

Voluntary Sector Task Force

Final Report

March 2003

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Executive Summary

The Voluntary Sector Task Force (VSTF) was initially established in the Privy Council Office in June 1998 to coordinate the preparation of advice to Cabinet on the relationship of the government with the voluntary sector. This was a response to commitments made in *Securing Our Future Together* (Red Book II) and reiterated in the 1999 Speech from the Throne. The government had pledged to work with the voluntary sector in three key areas: building the relationship, strengthening capacity and improving the regulatory framework.

In June of 2000, with the announcement of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), the VSTF became the focal point in government for centralized coordination and policy development for the VSI, and for working with the voluntary sector and 22 federal departments and agencies. Its mandate, as part of a coherent federal policy approach, was to advise and support the Reference Group of Ministers on the voluntary sector, as well as departments and agencies, on the state of the voluntary sector-government relationship and on actions to be taken to strengthen the partnership and the voluntary sector's capacity.

The Task Force had three primary responsibilities:

- Develop an Accord with the sector;
- Coordinate and manage the overall government relationship with the sector on the VSI; and
- Support government VSI activities.

Over the next two-and-a-half years, the VTSF broke new ground in working jointly with the voluntary sector, particularly the Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat (VSIS — its mirror organization in the voluntary sector). The VTSF adapted to evolving circumstances in a complex, fast-paced and highly visible work environment.

Initially, the VSTF focused on the internal requirements needed to ensure the approval, successful launch and implementation of the VSI, particularly the proposed

Accord with the voluntary sector. Over time, the VSTF broadened its role and outreach as the overall focus and objectives of the VSI took shape.

Representatives from the voluntary sector had inherently different approaches and goals from those of the public service. The VSTF worked with the VSIS to establish trust, a shared approach to work and results, and an understanding of and consideration for the respective constraints of each sector.

The VSTF, both on its own and in partnership with the VSIS, fulfilled its mandate of developing [*An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*](#) and two corollary documents, the [*Code of Good Practice on Funding*](#) and the [*Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*](#), coordinating all aspects of the VSI and supporting the Reference Group of Ministers and senior management. The October 8, 2002, All-Tables Meeting marked the culmination of the VSTF's work, as most joint tables had completed their work.

As the VSTF wound down from November 2002 to the end of January 2003, staff made a concerted effort to ensure a smooth transition of the continuing responsibility to the Department of Canadian Heritage, providing a solid foundation from which to move forward.

Introduction and Mandate

The Voluntary Sector Task Force (VSTF) was initially established in the Privy Council Office (PCO) in June 1998 with a mandate to coordinate the preparation of advice to Cabinet on the relationship of the government with the voluntary sector, in response to commitments made in *Securing Our Future Together* (Red Book II). In the 1999 Speech from the Throne, the Government, seeking to promote a more effective relationship with the voluntary sector, committed itself to, "...the development of an Accord using a joint table process; support for the celebration of the International Year of Volunteers, and the joint development of a proposal for a National Volunteerism Initiative..."

In June 2000, with the announcement of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), the VSTF became the focal point in government for centralized coordination and policy development for the VSI, working with the voluntary sector and 22 federal departments and agencies. Its mandate was to develop a coherent policy approach for the federal government's work and relationships with the voluntary sector. More specifically, it was to advise and support the Reference Group of Ministers on the voluntary sector, as well as departments and agencies, on the state of the voluntary sector-government relationship and on actions to be taken to strengthen the partnership and the voluntary sector's capacity.

The VSTF had three primary responsibilities:

- Develop an Accord with the sector;
- Coordinate and manage the overall government relationship with the voluntary sector on the VSI; and
- Support government VSI activities.

Its specific responsibilities within the federal government were:

- Develop a coherent strategic framework and global federal strategies on the voluntary sector for the Assistant Deputy Ministers Executive Committee.
- Support the Reference Group of Ministers on the voluntary sector and Cabinet in addressing commitments outlined in "Securing our Future Together".
- Provide leadership through advice, support and secretariat services to the Assistant Deputy Ministers Executive Committee.
- Develop an over-arching VSI accountability framework.
- Provide leadership and support for consultation with the voluntary sector.

- Engage the provinces and territories, the private sector, and stakeholders.

And for joint activities

- Support the Joint Coordinating Committee;
- Support the Joint Accord Table; and
- Support joint government-voluntary sector discussions and committees

VSTF Staff

The VSTF reported to the Deputy Secretary, Operations in the Privy Council Office (from August 2002, the VSTF reported to the Deputy Secretary, Machinery of Government).

The VSTF faced a demanding workload and significant time constraints in implementing the key components of the VSI yet consistently met goals and deadlines.

Staff members were recruited from across the government, generally for one- or two-year assignments, including a number of participants from development programs such as the Management Trainee Program and the Career Assignment Program. A number of individuals were assigned from other parts of PCO or employed for defined periods of time.

The following list identifies key individuals who contributed to the VSTF. Many others contributed and provided administrative support over the life of the VSTF, including contractors who provided writing and communications services, as well as events management and facilitation.

**Julie Angrignon
Jocelyne Bisson-Savard
Catherine Bragg
Joanne Cousineau
Lydie-Ann Davidson-Dion
Louise Delorme
Maria De Palo
Susan Fletcher
Mary Glen
Jacqueline Gonçalves
Georges Grujic
Rebecca Hales**

**Ruth Hawkins
Diane Jacovella
Patti Larmour
Sandra Lavigne
Micheline Lavoie
Barry MacKillop
Peter Mathieson
Jane McGill
Peter Mills
May Morpaw
Nathan Morris
Marceline Olivier**

**Raymond Rivet
Katherine Stewart
Maria Stewart
Wayne Stryde
Sylvianne Thomas
Sylvia Tobin
Patricia Villeneuve
John Walker
Anna Wheeler
Nancy Wildgoose
Linda Wood**

Working In Partnership with the Voluntary Sector

The VSTF's mandate for the VSI existed from the announcement in June 2000 until it closed its doors at the end of January 2003. Although the VSI conferred a common purpose on the two secretariats, the VSTF and the VSIS had inherently different mandates and approaches.

The VSTF had two distinct roles: one across government and within PCO, the other in relation to the joint structures and the VSIS. In its working relationship with the voluntary sector, it faced numerous challenges in developing ways of working jointly that surpass the normal requirements of a partnership. Roles and tasks were divided both along functional lines — with the VSTF providing support and strategic counsel within and across government — and by project or initiative.

The physical proximity of the offices of the two secretariats facilitated regular joint working sessions and effective communications. The VSTF worked in parallel and jointly with the VSIS – with daily meetings during peak periods to collaborate on key aspects of the VSI (such as the three All-Tables Meetings and the December 5, 2001 event that launched the Accord) – to provide active support to the Joint Coordinating Committee and the Joint Accord Table and to coordinate key aspects of communications.

Issues and differences were dealt with in a positive manner. The need to be flexible and practical was paramount as decisions could not be postponed and progress had to be immediate. The VSTF environment was team-focused, collective, open and vibrant. It challenged people to be resourceful, creative and to consistently “think outside the box” to deliver on an innovative mandate within a fixed timeframe.

Policy and Coordination

In addition to its responsibility for providing guidance and coordination for all the joint tables and other collaborative mechanisms, the policy and coordination responsibility of the VSTF included:

1. Providing policy advice to the government

- Drafting and coordinating submissions to Cabinet and to the Treasury Board; and
- Ensuring horizontal coordination across government, including liaison with central agencies.

2. Supporting

- The Reference Group of Ministers on the voluntary sector;
- The ADM Executive Committee;
- The ADM Advisory Committee; and
- The Interdepartmental Working Group on Policy.

3. Managing

- Designing the Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development (SIDPD) initiative and managing rounds one and two of the project selection.

4. Overseeing

- The development of evaluation frameworks for the VSI and its components.

The VSTF served as the secretariat, which included issuing notices of meetings, preparing agendas, developing and coordinating supporting material for the federal mechanisms, and providing meeting follow-up and shared secretariat responsibility for RGM meetings with the Social Development Policy Secretariat at PCO. It also provided briefings and support for meetings between ministers and senior sector representatives.

Its responsibilities ranged from providing strategic advice at the highest level to ensuring that agendas, minutes and other working documents for committees and joint tables were prepared, approved and disseminated.

Reference Group of Ministers

In spring 2000, the Prime Minister appointed a Reference Group of Ministers (RGM) on the voluntary sector to provide stewardship to the VSI, including strategic policy direction and coordination for the government, stewardship of the relationship and a locus for dialogue between government and voluntary sector leadership. Oversight of the development of the Accord was one of its key responsibilities.

Chaired by the Honourable Lucienne Robillard, President of the Treasury Board of Canada, the RGM originally included:

- The Honourable Herb Gray, then Deputy Prime Minister
- The Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage
- The Honourable Allan Rock, Minister of Health (now Minister of Industry)
- The Honourable Martin Cauchon, Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) (now Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada)
- The Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resources Development
- The Honourable Maria Minna, then Minister for International Cooperation
- The Honourable Hedy Fry, then Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women).

RGM membership was adjusted as a result of subsequent Cabinet changes. The following replaced ministers Gray, Minna, Fry, and Cauchon:

- The Honourable Anne McLellan, Minister of Health
- The Honourable Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of Labour and then Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women)

- The Honourable Elinor Caplan, Minister of National Revenue
- The Honourable Jean Augustine, Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women)

The VSTF worked in concert with the Social Development Secretariat of PCO to plan and support meetings of the RGM, which included occasional participation by Patrick Johnston as voluntary sector co-chair of the Joint Coordinating Committee.

The last meeting of the RGM was held on April 22, 2002. The VSTF also organized a meeting for Minister Robillard and Minister Caplan with the co-chairs of the Joint Regulatory Table in August of 2002 before the launch of the Joint Regulatory Table cross-Canada consultations.

By fall 2002, the RGM had completed its mandate of overseeing the launch of the VSI and the development of the Accord.

Assistant Deputy Minister Executive Committee

The VSTF provided secretariat support to the ADM Executive Committee until its final meeting on September 3, 2002. This committee included assistant deputy minister level participation from the departments with ministers who were members of the Reference Group of Ministers. It provided the overall government operational leadership to the VSI, including:

- Advice and strategic direction to the VSI;
- Policy coordination in areas that crossed departmental mandates; and
- Guidance to the work of the VSTF.

Three Interdepartmental Working Groups supported this committee: Operations, Policy and Communications.

Assistant Deputy Minister Advisory Committee

The VSTF supported the ADM Advisory Committee, which met approximately twice a year to:

- Provide advice to the ADM Executive Committee on government-wide policy and strategy development for the voluntary sector;
- Enhance horizontal policy-making and provide the focal point for the voluntary sector in its relationship with the Government of Canada in areas that cross departmental mandates; and
- Support and facilitate departmental initiatives ensuring appropriate coordination and cooperation.

Support to Joint Tables and Other Collaborative Mechanisms

The VSTF participated ex officio in the work of all the joint tables and collaborative mechanisms established under the VSI, as well as the informal alternative mechanism created to share information on advocacy and the definition of charitable status. These bodies focused on how to improve the relationship in a number of key areas – specifically, by:

- Developing a framework agreement setting out their vision and principles;
- Building the voluntary sector's capacity to respond to Canadians' needs;
- Streamlining reporting requirements and regulations affecting the voluntary sector;
- Developing a long-term approach to financing the voluntary sector;
- Enhancing knowledge about the voluntary sector and increasing recognition of the important role it plays; and
- Promoting and supporting volunteerism.

The VSTF also provided secretariat support for the Joint Accord Table, coordinating the production of drafts of the Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector and the Codes of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue and on Funding, in collaboration with the VSIS. It was also responsible for organizing and conducting consultations on the draft documents within the federal government and providing feedback to its voluntary sector counterparts on the results of these consultations. In addition, the VSTF participated in the cross-Canada consultations on the draft Accord in 2001. (See the report of the Joint Accord Table for more information.)

Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development

A key part of the VSI mandate is to strengthen the ability of the voluntary sector and the federal government – independently and in partnership — to serve Canadians. More than 30 percent of the VSI budget (\$28.5 million) was allocated to SIDPD, a substantial investment aimed at developing policy capacity in federal government departments and in voluntary sector organizations.

SIDPD was created for projects that would:

- Enhance policy development in departments by strengthening opportunities for input by voluntary sector organizations; and
- Strengthen the voluntary sector's capacity to contribute to departmental policy development.

SIDPD supported initiatives that:

- Contribute to building networks, alliances, and other collaborative mechanisms among voluntary sector organizations; and
- Support knowledge development and knowledge sharing activities.

In the summer of 2000, a first round of proposal development was launched. A screening panel of sector representatives with experience in public policy development reviewed the proposals, and 21 projects involving eight federal departments were approved. On August 8, 2001, Minister Lucienne Robillard announced \$11.6 million in funding for the projects.

In spring 2001, a second and final round was launched. A broad call for project descriptions was issued outlining the steps that voluntary sector organizations should take to develop and submit a proposal to a federal department or agency for funding. A joint review panel of federal government and voluntary sector representatives reviewed the proposals brought forward by 17 departments and agencies and 46 projects were approved. On March 20, 2002, Minister Robillard announced \$15.1 million in funding for 46 SIDPD projects.

The VSTF developed the criteria and process for the first round of consultation with departments, worked with departments to bring the proposals forward for review and ministerial approval and to prepare the Treasury Board submissions necessary to secure the funding, and attempted to keep all interested parties informed. Each department was asked to undertake an evaluation of its SIDPD projects.

Once SIDPD projects were announced and responsibility rested with individual departments, the VSTF redirected its energies to other priorities. It did not have the mandate or the resources to provide an overall coordination function that could have helped SIDPD project managers share information on approaches, best practices and lessons learned and create a sense of community.

The VSTF was also responsible for overseeing the process of developing the request for proposals for an overall SIDPD evaluation, and for guiding the evaluation team. The contract was posted by Consulting and Audit Canada. The winning bid was submitted by the New Economy Development Group, which will report by late 2003. The evaluation team will:

- Conduct a process evaluation for SIDPD;
- Determine strategic outcomes of projects and key indicators for success; and
- Conduct SIDPD Round 1 outcome evaluation.

Intergovernmental Affairs

Policy coordination included ensuring a link to the private sector and to provincial and territorial governments as well as to foreign governments (such as Scotland, Wales, United Kingdom and Australia) involved in similar undertakings and international bodies such as the United Nations.

The VSTF was responsible for informing provincial and territorial counterparts of directions proposed or being taken under the VSI. A draft strategy for provincial and territorial involvement in the VSI was developed in September 2001. Although the strategy itself was never finalized, the main points were followed and are aligned with the principles of the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA). The VSTF advised its provincial and territorial contacts in advance of any major announcement and involved them in regional consultations.

A Federal – Provincial/Territorial Working Group met approximately twice a year beginning in October 2000 to share information and explore opportunities for collaboration. Meetings were held in October 2000, May 2001 and October 2001 (followed by a teleconference in November). The last meeting in Toronto on May 31, 2002 was co-hosted by the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship. Voluntary sector representatives attended to share their perspective on the VSI's progress. Bilateral meetings were also held from time to time with individual provinces and territories.

The VSTF participated in a Federal-Provincial/Territorial teleconference with officials at Canadian Heritage in December 2002 as part of the transition process.

Federal Regional Councils were also informed of progress made on the VSI as time permitted and developments warranted. Representatives of the councils also participated in the consultations on the draft Accord.

Communications and Engagement

Initially, the communications activities of the VSTF specifically, and the VSI in general, were focused on establishing lines of communications first with the large number of stakeholders within the federal government and then with the voluntary sector as it became formally engaged in the process.

While communications with all the government stakeholders were slow at the outset, leading to some confusion, the VSTF developed, maintained and adjusted a communications strategy for the VSI. In addition, the VSTF established and chaired an Interdepartmental Working Group on Communications. Although the working group met infrequently, departmental contacts assisted in the dissemination of information across the federal government.

The VSTF organized the December 5, 2001 event on Parliament Hill to announce the signing of the Accord and the establishment of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative as well as the funding for the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, on a continuing three-year cycle. Communications planning for the ceremony had a particular focus on the media as the event featured the Prime Minister and several cabinet ministers. Although the event was extremely well attended, particularly by the media. However, it received little media coverage.

To create awareness of the Accord and mark the end of the United Nations International Year Volunteers (IYV), special supplements were designed for both *Maclean's* and *L'Actualité* magazines. Communications were also coordinated with the Royal Canadian Mint for the simultaneous IYV event at the United Nations in New York.

The VSI produced a large volume of print materials. VSI publications were provided in alternate formats including Braille, large print and audio, and particular attention was paid to ensuring the quality and availability of all materials in both official languages.

Funded by the VSTF and jointly managed with the VSIS, the VSI website was the primary communication tool for the VSI. It enabled Canadians to access information about the VSI and participate in the public consultation processes regarding the Accord and the two Codes of Good Practice. The VSI website was expanded to include a full section on the Accord project as well as the work of the other joint tables and working groups.

In addition to distributing the Accord and the Codes of Good Practice across the Government, the VSTF accepted speaking engagements in which it partnered with representatives of the voluntary sector, such as a Lunch and Learn workshop at PCO and a morning armchair discussion at the Canadian Centre for Management Development on December 5, 2002 to mark the first anniversary of the signing of the Accord.

Finally, the VSTF commissioned an overview of the VSI, entitled *A Shared Journey: Mid-term Reflections on the Voluntary Sector Initiative*, to capture the highlights of the experience for Canadians.

Operations

The VSTF managed the usual functions of human resources, financial reporting and accountability, and records management.

The VSTF received its operating funds through a contribution agreement with the Department of Canadian Heritage and returned all remaining funds to PCH at the end of January 2003. It was also responsible for receiving and analyzing financial information from the various table secretariats to inform the JCC.

The VSTF was also committed to ensuring a legacy of the work produced under the VSI. It contracted reports including the work of JCC documentalist, Dr. Kathy Brock, and *A Shared Journey*. It coordinated the production of a written history through final reports

from all the joint tables and collaborative mechanisms as well as reports on the VSIS and the VSTF. The formal records of the VSI have been catalogued and transferred to the Department of Canadian Heritage, to ensure a corporate memory.

Evaluations

Evaluations are a critical component of results-based management, providing information about how well processes and initiatives work and whether the desired outcomes are achieved. From the VSI budget, \$1.7 million was allocated for a comprehensive evaluation of the VSI and the SIDPD initiative. Three evaluations were planned: the VSI process (formative) evaluation, the VSI outcome (summative) evaluation and the SIDPD evaluation.

The VSTF contracted the development of an Interdepartmental Management and Accountability Framework for the Voluntary Sector Initiative.

A Joint Evaluation Steering Committee chaired by the VSTF was created in fall 2001. This committee met regularly to ensure that the evaluations proceeded. Consulting and Audit Canada was subsequently invited to join the committee and contracted to manage the requests for proposals for the evaluations.

The Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development (CVSRD) was awarded the contract to conduct the overall process evaluation of the VSI. The final report is due in the summer of 2003.

In 2003, work will begin on the evaluation of the overall VSI results while the SIDPD evaluation process was outlined in the SIDPD section of this report.

Lessons Learned

Though originally scheduled to disband in March 2002, the VSTF re-profiled its budget to continue its activities and in particular its assistance to the RGM on the voluntary sector, the government and the joint tables until most of the joint table reports and mandates were completed in fall 2002.

The VSTF worked with the VSIS to organize a final All-Tables Meeting on October 8, 2002, during which the VSI, and specifically the results of joint table work were celebrated and the transfer of continuing responsibilities to the Department of Canadian Heritage was announced.

One key lesson learned is that the complexity and time commitments required to work both horizontally across the government and jointly with the voluntary sector resulted in a workload that was seriously underestimated.

The Mandate

The mandate of a task force like the VSTF must be flexible enough to adapt and evolve. It must also, as it changes or evolves, communicate its role clearly and quickly.

Placing the VSTF within the authority of the Privy Council Office gave the VSTF an almost instant *moral* authority, a certain prestige and an ability to influence. However, the VSTF did not have a clear and practical mandate regarding its goals, authority and responsibilities. As one senior VSTF official said, “The Secretariat never really had the authority that an Executive Director would have in an NGO”. At the same time, “We belonged to everyone and yet we belonged to nobody”.

This lack of clarity resulted in confusion, and a certain ambivalence and frustration at the working level. It also affected credibility and operational efficiency. The fact that the VSTF mandate was limited to two years was also a challenge as it precluded long-term planning.

The Leadership

The leadership within the VSTF and the VSIS was of high calibre, demonstrating a consistent ability and determination to bring innovative thought and practices to the VSI and its support structure. Knowing that they were facing a number of novel challenges and needing to navigate “uncharted waters”, they had to be risk takers, be flexible and constantly stress the value of cooperation and collaboration. Though there were problems, without this strong leadership, some goals would not have been achieved.

The Team

The broad mandate and complex reporting matrix placed a significant burden and workload on the VSTF staff. The staff framed the “workload issue” in a professional perspective rather than in a negative tone. The prevailing view was that everyone was “learning on the job” and the team stayed on site until the “job was done”.

Where experience was lacking, initiative and dedication blossomed. Most recognized that the circumstances were unprecedented and that they had to anticipate potential needs and assignments. This was particularly true before the VSIS was established, when the VSTF was the sole source of support and was heavily involved in the preparation of documents for Cabinet consideration and submissions to the Treasury Board.

The turnover rate of VSTF staff was high, placing a strain on management and on remaining colleagues. Due to the pressures of delivering early on the mandate and establishing a number of parallel processes outside the VSTF, the human resources and administration functions were not always seen as well planned in the early stages.

VSTF members needed special skill sets to meet the workload and the unique challenge of working jointly with another sector. Those who excelled in this environment tended to be self-starters who showed initiative and the flexibility to adapt to a changing mandate and work methodology.

Overall, the work environment was collegial with a true team approach to making things happen. As the end of the VSTF approached, staff members were pursuing new employment opportunities, making it difficult to retain staff in the second half of 2002 when it was no longer possible to recruit new individuals. Those who remained were expected to demonstrate flexibility in responding to the most urgent and most critical requirements.

The Experience

Members of the VSTF regard their experience with the VSI as one of the most challenging and rewarding assignments of their careers. They take great pride in having played a role in a unique and demanding government initiative.

Members of the VSTF had the highest regard for their voluntary sector colleagues. For many, the VSI experience exposed them to a sector that they did not know well or fully appreciate. The exposure to other workplace cultures and methodologies was, in most cases, an enriching experience.

The Culture

The VSTF mandate and role within the government and its relationship with the VSIS called for a “horizontal approach”. The hierarchical nature of the bureaucracy and existing accountability structures within departments, combined with the VSFT’s lack of authority, while it was serving joint tables, created serious challenges to making progress. If horizontal initiatives are to succeed in government and especially in conjunction with other sectors of society, a much better recognition of what is needed for success is required.

While the VSTF had to find ways to work effectively across government, it also faced so-called “cultural differences” between the sectors. Though the senior management of both secretariats managed to build an open and trusting working relationship, this was not always apparent at other levels. As the VSI progressed and the relationship matured,

feelings of mistrust did diminish, partly due to a better mutual understanding of the demands and constraints within each sector.

The Process

The number of interdepartmental committees and working groups may have been necessary at the outset to ensure awareness and progress. However, a more streamlined committee structure would have made the work of the VSTF more manageable and less repetitive and burdensome in terms of process and document requirements.

Next Steps

As the Department of Canadian Heritage assumes responsibility for the VSI and its necessary support functions, a number of recommendations accompanied the passing of the torch.

The VSI profile has diminished with the completion of the table reports and the closing of the VSTF. Hopes are high that there will be momentum to re-energize the process and take the VSI effectively to its next stage and beyond. Implementation of the Accord and the Codes of Good Practice are key first steps.

One key element that the VSTF did not have time to pursue was a serious reflection on future public policy directions in the continuing relationship with the voluntary sector. Research and the development of options leading to a discussion paper are proposed as possible next steps.

The need to pursue a continuing relationship with provincial and territorial counterparts, to share information on related activities at both levels of government and to coordinate, where possible, as well as to continue providing international leadership on this issue were also mentioned as highly desirable next steps.

Recommendations for Future Task Forces

The following suggestions are made in the hope of assisting future bodies of a similar nature, with short reporting times:

- Move early on communications;
- Seek clear authority and accountability, even when given broad horizontal responsibilities;
- Seek recognition of the need for longer timeframes to develop the trust needed to work jointly;
- Develop a flexible work plan with scope for contingencies; and
- Pay particular attention to attracting and retaining staff who will remain until the end of the mandate.

Relevant Documents List

[An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector](#)

[Code of Good Practice on Funding](#)

[Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue](#)

A Shared Journey: Mid-term Reflections on the Voluntary Sector Initiative