

# Sooke Region Nonprofit Summit

## June 22, 2022

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Facilitated by  
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Executive Director



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## Introduction

Sooke Region Communities Health Network has a history of bringing nonprofits in the region together, either through support, resources, fairs, consultations, coordination meetings and the like. After two years of the pandemic and the lack of in-person gatherings, it was felt that it was time to reconnect. An invitation was sent out to over 200 nonprofit and volunteer organizations in the Sooke Region and over 20 from varying sectors attended the meeting held at Sooke Community Hall on June 22, 2022.

## Summary

It was agreed by all that where there were **needs in our community** pre-pandemic, they only increased due to COVID-19; food security, housing and mental health being the most critical ones. People have become more anxious with the youth being especially affected.

The **health sector** has been impacted including many surgeries being cancelled at late notice, creating disruption for many.

**In-person services** were affected due to fear of meeting in-person. Some services could be provided by phone, online or at a safe distance, but others required in-person presence throughout. The lack of in-person support not only created a lack of service but also led to increased isolation for the most vulnerable.

**Online meetings** could at times be exclusive for those who were not comfortable with digital devices, but in turn could create amazing opportunities for those who were willing/able to learn and for organizations able to pivot.

Services that were ongoing were not always known to the community despite efforts to **promote** them, which could lead to some frustration on the side of potential clients and the organizations themselves.

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**Space** was still an issue as some programs needed large spaces, that the booking systems for some locations were rather onerous, lack of space availability or they were too expensive.

Volunteers were hesitant to participate during the pandemic, so now organizations need to **re-recruit**. **Funding** and **communications** of services were also major concerns. Ideas and support around these pieces were communicated.

## Organizational Experiences Throughout Covid

### Challenges

- Frustration around how there is so little understanding for the crisis we are in: food security, housing, mental health (long waiting lists)
- Staff retention was difficult within government and nonprofit sectors.
- Volunteers were fearful and did not volunteer as before, which often led to a loss of momentum, halt in operations or new operational models
- Loss of creativity when one could not meet in-person.
- Loss of connectivity
- Unexpected costs, increased risk, and need for training to implement new virtual systems for maintaining servicesLack of technical staff support like IT which can lead to shut-downs of operations
- Where in-person contact was involved, service often did not take place
- Adapting to health regulations, though necessary, did take up resources and time: covid tests at the door, sanitization, masking etc
- All organizations going for the same funding
- Lack of coordination of events - at times overlap, competing to fill seats
- Clients becoming more demanding and not always understanding that volunteers are running the programs

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- Lock-down demanded more creativity to keep clients' spirits uplifted (ex: Ayre Manor) or to keep the lights on, which could take its toll on staff and volunteers
  - Lack of space for growing programs that was affordable and did not include too many hoops to rent

## Triumphs

- Those who managed to pivot and adapt their programs, discovered new opportunities to support clients.
- Federal covid grants through Victoria Foundation were very much in demand and appreciated
- Some organizations were able to secure grants that could support or enhance programming (ex: Sooke Region Museum's art gallery, SRCHN's COVID Shelter)
- Organizations became more at ease with zoom
- Transportation was less requested due to tele-health
- Online meetings made it possible to reach those with mobility issues
- Online learning exploded, opening up a new world for many

## Gaps and Needs

- Larger space for food bank
- Larger space for theatre and arts youth programs

## Opportunities

### Resources

Capital Regional District

- Rental *space* at community halls and JdF office on Otter Point Road

Sooke Community Hall

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- Affordable meeting *space*

#### Sooke and Juan de Fuca Health Foundation

- can help support causes through *advocacy and fundraising*

#### Sooke Region Communities Health Network

- Has a *volunteer centre* to promote volunteer and staff recruitment on Facebook and by newsletter.
- Sooke Region Lifelong Learning and Sooke Seniors Without Walls can provide an opportunity to *showcase organization's activities and services*
- Support with *grant writing*
- *Trainings* can be provided to support nonprofits: governance, funding, marketing, social media, volunteer recruitment etc
- Will resume annual volunteer fair
- Has a *resource website* (to be merged with the SRCHN website) where organizations can promote their services.
- Future *Elders Complex* with 70 affordable rentals for seniors and a seniors centre with kitchen and adaptable *space* to rent to other organizations
- Ongoing *mental health, addictions and substance use community consultation* that will provide insight on what these community needs are
- Plans for a *Community Health Centre* with various services, including mental health support
- Will improve its resource centre with a *Resource Navigator* to help people find their way to services and benefits that they need

#### Sooke Region Museum

- Has an *events calendar* and wants to be populated. This would not only provide a centralized calendar to promote events but also indicate what events are happening when, in order to coordinate events among organizations in the community.

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- *A covered pavilion with heat lamps* - perfect for when covid limits in-person meetings

Sooke School District

- *Meeting space*

Vancouver Island Regional Library

- Free *space* for meetings and gatherings

Various places of worship

- Rental *space* for meetings and events

Victoria Literacy Connection

- *Digital capacity building provided* for nonprofit organizations - get help with pivoting to online meetings and educational sessions

WorkLink

- Has a *newsletter* that communicate news to the community
- The new build is to include a *resource centre for for- and nonprofit organizations*, where marketing, business planning etc can be provided

## **Coordination**

- Apply for group collaborative grants
- Organize funding tables where we prepare proposals to funders directly
- Join in advertisement campaigns
- Share bookkeepers, marketing, IT etc
- Start Executive Director coordination meetings
- Find ways to simplify the booking of spaces in the community
- That all organizations advertise their events on the Sooke Region Museum events calendar to make this the go-to page for the entire community and not only visitors

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- Update the Sooke Region Resources webpage

## **Conclusion**

This initial meeting was to get together after a long hiatus and familiarize the various organizations about what is going on in our community, as well as the resources that are available. There was great interest to make these nonprofit coordination events a regular occurrence. It was suggested to host it every 6 months or at least annually.