

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming
Federal Budget**

By: The National Alliance for Children and Youth

List of Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government create sustained mechanisms for consultation and engagement with the children and youth sector.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government invest \$10 million over four years for a national Mapping the Sector project focused on collecting data that identifies the reach and impact of the children and youth-serving sector.

Background

The National Alliance for Children and Youth (NACY) is a network of diverse organizations within the children and youth sector. Made up of 24 organizations (and growing), NACY facilitates opportunities for wide sectoral exchanges regarding issues facing children and youth in Canada. While NACY has been around for some time, the COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on the overwhelming need for the sector to come together to work with government partners to strengthen a key sector that works together to enhance the well-being of children and youth in Canada. Since 2020, NACY's reach and impact have grown as the child and youth sector came together under the umbrella of NACY to engage in dialogue around sector priorities and discussions about how we can best support children and youth in a post-pandemic world. Through those discussions, a few things have been clear:

- The COVID -19 pandemic has had significant impacts on young Canadians and these impacts are likely to continue for years to come as 'generation pandemic' comes of age.
- The children and youth-serving sector is playing an important and significant role in COVID-19 recovery.
- A stronger relationship is needed between the children and youth-serving sector and our partners in both the public and private sectors
- Detailed data on the children and youth serving sector is needed to understand the impact of the sector, develop appropriate funding mechanisms and opportunities, and meet the growing demand on organizations left by the on-going economic crisis in Canada.

Amidst growing demands, the children and youth serving sector continues to provide vital services and support for young people (as well as their parents and guardians), continually adjusting their strategies to support each and every young person that walks through their doors.

As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to learn about the combined impacts of a global pandemic, economic crisis and a growing national divide on our country's youngest citizens. As we learn about these long-term impacts, our children and youth serving sector will continue to play a critical role in supporting this next generation. We know our efforts will be significantly enhanced if we can minimise the systemic fragmentation that has occurred within the sector due to jurisdictional issues, and the diverse services we collectively offer.

Recommendation #1 – That the government create sustained mechanisms for consultation and engagement with the children and youth sector

In 2019, the Government of Canada released its first ever Youth Policy¹. Even before the ravaging effects of COVID-19 were known, the policy recognized that our young people were in crisis. The Youth Policy highlights the need for a collaborative approach to addressing the complex issues they face each day and makes a commitment to working with youth-serving organizations to ensure that young Canadians have the necessary supports, tools and opportunities to reach their full potential.

We recognize the federal government’s important contributions to the sector through the course of the pandemic and its intentional efforts to support and engage youth in public policy. The delivery of the State of the Youth Report, the addition of charities and non-profits as part of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) program, and the announcement of the Community Services Recovery Fund in Budget 2021, shows us this government understands the role young people play in our society and the importance of the children and youth- serving sector in supporting them. We see the Prime Minister’s Youth Council as an important tool for ensuring there is a strong youth voice guiding the decision-making process at a federal level, however a consistent and coordinated consultation with those with the hands-on experience and responsibility of service delivery is still largely absent.

This sector is full of creative and innovative minds, with knowledge and expertise on the needs of children and youth in their communities, as well as the challenges and constraints in meeting them. The relationships that are built every day on the frontlines give service providers unique insights into the changing faces of the children and youth in our communities. It is for that reason, that we ask the Government of Canada to continue to strengthen its relationships with front-line organizations by involving them more fully in policy-making decisions that impact the health and wellbeing of the children and youth sector by creating sustained mechanisms for engagement.

As a sector, we acknowledge the role we play in ensuring and meaningful relationship with government and are calling on you to uphold your commitment in the 2019 Youth Policy to work with us, and to create a framework for dialogue that would provide an ongoing opportunity for policy development to meet the evolving needs of children and youth.

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/youth/programs/policy.html>

Recommendation #2 - \$10 million over four years for a comprehensive Mapping of the Children and Youth Sector

Over the past two years, youth serving organizations from across Canada have been investing their time, money and expertise into building a better, stronger and more informed sector to address the growing needs of children and youth in Canada, culminating in the rebirth and reimagining of the National Alliance for Children and Youth (NACY). Since then, NACY has grown into a well-connected network of organizations and individuals who are experts in the children and youth serving sector. Together we have kickstarted a movement where organizations work together to better understand our impact on young people in Canada and the roles we will play in COVID-19 recovery.

Both the Youth Policy and the commitments to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals ² (SDGs) clearly outline where we want Canada's children and youth to be. What is not clear is the aggregate of how Canada's children and youth organizations are currently contributing to these goals. To create benchmarks for success, an investment of \$10 million over four years is needed to map the sector. How many resources are being invested; where exemplary projects and centers of expertise may already exist; how many young people are employed in the sector, how many young people are being served nationally, and where the greatest gaps might be in meeting the Canadian targets, are just a few questions to be answered.

Children and youth-serving agencies have a strong role to play in leading initiatives to raise awareness of the SDG's and the Youth Policy, contributing to meet those goals and targets, and involving young people more fully in the decision-making process about priorities and action plans. For this reason, in addition to collecting aggregated data on the sector, a detailed mapping project will help raise awareness and support for the 2030 Agenda and Canada's Youth Policy. It will inform the children and youth sector about Canada's commitments, and inspire greater collaboration to realize more ways they can working together to better advance our progress, and to identify under resourced areas that should be prioritized to ensure we remain on track to meet our goals. To ensure a high level of engagement from children and youth serving organizations, it will be critical to involve the sector at all levels, from development and data collection to data analysis.

The project would first create a national survey of children and youth programs to determine how they currently contribute to the UNSDGs and Canada's Youth Policy. The Canadian Index of Child and Youth Wellbeing cites 125 key performance indicators to measure progress on 9 dimensions of child wellness (related to the 17 SDGS.) Although some indicators are not relevant to the work of children and youth agencies, the goal is to map our database to the greatest extent possible. The data input from these organizations would then be documented in a national database that would provide baseline measurements for how much time and resources are invested in specific goals

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

or objectives, and how many children and youth benefit from these investments. Additionally, the project will be constructed to allow us to segment results based on key demographics (e.g.) urban/rural, Indigenous communities, to identify and track service and performance gaps, particularly among marginalized populations so that no child or community is left behind. The collection of quantitative and qualitative data regarding the relative progress of initiatives could then inform best practices and identify potential sources of expertise. Examples include integrating Indigenous knowledge or adapting to unique rural or regional requirements. The goal would be to create a central online resource so other children and youth organizations seeking to establish or build upon similar programs and services in other areas of the country can benefit without reinventing the wheel.

This database would be maintained and updated throughout the project lifecycle and for years to follow. Such a database could create regular reports and assessments of the sector's readiness and capacity to stay on pace to meet Canada's SDG targets and how investments are supporting the advancement of Canada's Youth Policy.

Canada's children and youth sector has few opportunities to come together to collaborate, network, or engage in professional development. Indeed, many organizations operate in silos, so this mapping project provides a rationale and purpose to bring these agencies together for a common purpose, fostering stronger networking and collaboration generally as well as offering a more effective means to raising awareness for the SDGs and the Youth Policy. The development of a strong database of children and youth serving organizations will have a long-lasting effect on understanding where and how investments are made and what resources will be needed moving forward. Most importantly, the project will create a more responsive, less siloed and more accountable sector, while underscoring the important role each organization plays in helping Canada to move forward with its targets for 2030, infusing a challenged sector with much needed recognition and purpose.

NACY Members

BGC Canada	Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada	Kids Help Phone
Experiences Canada	Children's Aid Foundation of Canada	Shad Canada
Pathways to Education	Students Commission of Canada	Junior Achievement
UNICEF Canada	Muslim Association of Canada	TakingItGlobal
Children First Canada	Plan International Canada	FRAYME
Wayfinders Manitoba	United Nations Association in Canada	People for Education
Wisdom2Action	Young Canadians Roundtable on Health	Starlings Community
	Voices Manitoba	YWCA Canada