

VOLUNTEER ALBERTA

Volunteer Screening Initiative Survey Results and Analysis

FINAL REPORT

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BACKGROUND

Cambridge Strategies Inc. (CSI) was contracted by Volunteer Alberta (VA) through the Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI) to conduct a survey of voluntary organizations in the province in order to create a clearer picture of the costs and implications of using Police Information Checks (PICs) for screening of volunteers. This information would be used to gather data on the voluntary sector's level of engagement on PICs as well as to identify and evaluate related issues including cost, process, timing, and risk management elements. The information would also be used to educate the voluntary sector, politicians, policy makers and funders around the need and best practices for volunteer screening.

Drafting and Testing the Survey

CSI designed a survey instrument for VA information and approval, prior to distributing the document to organizations across the province. The survey asked various questions intended to help CSI and VA gain a better understanding of the issues, level of organizational involvement and present practices for volunteer screening. A copy of the survey instrument is attached as Appendix "A".

Before being released, the survey was tested by ten knowledgeable individuals who work in the voluntary sector in various parts of Alberta, at the Volunteer Coordinator or Executive Director levels. These test subjects were asked to comment on both the format and wording of the questions in the survey. Were the questions easily understandable? Were the questions fitting to the issues? Was the format easy to use and to follow? Feedback from these and other questions were used to refine the survey instrument and provided CSI with valuable input to create an effective survey instrument and format.

Database of Contacts

VA provided CSI with an initial database of contacts composed of volunteer organizations, larger umbrella volunteer organizations, municipal, provincial and federal politicians and advocates in Alberta. Jesse Meyer, VA's project coordinator, provided on-going and frequent updates of the database to CSI's project lead, Zohreh Saher. An effort was made to screen out the duplicate and inapplicable database entries from the VA database before disseminating the survey. CSI also conducted additional work – removing outdated information and replacing it with recent contact information in order to update the VA's database.

Distribution of the Survey to the Voluntary Sector

The survey was either emailed or faxed to the specific contacts in the database; CSI contacted each contact as many as three times between April 6th and April 26th, 2006, to encourage their participation and input into the project.

Follow up messages to contacts were sent to remind them why it was important to take part, and asked them to redistribute and to further circulate the survey to their own contacts within the voluntary sector who they believed would be

interested in participating. We have no records or information as to how many additional distributions of the survey were actually done as a result of this request.

Part of the survey follow up was an email providing a hyperlink to “The PolicyChannel” (www.policychannel.com) inviting them to view a video interview on the subject of volunteer screening with Joëlle Fawcett-Arsenault, the CVI Local Network Manager. In the interview, conducted by CSI Principal Ken Chapman, Fawcett-Arsenault explained the issues surrounding volunteer screening in the context of risk management in Alberta’s voluntary sector. She also discussed the importance of PICs as a risk mitigation and prevention tool for the voluntary sector.

CSI made additional efforts to contact certain groups that were not represented in the original database. CSI contacted key Aboriginal community leaders throughout Alberta requesting they ask appropriate organizations and individuals within their communities to participate and recirculate the survey to their contacts. CSI also contacted Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to obtain a list of Aboriginal volunteer organizations in Alberta. The survey was faxed or emailed to these organizations as well, inviting participation in the survey.

Volunteer organizations devoted to seniors’ issues were also researched and specifically contacted. Organizations such as the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council and the Senior’s Association of Greater Edmonton were asked to participate and circulate the survey to their member organizations in order to encourage participation in the survey.

Additionally, CSI faxed the survey twice, with a letter of introduction, to school boards across the province. This outreach was done in collaboration with the Alberta School Trustees’ Association and contact was made through the Superintendent’s offices in each instance.

There was a concern with the lack of immigrant organizations that had been included in the original database. VA researched various organizations on the internet and obtained their contact information; CSI made contact with these organizations and requested that they participate and recirculate the survey to other groups who might be interesting in participating.

CSI contacted the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters and asked for participation and recirculation of the survey to their member organizations throughout Alberta. And CSI made a similar request of the disabled community, sending the survey to key organizations, leaders, staff and advocates in that sector, across the province.

Finally, an attempt was made to reach out to the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. This was not a successful endeavor however; CSI was advised by the EFCL that the most effective way to reach the community leagues and encourage participation was via regular mail. Given this restriction and the quick turnaround needed for this survey, this contact attempt was abandoned.

CSI and VA working together

During the data gathering phase, weekly meetings were held between CSI and VA representatives. At these meetings, survey progress was discussed. Also, brainstorming was done on ways to make the database more comprehensive, accurate and inclusive and on ways by which to raise awareness of the survey, giving as many voluntary sector organizations as possible the chance to participate. On-going collaborative efforts between CSI and VA were directed to those ends throughout the project.

After the survey data collection phase closed on April 26, VA phoned approximately 80 organizations in the revised database; these groups had been contacted via email but had not yet participated. Of these, 17 organizations subsequently responded and their information has been included in the findings of this survey report.

Media Coverage to Raise Awareness

Part of the objective of this project was to raise the public consciousness around the issues and challenges of volunteer screening. A small media campaign was designed and initiated during the survey distribution timeframe to publicize why VA was undertaking this project and the importance of the issues.

A media release identifying the issues and concerns surround PICs was sent to news outlets, including radio stations, television stations, and daily and weekly newspapers province wide. The news release also noted the PolicyChannel video interview as a further source of information for the media on the subject. A sample of the coverage is attached as Appendix "B" for information. In the first week of availability, Policy Channel statistics indicated 65 individuals had viewed the Fawcett-Arsenault video.

FINDINGS

Introduction

In the course of this project CSI contacted over 1000 volunteer organizations or key individuals, by email, fax or phone, asking them to participate and to redistribute the survey. Not every organization contacted replied but there were 284 completed responses in the 20 day data collection timeframe. The names of the organizations which participated are listed in Appendix 'C'. We feel this almost 30 per cent level of participation was significant given the time constraints

and, for some organizations, the administrative demands and the complexity of our request.

The data shows these organizations are working with 150,000 plus volunteers in Alberta. 65 per cent of responding organizations were urban and 25 per cent were rural. Approximately 10 per cent of organizations were operating in both urban and rural contexts.

In general, we have found that there are three broad categories of organizations identified in the data. Firstly, there are the large sophisticated organizations that are active in checking their volunteers and do comprehensive screening on a regular basis. These volunteer organizations have the staff, size, demand, budget and experienced leadership necessary for this task. They also have a level of awareness and acceptance of the need to do PICs as part of an overall organizational risk management and program design and delivery strategy.

Second are the smaller organizations that are at an introductory stage of awareness or engagement around volunteer screening. These organizations see the need to screen their volunteers and have started to do so, but they are not as fully engaged or as organized as the first grouping. They are becoming more involved in developing the internal capacity, processes and practices to deal with the issues of volunteer screening and it impacts their organizations.

Finally, there are those organizations for whom we had no contact information or who did not respond to the survey. They may be involved and did not want to respond, they may not be aware of the issues or they may be disengaged. They may feel the nature of their work does not require volunteer screening. We can only speculate about this group in relation to volunteer screening because we have no feedback from them.

Participating organization varied in size, from those with annual budgets in the multi-millions of dollars to others with operating budgets as low as \$10,000.00. A few participants reported operating budgets in the \$2000.00 range. The budget ranges from respondents may have some relevance in better understanding the different impact of PICs on different kinds and sizes of organizations. This information may be helpful in the future to better understanding the differing impact of PICs on various kinds of voluntary organizations. PIC and volunteer screening differences may be due to variations in opportunity costs as more demands are made on staff time, in board and management time in establishing policies and procedures and in meeting higher levels of due diligence. These additional demands on management, board, staff and volunteer resources takes away from programs and will put strains on other core operational requirements of voluntary sector organizations.

It may be that PICs have become ubiquitous in the voluntary sector, especially amongst those organizations dealing with at risk or vulnerable people. It is

obvious that, at present, there is no standardization in the voluntary sector on how or why PICs are done or how they are paid for and used. We saw a wide range of strategies, techniques and funding sources that are used to cover the costs of PICs. We saw no evidence of an easy to use and effective risk management assessment tool to help organizations decide if they ought to be doing volunteer screening, and if so, how to go about addressing the need. This is a deficiency that may be a barrier to some organizations that ought to be moving forward in setting up or refining their volunteer screening initiatives.

Voluntary sector organizations must each undertake an appropriate management process and do an analysis to decide about their needs for volunteer screening. To ignore or neglect attention this issue is not prudent for certain voluntary organizations today. It is not an effective risk management strategy for any organization to merely assume volunteer screening is unnecessary without doing some careful consideration and some focused operational analysis. Increasing incidences of abuse, the rising number and damage awards for liability claims and stricter due diligence demands of insurers are becoming realities that demand a PIC based volunteer screening process be implemented for many organizations. Questions remain as to what are acceptable practices, standards and criteria to be used in setting up and applying a volunteer screening process. How does an organization's board of directors and management know if they are meeting the necessary levels of due diligence? On what principles and criteria are they to make decisions to accept or reject a potential volunteer? How is this documented for future reference?

Those organizations using PICs do so extensively.

Over 87per cent of the organizations who responded conduct PICs for volunteers; 83 per cent do PICs for staff positions. The level of respondent organizations currently using PICs demonstrates that these organizations understand the importance and value of doing Checks as a tool in a risk management strategy. In some cases, organizations that were not yet using PICs commented they were in the process of implementing new processes and procedures which would allow the use of PICs in the future.

Other organizations that do not use PICs provided commentary in the survey as to why they don't. In most cases, this justification was because their community was small and "everyone knows everyone"; it was felt there was no need to complete a PIC unless someone from outside of the community applied for a volunteer or staff position. Also, of the of the organizations who said that they do not do PICs, many indicated this was because their volunteers and staff do not come into contact with vulnerable populations or other high risk liability situations.

It is unknown whether the 70per cent of organizations who did not respond to the survey participation request are doing PICs or not. We do not know if they have done an analysis of their situation and have a rationale for not doing them or if they are unaware of the value of PICs as a risk management tool. Neither do we

know if they are, in fact, doing PICs and simply did not have the time or inclination to reply to the survey request. This is a challenge that invites both an opportunity for further inquiry and the possibility for an education program to be established for the voluntary sector. This education program ought to include volunteers themselves so they can better understand the value of PICs and the organizational expectations of volunteers in certain roles, relationships and responsibilities.

In addition to using PICs, a majority of respondent organizations indicate they are using *other* risk management tools in their volunteer management and screening. These activities ranged from interviews (87 per cent) and orientations (70 per cent) to reference checks (84 per cent) and training (82 per cent). Staff evaluations are being done by 57 per cent of survey participants. A significant number of respondent organizations also did Child Welfare Information Checks and intervention checks on volunteers and staff.

Based on the data received, approximately 5,000 local police service checks and over 2,300 RCMP checks were reported by survey participants in the last year. Only 1 organization reported doing a total of 70 information checks under contract to a private company. Averages are not reported here because they would be misleading. The range of PICs was from 1 to several hundred in some instances. A small number of organizations reported PIC use in terms of percentage allocation between local police and the RCMP so the above actual number totals in this report are understated.

Funding the costs of PICs varies widely

Funds to pay for PICs, if required, are coming from program budget for 45 per cent of the participants. In 15 per cent of respondent surveys, the individual volunteers are required to cover the costs and only 2 per cent of organizations are using reserve funds. Other solutions to cover costs include use of casino proceeds and other fundraising activities. In some cases, the local municipalities are paying the costs. In some instances, the police services are either covering or waiving the cost. Comments from some organizations indicated they are just starting to establish separate budget line items for the costs of doing PICs.

PIC costs vary widely from \$5 to 10, to \$25 or 30. At least one respondent indicated a cost as high as \$55. There also seems to be a significant amount of local discretion and randomness in the setting of charges as well as in the policy decision by a police service to waive fees. We did not get any clarity as to whether the fees being charged by police services are on a total or partial cost recovery basis. Many respondents who are not now being charged indicated they anticipated being required to pay for PIC in the future.

There is a need for more information on the real costs of the PIC services that police are providing as well as some assurances as to the accuracy, reliability and comprehensiveness of the PICs database. If there is a likelihood of an

increasing number of PICs being done by more and more organizations and it becomes a significant fiscal issue as well as a risk management concern for the voluntary sector, strategies and plans to address this must be done now.

An indication of the concern around these issues inherent in volunteer screening is from the 75 per cent of the survey participants who volunteered an email contact because they wanted to be kept advised and informed of the survey results and any follow up activity surrounding PIC policy development process. This finding indicates that the voluntary sector is willing to be further engaged on similar issues either within their organizations or in the sector as a whole.

General Survey Findings

- There is a new but growing awareness in the wisdom of doing PIC screening for volunteers and many of the larger volunteer based organizations are formally set up to do them as a matter of course.
- Many organizations indicated they are currently reviewing their policies in this area and considering doing PICs. Comments made by those not using PICs often said "...it is something we should look into changing."
- Only 13 per cent of the organizations could quantify how many volunteers they lost because of the wait-time to get PICs back. Numbers ranged from 1 to as high as 30+, for last year. This was one of the most challenging questions in the survey because, in most cases, it is based on estimates. Further, a large proportion of organizations did not answer this question which may indicate how difficult it was to answer. Volunteers, if frustrated about the wait time for PICs, may tend to abandon the organization without notification or any reason why they are doing so. This is a "hidden cost" of PICs that may warrant further investigation and study.
- Losing volunteers because of PIC turnaround time is a critical issue but it appears that current wait time for a PIC from the police is not an issue for most organizations. Indeed, 30 per cent of organizations reported having to wait a week or less to get PICs back for their volunteers. Another 30 per cent reported having to wait between one week and two. This is further evidence that waiting for the police to return PICs is not an issue that organizations have to deal with currently. Less than 10 percent of the organizations reported having to wait more than a month to receive their PICs back.
- With the expectation of increasing PIC volume and without systems or standards, turnaround times may increase and it may emerge as an issue in volunteer recruitment in the future.
- Only 29 per cent of organizations let their volunteers start prior to receiving PICs back. A few organizations indicated that the reason that this happens is so volunteers can receive the training they need for the position, including mentoring and job shadowing activities. Also, a few organizations responded they start a volunteer prior to receiving a PIC if they do not have to interact with vulnerable populations.

- Less than 10 per cent of organizations renew their PICs yearly. Around 20 per cent renew PICs every two years or more. Only 30 per cent of organizations never review their PICs for their volunteers and staff. And approximately 20 per cent of organizations never renew the PICs for their volunteers. One organization noted that there is policy in place surrounding PIC renewal but it is never exercised. A few organizations admitted that this was a policy that their organizations were looking at adapting and changing.
- Costs are being incurred from doing PICs, and based on the fact that 45 per cent of the respondents so far indicated they are taking the PIC costs out of program funds. PICs are starting to erode the program funds for many organizations and it is reasonable to expect more program funding erosion as PICs become more prevalent and potentially more costly.
- Many models exist for handling the PIC costs, from volunteers paying for the service themselves, to memberships sold to cover PIC costs, to having local municipalities pay and sometimes the police service waiving the fee entirely. These are some examples of the range of funding mechanisms being used to cover costs but there is no consistency in the funding of PICs.
- There is, as yet, no significant sense from participants of the associated “opportunity costs” of PICs including allocating management and staff time, volunteer loss or fatigue due PICs causing delay or demands on other resources amongst the volunteer organizations who responded. These are also real costs of PICs to the voluntary sector but it appears the activity is so new that organizations have not yet started tracking these hidden costs of PICs.
- There is a wide range of practices and procedures being followed by both volunteer organizations and by various police services about how PICs are handled. The procedures around requesting and reporting PIC results are varied, inconsistent and potentially open to abuse. The timing and depth of the PICs is also seen to be quite varied.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We have completed the data gathering and analysis and have a number of observations and recommendations as a result.

Observations

Our overarching observation is that this issue of volunteer screening is worth exploring further, especially in terms of the standards, practices, fiscal and staffing capacity of the voluntary sector to meet this growing demand.

We believe that Volunteer Alberta and the province of Alberta, both politically and administratively, need to work together to strengthen the capacity of voluntary sector organizations in understanding the issues and implications inherent in volunteer screening. Work needs to be done in the voluntary sector to develop

suitable policies and practices in staff and volunteer recruiting, in risk management and in determining due diligence standards. This will help prevent, mitigate and even offer defenses when necessary for exposed voluntary sector organizations who are dealing with at risk and vulnerable populations.

All of this is necessary and costs money to do properly. Additional public funding is needed to support the voluntary sector in order to do volunteer screening efficiently and effectively and to ensure program funding is not diluted or jeopardized.

Recommendations

Based on the data gathered, the conversations with organizations and the analysis of the research results and work done as background and in the development of the project, we have made a number of recommendations for VA to consider going forward around the issues of volunteers screening and the use of PICs in the voluntary sector.

Recommendation #1:

We believe there is a need for a confidential, centralized, comprehensive and authoritative volunteer screening and checking system for Alberta

PICs, for certain kinds of organizations in the voluntary sector, ought to be a required practice and process as a matter of public policy. We are suggesting that a clearing agency, ideally associated with a modern police service, be designated or created to be the “one-stop shop” for PICs for volunteer and staff screening in Alberta. Consistent procedures and practices need to be designed, developed and implemented. For public protection and prudent risk management within the voluntary sector we need to develop acceptable applied procedures that meet a necessary due diligence standard to manage the associated risk.

Recommendation #2:

We believe disengagement on the issues of volunteer screening may be seen as negligence or wilful blindness, and an education program to bring the implications and importance of PICs to the voluntary sector is needed.

For those in the voluntary sector who are not aware or engaged, an education program about the risk management, insurance concerns and public safety issues associated with PICs ought to be undertaken for the voluntary sector throughout Alberta. This education has to extend to the volunteers themselves so they can better understand the roles, responsibilities and relationships they undertake when they volunteer in certain circumstances. We need to be careful not to discourage volunteerism through too much process and “red tape” but a risk management level of due diligence is demanded of many volunteer activities and organizations. This has to be part of the education message as well.

Recommendation #3:

We believe that there must be a policy and procedure standard established and adopted by the voluntary sector to assure that due diligence levels have been met in dealing with volunteer screening.

Policy must be developed to determine if PICs are warranted by organizations and under what circumstances and at what stage of the volunteer recruitment and application process should PICs be sought. There needs to be consideration given as to when and how volunteer applicants should be informed of the need for a PIC and how the information will be applied for, paid for, reported back and evaluated. The databases used have to be comprehensive, complete, accurate and inter-jurisdictional but we suggest the databases and the information in them ought not to be in the care and control of the voluntary sector. Privacy issues and concerns have to be respected as well in the development of any policy and procedural standards. There is reason to believe that insurers of the voluntary sector will begin to demand adequate volunteer screening, risk management and due diligence practices and procedures within individual organizations and the sector as a whole. We expect adherence to these increasing demands will likely have to be proven in the event of liability claims as part of any legal or settlement proceedings.

This challenge cannot be left to the voluntary sector by itself to define, design develop and implement. This group is too diverse and dispersed to develop such a universal model in such a complex area. Governments, foundations and agencies who fund these voluntary sector groups also need to assist. Extra efforts will have to be made in developing the policy and practice standards and in providing the capacity for training and assessment for the voluntary sector. Other resources, including expertise and sufficient fiscal resources necessary to meet and serve this growing public need, will have to be made available.

Recommendation #4:

There has to be a balance between the due diligence demands of an organization and the confidentiality and privacy rights of individuals.

There are issues of judgment and fairness and even, perhaps, of due process surrounding volunteer screening and the use of PICs. Just because someone has a record with the police does not mean that they are automatically unsuitable for certain volunteer roles. For example, rejecting a person for a volunteer position based upon a criminal conviction in a minor offence in a matter and manner that is irrelevant to any potential current risk could result in losing a volunteer with potentially valuable skills and life experience. The use of PICs in volunteer screening is not something that lends itself to hard and fast rules. Judgement must be exercised in many cases. That said, PICs ought to be governed by acceptable policies and practices that serve due diligence demands,

that reduce risk yet respect confidentiality and personal privacy and that still encourages volunteerism as a valuable contribution in our society.

These are significant concerns and there conflicting values here which need understanding and resolution. 'Conflicting values' does not mean we can use complexity as an excuse to ignore the problems and the inherent challenges. Volunteers must understand they may have to forgo certain privacy rights to become a volunteer in certain kinds of organizations. That said, the principles of confidentiality and protecting individual privacy should still take precedence over the requirements of administrative expediency. They ought not, however, to trump the need to protect those who are at risk and who are served by the voluntary sector. Community participation, volunteerism and the responsibilities of citizenship are arguably becoming less appreciated and devalued in our society. Volunteer screening must be seen as a necessity to support and enhance these key social values and not as "a necessary evil" that leads to their further erosion.

We suggest, notwithstanding confidentiality and personal privacy issues, there are certain people within voluntary organizations who must have access to the volunteer screening PICs results so they can make the necessary judgement calls to include or exclude a potential volunteer. Organizational access to the personal PIC information should only be done with the prior written consent of the volunteer in question. The decision making and evaluation of PIC information is another area that needs to be looked at carefully and done by the organizations in consultation with the police service but not delegated to the police service. Otherwise it will be a police staff person or some other administrative official who is distant and disengaged from the organization and its activities, who will be making the decisions if a potential volunteer is appropriate or not. We believe this ought to be about risk management not risk delegation by the voluntary sector.

Organizations will need some training, guidance, advice and policy direction to help determine how to interpret and apply the police records information. It may be that standards should be developed to help determine PIC information relevance to the organization and to the positions available for volunteers at the organization. Again, decisions will have to be prudent and judgements made primarily for the benefit of the organization's clients, staff, stakeholders, board members and even for the other volunteers in the organization as the organization tries to satisfy its mandate and pursue its risk assessment responsibilities effectively.

Recommendation #5:

PICs are necessary but not likely sufficient to completely satisfy risk management responsibilities in volunteer relations.

Conducting PICs is only one way of reducing the risk of recruiting volunteers who are required to work with vulnerable populations, handle money or otherwise

work under little or no supervision in crucial roles. It is important for organizations to understand that PICs are a valuable tool in identifying unsuitable volunteers but they are not entirely foolproof. In order to make PICs a better risk management tool, it is important to set some standards and procedures to assure a responsible and recognized level and geographic range of checking is done.

There has to be some regular updating of the individual volunteer screening at reasonable regular intervals to be sure that circumstances have not changed for the volunteer that demands a reassessment. There has to be a way for volunteer organizations and citizens to be assured of the integrity of the information in the PICs. As well there is a need to provide a means for individuals to clarify and correct the police records that are used for PICs that may contain errors and omissions in individual's case. This could be done like credit bureau records, which are now open to personal monitoring for accuracy and demands for changes and corrections and explanations.

It is imperative for organizations to carry out effective recruitment, evaluation, training, monitoring and supervision if they are working with vulnerable clientele. PICs are an important and necessary tool but they are not likely sufficient as the only tool for effective risk management. Other policies and procedures including volunteer training, evaluation, monitoring and reference checking will likely have to be instituted as well.

Volunteer Risk Management Survey

Volunteer Alberta (www.volunteeralberta.ab.ca) has received funding from the Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI) to conduct a survey of Alberta’s voluntary sector organizations to determine the costs and challenges relating to risk management and volunteer recruitment. The voluntary sector knows it must institute policies and practices to manage certain risk for the benefit of all concerned. One aspect of this is the use of police information checks relating to the risk management of volunteers.

This survey’s purpose is to determine the costs and other implications of police information checks on the programming objectives of the voluntary sector.

Cambridge Strategies Inc. (www.cambridgestrategies.com) has been retained by Volunteer Alberta to design, conduct and analyze the survey results. All survey results will be aggregated for analytical and reporting purposes only.

Information received will only be used except as part of the survey project and all information from organizations will be kept strictly confidential.

Please email or fax completed surveys to:
Zohreh Saher
Associate, Cambridge Strategies Inc.
Email: zohreh@cambridgestrategies.com
Fax: (780) 420-1256

Questions regarding the survey can be addressed to Zohreh Saher at zohreh@cambridgestrategies.com or (780) 420-0505.

**Please return your survey on or before Wednesday
April 26th, 2006.**

VOLUNTEER RISK MANAGEMENT SURVEY

SECTION A

General Organizational Information.

1. What does your organization do?

2. What is your organization's annual operating budget?

3. Where is your organization located?

Urban Rural

Name of your community (optional):

4. What was the total number of volunteers involved in your organization last year?

5. How many volunteers left your organization last year?

Percentage _____ per cent and Number _____

6. Does your organization have a Coordinator of Volunteers?

(a) Yes No

(b) Full time Part time

(c) Paid Unpaid

SECTION B

Risk management policies and procedures determine the suitability of volunteers for a particular role and for a particular organization. A police information check is a search of the information database of the RCMP or local police service.

1. Do you do police information checks for:

(a) Volunteers

Yes No

(b) Staff

Yes No

VOLUNTEER RISK MANAGEMENT SURVEY

2. Which other risk management checks does your organization use?
(Please check all that apply)

- Interviews
- Orientations
- Reference Checks
- Training
- Regular Evaluations
- Other(s) (specify) _____

3. How many police information checks did your organization do in 2005 from:

Local police _____

RCMP _____

Private Corporation _____

Other (identify source and number) _____

4. How long does it take to receive the completed police information checks for your organization?

- Less than 1 week
- 1-2 weeks
- Less than 1 month (but more than 2 weeks)
- 1 month
- Other (specify) _____

5. What is your organization's source of funding for police information checks? (Please check all that apply):

- Program Budgets
- Reserve funds
- Volunteers cover the expense
- Other (specify) _____

6. Police information check costs:

(a) What is the cost per police information check?

\$ _____

(b) What was your organization's estimated total cost (including staff time and other costs) for police information checks last year?

\$ _____

(c) If your organization is not being currently charged for police information checks, do you expect to be charged in the future?

- Yes
- No

VOLUNTEER RISK MANAGEMENT SURVEY

7. How many volunteers has your organization rejected due to police information checks in 2005?

8. How many volunteers quit pending police information checks in 2005?

9. Do volunteers start prior to receiving the police information checks?

Yes No

10. How often do you renew police information checks for volunteers?

Annually

Every 2 years or more

Never

Other (please specify) _____

OPTIONAL SECTION

If you want a copy of the survey results, please fill in the details.

Name:

Position:

Organization:

Email:

Fax:

Thank you for your time and participation.

APPENDIX “B”

Article transcript from the Edmonton Examiner, April 26th, 2006.

STUDY LOOKS AT FINANCIAL IMPACT OF VOLUNTEER SECURITY CHECKS

By CORINNE LUTTER
Examiner staff

Non-profit organizations across Alberta are being surveyed to find out how the cost of police information checks on volunteers is affecting their bottom line. Volunteer Alberta, with funding from the Canadian Heritage Canada Volunteerism Initiative, is sponsoring the province-wide research project to gather information on the risk management practices of non-profit organizations. Paying for security checks is becoming a costly necessity for many volunteer-based groups, according to Cambridge Strategies, the consulting company undertaking the survey.

Ken Chapman, coordinator of the project, says most organizations with vulnerable clients like children, the elderly and the disabled, require volunteers to get security clearance.

“This is becoming a significant expense, and obviously a necessary expense for these organizations. But what it’s doing is taking money out of programs,” notes Chapman.

In the past, most police departments didn’t charge for record checks, but that’s no longer the case.

In Edmonton, for example, police charge \$10 to do background checks for volunteers.

Sometimes volunteers are asked to pay the fee, but many organizations, like Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton, pay the fee so volunteers don’t have to.

“Our bottom line is we don’t want to do anything that might limit the number of volunteers, because we’ve got a whole bunch of kids waiting for mentors,” says Marie Gauthier, manager of marketing for Big Brothers Big Sisters.

On average, the organization screens 1,000 volunteers a year.

While they’ve always done background checks on their volunteers, it’s only been in the past couple of years police have charged for them due to increased demand, says Gauthier.

“It just means we have to be much more successful in our fundraising. Right now, there’s no funder who’s saying to us there’s the money to pay for the criminal record check,” says Gauthier. “It’s not typically something funders have wanted to pay for in the past.” She’s happy the survey is being conducted. So far, the fee hasn’t impacted programs but it could in the long term, says Gauthier.

“It’s an issue that needs to be put on the table. We know that the thousands of volunteer organizations in the city, they’re all in the same situation as we are,” she says.

About 1,000 organizations from across Alberta will be contacted, including 200 to 300 from Edmonton. Cambridge will study the financial impact of security checks on programs and volunteers.

- corinne@edmontonexaminer.com

APPENDIX “C”

Below is a list of the organizations that completed the survey. The organization's name was taken from the optional section when filled out or from the email or fax number of the survey respondent.

ALS Society of AB
Bissell Centre
Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre
Wildrose School Division #66
Manning and District FCSS
Calder Seniors Drop in Centre
YWCA Lethbridge and district
Calgary Community Network Assoc.
Calgary Immigrant Education Society
Hope Mission
Trinity Baptist Church of Calgary
First Alliance Church
Girl Guides of Canada-Calgary
Calgary John Howard Society
Medicine Hat Volunteer and Community Information
Centre
Old Strathcona Youth Co-Op
Cross Cancer Institute
Big Country Victim Services
Edmonton Brain Injury Relearning Society
Council for Adult Lifelong Learning
Judo Alberta
Bowden Neighborhood Place
Alberta Summer Swimming Assoc.
Girl Guides of Canada- Alberta Council
Town of Hanna
Edmonton Folk Music Festival
David Thompson Health Region
The Salvation Army - Agape Hospice
Calgary Immigrant Woman's Assoc.
Volunteer Centre of Camrose
Beaverhill Rural Crime Watch
Millwoods Family Resource Centre
Canadian Cancer Society
Bethany Care Society
CLASS
The Good Samaritan Society
Pembina Hills Regional Division
Community Info. And Vol. Centre
Federation dec centres d'action benevole du Quebec

Wood's Homes
Youth Emergency Shelter Society
Literacy AB
REDI enterprise society
Vegreville & District FCSS
Hera therapeutic programs for girls at risk
WJS Group
ABC Head start
The Support Network
Society of Seniors Caring About Seniors
Palliser Health Region
Heartland Youth Center
Operation Friendship Seniors Society
Between Friends Club
Cape School
Castor District FCSS
Nanton Quality of Life Foundation
Boys and Girls Club of Calgary
Bethany Auxiliary Hospitals
Special Olympics Calgary
Family and Community Support Services (Volunteer
Centre Sylvan Lake)
YWCA Sheriff King Home
FCSS Town of Okotoks
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area
The Salvation Army Community Services
Intercorp Corporate Group
Children's Cottage Society
Greater St. Albert Catholic Regional Div. No. 29
Youth and Volunteer Centre
East Central AB Catholic SSRD #16
McMan Youth, Family and Community Services
Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton
Grand Centre Playschool
Edmonton Public Schools
Foothills Amateur Radio Society
Scouts Canada-Chinook Council
Musee Heritage Museum
Fort McMurray Swim Club
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and area
Catholic Social Services
4H Branch, AB Agriculture, Food and Rural Dev.
Youville Home
Zebra Child Protection Centre
Westmount Charter School
Carewest

4 Wing Military Family Resource Centre
Community Crisis Society
City of Edmonton Community Services-Recreation Facility
Services
Child and Adolescent Services Association
AB Council of Women's Shelters
Town of Jasper
Planned Parenthood Edmonton
High River Hospital
Healing Aboriginal People
Medicine Hat John Howard Society
CMHA
Town of Slave Lake
Learning Centre
Region 3 Family Based Care Society
VegMin Learning Society
CFS
Bonnyville Community Learning
Falher Municipal Government
FCSS(unknown town)
CNIB
Westview Health Centre Stony Plain
FCCS Town of Hinton
Peace River School Division
Red Deer Family Services
Cochrane FCSS
Misericordia Volunteer Services
CHR Coaldale
Volunteer Lethbridge
St. Albert Youth Community Centre
ECHO Society
The Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of
Edmonton
Henday Assoc. for Lifelong Learning
Midlake Veterinary Clinic
Coronation Municipal Government
Strathcona Place
FFCA System Central
Wellspring Family and Resource Crisis Centre
Grande Cache Transition House
St. Alphonsus School
Grey Nuns Community Hospital
Safe Home
WCCALS Literacy Programs
Beaverlodge FCSS
Volunteer Calgary

Distress Centre Calgary
Good Samaritan Society Evansburg
FCSS Town of Black Diamond
Good Samaritan Society Edmonton
Phoenix Safe House
St. Mary's Hospital
Conseil Scolaire Centre-East
Airdrie Meals on Wheels
Region 3 Family Based Care Society
Edmonton John Howard Society
Boys and Girls Club of Airdrie
The Works Art and Design Society
Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation
Rimbey Home Help FCSS
Camrose and District Senior Centre
Robin Hood Association
Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta
Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton Court Office
Rehoboth Christian Ministries
MRJC
Crowsnest Pass Adult Literacy Program
Lakeland Catholic School District No. 150
Livingstone Range School Division #68
Drayton Valley Adult Literacy Society
Calgary Educational Partnership Society
FCSS Crowsnest Pass
Christmas Bureau of Edmonton
Volunteer Hanna
Child and Youth Friendly Calgary
YMCA Calgary
Chinook's Edge School Div. No. 73
Metis Child and Family Services
Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
CMHA-Edmonton
Bethany Airdrie
Volunteer Cold Lake
Sturgeon Community Hospital
Swan Hills FCSS
Girl Guides Camrose
Claresholm FCSS
CMHA AB SE Region
Excel Society
PALS Pet Access League Society
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lethbridge
MS Society of Canada (AB Division)
AB Mentor Fdn. For Youth

FCSS Stettler
County of Lacombe Lifelong Learning Assoc.
Homebound Services Medicine Hat Public Library
Jewish Family Service Calgary
Rhythmic Gymnastics AB
Calgary Drop-In Rehab Centre
Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
Boys and Girls Club of Slave Lake
Town of Banff
Vulcan FCSS and Food Bank
Lethbridge Public Library
Town of Falher Emergency Services
Cdn. Liver Fdn. Edmonton
AB Caregivers' Assoc.
Canmore Public Library
Recreational Edmonton Co-Ed Hockey League
Smoky River Family and Community Support Services
Airdrie Meals on Wheels
The Steadward Centre
Foothills Medical Centre
Community Information and Volunteer Centre
Little Bow Continuing Care Centre
Edmonton's Food Bank
Ponoka FCSS
Barrhead and district RCW Association
Rocky Mountain House Rural Crime Watch Assoc.
Scouts Canada
Telus World of Science
ABC Headstart
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Wood Buffalo
Calgary Bridge Foundation
Parks and Protected Areas Division, Alberta Community
Development
The Good Samaritan Society of Medicine Hat
Central Lions Senior Citizen Recreation Centre
Canmore Community Daycare Society
Glenbow Museum
Strathcona County Library
The Champion's Centre
Hull Child and Family Services
Special Olympics Alberta
The Friends of Kananaskis Country
The Gateway Association for Community Living
Crystal Kids Youth Centre
Capital Health Homecare