

Evaluation of 604 Connect

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INTRODUCTION

Background

In the February 1998 budget, the federal government created the Voluntary Sector Support Network (VolNet). Under the administration of Industry Canada, VolNet aims to connect 10,000 non-profit organizations to the Internet by March 31, 2000. The government allocated \$15 million over three years for the project.

It was decided that local “delivery agencies” would liaise between VolNet administrators and the community non-profit organizations, thereby distributing the costs and nurturing local expertise. Delivery agencies should have experience both in the non-profit sector and with Internet technologies.

The Vancouver Community Network (VCN) is a not-for-profit Internet Service Provider (ISP), based on the “freenet” model of public Internet access. As a VolNet delivery agency, VCN committed to providing participating organizations with the following:

- 1. A communications protocol** – A method of informing groups about access-related issues and other announcements. In the early stages of the program, this would include off-line options such as fax, mail and telephone. Later, an Internet mailing list and a Web site would be created.
- 2. Internet Access** – Each organization would be given an Internet access account, which includes an email address and space on the VCN servers for a Web site.
- 3. Computer Equipment** – Each organization would be provided with either a new computer or a refurbished computer that is powerful enough to access the Internet. The requisite software would also be included, along with any necessary hardware accessories, including a 56K modem and associated communication cables.
- 4. Training** – Training workshops would be set up for all organizations to take part in. For detailed descriptions of training programs, see the section on Training, below.
- 5. Technical Support** – An automated voice mail system, detailing frequently asked questions would be installed for new users to telephone. In addition, an FAQ section would be posted on the VCN Web site. Weekly drop-in sessions for questions would be set up at the VCN offices, and help desk attendants would answer telephone and email questions.

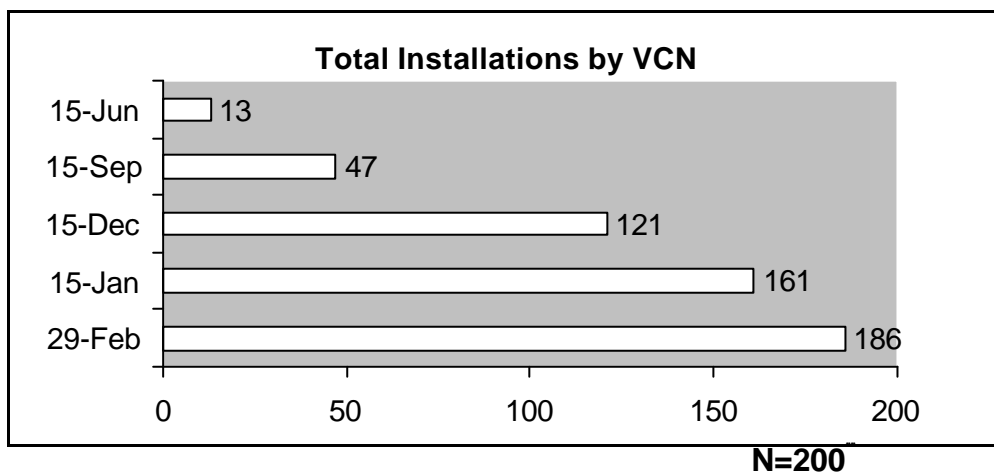
In April 1999, VCN began receiving applications from non-profit organizations for its 604 Connect program, so named for the 604 telephone area code of the Vancouver area.

Current Status

As of February 29, 2000, there were a total of 200 organizations participating in 604 Connect. 186 of those organizations were provided with the VolNet-funded computer equipment and Internet access accounts from VCN.

Total VolNet applicant organizations	= 233
Total Internet Access Accounts	= 200
Total complete installations* (by Feb 29/00)	= 186
Withdrawals	= 33
Ineligible organizations	= 7
As of February 29, 2000	

After a few months of ironing out the wrinkles, VCN increased its rate of installation in the last quarter of 1999:



* Complete installation refers to the delivery and installation of computer hardware and equipment, and the organization having activated its Internet account. VCN has created 200 Internet access accounts, or logon IDs, that automatically create a default home page for the organization. Even before the organization activates its account, its mission and contact information is available on the World Wide Web.

♦ Note: the original number of organizations that applied was 233, 33 of which had withdrawn at the time of this evaluation.

METHODOLOGY OF PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The design for the program assessment incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research instruments were designed and administered by the Centre for Policy Research on Science and Technology at Simon Fraser University.

Data Collection

Data was collected from December 16, 2000 until February 22, 2000 using three methods:

- **VCN Database Queries** – The researchers designed and executed Access database queries in VCN's 604 Connect database. This provided descriptive statistics and a current snapshot of the 604 Connect program.
- **Email questionnaire** – The email questionnaire consisted of 11 questions regarding respondents' experience with the VolNet program, as administered by the Vancouver Community Network. (see Appendix 1)

Two hundred and thirty-three organizations had applied to VCN for participation in 604 Connect. Of those, 170 were email subscribers to the 604 Connect mailing list at the time of the survey. They received the questionnaire via a posting to the mailing list.

At the time of the survey, there were 30 organizations that had not yet received Internet access. For them, the research team, with the help of the VCN staff, faxed out a hard copy of the questionnaire using a pre-programmed fax list.

- **In-depth Interviews** – Five organizations were chosen randomly and five were targeted for in-depth telephone interviews. Respondents were asked 17 open-ended questions (see Appendix 2).

In addition, 10 of the 30 withdrawn groups were also targeted for in-depth interviews. A follow-up in-depth interview process was conducted with 3 of the withdrawn groups. The interviews were conducted during the month of February 2000 and comprised of 18 open-ended questions meant to flush out the reasons for why these non-profit organizations withdrew from the program (see Appendix 3).

Each respondent was asked all questions on their respective questionnaires. The researcher also encouraged them to give information that was outside the scope of the questions, if they deemed that information relevant. The final question on each questionnaire was an open question that allowed respondents to mention anything about the 604 Connect program that they considered important.

The researcher took hand-written notes during each telephone interview, paying close attention to the information that respondents offered without prompting.

Response Rate

- **Email questionnaire** – 27 completed questionnaires were returned via email and 16 completed questionnaires were returned by fax.

Total responses	= 43
Spoiled/blank	= 2
Duplicate	= 2
Total valid responses	= 39
N	= 200*

- **In-depth Interviews** – Of the 10 participating organizations that were contacted, five were interviewed -- three from the random group and two from the targeted group.

The researchers found that contacting the withdrawn groups was particularly difficult. Of the 10 withdrawn organizations targeted for interviews, 3 were interviewed.

Data Analysis

The email and fax questionnaires were entered into a flat Access database, using a simple Yes = 1, No = 2 coding system. The database was then imported in SPSS for more complex data analysis.

The in-depth interview notes were read and summarized, and examined for conceptual themes and trends.

* At the time of the assessment, a total of 170 organizations subscribed to an electronic mailing list. The survey was emailed to them using the mailing list. The remaining 30 organizations received a fax of the same survey. The 33 withdrawn organizations did not receive the survey.

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Internet and Computer Experience

In general, the respondents had computer experience, but limited Internet experience. The majority of organizations had wanted to be on the Internet for more than one year before their involvement with VolNet.

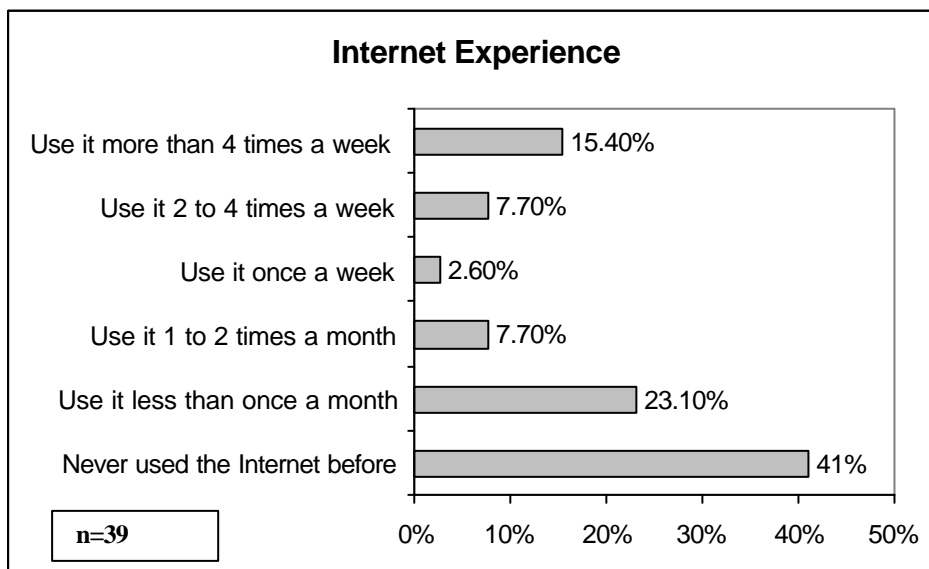
Did you have a computer before participating with VolNet?	
Yes	69.2%
No	30.8%
n = 39	

The in-depth interview respondents often mentioned significant experience with computers, including word processing and using spreadsheets. They also mentioned experience with electronic filing and some brochure/promotional material production.

Notably, 131 of the 200 VolNet participant organizations requested new computer equipment (only 21 requested refurbished equipment).

Only two of the five in-depth respondents reported using the Internet at all before getting involved in VolNet. They reported using email and borrowing Internet-ready computers at sister organizations for doing research on funding proposals.

Interestingly, those that used the Internet were either relatively heavy users or decidedly infrequent users. In other words, those that were already connected to the Internet tended to have used it frequently. One possible suggestion for this result is that frequent users have completed a learning curve and have integrated the Internet into daily use.



Only 15% of all respondents reported not having considered going online before participating VolNet. This would suggest that awareness of the Internet and its possible benefits was very high among these organizations, but obstacles stood in the way of taking advantage of getting online.

How long have you seriously considered using the Internet in your organization?	
Not before we were approached by VolNet	15.4%
Less than six months	10.3%
Less than one year but over six months	33.3%
Over one year	41%
n = 39	

Motivations for getting online

Not all organizations had a specific use for the Internet in mind before going online. Some specific uses were email and creating a Web page. Respondents also provided various other reasons, such as increasing promotions, accessing library and other resources.

What was the original use that your organization had in mind for access to the Internet?	
Communicate via email	51%
Create a Web page for the organization	41%
Communicate with volunteers or other organizational participants	28.2%
Investigate funding sources	25.6%
Contact other similar organizations	23%
Conduct research on your organization's area of activity	20.5%
Other	12.8%
n = 39	

In-depth respondents tended to believe that they needed to get online, one way or another:

“We had discussed [going online]. We were looking for the cheapest way.”

Since awareness of the Internet and its possible benefits was quite high, it's not surprising that the impetus for getting online usually came from within the organization.

But it is noteworthy that 15% of organizations cited the VolNet introductory letter as a factor.

Who prompted your organization to want to use the Internet?	
A member of the Board of Directors	23.1%
A general member of the organization	23.1%
The VolNet introductory letter	15.4%
Another agency or organization doing similar work	7.7%
A funding source	2.6%
An outside advisor	2.6%
Not sure	0%
Other	5.1%
n = 39	

Obstacles to getting online

Funding concerns

Overwhelmingly, respondents said that a lack of money was the major reason for not having Internet access. Lack of resources for training was also cited as an obstacle to using the Internet.

Very few organizations reported that they were unsure of what the Internet was or that going online was not worth the trouble. This would suggest that among non-profit organizations, awareness of the Internet's benefits are well known.

What was the primary reason that limited your organization's use of the Internet prior to participating with VolNet?	
Not enough money for computer equipment or for connection to the Internet	87.2%
Limited resources for training on the use of the Internet	48.7%
Unsure about the purpose of using the Internet	7.7%
Had never thought it was worth the cost of time to learn	5.1%
Never really thought about it	2.6%
Other	12.8%
n = 39	

In-depth respondents said, for the most part, that they would have gone online eventually, even without the VolNet program:

“I would [have gone online eventually]. It's always been there. It's just a matter of us getting core funding.”

“I’ve been online for years, but the rest of the organization will be drawn online because of VolNet.”

“It really helped us to have the discounted computer offer. It was a kick-in-the-butt, it spurred us into getting in gear. We re-shuffled the budget and got the money.”

Most of the in-depth respondents also discussed getting board approval before going online. But this wasn’t characterized as an obstacle; rather, it was seen as a formality that took time.

Technical and administrative issues with getting online

In-depth respondents had some interesting comments about the delivery and installation process. One respondent was concerned that the technician that arrived at her home office tried to sell her upgrades in addition to the subsidized computer equipment:

“I grew increasingly concerned about his role. He tried to sell me stuff and I thought they were expensive. I was getting very mixed signals from this guy who encouraged me to upgrade my software. He said he would come over and overhaul and charge \$50 an hour.”

Another in-depth respondent was concerned about the time it took for the equipment to be delivered:

“I think two months to get a computer is an unreasonable delay. We ordered a 400 [megahertz] and the 600s were coming out when we finally received it.”

There were also concerns regarding the delivery process:

“I wrote on the application form that I wanted to be called when the computer could be delivered. They mailed my computer [via snail mail]. I had to walk over and pick it up at the post office.”

Internet Use

Frequency

Of the 39 respondents, 30 had accessed the Internet since being applying to VolNet.

How often does your organization use the Internet now that you are connected?	
Never	12.8%
Less than once a month	2.6%
1-2 times a month	5.1%
Once a week	2.6%
2-4 times a week	28.2%
More than 4 times a week	35.9%
	n = 39

Again, there is a pattern that suggests users tend to be heavy users, with the majority of users accessing the Internet more than twice a week.

Primary Uses

Users were asked to provide examples of the kinds of Internet activities they do while online. Few organizations chose to answer this open-ended question, but those that did consistently cited email as a primary use. Some respondents said they were building, or attempting to build, a Web site.

The in-depth respondents also noted email as a primary use. In particular, they described using the Internet nearly daily simply so they could check their email. Research about funding sources and promotional activities were not daily activities, but were considered both primary and secondary uses.

The in-depth respondents also explained that creating Web sites and additional promotions were part of their future plans for their Internet access.

“Our primary use is finding funding sources. But once we get our Web site up and running, we’ll shift to promotion.”

Some in-depth respondents had organizations that were not as concerned with publicity. In these cases, respondents cited funding research as more valuable than building a Web site.

Users

In general, users are those who either work or volunteer at the organizations. But a significant number of respondents cited “other” as a category of users.

Interestingly, many specified clients or those they service as users. One organization even planned to train their clients on Internet use.

Who will have access to use the computer used through the VoINet program?	
Staff members	28.2%
Volunteers	7.7%
Both staff and volunteers	56.4%
Not sure	0.0%
Other	23.1%
n = 39	

Impact on Organization

Respondents were asked where they think Internet use might have an impact on their organization. These questions were broken down into several areas. The majority respondents regarded communication as having an impact on how they conduct organizational business. The discussions with in-depth respondents revealed that many saw email as being a major form of Internet-assisted communications (see below).

In what areas do you think that access to the Internet will affect your organization?	
Communication with other organizations	79.5%
Your visibility among potential volunteers	64.1%
Ability to achieve organizational goals	59.0%
Funding	51.3%
Ability to conduct research	51.3%
Status in the community	43.6%
Versatility of activities	38.5%
General computer knowledge	30.8%
Mission and vision of the organization	30.8%
Organizational structure	25.6%
Other	20.5%
n = 39	

Those respondents that cited other noted increased publicity, promotion and easy access to funding information.

Several themes emerged in discussing the impact of Internet use among in-depth respondents:

- **Email** – The in-depth respondents consistently cited email as an invaluable and efficient tool. In particular, respondents noted that being able to email files amounted to networked file sharing. A connection to the Internet was viewed very positively in terms of operations:

“It’s wonderful that we can get instant answers. Primarily it saves us money because we don’t have to phone [long distance]. It expedites our work and courier costs are expensive.”

“It affects us greatly. It improves our efficiency through sharing documents, shuttling them back and forth. Before we had to load [files] onto a floppy, hoping it could handle all the data.”

“It’s making [operations] smoother and faster. We don’t have to book time to borrow a computer anymore.”

“It makes us more efficient. Being part-time, it’s like having another employee.”

- **Funding Research** – In-depth respondents also commented on using the Internet for research for funding purposes. A great deal of work goes into a funding proposal, one respondent said, and having the Internet as a resource was very helpful.
- **Job postings** – Another respondent reported that the Internet allowed the organization to post job postings with a positive result:

“It’s bringing us some good, qualified employees. It’s given us greater reach.”

- **Public Profile** – In-depth respondents also reported that they believe Internet access will increase their public profiles, but this will happen sometime in the future:

“Hopefully, it will increase our profile in the future. We work primarily with teens but this [contact] is funnelled through schools and community centres. We hope to reach youth directly.”

- **Publicity/Donations** – Building Web sites for publicity and for soliciting donations were also cited as some future impacts:

“I assume that online promotion will be easier. We’ll have a Web site for people to refer to for more information.”

“We also want to get some kind of fundraising Web site up. That’s what we’re eventually hoping for.”

But overall, respondents did not think that their organization’s overall mission would change as a result of the Internet.

“I don’t think it changes our mission at all. The Internet just makes our communication easier.”

Internet Service

Questions regarding VCN’s Internet service were not part of the original survey design. However, poor server response time was raised again and again in in-depth interviews. In particular, in-depth respondents cited busy signals or no server response at all when they tried to dial in to the server.

As a result, respondents reported a lack of faith in VCN’s overall reliability:

“I expected access...I expected to use it a bit more. It’s a bit unreliable.”

“I’ve begun to expect very slow access on Monday mornings.”

“We were off-line for five days just before the holiday. This caused a whole bunch of problems.”

When the researcher pointed out that there was a significant and rare router problem during the time that they mentioned, most in-depth respondents did not know that it was an unusual occurrence. The advanced or heavy users persevered and continued to try to access the system and eventually learned that the router problem was unique.

However, newer Internet users reported a lack of faith with the medium in general:

“I was using it once or twice a week. But there’s been no access for a couple of months. Eventually, I just stopped trying.”

On the same topic of Internet service, an in-depth respondent raised the issue of access time:

“One of the things that I was surprised at was that I assumed the Internet use was unlimited. I found I went over my time [of five hours per week]. I have to really watch my time, learning to write

letters off-line. They weren't deceptive, but that wasn't made clear to me."

Training

When organizations had their new hardware installed, they received each received basic training on the hardware from the installation technician.

In addition, VCN provided various training programs:

- **Basic Training** – Beginner's tips on how to access the Internet, how to browse, and how to access email.
- **Applied Training** – Various applied skills workshops, including:
 - **Online Advocacy** – A workshop designed to train non-profits organizations on how to use the Web for advocacy, including Web research, promotion and communication skills.
 - **HTML Basics** – A workshop that gives the basics of Web site building using HTML.
 - **Designing an Internet Strategy** – A workshop that includes advanced topics in promotion, mailing lists, Web site and e-commerce strategies.
 - **Media** – Using the Internet to develop a media strategy.

The researcher accessed VCN's database for the following summary.

Basic Skills Workshop

A total of 162 organizations had members receive the basic training. Of those, 130 organizations sent two people to the training sessions. This suggests that these organizations took maximum advantage of the free training.

Workshop	Total Number of Attendees
Basic Skills Workshop	292 (attendees)
	162 (organizations participating)
Applied Skills Workshops	
HTML	= 37
Developing Strategy	= 20
Online Advocacy	= 8
Media Workshop	= 12
Total Attendees	= 77
Total Organizations Participating	= 50

Impressions of VCN training

In-depth respondents were asked about their experiences with any VCN training that they may have received.

In-depth respondents discussed differing levels of computer/Internet experience amongst participant organizations and the problems this caused for training:

“There were a lot of different abilities in the class. I would categorize the experienced people and put them straight on the Web.”

“[The basic training] was pretty good. I was a bit bored though. Everyone had different levels of ability. Maybe have different levels of training.”

In-depth respondents also discussed the lack of course offerings as a problem. One in-depth respondent was a quite advanced Internet user and lamented the lack of advanced courses. Another respondent was disappointed that there weren't more training classes available:

“I've certainly gotten information for other training. But my time is really limited and there weren't other [courses listed] that I wanted to pursue.”

One respondent was unhappy with the quality of the training and suggested that class size might be a problem:

“I wasn't too impressed with the instructor. They should have had more volunteers for one-on-one. I went in totally cold. There should have been more than one [instructor].”

But in general, respondents made a point of emphasizing the positive aspects of the program:

“[Project coordinator] Terri is very organized. She gets back to me and emails me information. She's very helpful and professional.”

“They were excellent. They're just starting out, too. The people and what they're trying to do is quite good.”

Withdrawn Organizations

In the end, 30 organizations had withdrawn from the program for various reasons. A follow-up in-depth interview process was conducted with 3 of the 30 withdrawn groups. The interviews were aimed at exploring why these non-profit organizations withdrew from the program.

The main reasons for the withdrawal of some organizations were: the organization was sharing space with another organization; other arrangements had been made to connect to the Internet; there was no interest; poor or inadequate organization hindered the initiation of the program; and agenda priorities.

Organizations with an alternative Internet connection no longer found any use for the program, at least not in terms of hardware. Some of these organizations found other means to connect either on their own or through other non-profit organizations (in this case, office space was being shared by some organizations).

“We were already on the Internet...we did a major upgrade in June 1999.”

One organization reported that space and resources were being shared with another non-profit organization. This meant that they were able to cut costs and get online with another non-profit organizations and thus 604 Connect was simply not feasible.

“[We were offered] a high-speed fibre optic connection. It would have been more for an extra phone line. Our board decided it was too costly. It just wasn't feasible [to continue with 604 Connect].”

However, being hooked up to the Internet already did not mean that these organizations were not interested in the program. The fact that 604 Connect was a package deal was disheartening to at least one organization. This particular organization could have used the extra training but could not receive the training because they could not fully partake in the program.

Also, withdrawing from the program did not necessarily mean that the non-profit organization was completely dissatisfied with the program. One organization mentioned that,

“I really do think this is a great service for community organizations. We had wanted that service for so long – a combination of training, support, and even purchasing.”

It was a matter of the timing rather than the effort made or the services offered. One organization rejected the program mainly because the Internet was not a priority at the time unless all of the non-profit organizations under the blanket organization were simultaneously hooked up. Thus, in due time, the Internet would be integrated into the organization.

Finally, as expected, organizations had to deal with a hierarchy of authority when it came to making decisions. In one case, the program was welcomed by its members, but rejected by the director, leaving at least one member disappointed with the decision.

“Everyone was really for it... I was really disappointed in [the proposal being rejected].”

“[Connecting to the Internet] is coming, but the wheels of progress are slow.”

Overall, it seems that the 604 Connect program was not rejected outright by many organizations, but rather there were underlying circumstances that halted the further progress of the program.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To make this assessment meaningful, it would be useful to revisit the original stated goals for the 604 Connect program.

In its letter of intent to the VolNet organizers, VCN stated that it aimed to “provide 200 Lower Mainland voluntary sector organizations with meaningful, sustainable connectivity to the Internet.”

Using this goal as a yardstick, one significant theme emerges from this research: new users must acquire confidence in order to make their Internet experience sustained and meaningful.

A strategy for inspiring confidence should include two key elements:

- Effective communication about the Internet experience
- Encouraging email competency amongst new users

New users do not know the answers to simple questions about the Internet and when the technology, for whatever reason, fails them, they are less likely to endure technical glitches than advanced users. Managing their expectations about the technology is an important factor in encouraging confidence.

It is email competency that engenders a feeling of Internet facility for new users. From there, users move onto browsing Web sites and doing funding research but it is email that is the gateway to advanced, and therefore meaningful, Internet use.

Recommendations for implementing such a strategy can be grouped into three major categories: installation, Internet service and training.

Installation

Notably, 131 of the 233 original applicant organizations requested new computer equipment (only 21 requested refurbished equipment). This fact, coupled with the lack of Internet experience, might suggest that many of these groups had low-end computers.

Moving from general computer use to meaningful Internet access is a great leap forward. Users must learn how to use new hardware, and in some cases, entirely new operating systems. Non-profit organizations that have not previously accessed the Internet require prompt and smooth installations in order to instill a sense of confidence in the new technology.

- **Recommendation:** A complete fact sheet of the installation process and commonly reported problems should be provided to new users. An additional help hotline is an expensive but useful option.

- **Recommendation:** A review of computer hardware providers should be conducted in order to ensure prompt delivery of equipment.

There were some complaints from some organizations that the installers in charge of physically setting up the non-profit organizations with their computers were not as amicable/receptive as one would have hoped. One organization in particular complained that they felt pressured and intimidated by the installer.

- **Recommendation:** This is a difficult aspect of the program to monitor unless the installers are well known and are well aware of their specific duties. In future, installers should not be contracted out but rather hired internally. The installers should be oriented toward the support that novice Internet users require.

It is worth emphasizing here that organizations consistently reported a lack of funds as an obstacle to getting online.

- **Recommendation:** Any future projects similar to 604 Connect should build overall policy around the assumption that organizations cannot afford additional hardware, software or training that would make Internet access more meaningful for them.

Internet Service

As stated above, there was a serious and unusual technical problem at VCN just prior to the survey. Advanced users may have quickly realized that it was an unusual occurrence, but newer users required greater reassurance that this was a temporary problem and not indicative of the Internet's overall reliability.

- **Recommendation:** In the event of an access problem, a non-technical explanation should be provided using off-line communications (such as fax) in order to reach those most in need of such information.

As noted above, users tended to be either infrequent or heavy users. New users need to gain confidence in the reliability of email as a technology before becoming convinced of the overall benefit of Internet use.

Moreover, respondents reported that email communication was very important. In order to make Internet access meaningful for all organizations, continuous access to email should be placed above general Internet browsing.

- **Recommendation:** A two-tiered system of user access should be implemented with priority being given to email. A possible implementation could include two separate dial-in phone numbers: one intended for quick, daily email upload/download and the second for in-depth Internet browsing.

Training

As stated above, organizations took maximum advantage of the training programs offered by VCN. Judging by the experiences of in-depth respondents, these training classes were not ideally suited to their individual and disparate training needs. Both new and advanced users were surprised that the basic training did not meet their perceptions of what basic training should be.

- **Recommendation:** Several levels of introductory Internet use courses should be created, each with a detailed description of its content and the assumed skill levels of participants.

An entire workshop series has been organized on “applied” or advanced skills, but in-depth respondents reported that such advanced applications were planned for sometime in the future.

In keeping with the assumption that email competency is key to making Internet access meaningful, more emphasis should be placed on that skill set.

- **Recommendation:** Advanced email practices that focuses on how to send attachments should take priority over HTML or other applied workshops.

The fact that the program, and all its training workshops, was offered as a package deal resulted in some withdrawn participants. The need for training seemed to be in high demand, but for those non-profit organizations that withdrew because of alternative means to connect to the Internet, they were unable to experience such training.

- **Recommendation:** Some type of training to those organizations that originally signed up but then withdrew from the program. Of course this defeats the original purpose of the program in terms of establishing a VolNet community, but since these non-profit organizations were originally eligible, they could be considered as VolNet success stories even though they are only involved in the training process.

Finally in the area of training, it was mentioned by at least one non-profit organization that there were some legal issues involved with the Internet. This is an important issue, especially if some organizations are brand new to the Internet medium.

- **Recommendation:** A brief description of the legal implications regarding privacy issues, email security, and Web browsing security. If these organizations are going to be involved with the Internet, they must be informed of the positive and negative aspects of the medium, for their own protection – staff and members included.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Email questionnaire

1. Before participating with VolNet, did your organization use the Internet for organizational purposes?

- Never
- Less than once a month
- 1-2 times a month
- Once a week
- 2-4 times a week
- More than 4 times a week

2. Did you have a computer before participating with VolNet?

- Yes
- No

3. How long have you seriously considered using the Internet in your organization?

- Not before we were approached by VolNet
- Less than six months
- Less than one year but over six months
- Over one year

4. Did your organization have a specific use in mind for access to the Internet?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes, please go on to Question 7.

5. What was the original use that your organization had in mind for access to the Internet? (please check all that apply)

- Create a Web page for the organization
- Contact other similar organizations
- Communicate via e-mail
- Conduct research on your organizations area of activity

- Investigate funding sources
- Communicate with volunteers or other organizational participants
- Other. Please specify:

6. Who prompted your organization to want to use the Internet?

- Another agency or organization doing similar work
- A funding source
- A member of the Board of Directors
- A general member of the organization
- An outside advisor
- The VolNet introductory letter
- Not sure
- Other. Please specify:

7. What was the primary reason that limited your organization's use of the Internet prior to participating with VolNet?

- Not enough money for computer equipment or for connection to the Internet
- Unsure about the purpose of using the Internet
- Limited resources for training on the use of the Internet
- Never really thought about it
- Had never thought it was worth the cost of time to learn
- Other. Please specify:

8. In what areas do you think that access to the Internet will effect your organization? (please check all that apply)

- Communication with other organizations
- Your visibility among potential volunteers
- Funding
- Ability to conduct research
- General computing knowledge
- Ability to achieve your organizational goals
- Status in the community
- Versatility of activities
- Organizational structure
- Mission and vision of the organization
- Other. Please specify:

9. Who will have access to use the computer used through VolNet program?

- Staff members
- Volunteers
- Both staff and volunteers

Not sure

Other. Please specify:

10. Has your organization used the Internet since you were connected through VolNet?

Yes

No

If Yes, please specify some uses, e.g., e-mail, setting up Web site:

11. How often does your organization use the Internet now that you are connected?

Never

Less than once a month

1-2 times a month

Once a week

2-4 times a week

More than 4 times a week

Appendix 2: In-depth Questionnaire (participant groups)

This interview guide is designed to address several basic areas associated with VolNet as delivered through "604 Connect!". The interview subjects will be semi-random. The total population of potential subjects will be divided up into main categories. These categories will be preliminarily based upon the sections outlined in the "604 Connect!" application questionnaire; non-profit, charity, or amateur athletic association. Should those divisions prove to be too limiting additional categories shall be developed. One subject will be selected at random from each sub-group and will be interviewed. Note this interview guide will be subject to review by Richard Smith of CPROST and by the SFU Ethics Approval Committee.

1. Can you describe the structure and orientation of your organization, and outline your organizational mission.
2. How would you describe your organizations use of computers or other information technologies?
3. How and where has your organization used the Internet prior to participating with VolNet?
4. What factors prompted your organization to consider applying for participation in the VolNet program?
5. How was it decided that your organization would apply for the VolNet project?
6. Who trains (or trained) members of your organization on the basics of accessing the Internet?
7. Who is the primary user of the Internet in your organization?
8. How often do members of your organization access the Internet for organizational purposes / for personal purposes?
9. What is the primary use of the Internet in your organization?
10. What are the secondary uses of the Internet in your organization?
11. In what ways, if any, does having access the Internet effect the way
12. that your organization operates?
13. Can you compare your actual uses of the Internet while participating with VolNet to what your expectations were before the program?

14. Can you describe how your uses of the Internet fit with your organization's mission?
15. What impact do you think that using the Internet will have on your organization?
16. Would you have gone on-line if it were not for VolNet?
17. What are your impressions of the "604 Connect!" as a resource for information and training on using the Internet?

Appendix 3: In-depth Questionnaire (withdrawn groups)

1. Can you describe how decisions are made in your organization? This would include decisions relating to promotional, funding, and expenditure.
2. Can you describe your experience with the Internet, outside of your work with your organization?
3. Had you heard of 604 Connect before you were approached about it?
4. Does your organization share any resources or physical space with other profit or non-profit organizations?
5. What type of funding does your organization rely on?
6. How do you spread public awareness of your organization and your cause?
7. What were your reasons for originally getting involved with "604 Connect!"?
8. Can you explain why your organization has decided to withdraw from the VolNet project?
9. What are your current impressions of the "604 Connect!" program?
10. Was your organization provided with enough time, resources, and proper instructions to participate in the "604 Connect!" program?
11. What would have changed your mind and convinced you to continue with the 604 Connect program?
12. How would you describe your organization's current use of computers or other information technologies?
13. Has your organization found alternative means to connecting to the Internet? If so, from where and what type of Internet access and computer technology are you equipped with?
14. Has your organization found alternative resources and training on using the Internet?
15. Do you feel that the Internet could have been a useful tool for your organization?
16. If your organization had decided to participate in the VoNet project, what would you have used the Internet for?

17. Do you foresee your organization connecting to the Internet in the future? If so, how soon?
18. Have you told others about the 604 Connect program?

Appendix 4: List of Recommendations

Installation:

1. A complete fact sheet of the installation process and commonly reported problems should be provided to new users. An additional help hotline is an expensive but useful option.
2. A review of computer hardware providers should be conducted in order to ensure prompt delivery of equipment.
3. Installation is a difficult aspect of the program to monitor unless the installers are well known and are well aware of their specific duties. In future, installers should not be contracted out but rather hired internally. The installers should be oriented toward the support that novice Internet users require.
4. Any future projects similar to 604 Connect should build overall policy around the assumption that organizations cannot afford additional hardware, software or training that would make Internet access more meaningful for them.

Service

5. In the event of an access problem, a non-technical explanation should be provided using off-line communications (such as fax) in order to reach those most in need of such information.
6. A two-tiered system of user access should be implemented with priority being given to email. A possible implementation could include two separate dial-in phone numbers: one intended for quick, daily email upload/download and the second for in-depth Internet browsing.

Training

7. Several levels of introductory Internet use courses should be created, each with a detailed description of its content and the assumed skill levels of participants.
8. Advanced email practices that focuses on how to send attachments should take priority over HTML or other applied workshops.
9. Some type of training to those organizations that originally signed up but then withdrew from the program. Of course this defeats the original purpose of the program in terms of establishing a VolNet community, but since these non-profit organizations were originally eligible, they could be considered as VolNet success stories even though they are only involved in the training process.

10. A brief description of the legal implications regarding privacy issues, email security, and Web browsing security. If these organizations are going to be involved with the Internet, they must be informed of the positive and negative aspects of the medium, for their own protection – staff and members included.