

# STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF NON-PROFITS

A STUDY DESIGNED TO EXPLORE POST SECONDARY  
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF CAREERS IN THE NON-  
PROFIT SECTOR.

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POST-SECONDARY STUDENT PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS CAREERS IN THE NON-  
PROFIT SECTOR

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## ABSTRACT

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This study aims to contribute to the body of resources available to non-profit organizations located in the Okanagan region of British Columbia. The research seeks to explore the perceptions post-secondary students maintain towards careers in the non-profit sector. The study is descriptive in nature, using a mixed-method approach. Data was collected through an internet questionnaire from 91 post-secondary students. Respondents were asked a series of open and closed-ended questions which answer the study's four research objectives. The findings of the study show that students perceive lower salaries, as well as less opportunity for career progression and work-life balance in the non-profit sector compared to the for-profit sector. Additionally, exposure to the sector through volunteer work and educational content have a positive impact on a student's willingness to choose employment within the sector. Further, many students responded that they believed work in the non-profit sector would provide self-fulfillment. However, many respondents did not believe their prior work experience, education, or skill set would align with a career in the non-profit sector. By using this profile of post-secondary student perceptions, non-profit organizations can identify the weak points of public perceptions and therefore the areas that need more effort to improve perception. This study is limited by a relatively small sample size comprised of mostly business students. A larger study with a broader demographic of students is recommended.

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

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## 1.1 Introduction

Canadian non-profit organizations have been shutting down at an increasing rate (Mallabone, 2011). There are several factors inducing failure in these organizations, one being an absence of research and development within the sector. This research study is focused on filling a knowledge gap within the sector concerning post-secondary student's perceptions of work in the sector. Chapter one examines the background of the non-profit sector, followed by the purpose and significance of the study, as well as an outline of the nature and scope of the report.

## 1.2 Background

The Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence was established as a partnership with Okanagan College as a vehicle to help non-profit organizations to increase their capacity, improve sustainability, and provide training (The Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence, 2018). With the assistance of faculty members, student researchers provide this aid by producing online training courses, and hosting panel discussions and workshops. Once created, material is available to the public through an online platform. The College and the Centre's partnership is adjourning soon, along with the funding to generate material (Kyleen Myrah, Personal Communication, October 2, 2018). Producing additional research specific to the sector would further the Centre's contribution of material and value provided to the non-profit community.

The non-profit sector contributes substantially to Canada's GDP, employing over two million people, amounting to approximately 11% of labour force participation (Statistics Canada, 2005). Although these statistics are outdated, it is reasonable to assume that the relative participation of non-profit organizations within the Okanagan is still substantial. Moreover, as there are several post-secondary institutions located in the Okanagan, it can be assumed that there is also a considerable post-secondary student population within the region. In contrast to this, the Canadian population is aging, particularly in the Okanagan (Statistics Canada, 2016). As the labour pool ages and begins to retire, non-profit organizations will be

looking to hire new talent. Post-secondary students and graduates are a demographic that non-profits may consider recruiting to succeed their retiring workforce. Provided the availability of accurate labour market information, there would be an opportunity for non-profit firms to source and market to the most suitable candidates for job vacancies. However, non-profit firms are currently unable to perform this marketing and hiring process effectively. This is due to a knowledge gap regarding post-secondary student's opinions of the non-profit sector.

Presently, it is accepted that millennials maintain certain values surrounding career selection when they initially enter the workforce such as interesting work, and salary expectations (Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015). However, it is not conclusive if student's perceptions of non-profits differ from what they value in a general career. In addition, there is existing research that determines public and consumer perceptions of non-profits as employers, however, it does not specify whether these perceptions impact post-secondary student's career choices. These are both knowledge gaps the proposed research seeks to fill.

### 1.3 Purpose

The Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence's purpose is to help non-profit organizations achieve sustainability. There is currently a knowledge gap concerning what judgements post-secondary students hold regarding the sector as a potential career choice. This research intends to provide insight from a student's point of view, and is reflected in the following decision statement:

*What are post-secondary student's' perceptions of the non-profit sector as a career choice?*

The following research objectives have been created to answer this decision statement:

*RO1: Determine the perceptions post-secondary students have regarding working in non-profit organizations*

*RO2: Determine if exposure to the non-profit sector impact a student's willingness to work within the non-profit sector*

*RO3: Determine why post-secondary students might choose a career in a non-profit*



*RO4: Determine why post-secondary students might not choose a career in a non-profit.*

## 1.4 Significance

The SCNPE will use this study as an online resource available to non-profit organizations and the public. This research study will be of benefit to non-profit organizations by providing them insight on the post-secondary students labour market. Access to “information on the characteristics of the workforce can help employers make... hiring decisions” (United States Department of Labor, 2016), build a skilled workforce, spend hiring funds effectively, and therefore function more efficiently. This study’s findings will help organizations to better attract and retain post-secondary students entering the workforce.

## 1.5 Nature and Scope of the Report

This report provides a thorough response to the decision statement and research objectives. Chapter one presents an overview of the non-profit sector along with the purpose of the study. This is followed by chapter two, which expands on the background through a literature review that explores existing research on the non-profit sector and millennial perceptions. Next, chapter three outlines the research methodology, which evaluates the study’s overall validity, sensitivity and reliability of its mixed method approach. Chapter four analyzes the data collected and provides the findings of the research. Lastly, chapter five derives conclusions from the findings and provides recommendations.

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review

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### 2.1 Introduction

The review analyzes existing literature related to perceptions of non-profits, addressing ideas and identifying strengths and weaknesses. The review reports on existing knowledge concerning the decision statement and identifies gaps or unanswered questions within the field.

Chapter two commences with a review of literature concerning perceptions of non-profits. Subsequently, literature pertaining to exposure to the non-profit industry is examined. Finally, factors that impact career choices are explored.

### 2.2 Perceptions of Non-Profits

Marketers often argue that organizations or entities can bear human-like traits. Coinciding with this notion, people possess judgements of organizations like how one perceives individuals or groups. The principle of an organization being a non-profit or for profit is frequently a determination of stereotype (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010). The perceptions a person maintains of an industry are relevant as those attitudes may correlate with a person's willingness to participate within the industry (Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer & Ng, 2015). Aaker et al. highlight the existing stereotypes that consumers have towards non-profit organizations based on the dimensions of warmth (i.e. honesty, generosity, and helpfulness) and competence (i.e. effectiveness, intelligence, and capability) (2010). The authors report that non-profits are typically viewed as warm, whereas for profits are more often perceived as competent. This was shown to impact buying decisions as "consumers [were] less willing to buy a product made by a non-profit than a for-profit because of their perceptions that the firm lacks competence" (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010).

The literature is relevant to this research as it identifies what the public perceives of the non-profit industry. Additionally, the literature recognizes realities within the non-profit industry, such as work places being considered 'warm' by employees, information which can be used as a comparison against student perceptions. Although the study is robust, it focuses on a

stereotypes' impact and persuasion in marketplace decisions, failing to address a stereotypes' influence on an individual's career choices. This gap formulates research objective one:

*ROI: Determine the perceptions post-secondary students have regarding working in non-profit organizations.*

## 2.3 Exposure to the Non-Profit Sector

There is no shortage of research surrounding employees within non-profit organizations. However, research on careers in the non-profit sector often focuses on individuals who are already working in the non-profit industry, failing to acknowledge how these individuals choose the sector for employment (Nelson, 2017). In 2017, a study was conducted with the intention of discovering how individuals make career choices and specifically, how they happen on the non-profit sector and choose it as a career. The researcher sampled random individuals from the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network, inquiring about their personal, educational and work history - factors that lead individuals to career choices (Nelson, 2017). The research findings indicated that many people working in the sector had some exposure to the non-profit sector before being employed, for example; enrolment in a non-profit related class in college, through professional or personal connections, volunteer work, unplanned internships, or socialization (Nelson, 2017). It was discovered that through these interactions, awareness of the non-profit organization increased, and career opportunities arose (Nelson, 2017). The literature shows that 46.4% of the employees surveyed accredited 'a great deal of influence' of their employment to being in the right place at the right time (Nelson, 2017). Additionally, surveys state that "more than two-thirds of students reported that participation in co-curricular activities, [including volunteering in the non-profit sector], had excellent or outstanding value" with many students receiving job offers (Graduate Management Admission Council, 2012).

Despite being employed in the sector, data shows that 67.6% of survey participants were unaware when they were younger that careers in the non-profit sector even existed (Nelson, 2017). For this reason, career selection is oftentimes accredited to chance, rather than a degree of exposure. Psychologists theorize that an individual's career choice is the result of an accumulation of experiences and unintentional, unpredictable events over time, for example, discovering a career opportunity from a sign while out on a walk (Nelson, 2017).

This study discusses many scenarios surrounding exposure to the non-profit sector. However, the sample surveyed was comprised of employees already working in the non-profit sector, who are already demonstrating that they are willing to work in the industry. The existing literature neglects to demonstrate the perspective of a post-secondary student who may have exposure to the non-profit sector and the impact that exposure has on his or her willingness to enter the sector. This gap brings reason for the formulation of research objective two:

*RO2: Determine if exposure to the non-profit sector impact a student's willingness to work within the non-profit sector.*

## 2.4 Factors Impacting Career Choice

### 2.4.1 Work Values

To attract employees, employers must understand the labour force's work values, as values shape individuals' choices including career selection (Kuron et al., 2015). Typically, an individual's values shift during various life, career, and educational stages, but become rather stable as they enter the workforce after post-secondary education (Kuron et al., 2015). Work values are defined as the "generalized beliefs about the relative desirability of various aspects of work, and work-related outcomes [and the] various needs or goals that people seek to satisfy through their work" (Kuron et al., 2015). Examples of work values include interesting work, pay, job security, relationship with coworkers, and status (Kuron et al., 2015). The literature defines the factors that are specifically important to the millennial generation, accounting for individuals with varying levels of work experience and education. The results of a study conducted on Canadian Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994) showed that the work values millennials identified to be most important to them are having good-coworkers, doing interesting work, salary, achievement, and doing work that helped people (Kuron et al., 2015).

Additional studies have reported that millennials do not like uncertainty in the workplace and prefer to work in situations where there is a formalized procedure, centralized decision-making, and clearly defined rules and responsibilities (Graduate Management Admission Council, 2012). Further, as identified by Kuron et al., individuals place importance on the element of helping others, a factor that might lead one to a career in the non-profit sector (2015). From a study conducted on individuals who work in the non-profit sector, it was

found that 82.5% of survey participants remembered wanting to “find a career in which they were helping someone” (Nelson, 2017). The literature defines what values millennials maintain when selecting careers, however it does not define what values millennials believe they would find in a career within the non-profit sector.

#### 2.4.2 Salary and Benefit Expectations

Salary and benefits are factors that consistently arise in literature concerning career choice. In 2017, Charity Village, a Canadian resource site, conducted a report addressing salary and benefit differences in the non-profit sector. It is anticipated that when discovering student’s perceptions of the non-profit sector, they will have some preconceived notions of compensation. Charity Village’s study will be applicable to demonstrate disparities when comparing non-profit employee’s actual wages to student’s expectations. This report is advantageous as it contains compensation breakdowns by both province and community size, so it can be tailored to be more comparable to the research sample. It also covers a broad sample of 14,879 Canadians within 1,016 organizations.

#### 2.4.3 Self Selection in the Non-Profit Sector

Studies have found that on average non-profit employees tend to be more intrinsically motivated than their for-profit counterparts (Nelson, 2017). Additionally, employees working in the non-profit sector were found to have higher job satisfaction than private firms, as well as an increase in life satisfaction, despite oftentimes having comparatively lower pay (Binder, 2016). Binder identifies that these results are not necessarily a causal relationship, as the increased satisfaction could be a result of altruistic individuals being happier in general and choosing the non-profit sector (2016). This introduces the concept of individuals “self-selecting” into the non-profit sector. The author suggests that it may be a generalization to assume everybody would experience increased satisfaction while working within the non-profit industry and that overall higher job satisfaction may be due to a concentration of self-selecting altruistic individuals (Binder, 2016). This literature identifies self-selection and altruism as factors that potentially lead to a career in the non-profit sector. However, these are solely two elements pulled from a larger population.

To identify the career values and compensation post-secondary students believe they would find in a career within the non-profit sector, as well as alternative factors for career selection, research objective three and four were developed:

*RO3: Determine why post-secondary students might choose a career in a non-profit*

*RO4: Determine why post-secondary students might not choose a career in a non-profit.*

## 2.5 Conclusion

The literature reviewed demonstrates perceptions of non-profits and involvement within the industry. It also distinguishes factors that impact career choices. However, the literature does not clearly define a post-secondary student's perceptions, involvement, or other factors in relation to their willingness to choose a career in the non-profit sector. The following research objectives have been developed to bridge the gaps within the existing research:

*RO1: Determine the perceptions post-secondary students have regarding working in non-profit organizations*

*RO2: Determine if exposure to the non-profit sector impact a student's willingness to work within the non-profit sector*

*RO3: Determine why post-secondary students might choose a career in a non-profit*

*RO4: Determine why post-secondary students might not choose a career in a non-profit*

These research objectives direct the research methodology and approach, which are discussed further in chapter three.

## Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

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### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter three outlines the methodology applied in this research study, to evaluate the overall validity, sensitivity and reliability. This chapter includes the research and sample design, data collection methods, instrument evaluation, and an analysis of the statistical methods used.

### 3.2 Research Design

The research conducted in this study was descriptive in nature. As stated in chapter two, after a thorough revision of existing literature concerning the population and subjects of interest, it has been established that there is a knowledge gap regarding the judgements students in the Okanagan maintain when considering careers, particularly in the non-profit sector. As such, the research strategy involved one method of primary research, an online self-administered questionnaire to post-secondary students. Surveys were deemed an appropriate method to gather relevant data on student perceptions as they could be delivered to both classrooms and individual students conveniently.

The survey used a mixed-method approach, using both quantitative and qualitative questions. Quantitative questions allowed for the discovery of correlations and patterns concerning student judgements; whereas, qualitative questions provided personal insight into if, and why, students had preconceived notions of the non-profit sector.

### 3.3 Sample Design

The primary unit of analysis for this study was post-secondary students at Okanagan College. The sample collected was a convenience sample. The student researcher surveyed students within classroom settings, after gaining permission from professors. For both comparison and representation reasons, classes involving content on non-profit material such as social entrepreneurship were surveyed, as well as courses with no non-profit related content such as calculus and strategic management. Additionally, students were surveyed on campus outside of classroom settings. The student researcher set up a table during a Thursday lunch hour in the atrium, a high traffic area on Okanagan College's campus, and invited passing students to

take the questionnaire. Moreover, student researchers who have previously worked for the ScotiaBank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence were also surveyed for insight and comparison reasons. In total, there was a sample size of ninety-six surveys required given a confidence level of ninety-five per cent and a confidence interval of ten.

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

The questionnaire was anonymous and short in length, it included twenty-four questions and took an average of seven minutes to complete (See Appendix A). Primary data was collected through Survey Monkey and Qualtrics, online survey instruments, which respondents gained access to through an e-mail link, a link posted on Okanagan College's Moodle site, or through the student researcher's mobile device. Under circumstances where a student did not have access to technology, the student researcher was able to supply a mobile device to use for survey completion. This ensured the questionnaire was available to all students, regardless of their access to technology. The questionnaire was successfully completed by ninety-one post-secondary students.

### 3.5 Instrument Evaluation

To ensure valid, sensitive and reliable results, the questionnaire was developed through a thorough design process and placed through numerous pre-tests by both the client and peer student researchers. This peer assessment improved the overall quality of the questionnaire by identifying confusion in wording, problems with question order, and inconsistencies. Further, to achieve validity, survey questions were developed directly from the four research objectives identified during the literature review. This process ensured that the questions being posed directly contributed to answering the research objectives and eliminated the possibility of unnecessary questions. Additionally, to establish a high level of sensitivity and to measure attitudes accurately, all continuous scale questions presented answers on a five-point scale to allow for various responses, including neutral options.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The survey design involved a variety of questions, which necessitated both categorical and continuous variable analysis. The analysis was conducted using both parametric and non-



parametric tests. Relationships between variables from closed-ended questions were explored through tools such as the Chi-square test, independent-samples t-test, cross-tabulations and frequency distributions. To determine trends within open-ended questions, answers were assessed and categorized by themes, which were identified by repeating words or similar word choice.

### 3.7 Conclusion

A descriptive research design was used to develop answers in respect to the research objectives. The methodology describes how the data was collected, as well as how it was analyzed so that further meaning could be developed. The results of the data and analysis will be discussed in Chapter Four, Findings and Discussion.

## Chapter 4 - Research Findings & Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three outlined the methodology applied in the research study. In this chapter, the demographics of the participants involved in the study are described. Additionally, the findings from the research are discussed, organized under the research objectives defined in Chapter One. The conclusions determined by these findings can be found in Chapter Five.

### 4.2 Description of Participants

The respondents consist of 91 post-secondary students of whom 51 were female and 40 were male (Figure 4.1). Most respondents are under 30: 68 of whom are aged 19-24, 19 are 25-30, with the remaining four respondents being 31 and over (Figure 4.2). Of the 91 respondents, 74 are business students, with the remainder studying other disciplines (Figure 4.3).

Regarding volunteer experience, 66 of the respondents claimed to have volunteer experience, ranging frequency of volunteer participation from very rarely to very frequently (Figure 4.4). The majority of respondents (79%) either strongly or somewhat agreed to having professional work experience (Figure 4.5).

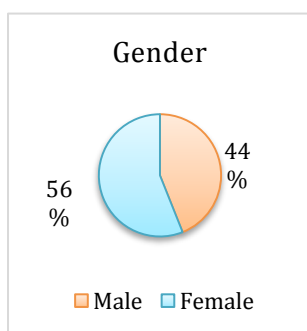


Figure 4-1: Gender Distribution

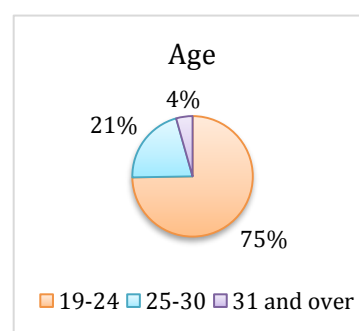


Figure 4-3: Age Distribution

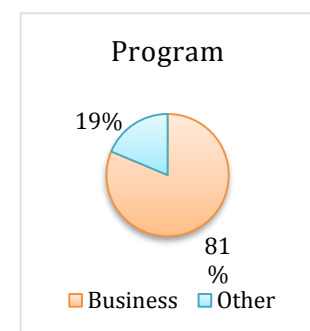


Figure 4-2: Distribution of program of study

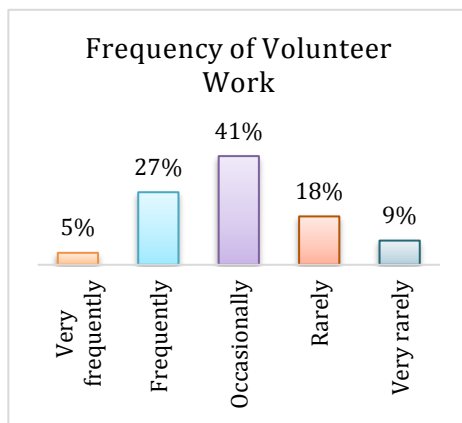


Figure 4-4: Frequency of Volunteer work



Figure 4-5: Agreeance with the statement "I have professional work experience"

### 4.3.1 RO1: Student Perceptions Towards Careers in Non-Profit Organizations

This research objective is designed to discover what post secondary students perceive a career within a non-profit organization entails. Questions were posed on elements such as salary, work environment, career progression, training and development, and the involvement of interesting and important work.

To address salary perceptions, participants were asked to answer on a scale what they believed average management and executive salaries would be within both the non-profit and the for-profit sectors. On this scale, the mean of respondents expected management salaries in the non-profit sector to be \$46,400, which is lower than the salary expectation for the same management position in the for-profit sector, which had a mean of \$67,100. The distribution of responses for expected salaries in both sectors can be found in Figure 4.6.



Figure 4-6: Salary Estimates for Management Positions

Regarding chief executive salaries, respondents expected executive positions within the non-profit sector to have an average salary of \$76,200, whereas they expected the same position in the for-profit sector to have an average salary of \$98,900. The distribution of responses for expected salaries in both sectors can be found in Figure 4.7.

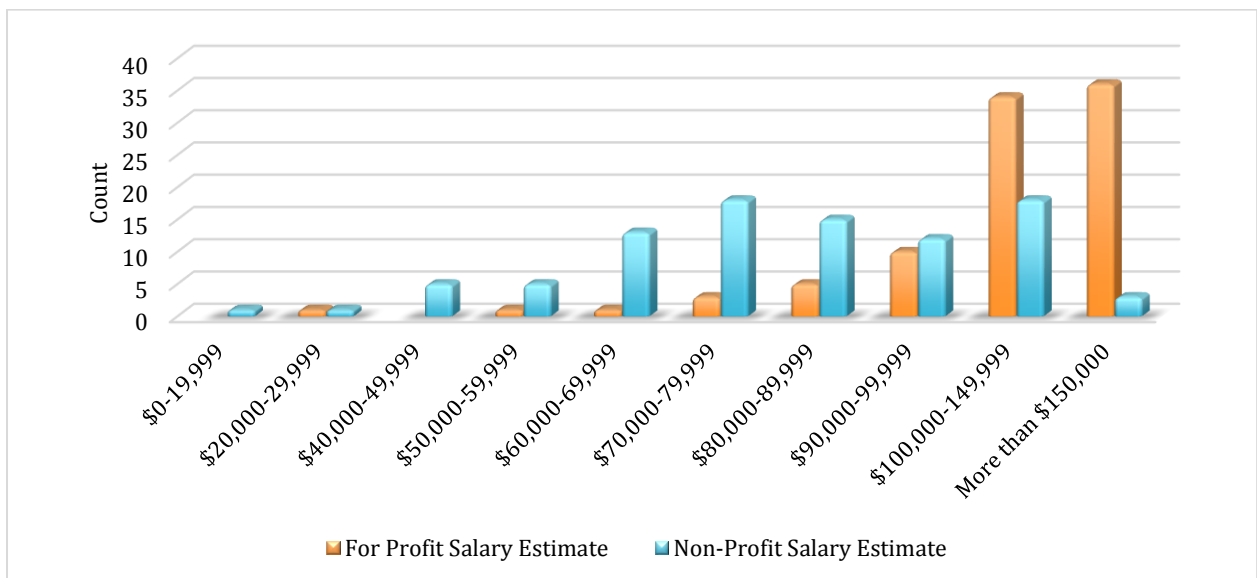


Figure 4-7: Salary Estimates for Chief Executive Positions

Respondents were prompted to complete an open-ended response to describe what words they associate with the non-profit sector. Responses varied in nature, encompassing negative, neutral, and positive perceptions. The following comments, provided by respondents, highlight common themes:

Table 4-1: Common perceptions of non-profit organizations

Warm/Positive	Neutral	Negative
“Probably just the sense of charity and people helping other people in their times of need.”	“Organizations operating for a mission rather than maximization of earnings”	“Low pay, limited business skills, limited opportunity for career advancement and training, strained resources, questions from the public/donors in relation to spending, inefficiencies.”
“A small group of people that are fundraising for communities around them making a difference”	“They greatly rely on volunteers”	“Social impact, but lower salary and over worked staff.”
“Doing good in the community, lower salary, meaningful work”	“Organizations that focus on a special population - charities”	

The open-ended responses are categorized into seven themes; Low Salary, Charity, Community, Social Impact, Volunteering, Alternative Mission and Other (See Appendix B). Although responses varied in attitude, it is interesting to remark that 25% of respondents associated the word “Charity” with the non-profit sector, and 19% associated it with “Social Impact/Doing Good”. The frequencies of all word association responses can be seen in Figure 4.8.

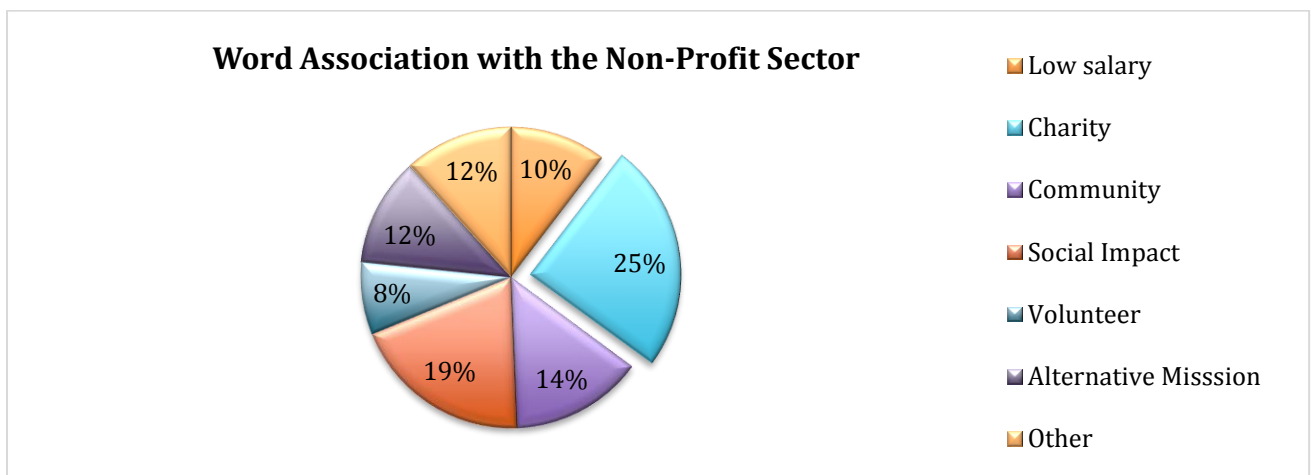


Figure 4-8: Open-ended word association with the non-profit sector

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of a set of criteria on a six-point scale (1=Neutral 2=Unimportant, 3= Of little Importance, 4= Moderately Important, 5= Important, 6=Very Important) when choosing a career. The criteria included Career Progression, Work-Life Balance, Salary, Interesting Work, and Important Work. Career progression was ranked as most important and Work-Life Balance as second most important. However, as expected, all criteria were ranked as relatively important factors when choosing a career. The importance of each criteria can be seen in Figure 4.9.

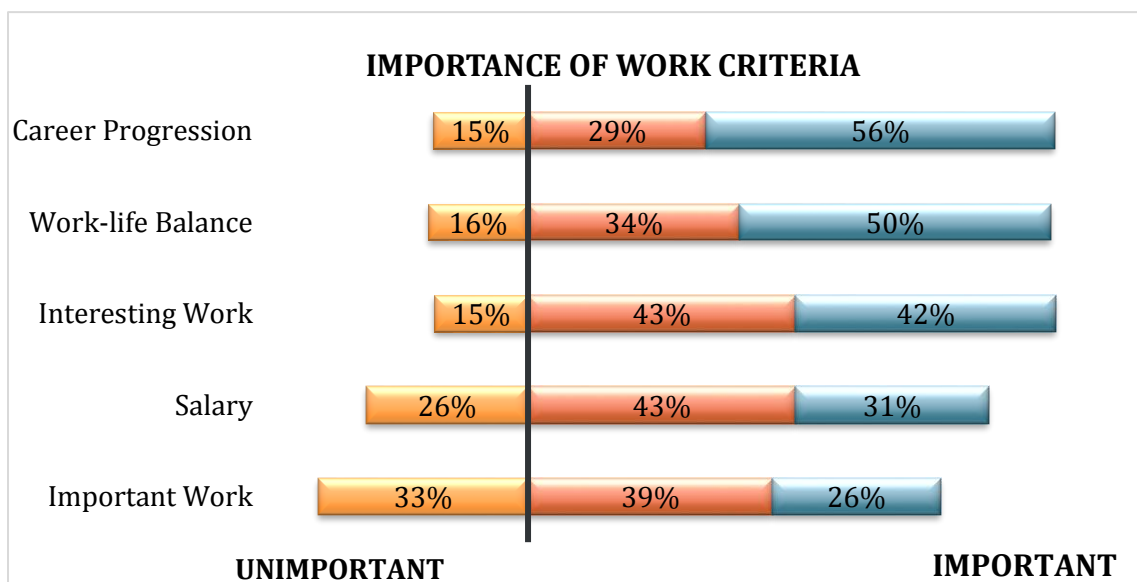
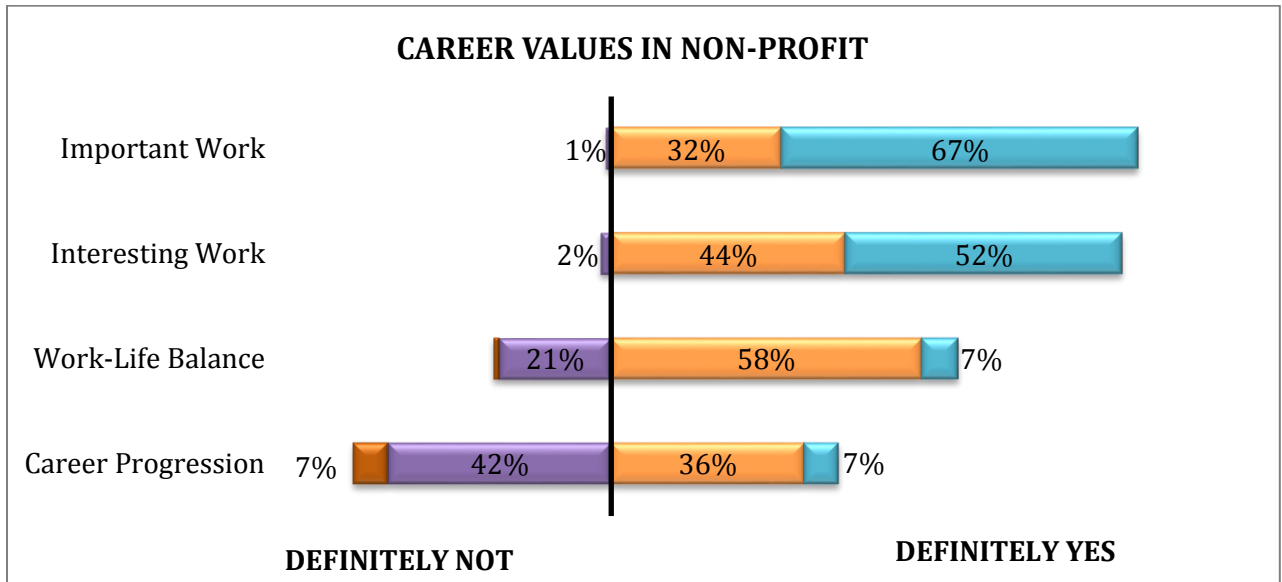


Figure 4-9: Importance of Career Criteria

Respondents were also asked to respond on a five-point scale (1= Definitely Yes, 2= Probably Yes, 3= Probably Not, 4= Definitely Not, 5= Unsure) to what degree they believed careers in the non-profit sector would provide opportunities for career progression, work-life balance, interesting work and important work. This is demonstrated in Figure 4.10. Of the four criteria listed, respondents believed there would be less opportunity for career progression and work-life balance within the non-profit sector. It should be noted that the criteria ranked as most important when selecting a career (Career Progression and Work-Life Balance) have an inverse relationship with what respondents perceive a career in the non-profit sector would include.



1

Figure 4-10: Perceptions of Career Criteria in the Non-Profit Sector

### 4.3.2 RO2: Exposure to the Non-Profit Sector's Impact on Willingness to Work in the Sector

The purpose of this research objective is to discover if a post-secondary student's exposure to the non-profit sector has an impact on their willingness to work in the sector. To address this objective, this study examines exposure to non-profit content through both education and volunteer/work experience.

To discover the degree of exposure to the sector, respondents were asked if they had prior volunteer or work experience within the sector, 72.5% of respondents indicated "Yes" and the remainder indicated "No". This measure was then compared with willingness to work in the sector to discern a dependency. The reliability of this was tested by running a crosstabulation and a Chi-Square test (See Appendix C for calculations). The results of these tests reject the null hypothesis, determining that willingness to work in the non-profit sector is dependant on previous volunteer experience. This can be seen in Figure 4.11.

<sup>1</sup> The values don't add to exactly 100% as respondents who responded "unsure" to the question were not included in the graph.

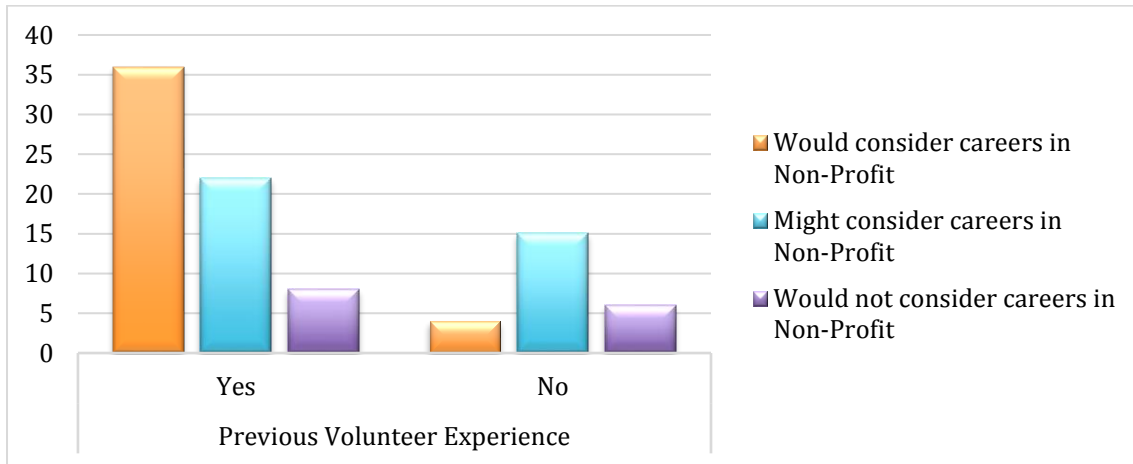


Figure 4-11: Willingness to Work in the Non-Profit Sector Dependence on Volunteer Experience

Additionally, respondents were asked to what degree they had been exposed to content concerning the non-profit sector within their post secondary education on a five-point scale (1=A great deal, 2=A lot, 3=A moderate amount, 4=A little, 5=None at all). To determine a dependence between this exposure element and a willingness to work in the non-profit sector, a crosstabulation and Chi-Square test were used (See calculations in Appendix C). It was found that the less content students were exposed to during their education, the more likely they were to be unsure about choosing a career in the sector. In comparison, students exposed to a greater deal of content in their post-secondary education were more willing to consider a career in the non-profit sector. This can be seen in Figure 4.12.

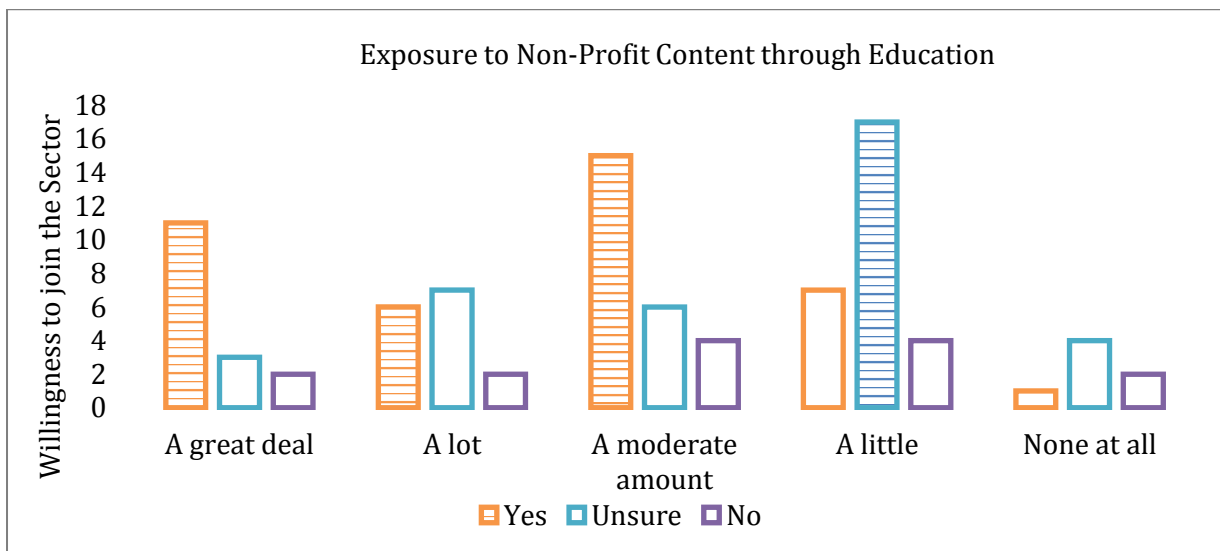


Figure 4-12: Exposure to Content and Willingness to Join the Non-Profit Sector



### 4.3.3 RO3: Why Students Might Choose a Non-Profit Career

This research objective seeks to discern what factors might lead a post-secondary student to choose a career in the non-profit sector. This is assessed by examining factors such as the importance of common work criteria, desire for fulfillment from work, and previous work experience.

In regard to choosing careers in the non-profit sector, 44% of respondents claimed they would consider a career, with 40% remaining unsure. When prompted to explain why, several common themes surfaced, such as; the perception of fulfilling work, helping the community, current employment within the sector, and a previous positive work experience. Of the respondents who answered the open-ended response, 39.3% claimed they would join the non-profit sector on the basis they believed it had the potential to be self-fulfilling and meaningful, or they were already involved in the sector and would like to continue their involvement. Additionally, as noted earlier, respondents perceived a career in the non-profit sector to involve both interesting and important work (See Figure 4.10), which may lead them to a career in the sector if those criteria were a priority.

### 4.3.4 RO4: Why Students Might Refrain from Careers in Non-Profits

Related to the previous objective, this research objective seeks to determine what factors might lead a post-secondary student to refrain from choosing a career in the non-profit sector.

When questioned, 15.4% of respondents declared they would not consider a career in the non-profit sector post graduation, along with 40% who were unsure of whether they would work in the sector. When prompted why they would not consider a career in the non-profit sector, responses fell under common themes, such as being unaware of opportunities in the sector, and a perception of wrong alignment with personal skills. Table 4.1 highlights the most common responses (See Appendix B for coding of open-ended questions):

*Table 4-2: Common reasons for not considering a career in the non-profit sector.*

Unaware of opportunities	Bad Timing and Wrong Alignment
“I don’t know enough about non-profit to say yes or no.”	“I would consider doing more non-profit work if I already had a steady income.”

<p>“I do not have the preferred skills set needed for non-profit or most for-profit organizations”</p>	<p>“It would depend on the labor market, opportunities and circumstances at that specific time.”</p>
<p>“I don't see the same career advancement and stability as my current vocation.”</p>	<p>“Would like to develop professional skills in the for-profit sector and make more money there so when I start a family I am able to sacrifice financial benefit for a better work-life balance in the non-profit sector.”</p>

Of the respondents who were not or are unsure if they would consider a career in the non-profit sector, 29% believed their prior work experience, education, or skill set did not align with the needs of the non-profit sector, 23% didn't think a non-profit career would meet their salary demands or was uninteresting. The distribution of all negative responses can be seen in Figure 4.13.

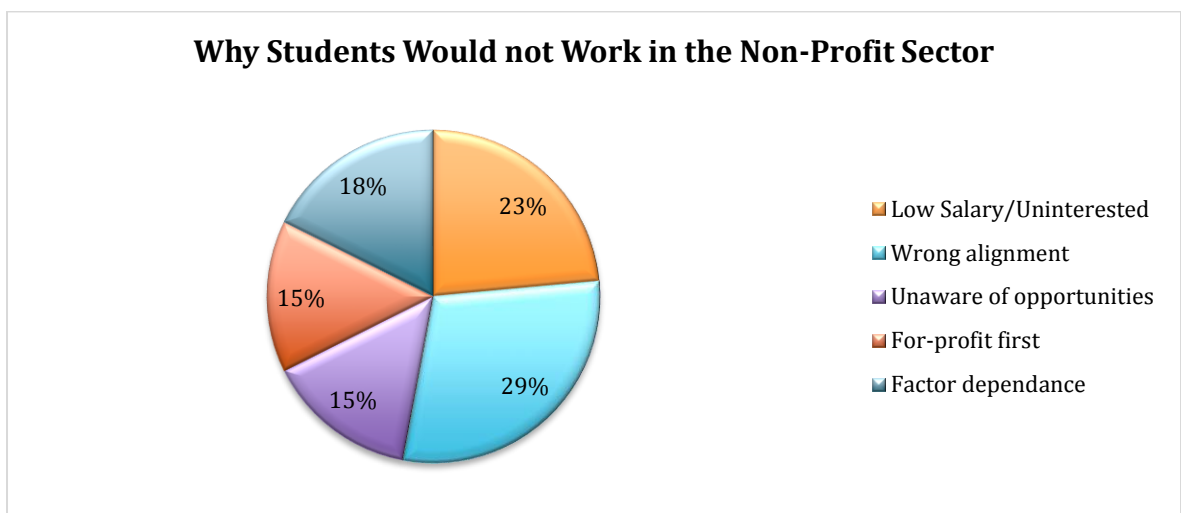


Figure 4-13: Percentage of Negative Responses to Careers in Non-Profit

As discussed in the other RO's, additional reasons students may refrain from careers the non-profit sector is the perception of a lower salary, low opportunity for career progression, work-life balance, or little exposure to the industry.

<sup>2</sup> Factor dependence includes factors such as organization, pay, labour market and how interesting the job is.

## 4.4 Conclusion

Ninety-one post-secondary students with varying degrees of exposure to, and knowledge of the non-profit sector participated in this study. Key findings of the study include post-secondary student's perceptions of lower salaries and less opportunity for career progression and work-life balance within the non-profit sector (RO1), student's willingness to work in the sector being dependant on their previous exposure to the sector (RO2), and factors such as career alignment which determine why or why a student might not choose a career in the sector (RO3 & RO4). In Chapter Five, the findings from this chapter will be explored along with conclusions and recommendations.

## Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

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### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, conclusions and recommendations deduced from the findings in chapter four are presented. Conclusions are addressed in order of research objectives. Additionally, the limitations of the study are addressed to ensure content is taken in the correct context.

### 5.2 Research Objective Conclusions

The findings from Chapter Four have uncovered post-secondary student perceptions of careers in the non-profit sector. Conclusions are presented in order of research objective.

#### 5.2.1 Student Perceptions Towards Careers in Non-Profit Organizations

As expected, respondents perceived salaries to be significantly lower in the non-profit sector than the for-profit sector. Additionally, it should be noted respondents perceived management staff salaries within non-profit organizations to be 25% lower than the actual average salary of \$62,378 (Charity Village, 2016). Furthermore, respondents estimated salaries for chief executives in the non-profit sector to be 18% lower than the actual average of \$93,154 (Charity Village, 2016). Accurate dissemination of compensation and benefits could prove to be beneficial to organizations in the sector, to demonstrate that the potential for compensation may be higher than stereotypes suggest.

Congruent with prior research on consumer perceptions, 45% of respondents characterized work in the non-profit sector with themes such as “Charity” “Community” or “Doing Good”, which fall under the category of “Warm” perceptions (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010). Although respondents may have characterized the sector in a warm manner, there was a theme of uncertainty of employer competence within the sector. Respondents did not believe the non-profit sector provides great opportunity for career progression and work-life balance (their most important criteria when selecting a career).

### 5.2.2 Exposure's Impact on Willingness to Work in the Non-Profit Sector

The research findings show that exposure to the sector through volunteer experience or enrolment in a non-profit related class had a positive impact on respondents' willingness to join the sector. This is consistent with previous research that stated many people working in the sector had some exposure to the non-profit sector before being employed, or received job offers after volunteer work. Regarding respondents who were unsure if they would work in the non-profit sector or not, they stated they were unaware of what opportunities the sector offered or if there was careers available in their field of study. This uncertainty is likely due to low exposure to the sector.

### 5.2.3 Why Students Might Choose a Career in Non-profit

Previous research established the most important work values as having good-coworkers, doing interesting work, salary, achievement, and doing work that helped people. In contrast, the findings identified that post-secondary students thought career progression and work-life balance are most important criteria, whereas salary and important work are less important when selecting a career. Therefore, students might be more likely to choose a career in the sector if they believed it incorporated these values. However, respondents perceived a career in the non-profit sector to involve both interesting and important work. To that effect, 39.3% claimed they would join the non-profit sector on the basis they believed it provided a sense of self-fulfilment, or they were already involved in the sector and would like to continue their involvement.

### 5.2.4 Why Students Might Refrain from Careers in Non-profit

As previously established, the perceptions a person maintains of an industry are relevant as negative attitudes may stop a person from working within the industry (Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer & Ng, 2015). The perception of low compensation emerges frequently in the findings. Salary was also frequently rated as an important job criterion. Many respondents claimed they would prefer to gain experience in the for-profit sector prior to joining the non-profit sector. This was often related to the low perception of salary, and the necessity of a higher salary when raising a family.

The majority of respondents were business students, yet 29% of respondents did not believe their prior work experience, education, or skill set would not align with a career the non-

profit sector. This implies that either students are not aware of job opportunities for individuals with business backgrounds in the non-profit sector, such as, human resources, finance or marketing, or they are not aware that organizations advertising these positions are non-profit organizations.

### 5.3 Decision Statement Conclusions

Perceptions of the non-profit sector and reasons for considering a career within the sector varied greatly. Students anticipated low salaries within the sector, which typically had an impact on their attitude towards working in the sector. Many students were unsure if they would seek employment in the non-profit sector. This was due to uncertainty and unawareness of opportunities in the sector, often stemming from common perceptions that non-profit is synonymous with charity, relies heavily on volunteers, and offers little opportunity for a career.

### 5.4 Limitations

This study focused specifically on post-secondary students in the Okanagan. This ensures the findings are relevant to non-profit organizations within the region, however limits the application of the findings outside of the region. Further, respondents were primarily business students (81%). Therefore, the results may not be applicable to organizations in search of information concerning students of other programs of study. This study also has limitations in terms of sample size. After the removal of incomplete responses, only 91 responses were used for data analysis, resulting in a larger margin of error than desired.

### 5.5 Recommendations

Four recommendations for non-profit organizations have been developed based on the findings. First, considering estimates of salaries in the non-profit sector were far below actual figures, it is recommended to emphasize competitive salaries in job postings. Secondly, in accordance with Aaker et al., it is recommended that non-profit organizations concentrate on putting forward an appearance of competence (i.e. effective management) instead of solely 'warm' (i.e. doing good). Third, given the proven dependency on exposure to the sector and willingness to work in the sector, it is recommended that non-profit organizations strive to

introduce post-secondary students to the sector. Once introduced to the sector, students may be more open to joining the sector as employees. Lastly, to address the unawareness of opportunities, non-profits must improve awareness of opportunities at their organizations to avoid misinformation and attract more post-secondary students to employment within the sector. Organizations can approach this issue by advocating for an increased investment in recruitment.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This research study has identified post-secondary student perceptions towards careers in the non-profit sector as well as recommendations for non-profit organizations within the Okanagan region based on these findings. Perceptions and awareness of the non-profit sector have an impact on whether post-secondary students would consider a career within the sector. Non-profit organizations should work to improve negative perceptions and increase awareness of what a career in the sector is like. Key areas to focus on are salary expectations, work-life balance and career progression.

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## APPENDICES

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### APPENDIX A

#### **Student Perceptions Towards Careers in the Non-Profit Sector<sup>3</sup>**

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##### *Start of Survey: Informed Consent*

Dear participant,

This questionnaire is being administered to better understand student perceptions towards careers in the non-profit sector. The primary research investigator for this project is Milanne Desfosses, who can be reached at (250)261-0208 or milanne.desfosses@myokanagan.bc.ca. This project is being conducted for the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence as a requirement for the completion of BUAD 491 and 492. The software cost to generate this survey was sponsored by the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence.

You have been invited to participate in this study because of your enrollment as a post secondary student. Your completion of this questionnaire will provide insight of a post secondary student's perceptions of the non-profit sector. Participation and completion of this questionnaire is voluntary; there is no obligation for you to answer any of the questions, and you have the right to refuse participation or withdraw at anytime. There will be no repercussions to not participating in this project.

This questionnaire will require a maximum of ten minutes. Completion of this survey may benefit you by giving you a platform to analyze the career decision process and potential career paths. By participating in this questionnaire, there is a risk you may experience stress by considering career choices. If this topic distresses you, you are encouraged to use Okanagan College's free counselling services. Counselling staff can be found in S111 within the Student Services building or at (250)762-5445 Ext. 4119.

A written report of the research conducted will be provided to the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence on April 12th, 2019. Along with the report, the primary investigator will deliver a presentation on the outcomes of the project. Both the report and presentation will outline the knowledge gaps regarding post-secondary student's perceptions of careers in non-profit organizations. The research report produced may be used by the Scotiabank Centre for Non-Profit Excellence in the future to provide organizations within the community augmented knowledge on the student labour force.

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<sup>3</sup> The frequencies and descriptives of each survey question can be found in Appendix D

Your participation in this project is anonymous and all information collected will be kept confidential. To ensure this, the investigator is using study codes on questionnaires instead of personal identifying information. In addition to the primary investigator, faculty advisors, Alan Rice and Sheilagh Seaton will have access to the data collected. All records of primary data will be securely stored until it is properly disposed of upon completion of the project in April 2019. This survey software stores data in the USA and therefore the data stored is subject to relevant USA laws.

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a participant in this project you may contact the Chair of the Okanagan College (OC) Research Ethics Board (REB) at 250-762-5445 (local 4736) or at reb@okanagan.bc.ca.

If you have any questions concerning the project, or any of the questions within the questionnaire, you are encouraged to ask the investigator for clarification.

By completion of this questionnaire, it is assumed your consent to participate in this project has been given, you acknowledge that your participation in this study is voluntary, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

Thank you for your participation,

Milanne Desfosses, Student Researcher, Okanagan College

- I consent, begin the study
  - I do not consent, I do not wish to participate
- 

Q1 To what degree have you been exposed to content concerning non-profit organisations during your post-secondary education?

(Note: Non-profit organisations include, but are not limited to; charities, foundations, societies, associations, and advocacy groups.)

- A great deal
  - A lot
  - A moderate amount
  - A little
  - None at all
- 

Q2 Do you have experience in the non-profit sector as a volunteer or as an employee?

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Do you have experience in the non-profit sector as a volunteer or as an employee? = Yes*

*Or Do you have experience in the non-profit sector as a volunteer or as an employee? = Unsure*

Q3 If you participated as volunteer in the non-profit sector, how often did you volunteer?

- Very frequently
- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Very rarely

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Do you have experience in the non-profit sector as a volunteer or as an employee? = Yes*

*Or Do you have experience in the non-profit sector as a volunteer or as an employee? = Unsure*

Q4 If you have participated in a non-profit organization, what was your position(s)?

Select all that apply

- Volunteer
- Staff Member
- Supervisor/Manager
- Executive Director
- Board Member
- Researcher/Student Researcher
- Other

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Do you have experience in the non-profit sector as a volunteer or as an employee? = Yes*

*Or Do you have experience in the non-profit sector as a volunteer or as an employee? = Unsure*

Q5 Has your participation in the non-profit sector impacted your perceptions of the sector?

- Yes



---

Q8 What do you think the average salary is for **management staff** working in the **non-profit sector** in Canada? (e.g. Team leaders, Supervisors, Managers)

- \$0 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- More than \$150,000

Q9 What do you think the average salary is for **management staff** working in the **for-profit** sector in Canada? (e.g. Team leaders, Supervisors, Managers)

- \$0 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- More than \$150,000

Q10 What do you think the average salary is for **chief and senior executives** working in the **non-profit sector** in Canada? (e.g. CEO, President, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, etc.)

- \$0 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999

- \$40,000 - \$49,999
  - \$50,000 - \$59,999
  - \$60,000 - \$69,999
  - \$70,000 - \$79,999
  - \$80,000 - \$89,999
  - \$90,000 - \$99,999
  - \$100,000 - \$149,999
  - More than \$150,000
- 

Q11 What do you think the average salary is for **chief and senior executives** working in the **for-profit** sector in Canada? (e.g. CEO, President, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, etc.)

- \$0 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- More than \$150,000

Q12 Do you believe there are as many opportunities to advance your career in the non-profit sector in comparison to the for-profit sector?

- Definitely yes
  - Probably yes
  - Probably not
  - Definitely not
  - Unsure
-

Q13 Do you think a career in the non-profit sector provides a good work-life balance?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- Definitely not
- Unsure

---

Q14 Do you think a career in the non-profit sector involves interesting work?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- Definitely not
- Unsure

---

Q15 Do you think a career in the non-profit sector involves important work that would positively impact your community?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- Definitely not
- Unsure

Q16 Do you think a career in the non-profit sector involves important work that would satisfy your needs for self-fulfilment?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Probably not
- Definitely not
- Unsure

Q17 Do you think the non-profit sector is a good place to start your career after completing post-secondary? Why or why not?

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Q18 What do you associate with the phrase, "Non-Profit Sector"?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q19 Would you consider a career in the non-profit sector in the near future? Why or why not?

- Yes
  - Unsure
  - No
  - Please explain \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q20 What gender do you identify as?

- Male
  - Female
  - Other
- 

Q21 What is your age?

- 18 and under
  - 19 to 24
  - 25 to 30
  - 31 to 36
  - 37 to 42
  - 43 to 48
  - 49 and over
- 

Q22 What post-secondary program are you currently enrolled in?

- Business
  - Arts
  - Sciences
  - Engineering
  - Health
  - Other
-



Q23 Do you intend to pursue further education after you complete your current post-secondary program?

- Yes
- Unsure
- No

Q24 To what extent do you agree with the following statement;

“I have work experience”

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

**End of Survey**

---

## APPENDIX B

### Codebook for Q18: Word Association

Axial Code	Open coding
Low Salary	Related to the non-profit sector paying lower salary than the for-profit sector.
Charity	Related to charitable organizations and charity work.
Community	Related to impacting and involving the community in a positive way.
Doing Good	Related to helping others, doing good, and overall involving a social impact.
Volunteering	Related to volunteer work.
Alternative Mission	Related to non-profit organization's mission revolving around something other than profit maximization.
Other	Spectrum of answers: "Government", "No Incentive to Innovate", "Small Company", "Independent", "Homeless Shelters", "Museums & Art Galleries", "Average Life", "Capitalism for a Cause", "Two spectrums: tax avoidance or passionate people".

### Codebook for Q. 19: Career Choice Explanation

Axial Code	Open Coding
Negative View	Related to the industry having low pay, being uninteresting or having little opportunity for growth and development.
Wrong Alignment	Related to prior work experience and education not aligning with opportunities in the sector. Not as much career advancement as the for-profit sector.
Unaware of opportunities	Related to unawareness about the sector in general. Unsure if there are appealing opportunities.
For-profit first	Related to a desire to work in the for-profit sector after graduation but maintain an openness to working in the non-profit sector later in life.

Fulfilling/Good Opportunities	Related to interest in the non-profit sector because it seems fulfilling, there are good opportunities, they are already working in the sector, or have past work experience in the sector.
Factor dependence	Related to dependence on factors such as organization, pay, labour market and how interesting the job is.

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## APPENDIX C

### RO1 Calculations:

#### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Non-Profit Management Salary Expectations	91	4.64	1.574
For- Profit Management Salary Expectations	91	6.71	1.979
Non-Profit Chief Executive Salary Expectations	91	7.62	2.048
For-Profit Chief Executive Salary Expectations	91	9.89	1.479
Valid N (listwise)	91		

Note: Means were chosen as a measure instead of median so that they could be directly compared to existing secondary data on salaries which used means as a measure.

The average salary was found by multiplying the difference in intervals by the mean and then adding that amount to the lower interval amount.

$$(10,000 * 4.64) + 40,000 = \$46,400$$

$$(10,000 * 6.71) + 60,000 = \$67,100$$

$$(10,000 * 7.62) + 70,000 = \$76,200$$

$$(10,000 * 9.89) + 90,000 = \$98,900$$

### RO2 Calculations: Past volunteer experience's impact on a student's consideration of a career in the non-profit sector.

Ho: The null hypothesis states that there is no dependence between volunteer experience and willingness to work in the non-profit sector.

Ha: The alternative hypothesis states that there is a dependence between volunteer experience and willingness to work in the non-profit sector.

The p-test = .004 which is significantly below the critical value of .05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative.

<b>Past Volunteer Experience and Consideration of a Career in the Non-Profit Sector Crosstabulation</b>					
		Consideration of a Career in the Non-Profit Sector			Total
		Yes	Unsure	No	
Past Volunteer Experience	Yes	36	22	8	66
	No	4	15	6	25
Total		40	37	14	91

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.963 <sup>a</sup>	2	.004
Likelihood Ratio	11.910	2	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.909	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	91		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.85.

<b>Symmetric Measures</b>			
	Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup> Significance

Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.315	.095	3.127	.002 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.330	.092	3.303	.001 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		91			

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
- b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
- c. Based on normal approximation.

### RO2 Calculations: Exposure to the Non-Profit Sector Through Post-Secondary Education and Consideration of a Career in the Non-Profit Sector

Ho: The null hypothesis states that there is no dependence between exposure to non-profit content through education and a willingness to work in the non-profit sector.

Ha: The alternative hypothesis states that there is a dependence between exposure to non-profit content through education and a willingness to work in the non-profit sector.

The p-test = .053 is slightly above the critical value of .05. Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Although this is not statistically significant, it could be significant for managerial decisions.

		Consideration of a Career in the Non-Profit Sector			Total
		Yes	Unsure	No	
Exposure to the Non-Profit Sector Through Post-Secondary Education	A great deal	11	3	2	16
	A lot	6	7	2	15
	A moderate amount	15	6	4	25
	A little	7	17	4	28
	None at all	1	4	2	7
Total		40	37	14	91

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.359 <sup>a</sup>	8	.053
Likelihood Ratio	16.003	8	.042
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.494	1	.019
N of Valid Cases	91		

- a. 7 cells (46.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.08.

<b>Symmetric Measures</b>					
		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.247	.100	2.406	.018 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.274	.100	2.683	.009 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		91			

- a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.  
 b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.  
 c. Based on normal approximation.

## APPENDIX D

Below are tables of the frequencies and descriptives of each survey question.

	q1_np_exposure	q2_volunteer	q3_volun_freq	q4a_volunteer	q4b_staff_member	q4c_manager
Valid	91	91	66	60	17	2
Missing	0	0	25	31	74	89
Mean	2.95	1.55	3.00	1.00	2.00	3.00
Median	3.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	3.00
Variance	1.497	0.806	1.015	0.000	0.000	0.000

	q4d_exec_direct	q4e_board_member	q4f_researcher	q4g_other	q5_participation	q6_neg_pos_imp
Valid	0	5	11	2	66	41
Missing	91	86	80	89	25	50
Mean		5.00	6.00	7.00	1.26	2.07
Median		5.00	6.00	7.00	1.00	2.00
Variance		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.317	0.820

	q7a_worklife_bal	q7b_salary	q7c_interesting_work	q7d_important_work	q7e_training	q7f_career_progression
Valid	91	91	91	90	91	91
Missing	0	0	0	1	0	0
Mean	5.29	5.03	5.23	4.83	4.79	5.40
Median	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	6.00
Variance	0.740	0.610	0.624	0.949	0.923	0.597

	q8_mgmt_sal_np	q9_mgmt_sal_fp	q10_exec_sal_np	q11_exec_sal_fp	q12_opportunities	q13_work_life_bal
Valid	91	91	91	91	91	91
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	4.64	6.71	7.62	9.89	2.75	2.55
Median	5.00	7.00	8.00	10.00	3.00	2.00
Variance	2.478	3.917	4.195	2.188	0.991	1.117



	q14_interest_work	q15_work_imp_omm	q16_work_self_ful	q17_career_starter	q18b_code	q19a_career_np
Valid	91	91	90	91	77	91
Missing	0	0	1	0	14	0
Mean	1.57	1.33	1.98	1.74	3.71	1.71
Median	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	2.00
Variance	0.559	0.246	0.674	0.574	3.628	0.517

	q19c_code	q20_gender	q21_age	q22_program	q23_further_educ	q24_work_exper
Valid	56	91	91	91	88	88
Missing	35	0	0	0	3	3
Mean	3.73	1.56	2.32	1.30	1.73	1.89
Median	4.50	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.50	2.00
Variance	2.891	0.249	0.397	0.855	0.660	0.861