

The Basics of Volunteer Management

At Volunteer Manitoba, we recognize that volunteers are the backbone of the non-profit and charitable sector, and yet many organizations find managing volunteers to be one of the most challenging aspects of non-profit life.

Regardless of the number of volunteers, there is a person at each organization, charity or community group whose job it is to recruit, train, supervise and recognize volunteers. In some cases, this person may be the Volunteer Manager, and in other cases the title “volunteer coordinator” has been added to a growing list of job responsibilities.

We know the challenges that non-profits and charities face when it comes to the maintenance of their volunteer programs. To address those challenges we are here to provide extensive training in volunteer management, access to the latest trends and research, and staff who have expertise and hands-on experience in the field of volunteer management.

With 6 out of 10 Canadians choosing to volunteer at some point in their lives, it’s clear that volunteerism is a significant national pastime. Given the high interest in volunteering, the questions for non-profit organizations are simple – how do we connect with people who share the same passion for our cause that we do? How do we work in partnership with them to bring about change in our communities? Change for the common good.

The questions may seem simple, but managing a volunteer program takes savvy and leadership skills. There are proven tactics out there that work, and research and resources available to help guide and support those of us working in the field of volunteer management.

The number one reason people want to volunteer is to make a difference in their community and as a leader of volunteers you will be a catalyst for that action. You will also be the bridge between people who want to see a change in the world and the non-profit and charitable organizations who have the resources and the mandates to make it happen.

This workshop has been developed to help volunteer administrators in both large and small non-profit organizations learn practical skills to help strengthen their group's volunteer management.



Volunteerism in Canada

Volunteering is fundamental to a healthy and democratic society; all citizens have a right and a responsibility to contribute in the manner that works for them.

Millions of Canadians of all ages contribute their time to get involved with people, causes, and organizations they care about. While volunteering continues to grow, there have been significant shifts in the way people want to be engaged.

It's important to be aware of the trends affecting volunteerism, of the cultural, economic and social trends affecting our communities, and the capacity issues in our organizations.

- People today tend to lead more structured lives, are more results-oriented, autonomous, tech-savvy, and have multiple responsibilities and interests.
- The type of volunteer roles Canadians seek evolves throughout the life cycle to reflect changing priorities and circumstances.
- Volunteers bring their personal talents and interests, professional skills, and education to volunteering in order to respond to needs in their communities.
- Volunteers seek a range of options and opportunities where they can see the value and impact of their contributions in the community.
- More people are interested in group volunteering, short-term assignments, and virtual volunteering, and they view volunteering as a way of contributing or gaining skills.

How can we bridge the gap between what Canadians are looking for in volunteering today and how organizations are engaging volunteers?

Research had found that there are gaps between the opportunities organizations are providing and the meaningful volunteer experience Canadians are seeking, such as:

- Many people are looking for group activities BUT few organizations have the capacity to offer them;
- Many people come with professional skills BUT many professionals are looking for volunteer tasks that involve something different from their work life;
- Organizations are expected to clearly define the roles and boundaries of volunteers BUT many volunteers want the flexibility to initiate what they have to offer (i.e., create their own volunteer opportunity);
- Many organizations want long-term commitment BUT more volunteers want shorter-term opportunities;
- and Many organizations focus on what they need BUT many volunteers come with personal goals to be met.

Common Trends Among Today's Volunteers

Some findings were unique to youth, baby boomers, families, and employer-supported volunteers, and other trends apply more broadly to volunteers today, including:

- Volunteering changes throughout our lifecycle, along with evolving priorities, circumstances and interests;
- Today's volunteers are more goal-oriented, autonomous, tech-savvy and mobile;
- Volunteering is a two-way relationship that needs to meet the goals of the volunteer and the organization;

- Volunteering is personal and stems from individual preferences and motivations;
- Volunteering is a way to transfer and develop skills by gaining or sharing experiences;
- Volunteering in groups appeals to all ages for social and business networking;
- Finding satisfying volunteering is not easy for everyone.

The results also suggest the most promising opportunity to expand the volunteer base is among 'past' volunteers -- those who have volunteered before, but don't at the moment.

Trends in Volunteer-Involving Organizations

Advances in technology, shifting demographics and increased resource pressures mean today's organizations must re-evaluate all facets of their volunteer policies and practices, and ultimately embrace different approaches.

Organizations reported six common characteristics of their volunteer programs:

1. Their volunteer base tends to be younger;
2. Many of their leadership volunteers are older;
3. More new Canadians are seeking volunteer opportunities;
4. More volunteers do not necessarily want to volunteer doing what they already do all day at work;
5. Most organizations do not have the tools, training, and strategies in place to engage youth, families, baby boomers, and employer-supported volunteers, particularly using a skills-based approach; and
6. Many organizations do not have the capacity to involve groups.

Organizations Can Improve the Volunteer Experience By:

- Building meaningful relationships – get to know volunteers' unique needs & talents
- Developing integrated HR strategies – use similar approach for paid employees and volunteers
- Being flexible and accommodating – recognize volunteers' other time commitments
- Being sensitive to differences – respect volunteers' gender, culture, language and age
- Capitalize on technology options -- provide more online volunteer opportunities
- Clearly outlining the purpose of the proposed volunteer activity and how it will help people, as well as follow up by letting volunteers know the impact of the time they contributed
- Telling volunteers what they need and when they need it, but not how to do it and what time to do it

The volunteer experiences individuals are looking for change significantly as Canadians move through the different stages of their lives. Organizations need to facilitate these shifts to optimize their volunteer recruitment and retention programs. This is critical for sustaining and growing an effective and vibrant voluntary sector in Canada.

Fostering meaningful volunteer engagement in Canada today is not just a capacity issue, but also a strategic one that must evolve with the trends to meet the needs of both organizations and volunteers themselves.

The optimal formula to engage volunteers strikes a balance between:

- Designing specific, set roles and being open to volunteers determining the scope of what they can offer;
- Being well organized but not too bureaucratic;
- and Matching skills to the needs of the organization but not assuming that everyone wants to use the skills related to their profession, trade, or education.

In conjunction with the public and private sectors, Canada's voluntary sector is an important third pillar of Canadian society and a major contributor to our nation's world-renowned ability to build quality communities.

As such, finding this balance as we aim to build a better future for our communities is essential. Ultimately, volunteering is an enriching experience both for the volunteers, as well as those who are beneficiaries of the contribution of volunteers.

Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI)

Volunteer Canada created the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI) to support organizations that engage volunteers. The CCVI is a framework for involving volunteers in all levels of an organization. This includes volunteers working in leadership, direct service and virtual roles.

Volunteer Canada launched the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI) in 2001. In 2012, they revised it to better reflect today's volunteer landscape. The CCVI is designed to be adaptable. It's meant to meet the needs of organizations of all sizes, in every community across Canada. An organization with a single staff member should be able to apply the CCVI. It should also be relevant to national organizations with staff spread out across the country.

The CCVI supports organizations by:

- Stating the values and benefits of volunteer involvement
- Providing a framework for discussion and decision-making within organizations
- Promoting meaningful volunteer involvement that meets the needs of both the organization and its volunteers

Together, these components encourage organizations to consider how they work with volunteers.

The Value of Volunteer Involvement

Volunteer involvement has a powerful impact on Canadian society, communities, organizations, and individuals.

Volunteer involvement is fundamental to a healthy and democratic society in Canada.

It promotes civic engagement and active participation in shaping the society we want.

It gives everyone a voice and the space to contribute to the quality of life in communities.

Volunteer involvement is vital for strong, inclusive, and resilient communities.

It promotes change and development through the collective efforts of those who know the community best. It identifies and supports local strengths and assets to respond to community challenges while strengthening the social fabric

Volunteer involvement builds the capacity of organizations.

It provides organizations with the skills, talents, and perspectives that are essential to their relevance, vitality, and sustainability.

It increases the capacity of organizations to accomplish their goals through programs and services that respond to and are reflective of the unique characteristics of their communities.

Volunteer involvement is personal.

It promotes a sense of belonging and general wellbeing.

It provides the opportunity for individuals to engage according to their personal preferences and motivations.

Volunteering is about building relationships.

It connects people to the causes they care about, and allows community outcomes and personal goals to be met within a spectrum of engagement.

It creates opportunities for non-profit organizations to accomplish their goals by engaging and involving volunteers, and it allows volunteers an opportunity to engage with and contribute to building community.

The Guiding Principles for Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers have rights.

Non-profit organizations recognize that volunteers are a vital human resource and will commit to the appropriate infrastructure to support volunteer engagement.

The organization's practices ensure effective volunteer involvement.

The organization commits to providing a safe and supportive environment for volunteers.

Volunteers have responsibilities.

Volunteers make a commitment and are accountable to the organization.

Volunteers will act with respect for the cause, the stakeholders, the organization and the community.

Volunteers will act responsibly and with integrity

The Organizational Standards for Volunteer Involvement

Standard #1: Mission-based Approach

The organization's Board of Directors and senior staff acknowledge, articulate, and support the vital role of volunteers in achieving the organization's purpose or mission. Volunteer roles are clearly linked to the organization's mission.

Standard #2: Human Resources

Volunteers are welcomed and treated as valued and integral members of the organization's human resources team. The organization has a planned and integrated approach for volunteer involvement that includes providing appropriate resources to support volunteer involvement.

Standard #3: Policies and Procedures

A policy framework that defines and supports the involvement of volunteers is adopted by the organization.

Standard #4: Volunteer Administration

The organization has a clearly designated individual(s) with appropriate qualifications responsible for supporting volunteer involvement.

Standard #5: Risk Management and Quality Assurance

Risk management procedures are in place to assess, manage, or mitigate potential risks to the volunteers, the organization and its clients, members and participants that may result from the delivery of a volunteer-led program or service. Each volunteer role is assessed for level of risk as part of the screening process.

Standard #6: Volunteer Roles

Volunteer roles contribute to the mission or purpose of the organization and clearly identify the abilities needed. Volunteer roles involve volunteers in meaningful ways that reflect their skills, needs, interests, and backgrounds.

Standard #7: Recruitment

Volunteer recruitment incorporates a broad range of internal and external strategies to reach out to diverse sources of volunteers.

Standard #8: Screening

A clearly communicated and transparent screening process, which is aligned with the risk management approach, is adopted and consistently applied across the organization.

Standard #9: Orientation and Training

Volunteers receive an orientation to the organization, its policies, and practices, appropriate to each role. Each volunteer receives training specific to the volunteer role and the needs of the individual volunteer.

Standard #10: Support and Supervision

Volunteers receive the level of support and supervision required for the role and are provided with regular opportunities to give and receive feedback.

Standard #11: Records Management

Standardized documentation and records management practices and procedures are followed and are in line with current relevant legislation.

Standard #12: Technology

Volunteers are engaged and supported within the organization through the integration and intentional use of current technology. New opportunities to strengthen volunteer engagement and capacity through the use of technology are evaluated continually.

Standard #13: Recognition

The contributions of volunteers are acknowledged by the organization with ongoing formal and informal methods of recognition, applicable to the volunteer role. The value and impact of volunteer contributions are understood and acknowledged within the organization and communicated to the volunteer.

Standard #14: Evaluation

An evaluation framework is in place to assess the performance of volunteers and gauge volunteer satisfaction. The effectiveness of the volunteer engagement strategy in meeting the organization's mandate is also evaluated.

Risk Management & Job Design

Risk management means asking ourselves, what could go wrong and what do we do to avoid that happening? Proper risk management involves identifying the risk of loss or injury to a participant during the delivery of services. It is important to think about the vulnerability of the participant to whom the services are delivered and to accept the fact that participants can be harmed while receiving services from your organization. Once the risk has been identified, reasonable measures must be taken to prevent, minimize or eliminate that risk. The proper screening of volunteers is one such reasonable measure.

Terms to Understand

The Duty of Care

The legal, moral and ethical principle that identifies the obligations of individuals and organizations to take reasonable measures to care for and protect their participants.

Standard of Care

The standard of care refers to the degree or level of service, attention, care and protection that one owes another according to the law. The required standard varies according to the circumstances of each situation.

The reasonable or prudent person standard

The standard of care expected in individual circumstances is that of the reasonable or prudent person. To determine what standard of care should be in a particular situation, the following questions would be asked:

- What are the risks involved in a situation, given the nature of the activity, the participants, the setting, the availability of support or assistance, and the other relevant factors?
- What would a reasonable person of average judgment, skill, and experience, be expected to do – or not do – under these circumstances?
- What consequences of an action – or lack of action – would a reasonable person of average judgment skills, memory, and experience be expected to foresee?

Screening

Screening is a process that helps match people with volunteer positions while improving the quality and safety of the programs and services offered in communities. It's an **ongoing 10-step process** performed by an organization to ensure that volunteers' involvement is meeting the needs of the organizations, the populations they serve and the volunteers themselves.

Screening practices play a role in fulfilling an organization's moral, legal and ethical responsibilities to the people it reaches. This includes members, clients, participants, employees and volunteers. This obligation is even greater when the organization is working with vulnerable people, including children, youth, people with disabilities and senior adults.

The benefits of screening are:

- People's skills and experience are better matched to the needs and opportunities of organizations.
- The quality and safety of volunteer programs in communities are improved.
- The risks and liability for people and organizations are reduced.

Screening helps organizations find the right roles for their volunteers. The screening process takes into account the skills, experience and qualifications needed for a volunteer role. Through the process, organizations learn about the applicant's interests and goals. At the same time, screening improves the quality and safety of our communities. Screening policies help to layout the responsibilities of both organizations and volunteers.

The following factors affect an organization's obligations for screening volunteers:

- Mandate
- Population served
- Volunteer opportunities offered
- Jurisdiction

Each volunteer position has its own set of requirements, risks and benefits. Boards of directors must set screening policies that suit the range of roles within the organization.

It's important to note that screening should be ongoing during a volunteer's involvement. Screening involves ongoing monitoring and quality assurance. This approach benefits the organization and the volunteer, by ensuring that the volunteer role is meeting the needs and expectations of both.

Ten Steps of Screening – An Ongoing Process

Organizations should have comprehensive and ongoing screening practices in place that recognize the importance and value of all the relevant steps in determining the right fit for an assignment. To rely solely on Police Checks as the only screening protocol is to ignore other important and valuable sources of relevant information. Screening practices begin when an opportunity is created in an organization. They are the basis of the selection process and continue throughout an individual's involvement.

The following ten steps provide clear guidelines for developing screening policies and practices that reflect an organization's commitment to safe and meaningful engagement:

1. Assessment
2. Position - Assignment
3. Recruitment
4. Application
5. Interview
6. References
7. Police Checks
8. Orientation and Training
9. Support and Supervision
10. Follow-up and Feedback

Job Design

Job design is the process of combining tasks and responsibilities to create assignments. Job design theory has evolved from its root in the business sector and, although volunteer positions are not paid jobs, the same terminology is used in volunteer management.

Job design is;

- The bridge between planning and recruiting
- Creating in an artistic and highly skilled manner
- Creating jobs to meet everyone's needs - clients/organization, staff, and volunteers
- A complex function
- A three-way process
- The foundation of a successful program
- A dynamic changing process

Why is Job Design Important?

- It clarifies roles and responsibilities
- It motivates volunteers and staff
- It helps to ensure that everyone's needs are met
- It encourages effective use of time and resources
- It sets the stage for the successful completion of tasks
- It ensures that tasks contribute to the organization's goals

Job Descriptions

As you can see from the steps outlined above, volunteer job descriptions are just one element of job design. They are, however, an important part of the process.

Job descriptions are contracts, written reports or outlines of the job to be done. As with a contract, it is important that the volunteer receive a copy for his/her own records and that a copy, signed by the volunteer, be kept on file.

It is important to remember that while job descriptions often come with "job titles", it is always best to focus on the work to be done, and then determine whether or not a formal job title is appropriate.

A job description will;

- Clarify job expectations
- Identify required time commitment
- Suggest recruitment strategies
- Assist with screening and interviewing
- Define training needs
- Clarify supervision needs
- Provide a basis for evaluation of the volunteer program and of the volunteer
- Give credibility to your program.

Job Description Outline

Job Title

The job title gives dignity to the position. Be creative here; make it sound appealing.

Purpose

Include a general statement on what the job is and how it relates to the overall goals of the organization. This helps people understand how they are contributing to the work of the organization.

Duties and Responsibilities

List specific duties using action verbs (e.g. Visit clients weekly, file slides by number). If attending the training, submitting reports or maintaining confidentiality are required, list such requirements as duties.

Time Requirement

State hours required per week or month and length of commitment expected (start and end date). Be realistic and as accurate as possible, but remember, contracts can always be renewed if necessary, so balance your needs with the volunteer's need for success.

Skills and Qualifications

Be as complete as possible, but list only the skills and experiences that you absolutely need. If you can train a person to develop a skill, list it as desirable but not essential.

Orientation and Training

Explain type (e.g. on the job, workshop, etc) length and date of planned orientation and training.

Supervision

State to whom the volunteer is accountable. Give name and phone number of supervisor. State frequency of evaluation.

Supporting Policies

Specific policies or procedures must be familiar with in this job.

Working Conditions

Establish where volunteer will be working. Provide information specific to physical condition, accessibility, physical strength, special equipment, etc.

Other

Explain benefits and related policies (e.g. reimbursement of expenses and procedures to claim these). Include an organizational chart.

From Job Design to Job Re-design

When to Re-design jobs;

- If you can't get anyone to do a job, or have frequent turnover
- If you discover new skills among your volunteers
- If your organization or program changes
- If you are not achieving the goals you have outlined

How to Redesign a Job - Gather Information

- From past volunteers, people who said "no thanks", potential volunteers, staff
- Look at the trends – take a good look at your community (what are the motivations)
- Look at the pros and cons of the job, and list suggestions for improvement

Three things to remember when designing volunteer jobs;

1. Be aware of trends. Apply what you have learned about trends in the voluntary sector when designing jobs.
2. Modify job design based on the needs of your community, your organization and your particular volunteer program. Think about developing jobs for groups or families, or one-time special event volunteers.
3. Don't forget that volunteers are different than paid staff, and they have different choices and motivations.

Recruitment

Recruitment is the process of finding volunteers to perform tasks that the organization must complete in order to reach its goals and fulfill its mission. Recruitment is a marketing activity in that its goal is to meet people's needs. Its goal is to "sell" your positions to interested volunteers, matching people's skills with work to be done. It differs from marketing, however, because volunteer recruitment is also matching people's interests with the organization's needs. Volunteer recruitment is not about selling a product to someone who is not interested in buying it, it is about offering an opportunity to someone who is already interested in it, whether they know it or not.

Finding the right volunteer should be a priority and strategy for all organizations. To grab the first person who walks through the door may work in the short term, but will usually not work for the long term for an organization. Consider the following targeted recruitment guidelines when developing your recruitment strategy.

1. Ask the question: "who is not here?" Does your volunteer base reflect the diversity of the community and organization you represent. Have you considered the trends in the voluntary sector? Are there specific populations you have not targeted? How might you get these people involved?
2. Recruit for the skills needed. To ensure you are effectively involving volunteers into your organization you should be recruited by looking at the skills you need. This can only be done if you have developed a position description and have identified what those skills are.
3. Appeal to potential volunteers' interests and motivations. Why would someone want to volunteer for your organization and for this particular position? It is important to be able to communicate the benefits and what you have to offer potential volunteers.
4. Allow the opportunity to grow. A good technique is to slowly involve volunteers into your organization by offering them an opportunity to play a small leadership role. Then foster their growth into roles with more responsibilities.
5. Define the role or task. It is more effective to recruit a volunteer for a specific, well-defined role rather than just involving them on an entire project. Again, a job description developed from the job design process will assist you with this.
6. Utilize your existing resources. Word of mouth is still one of the most effective ways to engage volunteers. Who better to help you sell your volunteer program than current volunteers already involved in your organization?
7. Be concise of time. People lead busier and busier lives. Nobody wants to commit to a position or opportunity and feel like they have not had their time used wisely. Don't waste the time of your potential volunteers. Plan ahead and know what is expected for a time commitment and honor that.
8. Letting others know what you do. The more aware the community is about your organization, the better chance you have of finding and attracting potential volunteers. Your credibility and accountability in the community is important. Communicate your mandate and your achievements.

Youth Volunteerism

Defined as between 15-24 years old, youth represent the future of volunteering and the relatively small size of this group makes effective recruitment techniques particularly important. The following are key findings related to youth volunteers:

The Characteristics of Youth Volunteers

- Career-focused, flexible and receptive to new ideas
- More open-minded – have grown up being exposed to greater diversity than previous generations
- Energetic and enthusiastic – have high levels of vitality
- Technologically savvy – respond to innovative online communications and recruitment techniques
- Prefer peer camaraderie – enjoy meeting new people and volunteering with friends
- Affected by mandatory community service requirements needed for high school graduation in some provinces and territories
- See volunteering as supporting their job search, skills development, and networking
- Sensitive to perceived age discrimination – need to feel respected and given responsibility

Youth Volunteer Interests

- Most likely to volunteer for education/research organizations, or sports/recreation
- Somewhat more likely to volunteer for social service organizations
- Enjoy international volunteering as ‘world citizens’ and define ‘community’ as being global
- Most likely to volunteer for organizations that support environmental issues
- Need flexible volunteer opportunities to accommodate other commitments for school, work, friends and family
- Look for volunteer descriptions that clearly define what they will do and its broader impact
- Appreciate opportunities to receive constructive feedback and certification where possible
- Relate best to other youth and therefore value volunteer activities involving other youth

Barriers to Youth Volunteering

- Lack of time or inability to make a long-term commitment
- Not being asked or unsure how to become involved
- Feeling that their opinions and insights are not valued, respected or taken into account
- Perception that youth need services instead of seeing youth as having skills to give to organizations)

Recommendations for improved youth recruitment:

Improve awareness around volunteerism

- Through the media, internet, newspapers and television
- In the community, at youth and community centers, as well as at basketball courts and other venues frequented by youth
- Testimonies of other youth volunteers could be a good way to spark interest in youth
- Training of high school volunteer coordinators to help them make good placements

Know and value your volunteers

- Involve youth volunteers
- Tell them the broader implications of their volunteering
- Be friendly and make them feel appreciated

- Treat them as equals (with older people)

Skills development and training

- Need skills development and training, to support employment searches and university and job applications
- Certification where possible
- Give feedback

Volunteer Management

- Provide group volunteer opportunities. Youth like to volunteer with their friends.
- Perceived lack of opportunities for youth aged 14-18 and many felt that they were restricted due to their age
- Be flexible to accommodate work, school, friends, family
- Make it fun, be helpful and friendly
- Use job descriptions to give a clear picture of what they will do

Benefits

- Offer benefits more (e.g. food, concert or theatre tickets, and access to facilities like gym passes)
- Volunteer appreciation parties
- Provide bus tickets to help everyone attend the meetings

Technology

- Use internet
- Use social media, e.g. Facebook and Twitter

Employer-Supporter Volunteers

The relationship between the private sector and the voluntary sector assumes corporations are held accountable for their social and environmental impact, as well as their financial performance. Employee Volunteer Programs (EVPs) are based on the philosophy that community volunteer work is a matter of corporate concern and another measure of social responsibility. EVPs can also have a positive impact on workforce morale, skill development, productivity, job satisfaction and employee retention.

The following are key findings related to employer-supported volunteers (ESVs):

The Characteristics of Employer-Supported Volunteers

- Results-oriented – ESVs want short-term, high-skilled volunteering opportunities
- Measuring progress – ESVs like to measure their efforts and know the impact is worth the time they're contributing
- Volunteerism as a hobby – volunteering is seen as an activity distinct from work, with a clear end product
- Flexible volunteering – ESVs want the ability to work remotely and to know the minimum hours expected
- Structured volunteering – ESVs do not want to contribute to an organization that isn't structured or efficient

Employer-Supported Volunteer Interests

- Prefer opportunities to learn new skills, valuable to both employee and their company
- Some indicated they do not want to perform the same job for a volunteer organization as they do for their employer
- Prefer organizations with the admin and HR support to efficiently run programs and ensure follow-up
- Look for opportunities without rigid hierarchies and volunteers are treated equally
- Enjoy meaningful volunteer engagement, not just 'one-day' company volunteer events

Barriers to Employer-Supported Volunteering

- The perception that applying for an employer-supported volunteer opportunity is a time-consuming or complex process
- Expectations that volunteers want to commit to an extended, open-ended period instead of tasks with definable timeframes
- Lack of recognition of volunteers' restrictions (e.g., conflicting work schedules or personal/family commitments)
- Insensitivity to diversity issues, inflexibility re: time/space; inability to volunteer remotely

Advice to organizations

- Employer-supported volunteers indicated that they see the employer-supported volunteering experience as an equalizer in the workplace (no titles, no hierarchy).
- Many spoke of the need for leaders to listen to volunteers, be engaged and not make volunteers "feel like second-class citizens."
- Build meaningful relationships with volunteers.
- Advertise volunteer opportunities in the community.
- Solicit volunteers through word of mouth and social groups.
- Recognition that is personal to the volunteer.

Families

The demand for opportunities where families can volunteer together is great, but the current supply of these opportunities is small. However, the number of volunteers who are parents of school-aged children make this a distinct demographic worth considering. Family volunteers tend to value charitable activities highly and recognize that family participation in volunteer work can contribute to a happy, stable and rewarding life.

Family volunteering is gaining prominence as a specific form of volunteering to allow children and teens to gain confidence and self-esteem through volunteering with the guiding hand of a family member.

It's also a way of dealing with lack of time as a barrier to volunteering, as many Canadians with busy lives see family volunteering as an opportunity to spend quality time with family, while also giving back to their community and mentoring their children.

The Characteristics of Family Volunteers

- Busy schedules – challenging to find enough time and juggle the schedules around babies, young children and teens, and sometimes aging parents
- Family cohesion – perception that volunteering together provides a thread to connect various members of a family
- Generational differences – organizations need to recognize and handle the range of family members differently
- Passing on values – parents often look for ways to engage their teenage children in volunteering in order to instill values, shift attitudes of entitlement and boost social awareness

Family Volunteer Interests

- Opportunities to develop youth through volunteering (builds character and parents can teach skills)
- Virtual volunteer opportunities where families can participate via Skype or other online methods
- Casual opportunities ('one-offs' or 'two-offs') to allow family volunteers to try out assignments
- Opportunities that can be perceived as 'family-friendly' and enjoyable for all ages

Barriers to Family Volunteering

- Lack of time
- Inappropriate volunteer activities for children due to client confidentiality or sensitivity issues
- Need for adequate supervision of children – opportunities that incorporate child care with volunteer time are valued
- Lack of awareness of volunteer activities that may be appropriate for the inclusion of children
- Concern that organizations don't make enough of an effort to get to know family members in order to match them with appropriate activities

Advice to Organizations

- Get to know your volunteers. Family volunteers often express concern about organizations' efforts to get to know their volunteers and tap into their skills and enthusiasm.

- The interview process / screening works well for family volunteers to gauge their suitability for volunteer tasks.
- Organizations to learn about their family volunteers' situations. (e.g. daycare, babysitting, transport, meetings that accommodate children)
- Incorporate volunteer recognition for family volunteers to encourage families.

Boomers

Baby boomers are defined as being the generation born between 1945 and 1962, who are now approaching retirement.

With the average number of hours volunteered highest among seniors, the addition of retired boomers could have a dramatic impact on the number of volunteers, their skills pool and collective commitment. This is particularly important to offset the current group of aging seniors who have made up the bulk of the 'uber volunteers' thus far, and are now edging into later years and retiring from their 'volunteer careers'.

Of particular note are the increasing numbers of recent immigrants of boomer age. This group could play a pivotal volunteer role in helping to integrate and support new immigrants into Canadian society, thanks to their unique cultural and linguistic skills.

The Characteristics of Boomer Volunteers

- Clear leaders -- in terms of average hours of volunteering compared to other groups
- Impressive overall participation rates – consistently among the highest
- Meaningful engagement – boomers look for purpose in their volunteer activities
- Available time and flexibility – boomers have more time and relatively flexible schedules compared to other groups
- Expectation of organization – boomers want organizations to be efficient and effective in their management of volunteers and staff
- Loyalty – Boomers indicated they are willing to stay at an organization for many years as long as they are treated well

Boomer Volunteer Interests

- Activities that reinforce their strong sense of social commitment
- Organizations that allow boomer volunteers to work independently and have a sense of ownership over the project
- Projects where boomers can clearly see the impact they are making
- Activities that offer a chance to act outside their skill/knowledge base (boomers perceived activities different from their daily work to be refreshing)
- Casual or short-term opportunities where boomers can see what the organization is like before making a long-term commitment

Barriers to Boomer Volunteering

- Smaller organizations that need volunteers to do 'everything' and don't match boomers' skills with tasks
- The perception that larger organizations are downloading the responsibility of unwanted tasks from staff to volunteers
- Not being recognized as a person with a wide skill set, but simply 'a volunteer body'

Thoughts on Boomer volunteering

- Baby-boomers tend to believe in community engagement and are generous with their time and money.
- They feel there is a lack of awareness of volunteer opportunities.

- Boomers feel that employers could provide seminars along the lines of retirement seminars for their outgoing retirees, to focus on volunteer opportunities. This is largely seen as a wasted opportunity to increase awareness around volunteerism for baby-boomers.
- There is a strong need for matching of skills / capabilities to volunteer opportunities. Boomers tend to have specific skills that they can offer on a professional level to volunteer groups.
- Some boomers may wish to try new challenges that are a change of direction from their paid employment work.
- Volunteer organizations need to have strong volunteer coordinators and use job interview and screening techniques to understand clearly the skills and time commitments of the volunteer and discuss the needs of the organization
- Develop clear job descriptions and job specifications for volunteer opportunities, in line with professional human resource management techniques.
- Exit plans and touchstones to give feedback for better engagement and retention.
- Greater online engagement would be beneficial, allowing people to get information through as many online and social media outlets as possible.
- Virtual communications to allow professionals who are frequently travelling to remain engaged. Volunteer centres (VM!) are very important as a place to bring together community opportunities, volunteers and organizations – to match skills to the organization.
- Boomers may be interested in short-term 'contract' based volunteer opportunities that allow them to contribute to a defined project with a short timescale, possibly before making a longer term commitment.
- Some baby-boomers felt that volunteer engagement is up to the individuals and that volunteers should speak up about what they want to do and what skills they want to use in an organization.
- Volunteers can be complicit in recruitment difficulties, as people in the core group of volunteers become used to doing things a certain way, and may not accommodate new people with new skills and ideas.

Think Strategically

Partner with other community organizations: partnering with youth organizations and schools is an especially effective way to engage the youngest of the youth age range.

Engage new Canadians and Indigenous people: organizations that implement strategies to outreach and engage specific demographics have more success in recruiting and retaining that demographic

Consider virtual volunteerism: volunteer roles that involve computer work can be done outside of the office, and provide flexibility for busy volunteers.

Alternate uses of social media: rather than using SM to promote the organization, use it to have conversations with volunteers and learn about stakeholders' interests and priorities.

Embracing The Changing Culture of Volunteerism

Many Volunteer Managers and leaders of non-profit organizations have been enormously resourceful and have begun to implement innovative strategies to engage volunteers today and into the future. However, the capacity and willingness to embrace the changing landscape varies considerably across the non-profit sector and will require continued effort to ensure the gap is bridged between what volunteers are seeking in their volunteer opportunities and how organizations are engaging volunteers.

Recruitment Techniques

There is a wide variety of recruitment techniques. Some are more effective than others. You should choose a method that strikes a balance between what works for you / your organization and what will attract the volunteer you're looking for.

Friends and Family recruitment

Electronic resources (www.volunteermanitoba.ca)

Social Media

Print resources

Presentations

Media (interviews, impact stories)

Orientation

During orientation, you are giving your volunteer a sense of what your organization is all about. More than that, you are communicating something crucial about:

- The way your organization does business
- Your attitudes toward the outside world
- Your seriousness of purpose
- Your sense of humor
- Your general expectations about the content of the job
- Your general expectations about the way in which the job should be performed

Some of the advantages of a structured orientation program;

- **Imparting knowledge.** The orientation program will help new volunteers learn about your organization and its mission and goals, and it may instruct the volunteer on policies and procedures in your organization.
- **Increasing confidence.** An orientation program can make volunteers more comfortable and confident in their work by helping the volunteer better understand what the agency does, and may help him or her see the purpose of what he or she is doing.
- **Increasing enthusiasm.** Volunteer orientation is an important part of maintaining the motivation and enthusiasm that caused people to want to help to begin with. A positive orientation session affirms people's decisions to work for your organization. It reminds them that what they are doing is worthwhile, and shows them that your organization is the place to help.
- **Avoiding future problems.** By explaining important information from the start, you save time and energy that would be spent on questions, misunderstandings, and misconceptions.

Orientation programs vary widely in terms of length, structure, method of delivery, and amount of detail. They can range from one-on-one casual conversation in the corridor, to highly structured classroom sessions in large groups lasting several days. So which to choose?

Some criteria in making decisions about your orientation program:

- The number of people who need to be oriented right now
- The number of people available to do the orienting (and their available time and expertise)
- The complexity of the job to be performed
- The prior experience of the new volunteer in performing that job or a similar one
- The presence (or absence) of an orientation program that someone else may already have established

Larger organizations, or those that have many volunteers, will generally have a more formal orientation program. This might take place over an hour or two and is often a requirement for becoming a volunteer. It might take place during the recruitment phase of your volunteer program, or on the volunteer's first day on the job.

Smaller groups who employ volunteers on one-time assignments, such as helping cook at the annual fundraising chili feed, may orient new volunteers individually. In these cases, the volunteer director or another member of the organization may simply show the new volunteer around, and (for simpler tasks) show him what he'll be doing.

What Information should you cover in an Orientation Session?

Some of the items that are more commonly discussed include:

- A description of your organization's programs, the community you serve, and your organization's relationships in the community.
- The structure of your organization, including an introduction to key staff members and an explanation of their roles.
- What is expected of the volunteers, including a general overview of the jobs they will be doing.
- A brief history of your organization. Help them understand your organization's mission, policies and main goals, as well as how the volunteer can contribute.
- An explanation of your organization's policies, rules, and procedures.
- A tour of the facilities. Make sure you show the volunteer offices, phones, rest rooms, parking, et cetera.
- The volunteer evaluation and performance review system.
- Volunteer benefits.
- Emergency procedures, such as where to go in case of a storm, where to find the first aid kit, and related information, should always be explained.

Any orientation, formal or otherwise, should close with a sincere expression of appreciation and welcome.

Information that might be covered in a volunteer manual:

- Copies of publications such as brochures, articles, et cetera, that have been written or produced by the organization
- Staff and volunteer directory
- A list of the Board of Directors
- Record keeping forms and paperwork
- Reimbursement policy
- Termination procedure
- Dress code
- Scheduling changes
- Insurance (if necessary)
- Grievance procedure
- Definitions of technical terms and jargon used by your organization
- Information on client rights, confidentiality, legal restrictions, etc.
- Volunteer promotion opportunities
- Use of agency facilities, equipment, and services
- A written copy of information discussed during the orientation

It is important that your new volunteers understand that you really are welcoming them with open arms. By skillfully managing orientation programs, you are effectively institutionalizing that welcome and making sure that everyone who wants to help will understand what they are doing and why they do it.

Ultimately, you are showing your volunteers how important their help is to the organization. Making sure they understand their positive impact on the organization is one of the best ways to make sure that the volunteers you orient today remain dedicated volunteers in the months and years to come.

Volunteer “Welcome Aboard” Checklist

This checklist should be used as a guide when planning volunteer orientation. Some of the information may be covered at various times during the first few weeks a volunteer is involved in your organization. In these situations, the manager of volunteers, supervisor or volunteer could check to ensure all applicable information has been provided.

Section 1 – Welcome to the Organization:

- Welcome and introduction to other volunteers and staff
- Mission and vision statements
- Historical overview and noteworthy accomplishments
- Philosophy and values
- Current programs and services, future plans
- Clients – an overview of who they are, numbers, etc.
- Resource allocation – funding, staff and volunteers
- Interaction with other organizations

Section 2 – Operational Information:

- Organizational flowchart
- Role of Board, Committees and relationships with volunteers and staff
- Rules, policies and procedures pertinent to the job
- Fire, safety and emergency procedures
- System of accountability – probation period, performance management process, discipline procedure
- Expectations re: conduct and responsibility
- Outline of volunteer benefits – reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, childcare, memberships, training schedule, etc.

Section 3 – Practical Details:

- Tour of facility
- Map of floor plan detailing different departments as well as highlighting volunteer’s work site and rooms they will access
- Location of washrooms, lunch and break rooms
- Check in/out process, secure location for personal belongings, coat racks etc.
- Parking and transportation details
- Unwritten rules re: telephone use, kitchen use and clean up, personal use of computers, equipment and facilities
- Calendar of special events, holidays, and meetings
- Phone numbers of manager of volunteers, supervisor, general reception

Section 4 – Resource Materials

- Letter of welcome
- Job Description – personally review specific job duties and record keeping requirements
- Acknowledgement that one is familiar with and agrees to job description
- Volunteer handbook/training manual
- Code of confidentiality
- Code of ethics
- Acknowledgement that one has read and understand policies and procedures
- Miscellaneous items – name tag, uniforms, parking pass

Training

Sometimes your organization doesn't really have a choice; volunteer training is an absolute necessity. But, for many groups, the decision whether or not to have a training program is not so clear-cut. Some of the issues to consider when deciding whether or not to have a training program include:

- Training helps new volunteers get to know the people, the program, and the job quickly and efficiently.
- Training your volunteers establishes that there is a minimum competency that all volunteers are expected to obtain.
- Many volunteers see training as a benefit of being part of an organization. Training teaches them skills that may be helpful to them elsewhere, and may even help them get a paying job.
- Training publicly acknowledges a necessary level of proficiency. By training your volunteers, you are making the statement that the organization is professional and capable of doing important work and doing it well.
- It's also part of the screening process.

Teaching new volunteers the skills they need to function effectively as part of your organization can be difficult work. By creating a training plan, however, you can cut down on potential headaches while making sure volunteers have the most comprehensive, effective learning experience possible. And, in the long run, your work will pay off in the form of skillful volunteers who really are making the goals and dreams of your agency happen.

To develop a training plan, begin by reviewing a particular volunteer job description and ask the following;

1. Do I need to train?
2. What should the volunteer have learned by the end of the training?
3. What type of training would be the best way to deliver the messages?
4. Who will conduct the training and how much time will be available?
5. How much time is required? What other resources are needed?
6. How will we evaluate the training we deliver?

As with any other plan you will develop, there are certain steps to developing a training program.

1. DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO TEACH VOLUNTEERS

Why are you training volunteers?

When new volunteers finish training, what should they know?

What do they want to know? (just as important)

Typically, a training session will impart 4 things to new volunteers:

1. What to do (what is expected? What will their responsibilities be?)
2. How to do it (Explanation)
3. What not to do (training should make the limits very clear)
4. What to do in an emergency

Both the trainer and the trainees will have goals for the training program; it's important that the trainer develop a training program that focuses on both of these. It might even help the person doing the training to write these goals down. If the trainer doesn't have clear ideas of what volunteers should leave knowing, chances are the volunteers will leave the training session pretty confused.

2. DECIDE HOW YOU WILL TEACH THEM

What kind of training program do you want to give new volunteers?

Simpler possibilities are good for smaller organizations, simpler tasks, and groups that don't have the resources for a full training program. Two such possibilities are the use of the "buddy system" and shadowing. In the "buddy system," a new volunteer works with an experienced person at first, and the experienced person answers questions and makes suggestions. Shadowing is very similar, but the new volunteer is more passive, and watches more than she takes action at the beginning.

For a larger group of people, more challenging work, and groups with sufficient resources, a more extensive training plan is often more appropriate. This may take a few hours, a few months, or anywhere in between. The amount of material to be covered and the resources available should be your guide.

3. BUDGET

Training can be fairly inexpensive, but it's not free. Think about room rental, food/beverages, trainer fees, staff time, equipment, etc.

4. MATERIALS

5. GET THE WORD OUT

Be clear about the time commitment.

6. LOGISTICS

That is, that the room is empty and prepared; there are enough chairs; the speakers know what time to show up, and similar details.

7. MAKE THEM COMFORTABLE/PUT THEM AT EASE

8. START TRAINING!

Supervision and Support

Performance management is an act of communication that occurs between a volunteer and a supervisor or manager of volunteers. Performance management is the management of people. It is about keeping the volunteers you have successfully recruited, oriented and trained and supporting their success. It includes supervision, evaluation and, when necessary, corrective action and dismissal. Performance management is not one-sided, it should always allow the opportunity for two-sided communication.

Performance management is vital to a volunteer program because it is an opportunity for the volunteer and the manager of volunteers to share their thoughts and ideas. Performance management and specifically supervision increases the motivation of volunteers, helps ensure the organization's mandate is met and gives volunteers a sense of belonging within the organization. This allows:

- a volunteer to improve his / her performance
- a manager of volunteers to gain integral knowledge from the volunteer about the volunteer experience and about the volunteer's needs and concerns

Performance Management is made up of four principal components: supervision, evaluation, corrective action and dismissal. It is not a clearly defined process of ordered steps, but rather a cluster of activities that contribute to the effective management of volunteers.

It is important to be aware of all aspects of performance management but you should decide which elements of performance management work for you, your volunteers and your organization. For example, if you deal mainly with one – time event volunteers, formal evaluations might not be efficient or appropriate – consider soliciting feedback from your volunteers through an evaluation form.

Modify the principles of performance management to suit your needs!

Supervision

Supervision is an act of overseeing and guiding someone else's work. It can take the form of periodic check-ins, or more constant observation. It can be very involved or very discreet. As manager of volunteers, it is your responsibility to provide supervision and support to your volunteers. There are many benefits to effective supervision...

Supervision of volunteers:

- Increases motivation
- Facilitates the achievement of program goals
- Supports the volunteer's sense of belonging
- Aids risk management

Supervision Techniques:

- Probation Period
- Buddy System
- Random Spot Checks
- Periodic Reassignment
- Check-in (personal or telephone)

- Observation
- Feedback
- Examination of work
- Client/family feedback
- Volunteer reports
- Support sessions
- Groups meetings

Keys to Effective Supervision

Determine the level of supervision necessary for the role the volunteer will play in the organization and communicate it to the volunteer.

Establish and communicate clear parameters for the volunteer's involvement, outlining when it is necessary for the volunteer to come to you with questions.

Let the volunteer know where else they can go for answers to their questions – this may be other staff, experienced volunteers, print materials, etc.

Set formal check-in times to allow the volunteer complete comfort in approaching you – show them that they're one of your priorities by making time for them!

Evaluation

A periodic evaluation provides an opportunity for focus communication between the person who assign the work and the volunteer who performs it. It allows them to communicate their expectations of each other and how well these expectations are being met. An evaluation session allows an opportunity for both parties to identify ways to improve their performance.

In a formal evaluation meeting, four areas should be covered:

1. The measurement of results against goals and objectives.
2. Verbal recognition of the volunteer's contributions.
3. The development of a plan of action to address any new or ongoing performance problems.
4. The establishment of goals and objectives for the future.

Six Basic Principles of Evaluation

1. The volunteer must understand the work to be done.
2. Evaluation must be fair.
3. Evaluation should be given cooperatively.
4. Evaluation of the volunteer's performance should be focused on behavior.
5. The volunteer should have had the tools, knowledge and support to get the job done.
6. When mistakes are made, they are discussed immediately and the focus is turned immediately to the improvement of performance.

Corrective Action

A volunteer's poor performance often means that he/she;

- Lacks clarity about his/her responsibilities.
- Lacks the necessary skills to perform the tasks.
- Lacks motivation.
- Hasn't been provided the appropriate support and supervision.

If you have followed the volunteer management process, these situations should be rare because;

- A volunteer's responsibilities should be clearly outlined in the orientation and training.
- The necessary skills for the position should be outlined in the job description.
- The volunteer would have been provided with the training and orientation required to carry out their duties successfully.
- A volunteer's lack of motivation should have been identified and addressed in the recruitment, orientation & training and supervision phases.

If, however, poor performance does arise, look for ways to improve performance through corrective action;

- Speak with the volunteer.
- Ask them to identify the behavior.
- Ask them to identify the reasons for the behavior.
- Ask the volunteer to develop a plan for improvement.

Dismissal

Terminating a volunteer should always be a last resort. You should only come to this decision if you have done performance coaching, offered training and support and the issue persists - unless the situation is serious enough to justify immediate dismissal.

A best practice is to advise the organization's senior management of the situation and the planned action before proceeding with termination. Consider whether you must first seek approval, who will be impacted and who should know before you proceed with terminating a volunteer.

Informing a volunteer they are being dismissed from their volunteer role is never pleasant, however if you have followed the steps outlined above you should have firm supporting documents to justify the decision.

Termination process:

- Inform the volunteer in person of the decision to terminate their role in a private office or room. It is recommended to have another staff present.
- Be specific about the reason for the termination.
- Refer to the volunteer manual and volunteer service agreement where they had previously acknowledged their understanding of the organization's expectations.
- Refer to the dates of the previous performance coaching conversations where support was offered.
- Present the individual with a letter stating all the facts.
- If the volunteer has a key pass or any items to return be sure to retrieve them immediately or include in the conversation and letter a date/time by which all items need to be returned.

- Document the dismissal and place a copy of the letter and performance coaching notes in the volunteer's file

When a volunteer is helping your organization, take the time to coach them and ensure you are offering them all the support they need to succeed. Providing volunteers with the necessary warnings and coaching before coming to the decision to terminate is not only fair to the volunteer but it's also key in protecting your organization from future legal risk.

Retention and Recognition

Retention of committed volunteers is the ultimate goal of many managers of volunteers. After having gone through the lengthy process of recruiting and training a volunteer, it is important to follow through with the process by trying to retain them as part of your volunteer force. By retaining existing volunteers, rather than continually recruiting new ones, you are building capacity within your organization.

There are three steps you can take to encourage your volunteers to stay involved;

Provide them with a solid volunteer program.

This is the best thing you can do for your volunteers, your volunteer program, your organization and yourself. Volunteers want to be engaged in an organized, safe, positive environment where there is meaningful work to be done. You can give this to everyone by ensuring that your volunteer program is in good order, that you have followed the necessary steps in the process and that two-way communication exists between your organization and its volunteers.

Monitor their involvement

As you guide a new volunteer through from recruitment onwards, watch for signs of dissatisfaction, boredom or lack of motivation. Although a poor placement can often be sensed early on in the process, feelings of dissatisfaction can also set in after the volunteer has been fully engaged in the organization for a period of time. Be sure to check in with your volunteers and find out how they're feeling about their involvement.

Recognize them for their contributions

Recognizing your volunteers can be a formal or an informal act. It is, however, an essential part of the retention of volunteers. Recognition shows that your organization values its volunteers and this helps attract new volunteers from the community. It also motivates volunteers to remain involved; to increase their involvement and to be more satisfied by being a part of your organization.

Recognition programs that typically work are those which:

- Base rewards on an appreciation of the individual volunteer as a unique person and which addresses individual needs.
- Are based on individual jobs or tasks.
- Have considered reward policies, resulting in a sense of trust that effort will receive the proper reward.
- Recognize longevity and special contributions frequently.
- Offer rewards, which can be shared by teams of volunteers or the entire organization.

Motivation

Observing your volunteers or asking them directly can help identify your volunteer's motivations. Once you have discovered what motivates your volunteers, you can choose which recognition items will make them feel most appreciated.

Four typical motivators of volunteers are:

Praise – these volunteers:

- Enjoy recognition for their talents and accomplishments
- Like being thanked, give gifts and singled out of achievements
- Find situations where there is little or no feedback frustrating
- Enjoy a volunteer program where the results of their efforts are readily seen by others
- A recognition spot on your website or in your newsletter
- Public recognition at an event
- Letter thanking their boss, teacher, family etc. for their help
- Reference letter for a job or another volunteer position

Affiliation – these volunteers:

- Enjoy being part of an organization, club or team
- Enjoy opportunities to get together with others with similar beliefs, backgrounds, goals and being associated with a well-known cause or group
- Don't find working alone or for an obscure organization very satisfying
- Social get-togethers
- Organization T-shirt
- Name badge
- Posting a list of all organization volunteers in a public area

Accomplishment – these volunteers:

- Enjoy seeing concrete evidence of their work, such as piles of finished paperwork or names checked off on a list
- Like practical, tangible projects
- Don't like working on projects where abstract goals are pursued or achievements hard won.
- Certificates of accomplishment at specific stages in their work
- Continuing education or credential credits
- A special place /way to showcase completed projects

Power and Influence – these volunteers:

- Like persuading people to see or do things their way, or enjoy showing people a better, easier way of accomplishing an objective
- Don't want to be in an insignificant position, but like positions where they help make decisions or train people
- A special parking spot for the month
- Involvement as a speaker at organization workshops

Volunteer Recognition Study (Volunteer Canada)

The ways people want to be recognized most are also the most cost-effective methods out there. This is promising news for organizations seeking effective methods of recognizing and retaining volunteers. Notably, hosting a formal banquet or dinner is one of the least preferred ways volunteers wish to be recognized. Few volunteers want to be thanked in public ways – but they do want to know the impact of their contribution.

Top two ways volunteers want to be recognized:

- 80% stated that they would like to be recognized or thanked by the organization they volunteer for by hearing about how their work has made a difference.
- Close to 70% stated they would like to be recognized by being thanked in person on an ongoing, informal basis.

What we learned:

Organizations can expand the concept of volunteer recognition by taking time to learn about volunteers' motivations and preferences. This can be achieved by building in questionnaires to accompany the documentation organizations are already requesting for screening and administration. This information can be referenced for ongoing recognition throughout the year.

Recognition practices can be expanded by learning about the kind of skills volunteers' would like to apply or develop and by ensuring that this is being fulfilled in their volunteer roles. Organizations can create an event that embeds training or networking opportunities with celebrations around volunteer recognition.

Organizations can recognize volunteers' efforts by communicating and highlighting the impact that they are having on their communities. They can take time to learn about their volunteers' skills, knowledge and motivations and find ways to foster or develop them. Creating more skills-based volunteering opportunities can be one way to achieve this.

Volunteers prefer greater flexibility in scheduling, more feedback on the impact of their work and more opportunities to use their skills, abilities or talents in their volunteer roles.

All age groups highlighted a desire to partake in an informal group outing as a way to be recognized, highlighting the social appeal to volunteering, especially for young people. Picnics, potlucks and small get-togethers were highlighted as being a very meaningful way to recognize volunteers- something that is not costly, but that brings people together in an informal way.

It is important to build strong relationships between staff and volunteers. The staff and board members should be aware of volunteers' contributions to the organization.

Making volunteers feel welcome is an important form of recognition. Whether it is putting a volunteers' role on their name-tag as opposed to simply "volunteer," soliciting feedback on how their role could be improved or offering training, there are many opportunities for organizations to create a warm and welcoming space.