

The Rubber and the Road

A Workbook for Implementing the Codes of Good Practice

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1. Before you start

About the Codes of Good Practice

When the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector signed the Accord in December 2001, they knew their work was just beginning. The Accord built a strong foundation for a renewed relationship between the sectors. But how would it play out on the ground – in the hundreds of daily interactions between the two sectors?

That's where the Codes of Good Practice come in. They are a resource of tangible, concrete ideas about how to take the spirit and guidelines of the Accord and put them into action in both government and voluntary sector organizations. The Codes are about building relationships, looking for common ground and accepting one another's differences. They're also about making Canada a better place to live by improving policies and programs for Canadians. What makes the Codes so powerful is that they were developed in a truly joint process and are endorsed by both sectors.

Who should use this Workbook

The Workbook is meant to be used both by people working in Government of Canada departments and agencies, and in the many organizations that make up the voluntary sector. The Codes focus on funding and policy dialogue because these are two of the areas where the sectors come together most often. So if you're a policy analyst or program officer who deals with the voluntary sector, check it out! If you're the administrator of a large national organization that receives Government of Canada program funding or would like to, or the part-time co-coordinator of a three-person advocacy group that wants to be heard, check it out!

What the Workbook can do

For many of you, living up to the Accord and the Codes of Good Practice will just mean "business as usual." You already devote a lot of time and energy to the relationship, collaborating with the "other" on key issues, sharing information and resources, and exploring new ways of drawing on each other's unique insights and skills. For some, it may only take a little tweaking here and there to put the relationship on a brand new footing. And for others, the spirit may be willing, but you're not quite sure how to begin.

Wherever you are now, this Workbook can give you some ideas about how to move forward. If you work in a voluntary sector organization, it may mean doing some research about how government funding processes work. If you're part of a government policy group, it might involve getting out into the field a little earlier in the policy process to find out what voluntary sector organizations are thinking. Or maybe it's just a matter of inviting some new faces to sit down at the table and talk.

How to use it

Choose how you use the Workbook. It's designed to be flexible so you can decide for yourself what approach best suits your needs. Here's how the rest of the Workbook is set out:

- section 2: *Where are you now?* – poses some questions to get you thinking about your current relationships and how they're working – or not working
- section 3: *Moving forward ... on policy dialogue* – looks at some good practices that apply to the policy process, helps you assess how you're doing now, and suggests how you can improve
- section 4: *Moving forward ... on funding* – looks at some good practices that apply to funding, helps you assess how you're doing now, and suggests how you can improve
- section 5: *The road ahead* – asks you to set out an action plan for the future, based on what you identified as priorities in either of the previous two sections

You may want to get a group of colleagues together – either from your own or other organizations – and engage in a dialogue about these two Codes. As a group, you can choose to go through the exercises and map out an action plan. Or you may decide to work through the exercises on your own and present your findings to your co-workers. Another option is to organize a workshop and invite members from your own or both sectors to participate in a half-day session using the Workbook as a discussion tool.

If you would like more information, or further suggestions on how to get started, you can refer to the contacts listed at the end of this Workbook.

2. Where are you now?

A good starting point for moving forward is to look at where you are now. Whether you work in the federal government or the voluntary sector, think about your current working relationships with the other sector and jot down your answers to the following questions:

- Who do you deal with now and under what circumstances (i.e., why? how often? in what format – e.g., face-to-face or telephone, one-on-one or group meetings?)?

- How would you characterize your relationship (e.g., collaborative, effective, flexible, frustrating, combative, inconsistent)? Do you think the people you deal with in the other sector would agree with you?

- How important is this relationship to achieving your work goals?

- What do you value most/least about the relationship?

- Do you know enough about the “other’s” environment to fully understand their needs?

3. Moving forward ... on policy dialogue

The good practices outlined below are aimed at improving the policy process – not to mention the policies themselves. Take a few minutes to rate yourself, your group or your organization on each of the following good practices – are you doing all you can or are there some areas that need work? Then go down the list and rate the other sector’s performance – is there room for improvement?

Once you’ve completed the assessments, go through the questions below to help identify some of the ways you can move forward. Note that the first set of good practices relates to both sectors; the next two sets of good practices focus on the two sectors separately.

A. Good practices for both sectors

(you can use this chart to assess your practices and those of the “other”)

	Couldn't be better	Needs improve- ment	Starting from scratch	Doesn't apply
▪ Engage in open, inclusive and ongoing dialogue through the various stages of the public policy process.				
▪ Identify and allocate resources and time to policy activities.				
▪ Ensure appropriate and significant representation from across the voluntary sector.				
▪ Build policy capacity and knowledge, including an understanding of the other sector’s issues and processes.				
▪ Be aware of the policy implications of what you do and inform the other sector of your conclusions.				
▪ Ensure that assessments take into account the different regional impacts of policies.				

Ask yourself ...

- At what stage of the policy process do you generally interact with the other sector? (See below for an overview of the policy process.)

- Are you getting what you need from the other sector?

- Are there opportunities to work together at other stages of the policy process?

- What are the benefits/challenges to expanding your relationship?

Some tools to work with ...

About the policy process

Voluntary sector organizations can contribute at any stage in the public policy process:

- *Issue identification* – by helping identify important and emerging issues, either informally or through policy scanning and planning exercises, or serving on advisory groups
- *Agenda-setting* – by mapping out a plan for how and when voluntary sector organizations can bring key information to the development of public policy priorities
- *Policy design* – by contributing their expertise and experience in research, analysis, drafting and testing models, and developing design options
- *Implementation* – by contributing their knowledge and expertise in delivering services and programs, and drawing on their connections to the community
- *Monitoring* – by monitoring initiatives and suggesting changes in policy direction
- *Impact assessment* – by assessing the impact of policies at the national and local levels and recommending changes

Consider this ...

Describe what the policy development process would look like – *in a perfect world*.

Consider, for example:

- how and to what extent each sector would input at key stages of the process
- how to involve both marginalized and mainstream groups
- what methods of consultation/collaboration would be most effective
- the costs and benefits of your approach (e.g., with respect to timeliness, resources required, getting buy-in)

B. Good practices for the Government of Canada

	Couldn't be better	Needs improve- ment	Starting from scratch	Doesn't apply
▪ Consider how new legislation, regulations, policies and programs may affect the sector and individual organizations (i.e., use a “voluntary sector lens”)				
▪ Regularly listen to the concerns of voluntary sector organizations in all their diversity – including grassroots and hard-to-reach organizations				
▪ Use a range of methods to engage the sector in the various stages of policy dialogue				
▪ Make information such as research and policy papers readily available to the sector in useable formats				

	Couldn't be better	Needs improvement	Starting from scratch	Doesn't apply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and coordinate policy discussions on related topics so organizations aren't overburdened 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture the full spectrum of views, giving special attention to those most likely to be affected by policies 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build trust and understanding by discussing the rationale for and implications of decisions with the sector 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform sector organizations about how the input was used 				

Ask yourself ...

- What are you doing now to put these good practices into action?

- How can you build on these activities?

- Are there any barriers to moving forward and, if so, what can you do to overcome them?

- What methods are being used to engage the voluntary sector – for example, meetings, surveys?

- Are there any other good practices that you can put in place to strengthen the policy relationship with the voluntary sector?

Some tools to work with ...

A “Voluntary Sector Lens”*

When developing a policy, program or regulation, ask yourself what impact it will have on the voluntary sector.

For example, would the initiative:

- enhance or strain the sector’s capacity or long-term viability?
- preserve or diminish its autonomy?
- respect the sector’s timing and cycles?
- provide for agreement on objectives and outcomes?
- create unhealthy competition within the sector?
- encourage collaboration between government and the sector?
- include a process for resolving disputes?
- permit flexibility and accommodate changing circumstances?

Consider this ...

The voluntary sector is a significant social and economic force in the country – for example, it:

- employs 1.3 million people (9 percent of working Canadians)
- is supported by the efforts of 6.5 million volunteers who dedicate more than 1 billion hours each year (the equivalent of 580,000 full-time jobs)
- is made up of approximately 180,000 non-profit organizations (of which 80,000 are registered charities) as well as hundreds of thousands of groups that are not incorporated
- has annual revenues of \$90 billion and assets of \$109 billion
- includes a wide array of groups and organizations – ranging from service clubs and advocacy coalitions to food banks, international aid organizations, symphonies and local sports clubs

* Adapted from “Working Together: A Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative” (August, 1999)

Find out more about ...

- the full range of voluntary sector organizations with an interest in/knowledge about specific policy issues
- the barriers that can prevent voluntary sector organizations from taking part in policy discussions (e.g., lack of resources or knowledge about government processes)
- how you can make the best use of voluntary sector expertise and experience
- the most effective ways of communicating with/reaching out to concerned voluntary sector organizations

C. Good practices for the voluntary sector

	Couldn't be better	Needs improve- ment	Starting from scratch	Doesn't apply
▪ Develop and strengthen policy capacity in your areas of expertise				
▪ Gain a better understanding of formal and informal policy development processes in the Government of Canada				
▪ Ensure that diverse groups have an opportunity to provide input				
▪ Represent your constituents and articulate their position clearly on issues they consider important				
▪ Identify whose views are represented when intermediary bodies express opinions on behalf of parts of the sector				
▪ Build consensus by improving coordination within the sector				
▪ Act as intermediaries by canvassing sector organizations and summarizing their views on various issues				
▪ Identify policy makers and share policy ideas with them				
▪ Bring emerging issues – including local concerns – to the attention of the Government of Canada				

Ask yourself ...

- What are you doing now to put these good practices into action?

- How can you build on these activities?

- Are there any barriers to moving forward and, if so, what can you do to overcome them?

- Are there any other good practices that you can put in place to strengthen the policy dialogue relationship with the Government of Canada?

Some tools to work with ...

One of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) joint tables – the Capacity Joint Table (CJT) – has compiled a resource guide with information and tools to help the sector influence public policy. *Public Policy Toolbox: A Guide for the Voluntary Sector on Successful Involvement in the Public Policy Dialogue in Canada* includes practical and easy-to-understand information on such topics as:

- how the policy making process works in Canada
- getting on the government’s “radar screen”
- making your point effectively
- working collaboratively

The *Toolbox* also provides extensive resource listings and links to web-based information.

Consider this ...

The following scenario is fictitious but it demonstrates what can happen when a government-voluntary sector relationship isn't working well:

The policy branch in one large Government of Canada department has developed a new policy outlining the conditions under which older Canadians can receive pension income support. When this new policy was developed, some seniors' organizations within the voluntary sector were consulted. The policy is now in its final review stage and other seniors' organizations within the voluntary sector have concerns. In fact, they're calling their Members of Parliament to protest what they see as unreasonable and unfair restrictions on support. For their part, government officials say that this is the first they've heard about a problem.

- What do you think the government might have done better to involve the voluntary sector in developing this policy?

- What could the voluntary sector organizations have done to make themselves heard at an earlier stage?

- How can each sector move forward from where they are now?

4. Moving forward ... on funding

Over the long term, improvements in the sectors' funding relationship should result in substantial gains on both sides – including greater accountability in the funding process, strengthened sustainable capacity among voluntary sector organizations and more transparency, consistency and understanding between the sectors. Take some time to rate yourself or your organization on the selected good practices that follow and see what areas are most in need of improvement. You may also want to make a quick assessment of how the other sector is doing on its good practices.

Once you've completed the assessment, go through the questions suggested below for some ideas about how you can move forward.

A. *Good practices for both sectors*

(you can use this chart to assess your practices and those of the "other")

	Couldn't be better	Needs improve- ment	Starting from scratch	Doesn't apply
▪ Make sure impact assessments of funding policies and practices consider the varying regional circumstances				
▪ Exchange information, and build general awareness and understanding				
▪ Make good-quality information available for decision-making and reporting on results				
▪ Establish collaborative processes with clearly defined roles and responsibilities – particularly for decisions about the funding process				
▪ Agree on the outcomes for financial programs/activities				
▪ Develop evaluation tools to measure longer-term funding outcomes at the program level (as opposed to project level)				
▪ Communicate shared results and successes jointly				

Ask yourself ...

- What types of funding, if any, does your organization provide to/receive from the “other?”

- What are the major strengths/weaknesses of your funding relationship – from your perspective and from the other sector’s view?

- If you could change one thing about the funding process, what would it be?

Some tools to work with ...

Check out the following funding information about the two sectors and consider:

- Whether there are advantages/disadvantages to the voluntary sector of the various types of funding (contributions, contracts, grants, etc.)? To the Government of Canada?
- Whether there are any funding arrangements that might better suit your relationship with the other sector?

What the Government of Canada supports

Each department and agency of the Government of Canada determines the type(s) of funding best suited to its mandate and policy objectives – these may include contributions, grants, contracts and other transfer payments. Although most funding is

allocated for a one-year period, some departments and agencies also provide funding on a multi-year basis for activities such as:

- program and service delivery
- strengthened sustainable capacity
- strategic investment
- alliances and partnerships
- policy dialogue
- advocacy
- research
- innovation
- capital expenditures

As well, the Government of Canada provides *in-kind contributions*, for example, access to facilities, video teleconferencing equipment, training and personnel interchanges.

About voluntary sector financing

The voluntary sector draws its support from a variety of sources, including:

- \$5 billion from financial and/or in-kind donations from Canadians
- millions of people who volunteer their expertise and labour
- governments, foundations, charitable funding organizations and corporations
- funds raised by voluntary sector organizations through service fees, product sales, investment income and other charitable fund-raising activities

B. More good practices for the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector

Following are some good practices for each sector (Government of Canada = GC; voluntary sector = VS) pulled from the Code. For a complete list of the Code’s good practices, go to the VSI web site: www.vsi-isbc.ca

	Couldn't be better	Needs improve- ment	Starting from scratch	Doesn't apply
<p>Valuing the voluntary sector: GC: provide opportunities for voluntary sector organizations to access contracts (for example, by developing service registries of organizations with a particular expertise)</p> <p>VS: demonstrate and communicate value in the delivery of programs and services</p>				

	Couldn't be better	Needs improve- ment	Starting from scratch	Doesn't apply
<p>Strengthened sustainable capacity: <i>GC:</i> use multi-year funding agreements to enhance organizations' stability and capacity for long-term planning</p> <p><i>VS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ invest in organizational and human resource development management ▪ explore the use of multi-year funding agreements ▪ include infrastructure costs (e.g., facilities, information technology) in budgets 				
<p>Co-operation and collaboration: <i>GC:</i> solicit voluntary sector views on better ways to meet new or existing needs through funding programs</p> <p><i>VS:</i> make programs more responsive to local needs</p>				
<p>Innovation: <i>GC:</i> identify emerging issues related to funding policies and practices, and use new funding approaches to address community needs</p> <p><i>VS:</i> identify innovative funding practices for delivering current programs</p>				
<p>Diversity and equitable access: <i>GC:</i> make funded programs more accessible to groups that typically face challenges by making information available, writing applications in plain language and eliminating barriers in eligibility criteria and funding practices</p> <p><i>VS:</i> ensure equality of opportunity in employment practices and service delivery</p>				
<p>Accountability: <i>GC:</i> make application and accountability standards and practices flexible enough to accommodate a variety of approaches and the limited capacity of smaller organizations</p> <p><i>VS:</i> provide effective board governance</p>				

	Couldn't be better	Needs improve- ment	Starting from scratch	Doesn't apply
<p>Transparency and consistency: <i>GC:</i> clearly state the objectives of funding programs and their eligibility criteria and ensure that application forms are understandable and concise</p> <p><i>VS:</i> co-operate with external funding reviews, including monitoring, evaluation and/or audit</p>				
<p>Efficiency and effectiveness: <i>GC:</i> speed up the application process by developing less complex and shorter agreements for lower-cost, lower-risk projects</p> <p><i>VS:</i> work with government to simplify forms and reporting requirements</p>				

Ask yourself ...

- What are you doing now to put these good practices into action?

- How can you build on these activities?

- Are there any barriers to moving forward and, if so, what can you do to overcome them?

- For each of the above areas, what other good practices can you put in place to strengthen and simplify funding practices?

Some tools to work with ...

More about accountability...

... for voluntary sector organizations

Effective governance and accountability begin at home. For voluntary sector organizations, this means ensuring that you have the appropriate processes and structures in place to direct and manage your operations and activities, and ensure that they function well. Effective board governance involves, among other things* :

- steering toward the organization’s mission and guiding strategic planning
- being transparent, including communicating to members, stakeholders and the public and making information available on request
- developing appropriate structures
- ensuring the board understands its role and avoids conflicts of interest
- maintaining fiscal responsibility
- ensuring that an effective management team is in place and overseeing its activities
- implementing assessment and control systems
- planning for the succession and diversity of the board

Think about:

- how your organization rates on accountability
- whether your current governance/accountability regime is affecting your funding relationships
- what structures and processes your organization needs to bring it up to scratch

... for Government of Canada departments and agencies

Think about how you and your organization can accommodate the varying needs, practices and capabilities of voluntary sector organizations and, at the same time, be accountable for public money, for example, by:

* Adapted from “Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada’s Voluntary Sector” (February, 1999)

- taking into account monitoring procedures already agreed to by a voluntary sector organization's other funders, as well as any quality assurance system introduced by the organization, when discussing the content, quality and format of Government of Canada information needs
- agreeing on well-defined measurable results and clear roles and responsibilities
- recognizing and respecting the different ways that community groups can manage their resources and still meet accountability requirements

Consider this ...

Almost every facet of Canadian life is affected in some way by the Government of Canada. In addition to providing essential services such as national security, environmental protection, maintaining national parks and providing transportation services, the federal government contributes to the development of Canadian and global economies, and sustains relations with other countries and organizations around the world.

In carrying out these diverse roles, the Government of Canada provides direct and indirect support to programs and services delivered by voluntary sector organizations. For example, in 1997-98, the government made about \$2.2 billion in direct payments to voluntary sector organizations and provided \$1.5 billion in indirect support to the voluntary sector through personal and corporate tax credits for charitable donations and GST rebates available to non-profit organizations. In addition, tax assistance is provided through the sales tax rebates to charities and the benefits associated with their tax-exempt status.

If you work in a voluntary sector organization that receives Government of Canada funding, think about how you can simplify the processes for funding by, for example:

- collaborating with other voluntary sector organizations to share innovative funding approaches
- working with government funders to identify innovative funding approaches and develop user-friendly forms and reporting requirements

If you work in a federal government department or agency that provides funding to the voluntary sector, think about how you can simplify the processes for funding by, for example:

- identifying “boiler plate” information that applies to more than one program
- developing harmonized processes within/across departments to facilitate joint funding when several programs/departments are working collaboratively with a common client

- ensuring minimum duplication and requiring only essential information
- making information on funding processes readily available
- engaging the voluntary sector in discussions about innovative approaches and tools
- providing sector organizations with access to useful planning tools

5. The road ahead

Now that you've identified some areas to work on in your relationship with the other sector, it's time to commit to action. Looking back over your notes, select three to five areas where you think there is some real room for improvement and set out an action plan for achieving it. For each area you choose to focus on, consider the following:

- What's the goal?

- What specific actions are needed to get there?

- Are there any barriers that need to be dealt with along the way?

- What, if any, resources or tools would help?

- Who should be involved/take the lead?

- What kind of timeframe will this take?

- How will you know when you get there?

Congratulations! You have taken some important steps on this shared journey to a better relationship between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada.

For more information...

For more information or copies of the Accord and Codes of Good Practice please visit the Voluntary Sector Initiative web site: www.vsi-isbc.ca.

This Workbook was prepared jointly by the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector as a tool to help federal departments and voluntary sector organizations bring the Accord and Codes to life in their organizations. If you have questions or comments, contact:

- The Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Affairs Division, Social Development Canada, (819) 956-6715, or
- The Voluntary Sector Forum, (613) 238-7555, or toll free 1-800-821-8814.