Making Evaluation Work in the Nonprofit Sector

A Call for Systemic Change

SECTOR DRIVEN
EVALUATION STRATEGY

COLLECTIVE
UNDERSTANDING

Sharing perspectives = Better evaluation.

ONTARIO
NONPROFIT
NETWORK

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

The nonprofit sector plays a vital role in the health and wellbeing of our communities. Ontario's nonprofit sector is the largest in Canada and is a socio-economic force driving the province and our communities. Ontario nonprofits and charities are often the first to identify issues and opportunities to strengthen and create vibrant, healthy communities. These issues and opportunities can be complex and evolving as economic and social environments change.

Consequently, we need organizations that are constantly listening, have developed the ability to gather and interpret many types of information, and are using that information to innovate and evolve.

The Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) developed a [Sector Driven Evaluation Strategy](#) to promote an ecosystem in the nonprofit sector that enables nonprofits to make thoughtful use of evidence to further their missions and service to communities. Fundamentally, a sector that embraces evaluation is one that is more focused on the values of understanding, discovery, critical reflection, and continuous improvement. ONN understands that high quality and useful evaluation is an important tool for the sector and has put together seven key recommendations for improving evaluation and learning in Ontario's nonprofit sector.

7 Recommendations for Improving Evaluation in Ontario's Nonprofit Sector

Promote learning and action before measurement
1. Create safe spaces for sharing evaluation findings.
2. Develop learning organizations.

Make more strategic use of evaluation resources
3. Use the right evaluation approach for the job.
4. Match evaluation investments to expectations.
5. Differentiate evaluation and accountability.

Expand what evaluation can achieve for the nonprofit sector
6. Investigate the full impact of the nonprofit sector.
7. Evaluate evaluation.

Why a position paper? A call to action

For nonprofits to be able to do their work better and achieve their missions, they need evaluation results that will answer questions that matter and enable them to adapt to changing circumstances. For governments and other funders who make investments in the nonprofit sector, promoting meaningful evaluation helps to create a stronger, more informed, and more adaptive sector. It also informs decisions to ensure these investments continue to support and make a difference.

There is abundant research on the factors that lead to high quality, useful evaluation. However, the evaluation work that takes place in (and about) Ontario's nonprofit sector doesn't always use these factors. The purposes and intended uses of evaluation work are not always made clear, for example. The methodologies employed are not always aligned well with purposes or with available resources. The focus is more on the process of data collection and reporting. This has led nonprofits to express frustration about the evaluation process.

U.S. research suggests that 92% of nonprofit organizations conducted some form of evaluation in 2016.[1] The majority of respondents (85%) felt evaluation was important to their organizational growth and development, and over 85% of them regularly used evaluation results to support the development of new initiatives. However, 43% felt that there was too much external pressure on them to measure results. Limited staff time, insufficient financial resources, and limited staff expertise in evaluation were the top three barriers organizations faced in evaluating their work.

Funders in Ontario have told ONN that they have had similar experiences; evaluation does not always meet their needs either. As a result, evaluation's potential as a tool for learning that leads to useful and actionable insights can get missed. Furthermore, without a serious rethinking of the current evaluation ecosystem, nonprofits, governments, and other funders may be unintentionally ignoring key questions that matter to communities and equip the sector to respond in more impactful ways.

This position paper is a call for systemic changes that will create an ecosystem within which it is straightforward, efficient, and rewarding for nonprofits and funders to invest in evaluation work.

It is also intended to further critical conversations to build a nonprofit sector that is more responsive, accountable, and focused on the best ways to support the communities in which they work.

What do we mean by the evaluation ecosystem?

To date, most of the efforts to improve evaluation capacity in Ontario's nonprofit sector have focused on the *how to* of evaluation. These efforts have focused on the technical steps involved in designing and implementing an evaluation project, for example, or circulated standardized measures. The *why* of evaluation has not been explored in as much depth.

The onus cannot be solely on the individual nonprofit to make evaluation work on its own, with limited resources and expertise. Instead, more attention needs to be paid to those factors that influence evaluation practice in important ways and are typically outside the control of most individual nonprofits. The ecosystem includes:

- *Government funders*. These actors create policies and practices that affect how evaluation work is funded, what questions or issues evaluation addresses, how evaluation findings factor into decisions about investment in programs and services, and how findings inform policy.
- *Public and private funders*. These actors are diverse in their evaluation interests and practices. How they work with nonprofits varies, but they are often more flexible than government funders and capable of exploring innovative approaches to evaluation.
- *Provincial and national associations or umbrella groups (like ONN, for example)*. These actors often work to build evaluation capacity in the sector. They also participate in developing broader strategy and advocate for new kinds of investment or action. They may also manage or conduct more complex evaluation projects.
- *Policy think tanks and regulatory bodies*. These actors contribute to creating the context within which nonprofit evaluation takes place (through the resources they create for the

sector, the projects they choose to pursue, and the ways in which they frame the sector's value and impact in their communication with government).

- *Academic researchers and evaluation practitioners*. These actors contribute to the evaluation ecosystem by undertaking applied research and knowledge mobilization efforts that set the stage for good evaluation work and by training their students in evaluation strategies.
- *The public.* Through their donations, their votes, their volunteering work, and their participation in civic dialogue, the public can create demand for better quality evaluation and more evidence-based practice.

Our Seven Recommendations

Promote learning and action before measurement

1. Create safe spaces for sharing evaluation findings

At present, findings from evaluation work are not broadly shared by nonprofits, governments or funders. A 2016 U.S. study found that 93% of nonprofits use evaluation to report to funders, while only 45% of funders use evaluation to report back to grantees.[2] Moreover, only 52% of nonprofits and 49% of funders report sharing their findings with peers.[3] There are good reasons why this is true. Organizations worry that the results will be misunderstood. If evaluation findings suggest that the project faced significant challenges or did not achieve intended outcomes, nonprofits worry they will be at a disadvantage the next time they apply for a grant or seek donations. Funders have similar concerns about the impact of their investments. These concerns leave nonprofits feeling that it is not safe or strategic to share evaluation findings widely or fully.

Safe spaces for sharing evaluation findings are where nonprofits know they will not be penalized for negative evaluation results. Safe spaces typically involve peer-to-peer sharing with similar nonprofits. They invite the sharing of stories and examples, as well as numbers. They use facilitation techniques that encourage sharing and learning from mistakes and unexpected findings. They allow for discussions that are sufficiently open-ended and with enough time to uncover the deeper evaluation insights that may not be immediately obvious.

Creating safe spaces applies to all levels of the evaluation ecosystem. For example, the Mowat Centre has recently called for the creation of "ministries of failure" within Canadian governments. These ministries would encourage civil servants and their nonprofit partners to take strategic risks and share mistakes more openly.

In our conversations with Ontario nonprofits, we have learned that independent provincial networks, umbrella groups, and resource centres are well suited to creating these kinds of spaces. They have experience synthesizing diverse information from different kinds of nonprofits and sharing that information with others. They often host conferences and other gatherings and so they have the facilitation skills to manage complex discussions. They hold little or no power over their members' funding.

It should be made easier for nonprofits, funders, and the general public to find the results of evaluation work in the nonprofit sector. This isn't only about transparency and good process, but also a fundamental commitment to changing the way information flows and facilitating a better way to share insights. There is also work to be done to promote better sharing of findings internally among staff and management.

Examples of action
- Evaluation Cafes offer opportunities for people interested in and working in evaluation to share what they are working on and ask questions. Similarly, Vibrant Communities Canada has an Evaluating Community Impact Community of Practice that is held bi-monthly via teleconference. If similar evaluation communities of practice were more formally organized around subsector issues, it might promote more sharing of knowledge among stakeholders who are often working in similar fields on similar issues.
- Repositories of evaluation tools and evaluation findings may also help to create safe spaces for sharing. For instance, YouthREX has an online exchange designed to help organizations share what they are learning about youth and well-being. Its site also includes a youth measures inventory with qualitative tools, process measures, outcome evaluation measures, and an evaluation how-to guide. Similarly, the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth

Mental Health maintains a [measures database](#) and has created resources and videos on topics related to evaluation.

2. Develop learning organizations

A nonprofit organization that has a culture of learning is more likely to do useful evaluation work. "A good evaluation is not only contained in the insightful report, or strong evidence to convince others of your causes. It is also in self-understanding, in building knowledge and in taking braver decisions with confidence."[4] Organizations (whether they are government departments, non-governmental funders, or nonprofits) that support their staff to think critically and continually reflect on their progress with an eye to improvement are organizations that inherently value evaluation and related processes like story telling, development of innovative programming, and inter-organizational collaboration of planning. However, evaluation capacity building work in Ontario tends to focus more on the process of data collection and analysis than it does on enabling nonprofit leaders to build a culture of learning.

Some writers have observed this bias towards measurement and lack of attention to a culture of learning in collective impact projects. Tamarack Institute, for example, has recently called for collective impact approaches to shift their emphasis. One suggestion involves placing less emphasis on the development of shared measurement systems across partners and more emphasis on creating robust learning and evaluation processes. In their words: "CI (Collective Impact) participants are known sometimes to rush right into shared measurement with the question, 'What should and could we measure together?' Unfortunately, without first having laid the foundations for strategic learning, they find themselves wrapped up in messy, frustrating, tail-chasing processes with slim prospects for producing useful data."[5]

Nonprofit leaders, particularly board members and executive directors, are one group that is well positioned to act on this recommendation. Many nonprofit leaders already value and prioritize learning. For example, they consult regularly with their stakeholders in order to understand their needs. They make space at meetings for critical reflection and they mentor other leaders. They manage with a focus on outcomes and are willing to alter their programming or operations to achieve change.

Funders are in a good position to create a nonprofit ecosystem that cultivates and rewards learning organizations. They can incorporate a commitment to learning in the criteria for grant applications (as well as a commitment to measurement) and offer training events on this theme. They can strengthen the infrastructure of the nonprofit sector by supporting leadership development and mentorship. Funders can also lead by example and take steps to seek and promote themselves as learning organizations. This could potentially include gathering feedback both internally among staff, as well as from grantees on the effectiveness of their processes.

Examples of action
- Having access to a mentor — a leader who works in the nonprofit sector and has experience building good evaluation practice into nonprofit management — would be a significant asset to organizations seeking to develop a learning culture. Both Capacity Canada's EvalU and Innoweave's model of workshops plus coaching use a mentorship model to help nonprofit leaders build cultures of learning.
- Some funders are working to create formal feedback mechanisms that allow for funders and nonprofits to provide honest commentary on the issues. For example, in the U.S., the Grantee Perception Report is a way for funders to gather feedback on their granting process that includes information on their evaluation requirements.

Make more strategic use of evaluation resources

3. Use the right evaluation approach for the job

In the nonprofit sector, the term evaluation is often used in a broad sense to refer to a wide range of measurement and research processes that have different purposes.[6] As a result, evaluation approaches are sometimes misused. For example, a nonprofit might attempt to use an evaluation of a single local program to show the ways in which that program has an impact on the lives of participants many years down the road, when a multi-agency, longitudinal applied research project might be a better fit for that purpose. Similarly, a funder might ask grant

recipients to report on basic performance measurement questions and then attempt to use that data to demonstrate the impact of its investments — a purpose better served by a collective impact approach.

Matching the *why* of evaluation and related kinds of work to the *how* can be challenging. Finding the right approach begins with understanding the purpose of the work and a discussion of whether evaluation is truly appropriate, and if so, what kind.

Evaluators and applied researchers working in the nonprofit sector can play a key role in educating government, nonprofits, and other funders about the appropriate uses of various types of evaluation work.

Examples of action
- [ONN's Matching Evaluation Approaches to Expectations](#) resource identifies five basic approaches to gathering evidence about nonprofit work and identifying the most appropriate uses for each. Nonprofits and funders should work to use these terms in more precise and consistent ways and should develop a deeper understanding of the best uses of each approach, as well as the limitations. For example, if a funder asks grant recipients to provide statistics in a standardized format about the numbers of people served or targets achieved, they should be clear that they are engaging in *performance measurement* and not full *program evaluation*.
- The Canadian Evaluation Society's [Program Evaluation Standards](#) state that good evaluation practice should "yield sufficiently dependable and consistent information for the intended uses" (standard A3) and "employ technically adequate designs and analyses that are appropriate for the evaluation purposes" (standard A6). This is another resource that users of evaluation can reference when designing program evaluations.

4. Match evaluation investments to expectations

Evaluation work in the nonprofit sector requires significant investment of time and resources by government, public and private funders, and nonprofits themselves. Sometimes, evaluation work

is a requirement for funding even though the grant does not include resources earmarked for evaluation. In this context, it is especially important to be sure that limited resources are being directed towards evaluation work that can fulfil its intended purpose. It is therefore important that nonprofits and funders are able to have an open conversation about the purpose of the evaluation and the true costs associated with it. When it comes to barriers to evaluation, for example, 79% of nonprofit respondents to a 2016 survey listed limited staff time, while 52% listed financial resources.[7]

One way to direct evaluation investments more strategically would be identify situations where nonprofits are being asked to replicate results that already exist. Before starting any evaluation, a review of existing literature on the subject should be done to see if an evaluation will help lead to new insights or merely reproduce results that others have already proven.

Every evaluation project is unique and there are no universal rules for determining the right budget for a given situation. The Innovation Network recommends that 5–10% of an organization's budget should be dedicated to evaluation[8] and this is a good guideline for ongoing program monitoring and basic evaluation of established programs. Evaluating interventions that are complex, unique, or highly experimental is often more expensive. Ontario's Local Poverty Reduction Fund supports innovative local projects aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty and requires sophisticated evaluation designs. It recommends that applicants devote 15–25% of grant funds to evaluation.[9]

Recommendation #2 calls for nonprofit leaders to build cultures that promote learning to set the stage for useful evaluation. This work requires some time and energy as well and it is not typically covered in evaluation budgets. However, this kind of investment may yield the greatest value per evaluation dollar in the long run. It is not as time consuming or as technically challenging as a formal evaluation project, but it yields many different kinds of benefits. It helps nonprofits to make strategic choices about where to invest in program redesign, staff training, and dissemination of results, as well as evaluation.

Governments, as well as other funders, play a key role in determining how evaluation work is resourced. In order to build an ecosystem that promotes meaningful evaluation, all funders should recognize the role they play in how evaluations are financially supported. Funders can

support evaluation in ways other than providing direct funding to nonprofits, such as by contracting with an external resource group to support evaluation or by providing training opportunities to nonprofits.

Nonprofits themselves also play a key role in acting on this recommendation. Properly planning for evaluation and embedding evaluation in budgets can help in the creation of learning organizations. Nonprofits also need to be realistic about what they hope to achieve. Organizations need to think through what expertise they have on staff, versus the need to hire an external consultant. Evaluation should be seen as a vital part of how an organization operates and adequately embedded into planning and budgeting cycles.

Examples of action

- The Local Poverty Reduction Fund provides applicants with clear information about the type of evaluation work they are willing to support and expects resources for evaluation to be earmarked in the project budget.
- McMaster's Research Shop is one resource that nonprofits can consult to determine what research on a subject already exists.

5. Differentiate evaluation and accountability

Evaluation is impactful when it serves a clear and specific purpose. It is important to differentiate measurement work undertaken for the purposes of accountability more clearly from evaluation work focused on demonstrating meaningful local impact, ongoing learning, and action.

Funders that invest in Ontario's nonprofit sector often require grant recipients to gather and report evaluation findings. This kind of evaluation is used as an accountability mechanism to determine whether grant funds were used as planned or whether intended outcomes were achieved. These requirements have certainly raised awareness about the importance of evaluation in the sector and have led to an increase in the amount of evaluation work that gets done.

At the same time, these requirements have also constrained the type of evaluation that nonprofits do and the ways in which evaluation findings are used. When decisions about future

funding are based on evaluation findings, evaluation work tends to address questions that are important to funders in a way that minimizes risk and maximizes the potential for future funding. It may be less likely to address questions that matter to the people served by the nonprofit or to fully explore the reasons why a program isn't working in a particular context.

Funders have a key role to play in making sure that their own accountability requirements are clear and appropriate and that they do not require nonprofits to submit data they are not intending to use. There are also many ways in which funders can support nonprofits to undertake meaningful evaluation that address questions to enable them to act in a more impactful way. While some funders already do this, such as working together with their grantees to determine what questions need to be asked and what data needs to be collected that would satisfy both parties, this approach is still not the norm.

While there is often tension between evaluation for learning and evaluation for accountability, new approaches to nonprofit accountability may help to address this problem. More focus should be paid to developing evaluation as an exercise where nonprofits, governments, funders, and other stakeholders are committed to ongoing learning.

Examples of action
- [The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)](#) has recently revamped its accountability and evaluation requirements. Many grant recipients are required to report to OTF using one of a series of standardized tools that are tied to the Foundation's investment priorities. However, grantees are also encouraged to allocate resources for their own independent and local evaluation strategies in their grant application.
- The [Atkinson Foundation](#) does not require a standardized evaluation report from grantees, but instead asks them to share proposed metrics and a number of reflective blog posts over the course of the grant period.

Expand what evaluation can achieve for the nonprofit sector

6. Investigate the full impact of the nonprofit sector

The nonprofit sector is important to the fabric of Ontario society for a broad range of reasons. It is an economic driver, it strengthens the democratic and civic life of communities, and it models progressive practices around quality of work, environmental stewardship, diversity, and inclusion. It also provides the infrastructure for the five million Ontarians who volunteer their time and talents.

To enable the nonprofit sector to meet the evolving needs and aspirations of communities in an ongoing way, we need an evaluation ecosystem that addresses a wider range of evaluation questions and equips nonprofits to adapt quickly. How do nonprofits support vibrant communities? What strategies are effective in bringing organizations together to solve problems? What is the long-term impact of activities like early childhood development, health promotion, or integrated community food systems? With a better understanding of the social, economic, environmental, and cultural impacts of the nonprofit sector in communities and regions, the nonprofit sector can support decision makers in their efforts to develop laws, regulations, funding frameworks, and policies that allow the sector to better serve their communities. This more holistic approach to nonprofit evaluation would address the desire of many nonprofits and funders to demonstrate system-wide impact. It would also help ensure that, in time, investments in the nonprofit sector are deployed most strategically in terms of solving our most intractable challenges.

Applied researchers and capacity building organizations have an important role to play in addressing this recommendation. They are often best equipped to undertake the more complex and longer-term studies needed to set the stage for evaluating the full impact of the sector. Nonprofits, governments, and funders also play a key role and can incorporate these broader benefits or impacts of the sector into their evaluation work.

Examples of action

- [Imagine Canada's Chief Economist for Canada's Charitable and Nonprofit Sector](#) has conducted studies on the economic contributions of Canada's nonprofit sector to GDP and related topics. A provincial network or association could develop a resource on how to demonstrate the impact of nonprofit work on social cohesion.
- The Toronto Arts Foundation produces the [Toronto Arts Facts](#), which aims to show the economic value of the arts sector in Toronto. Similarly, the Association of Ontario Health Centres' [Be Well survey](#) provides "…a minimum set of meaningful standardized questions intended for adaptable use in community-governed primary health care settings."

7. Evaluate evaluation

There is no doubt that considerable resources are devoted to evaluation work in Ontario's nonprofit sector. Governments, public and private funders, provincial associations and nonprofits themselves have told ONN that evaluation does not lead to action as often as it should. However, there is very little empirical evidence about the size and scope of evaluation work in the sector, or the degree to which these investments have achieved their intended outcomes.

Other jurisdictions have begun to take steps to understand what kinds of resources and ideas are being invested in evaluation in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors, the effect those investments have had, and the obstacles to better evaluation practice.

Examples of action

- In the U.S., the [Innovation Network](#) has conducted three State of Evaluation surveys that have generated a national picture of evaluation practice in the sector. An Ontario state of evaluation survey to gather data and further inform and develop evaluation capacity building efforts in the sector locally would be a strategic next step in our efforts to make better use of evaluation.
- The Canadian Evaluation Society's [Program Evaluation Standards](#) call for "external metaevaluation" (E3). This standard describes how evaluation

sponsors, clients, evaluators, and other stakeholders could conduct periodic reviews of the process and impact of evaluation work.

Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations are a central component of Ontario's communities and socio-economic infrastructure. Aligning this work under high-level strategies is important, but not sufficient on its own to ensure that the sector is capable of listening, understanding, and adapting in an ongoing way. This is why it is important to create an ecosystem that encourages meaningful evaluation in the sector.

The seven recommendations presented here are meant as a call to action. They have emerged from over two years of dialogue with nonprofits, public and private funders, government, and other evaluation stakeholders around the challenges and opportunities to creating a more useful evaluation ecosystem.

The examples cited in this paper are but a few possibilities of action and are not meant as an exhaustive list, but rather a potential starting point for discussion.

ONN believes that the nonprofit sector is ready for and in need of an evaluation ecosystem that consistently leads to useful evaluation and learning. This means focusing on how to develop an evaluation ecosystem that:
- Promotes learning and action before measurement;
- Makes more strategic use of evaluation resources; and
- Expands what evaluation can achieve for the nonprofit sector.

Evaluations are not done alone. Instead, they often include multiple actors who each play a role in determining the relevance and use of an evaluation. Nonprofits, governments, funders, and others must realize, accept, and embrace their role in the evaluation ecosystem. This means being clear in their own expectations, as well as the expectations of their partners, the intended purpose(s) of the evaluation, and the ways in which learning and accountability will be prioritized, supported, and embedded into the work.

Ultimately, this position paper should be seen as a conversation starter and a way for all users of evaluation to begin to envision an evaluation ecosystem that, at its core, is more rewarding and engaging for good evaluation work to take place.

References

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- [Center for Effective Philanthropy - Grantee Perception Report](#)
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- [IETM - Look, I'm Priceless! Handbook on how to asses your artistic organisation](#)
- [Imagine Canada - Key Facts about Canada's Charities](#)
- [Innovation Network - State of Evaluation](#)
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- [McMaster Research Shop](#)
- [Mowat Centre - From fail-safe to safe-to-fail](#)
- [Ontario Centre for Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health - Measures database](#)
- [Ontario Government - Local Poverty Reduction Fund](#)
- [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#)
- [Tamarack Institute - Evaluating Community Impact Community of Practice](#)
- [Tamarack Institute - Collective Impact 3.0](#)
- [Toronto Arts Foundation - Toronto Arts Facts](#)
- [YouthREX - The Exchange](#)

Appendix A. Guiding Principles

One of the reasons why Ontario's nonprofit sector does not yet have an evaluation ecosystem that consistently generates useful findings is that there has not been a consistent, high profile call for such a system. Given that the evaluation utilization literature has generated very strong, consistent recommendations about best practices in evaluation use, a simple call for better evaluation based on the following three core principles could go a long way. These principles are explained in more depth in ONN's [principles document](#).

The three principles listed below are intended to outline the basic conditions necessary to lead to useful evaluation. It is a way to identify or diagnose problem areas as well as outline the aspirational ideal of an evaluation partnership that leads to action.

3 Principles to help us get to useful evaluation
- ✓ **Reciprocal Respect:** An evaluation that is treated as a partnership is more likely to lead to positive action.
- ✓ **Commitment to Use and Learning:** Evaluation should be concerned primarily with learning and action.
- ✓ **Matching the Why to the How:** Good evaluation is not wedded to a single approach but employs a range of methods designed to maximize the chances of achieving evaluation's intended use.

ONN believes that applying these principles would go a long way toward the creation of a more inclusive and effective evaluation ecosystem.

Appendix B. Defining Evaluation

ONN uses Michael Quinn Patton's definition of evaluation: "Evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and results of programs to make judgments about the program, improve or further develop program effectiveness, inform decisions about future programming, and/or increase understanding." We follow Patton in defining "programs" very broadly to include, for example: events; artistic projects; or systems change work.

At its ideal, evaluation is a tool to help make sense of how and why something is done. It is designed to generate knowledge that can help to facilitate decision making. It also provides an opportunity to engage with all stakeholders, reflect on both failures and successes, and learn from them in order to make evidence-based decisions.

Appendix C. Five Common Concerns from Nonprofits about Evaluation Identified by ONN

- Nonprofits don't feel a sense of ownership over the design and outcomes of the evaluation.
- Nonprofits feel that their voice is not heard.
- Nonprofits feel that an evaluation will be used to judge them.
- Nonprofits feel that an evaluation will not be used in a meaningful way to benefit their clients or community.
- Nonprofits feel that an evaluation will take up a lot of their time and resources.

Endnotes

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ABOUT ONN

Organized in 2007 and incorporated as a nonprofit in 2014, the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) is the independent nonprofit network for the 55,000 nonprofits and charities in Ontario, focused on policy, advocacy, and services to strengthen Ontario's nonprofit sector as a key pillar of our society and economy.

ONN works to create a public policy environment that allows nonprofits and charities to thrive. We engage our network of diverse nonprofit organizations across Ontario to work together on issues affecting the sector, and channel the voices of our network to government, funders and other stakeholders.

OUR VISION

A Strong and Resilient Nonprofit Sector. Thriving Communities. A Dynamic Province.

OUR MISSION

To engage, advocate, and lead with—and for—nonprofit and charitable organizations that work for the public benefit in Ontario.

OUR VALUES

Courage to take risks and do things differently. Diversity of perspectives, creativity and expertise to get stuff done. Optimism and determination. Solutions created by the sector, with the sector, for the sector. Celebrating
our successes and learning from our experiences. Strength that comes
from working together.

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