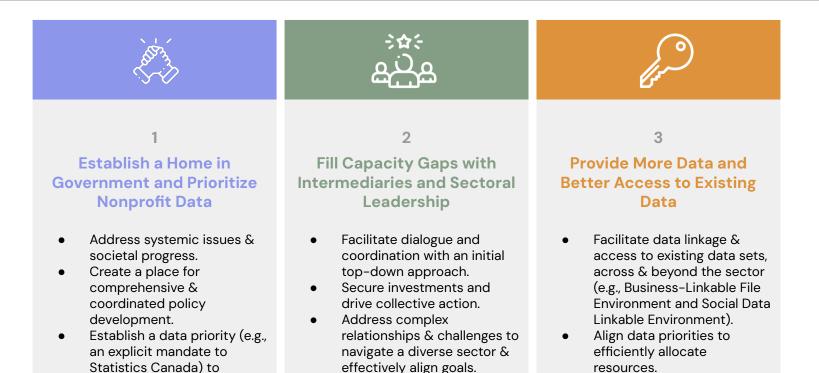
Recommendations for moving forward

support sector success.

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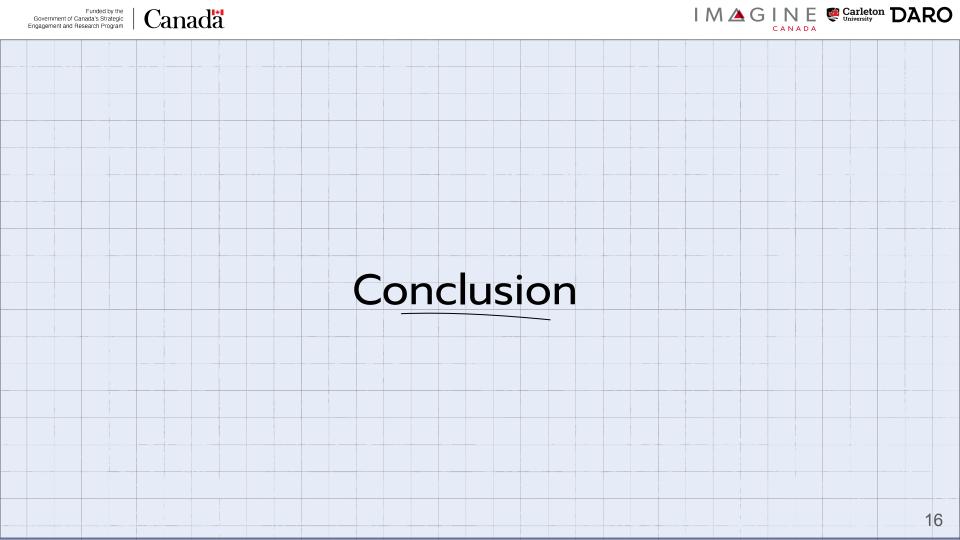
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Conclusion

This is not a new issue

We mostly have the same needs as 25 years ago - now more urgently.

There is momentum

Funders are coming together; surveys are being conducted; there are several examples of innovative sector collaboration with the federal government.



There are examples of sustainable infrastructure

The Business Data Lab is a model of successful collaboration. A Nonprofit Data Lab could address the three recommendations.





