



Mission Statement: *"To enhance the capacity of groups and organizations to create and strengthen initiatives that build stronger, equitable, and more inclusive communities, primarily by matching them with volunteers with specialized skills."*

Spark is a capacity building service for the community development (CD) and community economic development (CED) sector in the city of Winnipeg. Spark works with established community organizations and with emerging groups, with Canadian CED Network member organizations as well as non-members.

Spark staff meet with organizations to gather information on what they are doing and what challenges they face. They assess the organization's capacity to start or take on new projects and assist with mapping out a developmental path for their project, and when appropriate bring resources to the table. These resources can be information on funding or training opportunities, connections to other groups who have recently faced similar challenges, or connections to needed technical expertise.

Spark's "centrepiece" is arranging matches between the organizations and volunteers with specialized skills to do short term, specific work to build specific capacity in the organization – whether it be accounting expertise, a database design and build, facilitation of a strategic planning process, or providing marketing advice.

By helping community development and community economic development organizations in Winnipeg access knowledge, resources, and technical expertise, Spark is assisting them in becoming more stable, efficient and effective – which leads to positive impacts and outcomes in the individuals, families and communities that they work with.

Program Profile

History: Began as CEDTAS (Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Service) in 2004 under the governance of a multi-organization steering committee. Became a service of the Canadian CED Network in January 2009, was re-branded as "Spark" in September, 2010.

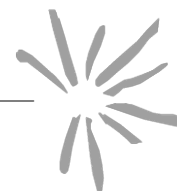
Staff: Geoff Ripat, Donna Hall and Lindsey McBain

Funders: Province of Manitoba (Department of Local Government), United Way of Winnipeg, Winnipeg Foundation.

Operational Structure: Distinct program of CCEDNet, services available to both member and non-member organizations in Winnipeg.



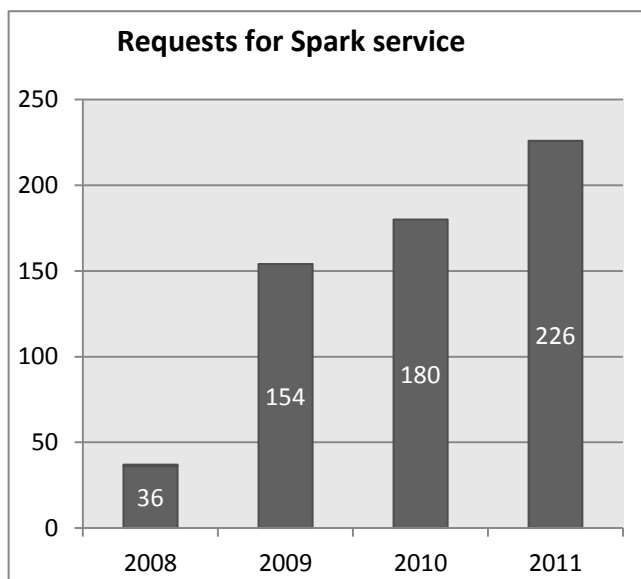
Spark volunteer Paul L. provided 26 hours of high-level pro-bono marketing assistance to IRCOM (Immigrant and Refugee Association of Manitoba, E.D. Dorota B shown here) guiding the organization through a major re-branding campaign.



Results

In **2011**, Spark:

- Was in contact with **133 organizations**. This contact ranged from providing referrals or advice to organizations who contacted us by phone, to in-person assessment meetings (initiated by either Spark or the organization), to ongoing collaboration, to volunteer matching, or to multiple contacts with the same organization.
- Had **226 requests for service**.
- Was involved in **93 outreach activities to volunteers** with specialized skills.
- Made **65 matches** between organizations and volunteers with specialized skills. This matching activity leveraged **\$230,375** worth of pro-bono and reduced rate skilled technical assistance for the sector.
- Made **93 referrals** for organizations, connecting them with training opportunities and possible funders, organizations who have recently faced similar challenges in order to provide advice, and individuals and businesses that provide the specific help they are need when they have the ability to pay.
- Provided **23 hours of direct service** to organizations when our team could provide very specific and timely assistance rather than looking for a match (this does not include time spent in assessment activities).
- Had requests for **40 different types of technical assistance** from organizations The “top 10” requests in terms of frequency were:
 1. Referrals to consultants and other professionals
 2. Marketing and communications
 3. Information on funding sources
 4. Human resources
 5. Strategic planning
 6. Graphic design
 7. Social enterprise development
 8. Website design and development
 9. Referrals to other organizations
 10. Bookkeeping



Monitoring and Evaluation: Spark has developed strong tracking, monitoring and evaluation processes. We track all outreach, referral, direct service and matching activities, periodically check-in on ongoing matches, gather feedback at the conclusion of matches from both the organization and the volunteer, and re-engage the organization 6 months after the conclusion of the match to assess the long term outcome and impact of the assistance provided. These measures are an internal mechanism for constant program improvement, and provide strong quantitative and qualitative evidence of the service’s effectiveness and impact for our stakeholders and funders.

