



VOLUNTEER HUB FEASIBILITY STUDY

OPTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Marjie Lesko Consulting

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1.0 BACKGROUND	3
2.0 AUDIENCE	3
3.0 OPPORTUNITY	3
4.0 OPTIONS	4
4.1 Option 2 - Online Only, No Staff	5
4.1.1 Pros	5
4.1.2 Cons	5
4.1.3 Considerations	5
4.1.4 Operational Cost	6
4.2 Options 3 - Online Only, Staffed	6
4.2.1 Pros	6
4.2.2 Cons	7
4.2.3 Considerations	7
4.2.4 Operational Costs	7
5.0 COST – Start Up	8
6.0 POTENTIAL PARTNERS	10
7.0 FUNDING	11
7.1 Potential Sources	11
7.1.1 Service Fees - Membership	11
7.1.2 Service Fees - Training	11
7.1.3 Goods & Products	11
7.1.4 Events	11
7.1.5 Private Contributions – Ongoing Donors	11
7.1.6 Grants	11
7.2 Funding Projections	12
8.0 RISKS	13
9.0 SUMMARY	16
10. RECOMMENDATIONS	17
Stage 1 – Collaborate and Identify Umbrella Organization	17
10.1 Confirm Potential Partnerships	17
10.2 Identify Umbrella Organization	17
Stage 2 – Operational Funding	17
10.3 Secure Operational Funding	17
Stage 3 – Pilot	17
10.4 Identify High-Level, Website Requirements*	17
10.5 Secure Pilot Funding	18
10.6 Conduct a Pilot	18
10.7 Review Pilot Outcomes	18
Stage 4 - Maintain or Further Develop the Hub	19

1.0 BACKGROUND

This document forms the final deliverable in the Volunteer Hub Feasibility Study commissioned by Nelson's Social Action Planning Network (SPAN) and builds on the Community Engagement Outcomes Report previously submitted to SPAN. The Study was conducted over a six month period from April to September, 2017 and is supported by:

1. **Tri Centre Scoping Study** conducted on three Canadian volunteer centres serving similar, small, geographically diverse communities - conducted in late Autumn, 2015.
2. **Community Dialogue** with a dozen or more local volunteer organizations – primarily in the social services sector - held in March, 2016.
3. **Community Engagement Activities** (Dialogues and Surveys) that included representation across a broad range of volunteer sectors and the majority (55 of 101) of VIO's invited - conducted in June and July, 2017.
4. **Steering Committee** initiated with nine representatives of the VIO community, which became four members at final review of this document. Member depletion was due to a variety of reasons: lack of time to attend meetings, environmental emergencies, employment departure, extended absence, and extenuating personal circumstances. Hence, these Recommendations have the approval of three Steering Committee members as it was too far progressed in the Study to recruit and inform new Members.

2.0 AUDIENCE

This Study has been conducted for SPAN to facilitate decision-making on whether to support creating a Volunteer Hub in Nelson, and if so, provide recommendations for creating a sustainable Hub.

3.0 OPPORTUNITY

As this is a Not-for-Profit venture, the question is not whether there's profit to be made, but whether there is sufficient need in the community that could benefit by creating a Hub. And, if there is a need, is the solution to filling that need fundable?

There is currently no coordinated, centralized volunteer service that supports Nelson's VIO's and Volunteers. Through Community Engagement activities we've confirmed that Yes! there is a need for a coordinated, central service as the majority of Nelson's VIO's across a broad range of sectors indicated they would use a Volunteer Hub. We've also confirmed a Hub should benefit Nelson and its volunteer community in multiple ways such as:

1. Increased promotion of VIO services.
2. Increased recruiting opportunities.
3. Save VIO's time and costs by sharing common services.
4. Increase opportunities for VIO's and volunteers to gain knowledge and skills through training, affiliations, and resources.
5. Support volunteers to easily find a cause that best fits their needs, skills and availability.
6. Better utilize skills, knowledge, and expertise in our community.
7. Increase community connection, wellbeing, and resilience.
8. Increase ability to identify gaps in the community and provide timely responses in filling those gaps.

Now that need and use have been established, the questions become: What options do we have to provide this service? How much will it cost? Are there stakeholders or potential partners in the community? What risks are associated with creating a Hub? What is the potential to fund it? Following are discussions in response to these questions.

4.0 OPTIONS

What options do we have to provide this service? Several options exist for creating a Volunteer Hub. Table 1 identifies four main options and provides a brief description of what they are, the services they could provide, along with their staffing requirements and responsibilities. Analysis and discussion will then follow.

Table 1 – Volunteer Hub Options, Comparison

OPTION	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE PROVISION	STAFFING	STAFFING RESPONSIBILITIES
1. Do Nothing	Maintain status quo. Don't create a Hub.			
2. Online Only – No Staff	Create a Web presence with Hub services delivered only through a Website.	<p>Promote – Provide a VIO Directory where organizations can self populate organizational and contact information.</p> <p>Recruit – Provide VIO's and volunteers with a searchable, self-matching, self-populating tool to identify opportunities and people to fill them along with a complete Job Board listing.</p> <p>Engage – Provide a general Application Form & Checklist.</p> <p>Train – Provide links to existing online training resources.</p> <p>Support – Provide links to online information & resources.</p>	As Needed Web Support	Maintain and support Website
3. Online Only - Staffed	As above with Hub services supported and delivered by a contracted Hub Coordinator.	<p>Lead – Identify volunteer opportunities, arrange networking and information sharing opportunities.</p> <p>Promote/Recruit – Conduct events and deliver presentations.</p> <p>Engage – Deliver general volunteer orientations.</p> <p>Train – Provide community specific, online or in-person, training resources and workshops.</p>	As above plus: 1 Part Time Coordinator	<p>Promote Hub services to VIO's and volunteers.</p> <p>Create and upload information and resources to the Website.</p> <p>Provide over the phone/email support.</p> <p>Assess community needs and create</p>

Option 1 will not be explored as needs and benefits have been established and projected Member Fees should generate sufficient income to support an Online Only/Non Staffed Option.

Options 2 & 3 will be explored as they meet VIO's preference for an Online Hub and deliver VIO's top two highest service priorities – Promoting volunteer opportunities and recruiting volunteers.

Option 4 will not be explored as there isn't enough demand or benefit to warrant significantly higher expenditures associated with running a physical space.

4.1 Option 2 - Online Only, No Staff

This option involves creating a Website to promote volunteer opportunities via a self-populated VIO Directory and recruit volunteers via a self-matching, self-populated, searchable tool/database that identifies volunteer opportunities and volunteers to fill them. Staffing would consist of Website support only with the VIO Directory and volunteer opportunities managed and updated by Hub Members. Online reporting functionality could be built into the online platform to provide metrics to report to the Board on areas such as: traffic volume (new and repeat users), traffic sources (Google, Social Media, Referral, Link), bounce rate (the % of sources that go to only 1 page then exit your site), Engagement (time users spend on the website). A Working Board and a few Volunteers would be used to conduct promotional activities. This option does not include a physical office space or staffing to enable in-person contact.

4.1.1 Pros

- **Meets Community Need** - Honours the clear indication from Nelson's volunteer community that an Online presence is preferred.
- **Delivers Top Service Priorities** - Is able to deliver the top two service priorities identified in the Study's Community Engagement activities.
- **Embraces Online Trend** - Capitalizes on the growing trend of providing services in an online only environment.
- **Delivers Services at Minimum Cost** - Keeps operational costs to a minimum with no staffing, space, furniture, equipment, office supplies, utilities, or insurance expenditures.
- **Sustainable** – Projected Member Fees should cover operational costs.

4.1.2 Cons

- **Limited Service Provision** – No ability to provide leadership with limited promotion, training, support, and recognition services provided.
- **No In-Person Contact** – No in-person contact available to support individuals in the community who aren't online, do not have access to online capabilities, or aren't familiar with utilizing online environments.
- **Limited Marketing & Promotion** – Limited ability to conduct marketing and promotion of Hub services.
- **No Community Leadership** - No ability to be responsive to the volunteer community's and Nelson's needs overall.

4.1.3 Considerations

- **Governance** - There are two governance structures to consider. One is to create a Hub under an Umbrella organization. The other is to create a free standing Hub registered as its own Not-for-Profit (NFP). If Umbrella governance is pursued, an organization needs to be identified to do this.
- **Organizational Readiness** - If SPAN pursues the creation of a Hub, their current Board Members bring a wealth of experience from their day jobs running social service organizations. However, alignment with SPAN's mandate and Board willingness to oversee a Hub would need to be confirmed as SPAN has no day-to-day staffing, nor funds to support the creation of a Hub. If another organization takes on the role of being an Umbrella organization, organizational readiness to do so also needs to be examined and clarified at the Board level.
- **Working Board Needed** – Some activities will need to be conducted by Board Members such as monitoring/reporting/reviewing website success along with Hub advertising and

promotion. This poses no issues if an Umbrella organization governs the Hub and has staffing available to conduct these activities. However, if an Umbrella organization isn't able to provide high level management or if a free-standing Hub is created, a working Board will be needed to conduct high-level Hub monitoring and management.

- **Metrics and Reporting** - The creation of metrics tools to measure online activity should be considered in the design of an Online Hub to ensure the Board can generate reports to monitor usage, measure success, and identify future directions.

4.1.4 Operational Cost

How much will it cost to operate? Cost projections in Table 2 assume no partnership(s) exist to contribute any management, a web platform, support or hosting. Currently, SPAN is in discussion with a potential online platform partner, and if a partnership is formed, below costs may decrease. This report also identifies organizations in Section 6 that may meet a Hub's promotion and recruitment needs via customized, off the shelf platforms. If this occurs, operational costs may increase if a fee is charged to link to an existing platform. This is identified to ensure SPAN is aware of potential activities that may decrease or increase costs identified in Table 2.

Table 2 Online Only Hub, Cost Projections – Umbrella & Free Standing Governance

ACTIVITY	COST (Umbrella Governance)	COST (Free Standing Governance)
Staff		
Volunteers (1 - 3, Marketing & Promotion)	NIL	NIL
Training & Development – Working Board	\$750	\$1,250
Operating Costs		
Web Support and Maintenance	\$1,000	\$1,000
Web Hosting Package	\$250	\$250
Professional Fees		
Accounting	Absorbed by Umbrella Org.	\$750
Banking	\$100	\$100
Insurance		
Directors & Officers Liability	Absorbed by Umbrella Org.	\$650
Advertising / Promotion	\$2,500	\$2,500
Unallocated (10%)	\$460	\$650
Total Expenses	\$5,060	\$7,150

Based on the above projections, a Hub governed under an Umbrella organization would cost approximately \$2,100 less to run per year than if a Hub is governed as a Free Standing organization. Both Hub governance structures could be sustained through projected Member Fees of \$4,713 to \$7,069 as identified in this Study's Community Engagement Outcomes Report.

4.2 Options 3 - Online Only, Staffed

This option would include everything identified in Option 4.1 above plus a contracted, part-time Coordinator with the Contractor providing office supplies and equipment and being responsible for office equipment support and maintenance. There would be no physical office associated with the Hub. The Contractor would be working from a home office environment.

4.2.1 Pros

- **Provides In-Person Contact** - Provides a personal experience and 'face' for the Hub with over the phone, and in-person contact and support available.
- **Enables Marketing & Promotion** - Enables coordinated, ongoing marketing and promotion of Hub services to ensure services are known, used, and meeting user needs.
- **Delivers More Diverse Services**- Enables broader and more diverse service provision such as delivering in-person training and support which was one of the higher priority needs identified in the Study's Community Engagement Outcomes Report.

- **Enables Leadership** - Enables identification and assessment of needs as they arise and the ability to create ways to fill those needs E.g. targeted recruitment activities or seeking project based funding to design and/or deliver training.
- **Creates Potential Income Opportunities** – A Coordinator could oversee the creation or purchase of products that could be sold to members such as volunteer recognition mugs, frames and certificates for awards, t-shirts, ball caps etc.

4.2.2 Cons

- **Higher Cost** - Higher operational cost to support a Coordinator position.
- **Single Point of Staffing Reliance** – This model places the reliance of running a Hub primarily on one staff member. The Coordinator becomes the ‘face’ of the organization which is a benefit over not having a staff member. However, if that person is ill, or decides to leave, there is no succession plan available – aside from a well-documented role and responsibilities, a hand over period, or a well-informed Board.

4.2.3 Considerations

- **Governance, Organizational Readiness, & Metrics Reporting** – The same considerations apply to this Option as to the Online, non-staffed Option.
- **Meeting Space** – No dedicated office space would exist to conduct meetings. Casual, coffee shop style meetings or donated meeting space at a partner or umbrella organization may be used for in-person meetings.
- **Single Resource / Achievable Priorities with Limited Time** – Not all services can be delivered by a single, part-time resource. A Strategic Plan needs to identify the highest priority services and activities to be pursued that are achievable within the time a part-time contractor has to work.

4.2.4 Operational Costs

Table 3 – Online Only, Staffed Option – Umbrella Organization & Free Standing Governance

ACTIVITY	COST (Umbrella Organization)	COST (Free Standing)
Staff		
Contractor/Coordinator *	\$16,380	\$16,380
(10 hrs/wk \$30/hr, 52 wks/yr + GST, .25 FTE)		
(20 hrs/wk, \$30/hr, 52 wks/yr + GST, .5 FTE)	\$32,760	\$32,760
Volunteers (3+, Marketing & Promotion)	NIL	NIL
Training & Development – Non Working Board	\$250	\$750
Operating Costs		
Web Site Support and Maintenance	\$1,000	\$1,000
Web Hosting	\$250	\$250
Professional Fees		
Accounting	Absorbed by Umbrella Org.	\$1,500
Banking	\$100	\$150
Membership & Subscription Fees		
Volunteer Canada, Volunteer BC	\$120	\$120
Other	\$130	\$130
Insurance		
Directors & Officers Liability	Absorbed by Umbrella Org.	\$650
Advertising / Promotion	\$2,500	\$2,500
Unallocated (10%)	\$2,100/\$3,700	\$2,350/\$4,000
Total Expenses (.25 FTE Coordinator)	\$22,830	\$25,780
Total Expenses (.5 FTE Coordinator)	\$40,810	\$43,810

Based on Table 3, operational costs for an Online Only Hub with a contracted .25 FTE Coordinator could range from approximately \$23,000 to \$26,000 – with Umbrella organizational governance costing approximately \$3,000 less than the Free Standing Hub as a result of in-kind contributions. A Hub with a contracted .5 FTE Coordinator could range from \$41,000 to \$44,000 with Umbrella organizational governance costing approximately \$3,000 less than Free Standing governance. Both .25 and .5 FTE Coordinator roles are costed out as a .5 is optimum and would enable greater service delivery. However, a .25 is easier to sustain and may be all that is needed to sustain core, high priority services.

As a comparison, Volunteer Prince George (VPG) identified an annual cash income for 2015-16 of \$44,000 (this includes \$12,800 for running an office, plus \$5,220 more for staffing). Removal of these two items from VPG's budget brings the VPG annual cost to \$25,980 which is in line with the costs projected for a .25 FTE Coordinator role above. Interestingly, VPG has a .5 FTE Coordinator. However, the wage is significantly lower - around \$20/hr.

5.0 COST – Start Up

Start-up costs include five areas discussed below.

Business Plan – The success of any organization rests on a solid Business Plan. A Business Plan focuses on actions and investment needed to generate income from programs and services. It helps persuade donors and partners to fund the organization. It helps recruit Board members by letting them know what they are getting involved with. It also provides support when submitting funding applications and proposals. A Business Plan should identify:

- Vision, Mission, and Values
- Governance/Management Structure – What are the Roles and Responsibilities?
- Programs, Services, & Products – What will be offered? What benefits are expected?
- Branding & Marketing Plan – Who are you trying to reach? How will you reach them?
- Operational Plan – How will it be maintained, monitored and evaluated?
- Financial Plan – What is the projected financial status – revenue and expenses?
- Technical Website Plan – How will the Website be maintained, reviewed, and revised? How will Website success be measured?

Strategic Plan - As part of the Business Plan/Start Up phase, a Strategic Plan should also be identified. This provides guidance in fulfilling the Hub's mission with maximum efficiency and impact. It basically serves as a compass for the organization. As a rule, most Strategic Plans should be reviewed and revised every three to five years. Given the size and newness of this venture, it is suggested a shorter three year plan is created. This Plan would include:

- SMART Goals (Organizational, Board, & Staff), and Strategies to achieve them
- Action Plan – Who will do what, when

Project Management - The purpose of this role is to have one person oversee Hub creation, planning, and management plus conduct promotional activities. This enables a more streamlined and timely approach to Website design and build. The skills and expertise needed for this position could be provided by an Umbrella organization or obtained from a Consultant.

Website Design – The purpose of this role is to identify technical web design requirements – business and user - including metrics to measure success. Also, to design, build, test, and launch the Hub's web page and associated self-matching, self-populated, recruiting database – including metrics collection and reporting. Finally, to provide Website training materials and conducting training on use of the Hub's Web Page and associated tools.

Website Content Creation – The purpose of this role would be to research and identify - or create - online tools and templates and identify resources to refer or link to for upload to the Web Page.

Table 4 – Start Up Costs, Online Only Hub – Umbrella & Free Standing Governance

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	COST (Umbrella Organization)	COST (Free Standing)
NFP Society Status & Registration, Legal Fees		NIL	\$200
Domain Name Registration		\$35	\$35
Consultant – Business Plan (\$35/hr., 240 hrs, + GST)	Consult with Stakeholders and create a Plan as outlined in Section 5.0 above.	\$8,568	\$8,568
Consultant – Strategic Plan (\$35/hr., 80 hrs + GST)	Write a Plan as outlined in Section 5.0 above.	\$2,940	\$2,940
Contractor – Project Manager * (\$35 hr./ 740 hrs + GST)	Plan and Manage Hub creation: - Identify technical requirements (160 hrs) - Create Project Plan (80 hrs) - Oversee Website build, test, & implementation (80 hrs) - Research and prepare web content (160 hrs) - Promote Website (120 hrs) - Inform VIO’s of Hub Services - what they are and how to populate them (60 hrs) - Conduct handover training to Board and Hub Coordinator content upload (40 hrs)	TBD	\$27,195
Consultant - Web Page Design & Build ** (informal, verbal quotes)	Build web site and searchable database to Requirements identified by the Project Manager’s activities.	\$2,500	\$10,000
Contractor - Content Coordinator (\$30/hr, 240hrs)	Confirm up-to-date VIO Directory, Create general Application Form & Checklist, Identify and/or Write Training Materials, Perform Other Admin Duties to Support Hub Start Up	\$7,560	\$7,560
Unallocated (10%)		\$2,200	\$5,600
TOTAL COST		\$23,803	\$62,098

* Staffing and expertise to manage the start up may not be present in an Umbrella organization. Hence, \$27,200 identified for this role - or a portion of it, may need to be added to Umbrella organization costing which would increase or bring that costing up to be on par with Free Standing costs.

** Cost variation of \$2,500 to \$10,000 for Web Page Design and Build accounts for potential Umbrella organization contributions to creating a custom Web Page database. Variance also reflects unknown solution design. It could be as simple as a Website with a portal to a recruiting tool provided by CBT – or – a custom built Web Site and recruiting tool. Web Page design and build may be brought down considerably, if a suitable off the shelf product is identified.

Overall, start-up costs are projected to range from approximately \$24,000 to \$62,000 including a 10% tolerance for unanticipated expenses. The reason for such high variance is twofold. The level of project management an Umbrella organization can provide and Website cost. However, the higher number is probably more accurate in reflecting potential start up costs as it is highly unlikely an Umbrella organization has the additional staffing and funding to foot a \$27,000 resource. It’s more likely that a small contribution towards this may be provided.

6.0 POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Through activities conducted in this Study, a few organizations have come to the fore that are considering providing, or in the process of creating, services that overlap with or could be leveraged if creating a Hub. SPAN should be aware of these organizations if pursuing the creation of a Hub. These organizations and the activities they are conducting are identified below.

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) - The Canadian Mental Health Association, Kootenay Division runs a volunteer website that includes the Nelson area and intakes and places on average 200 volunteers per year. However, CMHA's emphasis is on volunteering opportunities associated with Mental Health and has very limited almost non-existent exposure in Nelson. However, CMHA is supportive of creating a Hub in Nelson and has offered to consider providing space in their Anderson Street offices if needed and deemed appropriate.

City of Nelson - Although the writer of this Report is not aware that the City of Nelson is considering any activities related to Volunteer Hub service provision, the City of Nelson is a natural partner to approach given the significant numbers of community members volunteers represent and the clear benefit a Hub would provide to citizens of Nelson overall. This is highlighted in Prince George's Volunteer Centre where they receive \$11,300 annually from the City of Prince George to conduct their activities.

Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) - CBT is looking at how to support volunteerism across the Basin with recommendations being submitted mid-October. Making online recruiting tools available to Basin communities may be recommended. However, decisions on whether to proceed with that won't be confirmed until year-end. What form that will take is unclear. Also, CBT formed a group to look at Youth, Sport & Physical Activity in the Basin during the summer of 2017 that identified recruiting coaches as their top concern. CBT's activities may lead to the provision of part or all of a Website platform that meets Hub needs.

Columbia Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) - CVCF is in the process of creating an online Volunteer Hub that includes email newsletters, automatic messaging and communications; a self-populated, self-matching, searchable recruiting tool that includes skills and interests; plus a volunteer management tool that helps create events, recruit and accept volunteer applications for those events. Once created, this off the shelf tool should be assessed for its potential to deliver Hub services at a fraction of the cost of developing it.

Kootenay Career Development Society (KCDS) - KCDS has recently launched a new online job board that includes a self-populated, volunteer opportunity listing. Conversations have been initiated with KCDS and are encouraged to continue to determine and confirm the potential for an ongoing partnership between a Volunteer Hub and KCDS.

Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) - RDCK assembled a Task Force on Future Recreational Facility Use with recommendations being submitted mid-September. Recommendations include creating an Online Sport and Recreation Calendar of Events and an Organizational Directory. The vast majority of Sport and Recreation organizations involve volunteers that overlaps with one of the high priority services VIO's are asking for - an Online Service Directory. This indicates RDCK may be considering creating online services that overlap with potential Hub services and would benefit from further conversations around service overlap and partner relations.

7.0 FUNDING

What's the potential for funding an Online Only Hub? A non-staffed Online Hub should be 100% sustainable through Hub Membership Fees. This section looks at the potential for funding a staffed, Online Hub.

Before identifying potential funding sources SPAN should be aware that research indicates the primary challenge Hubs face is securing ongoing operational funds. Models where Hubs rely heavily on a single Grant or Donor create the highest risk if that Grant or Donor falls through. Therefore, a diversified funding model will be looked at as it offers flexibility to continue current or paired down service provision if not all funding sources are secured year-to-year. Below, we'll take a look at the potential for a diversified funding scheme by examining potential income streams and identifying whether they are significant enough to pursue.

7.1 Potential Sources

7.1.1 Service Fees - Membership

An Online Hub could expect to generate \$4,700 – \$7,100 per year in Member Fees. This would cover 100% of the cost of an Online, non-staffed Hub delivering the top two highest priority services. This revenue stream is worthwhile to pursue.

7.1.2 Service Fees - Training

There is the potential to conduct trainings on a fee-for-service basis. This would not be a significant source of income, but is mentioned here to note there is some potential for nominal, revenue generation. This revenue stream is not recommended as an income stream to rely on.

7.1.3 Goods & Products

Some products to support volunteer recognition could be sold such as framed recognition certificates, mugs, pins, baseball hats, t-shirts etc. This would not be a significant source of income and would need to be assessed with VIO's for product's potential use to gauge whether it would be beneficial to invest limited Coordinator time in conducting activities associated with organizing this revenue source. This revenue stream is not recommended as an income stream to rely on.

7.1.4 Events

There is potential to raise revenue by conducting a one-off event. The downfall is organizing an event can be time intensive and detract from limited, resources to deliver Hub services. If event fundraising is pursued, it would be beneficial to organize a niche event that isn't already being conducted in Nelson and requires minimal organization to minimize planning costs and maximize revenue generation. An example of this type of event was identified by Kootenay Rhythm Dragons (KRD), who indicated they raised over \$10,000 by organizing an annual Golf Tournament (which they no longer do). This revenue stream is worthwhile to pursue.

7.1.5 Private Contributions – Ongoing Donors

Organizations with high potential usage (high volunteer numbers) combined with a higher need for services that could be provided through a Hub, are potential candidates for ongoing donations to the Hub's operational revenue. The Salvation Army, Nelson Branch has been identified as having the potential for becoming a donor with initial discussions indicating a positive response to such a relationship if a Hub is created. This revenue stream is worthwhile to pursue.

7.1.6 Grants

Obtaining funds through local, municipal, and regional funding is the highest potential revenue source for a Hub. Section 6 identifies several organizations conducting activities directly related to a Hub. This indicates priority and interest in services that would be provided by a Hub along with the potential for funding a Hub given a Hub's mutual interests with these organizations. This revenue stream is necessary to pursue to ensure sustainability of a staffed Online Hub.

Also, provincial gaming grants may provide funding as they do to other Hubs. However, criteria may change from year-to-year and regular, annual applications need to be submitted.

7.2 Funding Projections

Table 5 suggests a possible diversified funding model for an Online, staffed Hub by estimating revenue from the highest potential revenue generating streams identified above. Member Fees are from the lower estimate identified in the Community Engagement Activities. Event revenue is a conservative estimate based on the \$10,000+ identified by Kootenay Rhythm Dragons for their annual golf tournament. The Donor and Sponsor estimate is based on conversations with only one potential Donor that expressed interest in donating around half of what's identified in the Table. Grants make up the remaining balance and are identified as one line item but may be made up of two or more Grants to facilitate a diversified funding model.

Table 5 Diversified Funding Model
Potential Operational Revenue Sources & Percentages of Annual Revenue They Comprise

REVENUE SOURCE	POTENTIAL INCOME GENERATED	% OF ANNUAL REVENUE GENERATION	
		\$23,000 .25 FTE annual, cash operating budget	\$44,000 .5 FTE annual, cash operating budget
Member Fees	\$5,000	23%	11%
Event	\$7,500	23%	19%
Donors & Sponsors (E.g. Salvation Army)	\$2,500	8%	8%
Grants - Ongoing (E.g. City of Nelson, RDCK, CBT, Osprey)	\$10,000	46%	
Grants - Annual (E.g. Gaming Grant)	\$20,000		54%

So, is a staffed Online Hub fundable?

Table 5 indicates the potential for almost half the operational funds needed to fund a .25 FTE staffed Hub could be generated through member fees and a fundraising event. However, the remainder of operational funds needs to be sought through donors, sponsors, and grants. One donor has already been identified that has indicated a willingness to donate around half of the funding identified in Table 5 in the Donors & Sponsors section.

There is clear evidence that local, municipal, and regional organizations are conducting activities that overlap with or could be delivered by a Hub that indicates the potential for symbiotic partnerships that may include regular, annual financial support for the remaining half needed to fund a .25 FTE staffed Hub.

Finally, there are provincial organizations – such as the Gaming Grant - that have indicated support by funding other Hubs. This income stream has the potential to increase the staffing from a .25 to .5 FTE position.

Combined, the sources identified in Table 5 indicate potential to secure funds exists.

8.0 RISKS

The below tables provide a Risk Level Matrix and Risk Assessments for creating both a non-staffed and staffed, Online Hub.

Table 6 Risk Level Matrix

LIKELIHOOD (LKL.)	CONSEQUENCE (CON.) (estimated based on Financial Loss - FL)				
	Insignificant (1) Very Small FL	Minor (2) Small FL	Moderate (3) Medium FL	Major (4) High FL	Catastrophic (5) Massive FL
Almost Certain (5) - Often Occurs	Moderate (5)	Moderate (10)	High (15)	Very High (20)	Very High (25)
Likely (4) - Could Easily Happen	Low (4)	Moderate (16)	High (12)	Very High (16)	Very High (20)
Possible (3) - Could happen or known to happen	Low (3)	Moderate (6)	Moderate (9)	High (12)	High (15)
Unlikely (2) - Hasn't Happened, but could	Low (2)	Low (4)	Moderate (6)	Moderate (8)	Moderate (10)
Rare (1) - Conceivable, in extreme circumstances	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)	Moderate (5)

Table 8 Online Only, No Staff Option – Pre and Post Mitigation Risk Levels

RISK	PRE MITIGATION			RECOMMENDED MITIGATION	POST MITIGATION		
	LKL.	CON.	RISK		LKL.	CON.	RISK
1. Out of Date Web Content - Organizations aren't maintaining information via self-populated Directory and Recruiting Tools.	Likely (4)	Major (4)	Very High (16)	Build in regular, self-generating online reminders to organizations to keep information up to date. Build in Reporting tool that identifies to Board Members when individual organization's information was last updated. Build in automatic reminder to review organizational information for accuracy as part of the annual membership fee renewal process.	Possible (3)	Major (4)	High (12)
2. VIO's Lack Skills and	Likely	Major	Very High	Ensure self-populated tools are easy to use.	Possible	Moderate	Moderate

				Conduct VIO information training sessions as part of pre-Website launch activities.			
3. Website Design Isn't User Friendly - Forecasted use doesn't occur.	Likely (4)	Moderate (3)	High (12)	Consult with VIO's and volunteers to identify user design requirements of the online services. Conduct a Pilot to test the service meets user requirements.	Unlikely (2)	Moderate (2)	Low (4)
4. Low VIO and/or Volunteer Use - Not enough volunteers use the website to make it a useful recruiting tool.	Likely (4)	Major (4)	High (16)	Prepare a Marketing Strategy targeting VIO's and Volunteers. Conduct promotional activities as outlined in the Marketing Strategy which should address two phases: 1. Website launch promotional activities 2. Ongoing promotional activities that can be managed by a Working Board and a few volunteers.	Possible (3)	Minor (4)	High (12)
5. Governance & Organization Readiness - Governing organization lacks expertise to manage an Online Hub.	Possible (4)	Moderate (3)	High (12)	Prepare a Business & Strategic Plan as part of the Start Up planning process that provides direction to Board Members on Hub management. Allocate operational funds for Board training to up-skill Board Members if needed.	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	Low (4)
6. Operational Costs Higher Than Anticipated - Budgeted operational costs exceed expended operational costs.	Possible (3)	Moderate (3)	Moderate (9)	Include a 10% tolerance in the Budget to cover unanticipated costs.	Possible (3)	Minor (2)	Moderate (6)
7. Member Fee Shortfall - Member Fees fall short of expected income.	Likely (4)	Moderate (3)	High (12)	Conduct a Pilot that doesn't rely on Member Fees and focuses efforts on Marketing the online service to VIO's to establish Member base and clearly identify Member Fee income.	Rare (1)	Insignificant (1)	Low (1)

Table 7 Online Only, Staffed Option – Pre and Post Mitigation Risks Levels (Risks for this Option include all of the above risks plus the below.)

RISK	PRE MITIGATION			RECOMMENDED MITIGATION	POST MITIGATION		
	LKL.	CON.	RISK		LKL.	CON.	RISK
1. Financial – Unable to establish sufficient operational funds to cover cost of engaging a part-time Coordinator.	Likely (4)	Very High (5)	Very High (20)	Obtain ongoing, operational funding to cover the cost of a .25 FTE Coordinator. Obtain remaining .25 to fund a .5 FTE from one-off, annual grants.	Rare (1)	Very Small (1)	Low (1)
2. Out-of-Date Web Content - Organizations aren't maintaining information via self-populated Directory and Recruiting Tools.	Possible (3)	Major (4)	High (12)	Engage Coordinator to monitor and manage website.	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	Low (4)
3. Low Volunteer Use – Not enough volunteers use the website to make it a useful recruiting tool.	Possible (3)	Major (4)	High (12)	Engage Coordinator to promote Hub services to the volunteer community and facilitate access for volunteers that don't have a computer or aren't comfortable, accessing online services.	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	Low (2)

The above Risk Assessment indicates significantly higher risks associated with a non-staffed vs. staffed Online Hub with two of the risks identified in a non-staffed Hub (out-of-date web content and low use) receiving an unacceptable High Risk Level post-mitigation. These same two risks are lowered to an acceptable risk level with the addition of a part-time Coordinator position in a staffed Hub.

9.0 SUMMARY

Through activities conducted as part of this Feasibility Study, we know:

1. **Use** – Nelson based VIO's across a broad sector would use a Hub.
2. **Online Model** – An Online Hub is preferred.
3. **Two Options To Consider** – A non-staffed or staffed, online Hub.
4. **Staffing Risk** – A non-staffed, online Hub has a high risk and a staffed Hub has a low risk.
5. **Service Priorities** - VIO's highest service priorities are Recruiting Volunteers and providing services through a Service Directory.
6. **Benefit** – Nelson's Volunteer Community and Nelson in general will receive multiple benefits.
7. **Member Fee Revenue Potential** – A conservative estimate indicates the potential for \$7,100 a year.
8. **Partial Operational Revenue Identified** - Member Fees should be able to sustain priority services (unstaffed, Website maintenance and support only) if an Online Hub Umbrella organization is established.
9. **Start-Up Costs** – These are estimated to range from \$24,000 to \$64,000. This range is based on current limited identification of service design requirements and unknown umbrella organization contributions. It is recommended to use the higher number as a more likely estimate.
10. **Online, Non-Staffed Operational Costs** – This is estimated to be \$5,100 for a Hub Umbrella organization.
11. **Staffed Operational Costs** – This is estimated to range from \$23,000 to \$44,000 with a .25 or .5 FTE Coordinator position.
12. **Potential Partners** - Several key organizations are conducting work that overlaps with our services. Some of these organizations may benefit if a Hub is created.
13. **More Funding Is Needed** – There is no way of running a Volunteer Hub without securing additional operational funding. Start up is one-off funding that would most likely be provided by one or more Grants. The greater concern is securing ongoing, operational funding.

We do NOT know:

1. **Partnerships/Funding** - What level of interest, participation, resource or operational support other organizations that are pursuing similar services might be willing to provide.
2. **Umbrella Organization** – Which organization will act as an Umbrella for a Hub and what that organization may provide.
3. **Precise Start-Up Costs** – Two areas require confirmation. What detailed Website development and delivery requirements are. Also, what, if any, project management contributions other organizations might provide. Until an umbrella organization and discussions with stakeholder/partner organizations has been conducted, this can't be clarified.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

This Study indicates an Online Only Hub should be well used by Nelson's VIO's and has a high probability of successfully meeting a need and creating benefit to a significant group of people in the community. The question around sustainability has been partially answered by projecting potential Member Fees and finding these Fees could cover the cost of running an online, non-staffed, high-priority service Hub. However, a non-staffed online Hub carries a high risk of failure so securing funding for a staffed Hub is needed.

If an online Hub is pursued, SPAN or the Hub's Umbrella organization, need to know that funding must be secured for start-up (\$24,000 to \$62,000) and a portion of operational costs (\$10,000 to \$30,000 depending on staffing level). There is no way of sustaining a hub solely on Member Fees nor on income generated as a result of Hub-related services and activities.

Given that need, use, and benefit have been established, it is recommended SPAN considers supporting the creation of an Online, staffed Volunteer Hub and manages the financial risk of doing so by conducting the below staged approach which identifies stop/go decision points after key stages have been conducted.

Stage 1 – Collaborate and Identify Umbrella Organization

10.1 Confirm Potential Partnerships

It is recommended that SPAN explores services being pursued and potential for collaboration and/or partnership with CBT, KCDS, and RDCK. This will help ensure no redundancy or unnecessary overlap occurs. It may also identify symbiotic partnerships that may take the form of resource contributions, funding contributions, or the identification of an Umbrella organization to house a Hub.

10.2 Identify Umbrella Organization

It is recommended that SPAN identifies an umbrella organization to host a Volunteer Hub. Once an organization is identified, conduct an Organizational Readiness Check to ensure the organization's mandate includes Volunteer Hub service provision and the Board is willing and qualified to take on the additional responsibility of overseeing a Hub. SPAN may decide to take on this new role. However, the above discussions may identify another organization willing and better positioned to do this.

Decision Point – If no partners or umbrella organization can be confirmed, review reasons why and consider whether to extend efforts in new areas or cease efforts to create a Hub.

Stage 2 – Operational Funding

10.3 Secure Operational Funding

It is recommended that SPAN secures, or works with an Umbrella organization to secure, ongoing operational funding to cover the cost of engaging a .25 FTE Coordinator before creating a Hub. This would be a minimum of \$10,000 and a maximum of \$16,000. \$10,000 would need to be topped up with fundraising, sponsorship, and donors. \$16,000 would cover the .25 FTE role. Both The City of Nelson and RDCK would benefit from Hub creation with RDCK being part of the discussions in recommendation 10.1. However, The City of Nelson is also a natural candidate to approach for funding given the benefits Nelson in general would receive from the creation of a Hub and that other Hubs often receive operational funding support from municipal organizations – E.g. Volunteer Prince George. This is key in ensuring sustainability of a staffed Hub.

Decision Point – If ongoing funding to support a .25 FTE cannot be secured, review reasons why and consider whether to extend efforts in new areas or cease efforts to create a Hub.

Stage 3 – Pilot

10.4 Identify High-Level, Website Requirements*

It is recommended that the Hub's umbrella organization clarifies what the high-level, website technical requirements are. This will facilitate website design and support ability to more accurately identify start-up

funding requirements which is projected to range from \$24,000 to \$62,000 with \$7,500 of the variance in this range reflecting unknown website requirements.

*Note: This may incur additional expense if a consultant is needed to guide the process.

10.5 Secure Pilot Funding

It is recommended funding is secured in the amount of \$28,000 - \$38,000 to conduct a Pilot. The exact amount will be easier to confirm with the identification of high-level, website requirements as noted above in recommendation 10.4. Estimated Pilot costs are below.

Table 8 – Pilot Costs, Online Hub – Umbrella Organization Governance

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	COST
NFP Society Status & Registration, Legal Fees		NIL
Domain Name Registration		\$35
Contractor – Project Manager (\$35 hr., 740 hrs + GST, rounded up)	Identify Technical Requirements (160 hrs) Create Pilot Project Plan (80 hrs) Identify Solution * (80 – 160 hrs) Promote/Conduct/Monitor Pilot (15hrs/wk, 26 weeks) Report on Pilot Outcomes (80 hrs)	\$22,000 – 25,000
Consultant - Web Page Design & Build (informal, verbal quotes)	Build web site and searchable database to Requirements identified by Project Manager.	\$2,500 - \$10,000
Unallocated (10%)		\$2,500 – \$3,500
TOTAL COST		\$28,035 - \$38,535

10.6 Conduct a Pilot

It is recommended that a small, simple, 6 month Pilot of an Online Hub that offers only the top two, high-priority services is conducted – a self-populated, VIO service directory and a self-populated, searchable, recruiting tool and opportunity listing. A Pilot is recommended as it's a low risk, low cost way of testing an online service before implementing the service. The benefits of a Pilot are:

1. **Lower Cost Than Full Start Up** - \$28,000 to \$38,000 to Pilot vs. \$24,000 to \$64,000 to Start-Up (it is expected that the higher amount is a more accurate projection of the cost needed with a significant portion of the variance reflecting potential Umbrella organization contributions to project management costs).
2. **Meet High Priority Needs** – Support creation of a service that meets the volunteer community's two highest priorities.
3. **Confirm Service Design** - Confirm services meet user needs before proceeding further.
4. **Build Membership** – Provide an opportunity to promote the service, enable VIO's to 'try before you buy', and more easily gain Hub Members if a service is launched.
5. **Sustainable** – Confirm if Piloted services can be sustained by a .25 FTE Coordinator position.

A six month Pilot is recommended as it allows time to promote the Website service, assess service design, conduct Website fixes, ensure monitoring tools are useful, and enable volunteer community use/feedback.

It is recommended the Pilot doesn't collect Member fees to encourage VIO participation and, ultimately, ongoing use. However, the Pilot should measure the number, size, and usage levels of organizations that participate.

10.7 Review Pilot Outcomes

Assess Pilot outcomes and determine whether:

- VIO's and Volunteers find the website useful and easy to use
- Core services can be maintained with minimum .25 FTE Staffing

Decision Point: If Pilot indicates poor website performance and use – or – that more than a .25 FTE is required to maintain the core service consider whether further efforts are justified or whether to stop implementing a Hub. If Pilot indicates good website performance and use and a .25 FTE Coordinator role is sufficient to promote, maintain, and monitor core Website service, continue to Stage 4.

Stage 4 - Maintain or Further Develop the Hub

If this Stage is reached, SPAN or the Umbrella organization, are at a point where what's been created is sustainable. They can then decide whether to maintain as-is or further develop the Hub. Both decisions require two key activities:

- Create a Business and Strategic Plan (as outlined on page 8) which will include the identification of additional service delivery areas to be provided.
- Engage and train a Hub Coordinator (based on Pilot outcomes.)

If the decision is to further develop a Hub, it is recommended that funding is secured for a .25 FTE role to increase the .25 to a .5 FTE position. As mentioned earlier, this funding may be one-off, and require annual applications.

Overall, the pursuit of a Volunteer Hub is a worthy cause that requires more exploration before funding needs and sources can be fully clarified. It's also a cause that requires a commitment to secure start-up and approximately half of the operational funding needed to sustain a staffed, online Hub.