HOW TO START A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

2022

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:
I WANT TO VOLUNTEER

Volunteer BC

2022

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

Volunteer BC's revised "Community Connections: How to Start A Volunteer Program". This is a guide for those planning or considering building a volunteer program, wanting to promote and match people to local volunteer opportunities in their community. There is a demand for this handbook as we steadily receive requests from the public- who are looking for meaningful opportunities and sustainable local volunteer engagement. We enhanced this handbook to reflect the challenges individuals & communities are facing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

ABOUT VOLUNTEER BC

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Volunteer BC is the voice of volunteerism with the goal of promoting the value of volunteerism and building healthy BC communities.

OUR VISION

Volunteer BC is the voice for supporting & connecting the voluntary sector to achieve excellence in volunteerism for the benefit of all British Columbians.organizations.

OUR MISSION

To be a strong and relevant provincial voice in promoting the development and value of volunteerism in BC by working cooperatively with the general public, volunteer centres, voluntary organizations, governments, business, and volunteer-involved organizations.

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VOLUNTEER
PROGRAM BASICS

2022

DISCLAIMER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Whether starting or reviewing a volunteer program within your organization, the standards of best practice remain the same. While many of the ideas contained in this document are not new, it is our hope that you will gain some useful thoughts to ponder, and possibly a few a-ha ideas to take away.
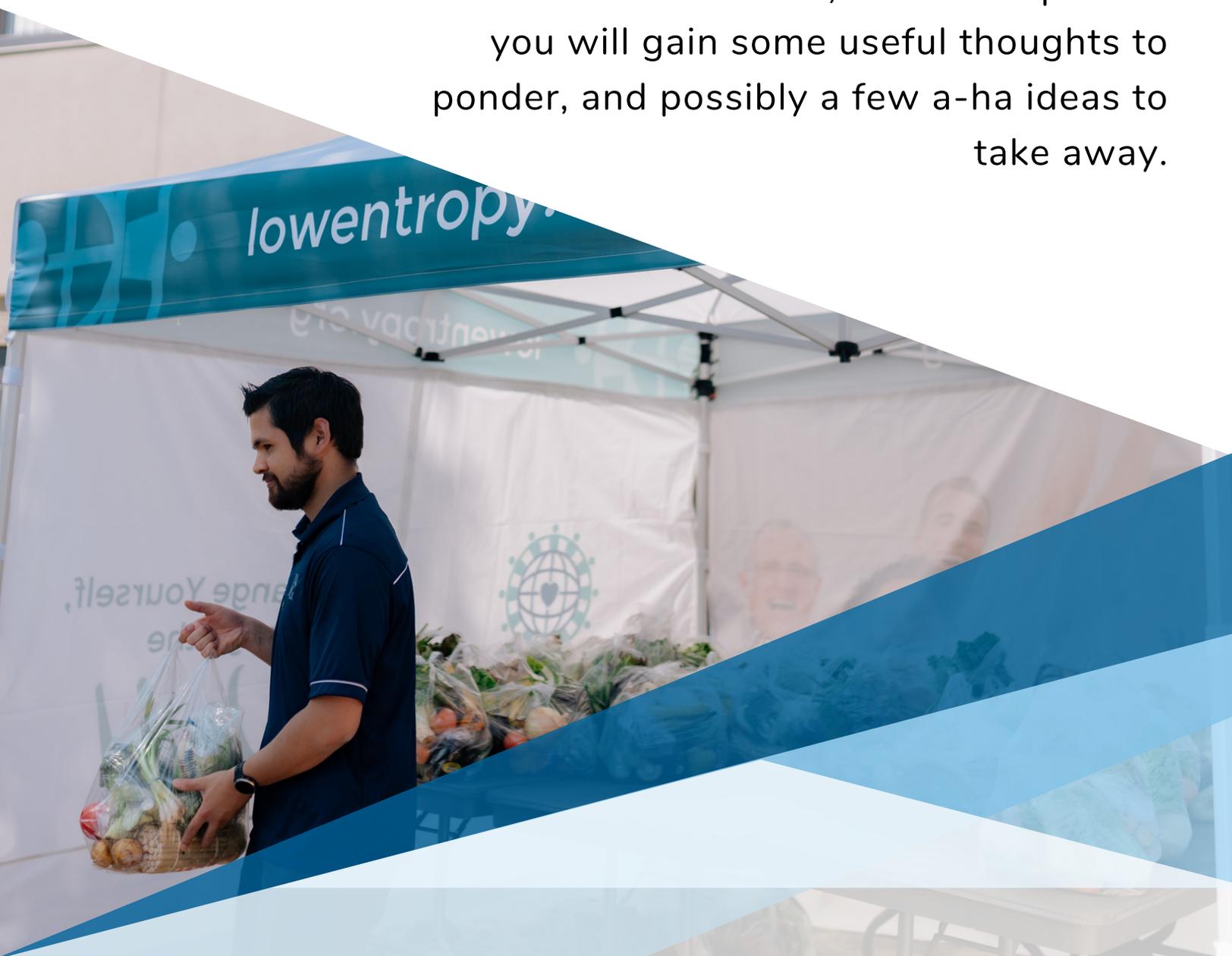
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RESPONDING TO COVID WITH EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

In these uncertain times, Covid-19 has created an ever-changing environment as non-profits and volunteer-driven organizations move into uncharted waters.

It would be true to state that organizations managing volunteers continue to have many questions while navigating the Covid-19 pandemic, managing their organization, and optimizing their volunteer program to provide the best possible scenario in community support.

Clear Communication is a Top Priority
- Clear communication in volunteer engagement is critical to the ongoing success of any volunteer program.
- Volunteers (either new or ongoing) continue to seek out organizations for up-to-date information about current opportunities, organizational changes, and current community needs.

Transparency is Equally Important
- Organizations should always be transparent in reporting while providing a solid support system for their volunteers.
- Continue to send a positive message in that their volunteer service contributions provide much-needed support to those affected in their community.

Good Communication With Volunteers Will Include:
- Organizations providing detailed instruction and flexibility.
- Providing information about alternate ways to give (beyond volunteering).
- ALWAYS being consistent and transparent in everything .

RESPONDING TO COVID WITH EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

VOLUNTEER BC OFFERS THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- How to help during Covid-19 Pandemic:link
- Resources to help you restart after Covid-19
- Virtual Volunteering Ideas

What Makes a Top-Notch Volunteer Program?

Right from the onset, both the organization and volunteer program should reflect:

- Demonstrated leadership
- Consistent application of guiding principles
- Best practice in all matters of volunteer engagement

The underlying importance of addressing both the needs of the volunteer, in providing meaningful opportunities suited to their interests and skills, and the needs of the organizations, supporting a wide range of services, and activities, thereby furthering its mission, mandate, goals, and objectives, is paramount when creating a top-notch volunteer program.

The mutual benefits are many and the possibilities are endless.

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WHERE TO START

PART ONE

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1. PLANNING AND PREPERATION

Whether you are thinking about starting a new volunteer program or have an existing program, the following thoughts and principles remain relevant and a good exercise for review.

YOUR ORGANIZATION HAS:

- A solid plan in place and has determined it would be appropriate to undertake a volunteer program.
- Set the framework to organize, develop, coordinate, adn implement a comprehensive volunteer program.
- Engaged a qualified individual to manage the program and its volunteer resources.
- Begun the work of developing volunteer program policies and procedures to ensure best practice in all matters of volunteer engagement.
- Prepared to move forward to accept volunteers.
- Recognized that volunteers are a vast resources representing a diverse cross section of talents, skills, intiatives and creativity.
- Recognized that staff, clients, and volunteers alike, will enjoy much benefit through its volunteer program.

Moving forward, your organization has determined that the inclusion of volunteers would be a tremendous resource and of huge benefit. That proper management of volunteers by a qualified individual either paid or unpaid, will ensure this valued asset is utilized effectively within the organizations programs and services.

2. VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT CYCLE (DIAGRAM 1)

The Volunteer Engagement Cycle provides the actual framework for managing volunteers. From planning to implementation, overlap should occur as a constant thread throughout the cycle.

It's an ongoing and continuous process that is monitored and revised as required; from planning, job design, recruitment, screening, training, placement, evaluation, and recognition.

RECOGNITION & RETENTION

INTAKE & SCREENING VOLUNTEERS

SUPERVISING & EVALUATING VOLUNTEERS

DESIGNING VOLUNTEER ROLES

PLANNING
Mission & Mandate
Volunteer Engagement
Needs Assessment
Screening Process
Policy & Procedures

ONGOING
Risk Management
Policy & Procedures
Recognition
Motivation
Record Keeping

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

PLANNING

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3. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM STATEMENT

The key to a successful volunteer program is to understand that volunteerism is constantly changing, hopefully growing, with the potential of thriving. Recognizing that those who both work with, and manage volunteers, should consider the following thoughts on a constant basis:

- Who are the volunteers?
- Why people volunteer, and why they don't?
- What motivates people to volunteer, and what doesn't?
- Why utilize volunteers?
- What can be expected of volunteers?

Additional thoughts for consideration to assist along the way:

4. DO YOU HAVE A POSITION STATEMENT?

Do you have a position statement for your volunteer program? A position statement sets the stage for your volunteer program.

EXAMPLE POSITION STATMENT:

The Organization acknowledges the many benefits of volunteerism to "your organization", to the volunteer, to clients, and to the community at large.

5. DO YOU HAVE A PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT?

A philosophy statement defines how an organization's mission or purpose is to be achieved.

EXAMPLE PHILOSOPHY STATMENT:

Philosophy of involvement - "your organization" recognized the tremendous contribution volunteers make, volunteers and paid staff work together to implement the mission and programs of the organization. One complements the work of the other. A dynamic and meaningful volunteer program is encouraged.

6. WHAT ARE YOUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OUTCOMES?

- Promoting increased awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the organization.
- Understanding how volunteers will fit in as an organization becomes more fluid while continuing to adapt which requires flexibility.
- Identifying and responding to the organization, volunteers, staff, and community needs.
- The organization's board of directors, volunteers, and staff, acknowledge and support the vital role of volunteers in achieving the organization's purpose, mission, goals and objectives.
- The organization's staff and volunteers work together efficiently, effectively and productively.
- Both volunteers and the organization receive mutual benefit (Fair Exchange).
- The volunteer program is valued among all its stakeholders (staff, volunteers, clients, and the community at large).

7. CANADIAN CODE FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT (CCVI)

Take a look at the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement which provides voluntary and not-for-profit organizations with a philosophical framework for involved volunteers at the governance, leadership, and direct service levels. The Code outlines the values, principles, and standards for effective volunteer practices within organizations. (Volunteer Canada)

THE CCVI DETAILS THE IMPORTANCE OF:

- Core Values for Volunteer Involvement
- Organizational Standards
- Guiding Principles

8. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The strength of a successful volunteer program is in its guiding principles.

EXAMPLE OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
• Trust and Respect • Accountability • Fair Exchange
• Integrity • Volunteer Engagement • Value
• Transparency • Inclusiveness • Open Communication

9. VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

From very small volunteer-led community groups to huge international organizations, the benefits of volunteer efforts are felt each and every day. Volunteers around the planet continue to make a huge impact in a vast and varied range of settings and organizations. The possibilities are endless and limited only to our imaginations.

WHY ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS?

• To build community
• Increase diversity • Potential donors
• Increase networks • Increase profile
• Credibility • Low budgets
• Passion for cause

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS?

• Establish priorities
• Save time
• Be proactive
• Provides a roadmap to achieve mission, mandate, goals and objectives
• Helps you know what resources you need
• Clarifies expectations
• Reduces uncertainties/risk
• Increases control
• Allows time for creative thinking
• Gets everybody on the same page (board, staff, volunteers)

ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS EFFECTIVELY

• Who will be responsible to supervise and manage volunteers?
• Who will work with them? Staff, volunteers?
• How will you train them? Onsite, online? What resources are needed?

10. WHAT MOTIVATES VOLUNTEERS

WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

- Because they were asked
- For a change of pace
- Get to know a new community
- To gain leadership skills
- To be part of a team
- To learn something new
- To be an advocate
- To further potential career and job opportunities
- To meet education requirements
- To have some fun!

WHY DON'T PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

- They were never asked
- Not a candidate, may not qualify
- No matter what, some people will simply not volunteer
- Risk & liability concerns
- No time
- Past negative publicity around organization
- Schedules don't match hours of operation, orientation, & training
- The work is repetitive, physically difficult, or taken for granted.

11. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

What is the organizational structure?

Organizational structure is a system used to define the hierarchy within an organization. It identifies each job, its function, and who and where all report to within the organization. What does your organization look like?

Example

BOARD — EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/ MANAGER — STAFF — PROGRAMS — FINANCE & ADMIN

STAFF — FUNDRAISING

VOLUNTEER MANAGER/ COORDINATOR — VOLUNTEERS
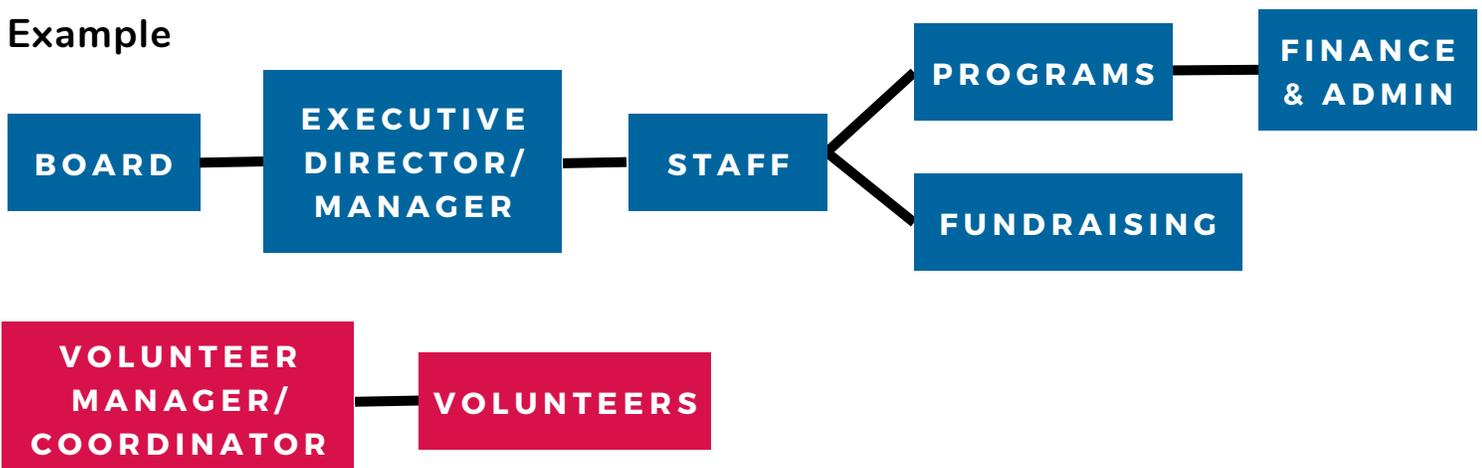
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WHERE TO START

PART TWO

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HOW TO START A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Do you currently have, or are you considering a volunteer program in your organization?

How Does Your Organization Engage & Manage Volunteers?

1. DO YOU HAVE POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

When developing volunteer position descriptions, always remember to balance the needs of the organization, with a mix of interesting offerings.

The potential range of skills and abilities that volunteers can bring to the organization are endless. Where possible consider one-time, short-term, long term, project, and online/virtual opportunities

VOLUNTEER POSITION

- Undertake an evaluation of the position. I.E how it fits back to the mission, mandate, vision, goals and objectives of the organization.
- Conduct a risk management assessment. Assess the position for risk, to the volunteer, client, staff, the organization, and the greater community.
- Detail both the organization and volunteer expectations and responsiblities.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE POSITION DESCRIPTION

- Title of position (be creative)
- Area or location (where it will take place)
- Person to whom they report (immediate supervisor)
- Duties/Qualifications/Skills (be thoughtful)
- Commitment expected (be real)
- Training provided (be specific)
- Requirements (drivers abstract, CRC, Vulnerable Sector Check)
- Benefits to the volunteer & organization (fair exchange)

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2. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The organization's volunteer policy and procedures should reflect its Core Values, Guiding Principles, and Organizational Standards. Policy and procedure (no exception) should apply to all types of volunteers within the organization.

Questions:

- **Does your organization have policies and procedures in place?**
- **Which type of policy is the most crucial?**
- **Who should policies apply to?**

EXAMPLES OF POLICY:	**TYPES OF VOLUNTEERS (EXAMPLES):**
• Organizational structure (who's on where and daily operations) • Volunteer engagement (intake to exit) • Values and belief/ philosophy statements • Risk management (intake to exit)	• Long term, short term, and episodic volunteers • Volunteers in community work options (work experience, justice, practicum students) • Virtual/online volunteers • Volunteers who are also staff

3. DEVELOP APPLICABLE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM FORMS

Do you have the necessary forms for volunteer engagement?

PAPERWORK EXAMPLES:

- Application Form
- Evaluation Form
- Volunteer Exit Interview Form
- Supervisor Exit Interview Form
- Interview Form
- Volunteer Agreement Form
- Internal Volunteer Request Form
- Hours Tracking Form
- Media Release Form

CLICK HERE FOR OUT VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

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4. VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT :
SELL THE SIZZLE

A successful volunteer recruitment strategy should be a welcome invitation not a desperate plea for help.
  • What skills, knowledge, and abilities does your organization need? Desire?
  • Who is your target demographic? Is it youth, adults, seniors, families?
  • Where will you source volunteers? What locations will you target?
  • How will you source volunteers?
  • What method will you use? Will it be in person, online, in print?

What's Your Story?
Take full advantage of the opportunity to tell your story. It's not only about volunteer recruitment, but also about providing information and awareness in promotion of the organization, which in turn will create interest, which in turn will create prospects for recruitment.

Thoughts To Ponder:
  • What are your most difficult or challenging positions to recruit?
  • How do these positions/work relate to what we know about the changing motivations/interests of volunteers?
  • What recruitment strategies do you use?
  • Do you have a written recruitment plan?
  • Do you utilize past volunteers to help with recruitment?
  • Who does the recruitment? Whose role is it?

EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

  • Word of mouth
  • Booths, exhibits, and special events
  • Referrals and public speaking opportunities
  • News articles and bulletins
  • Register everywhere - Volunteer Centres, Colleges & Universities
  • Utilize your fax cover, radio, and TV spots
  • Print material - brochures, flyers, posters, inserts

WORD OF MOUTH: YOUR BEST FRIEND AND WORST ENEMY

Good news travels fast, but bad news travels faster. And beats you out the door every time.
And you can't catch up with it!
And then, I will tell two friends
And they will tell two friends
And they will tell two friends and so on and so on....
Which would you rather have?

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5. SELECTION/SCREENING:
DOING IT RIGHT

To ensure the ongoing success of a volunteer program, it's always important to achieve quality and balance between the needs of the volunteer, client, staff, organization and to the greater community.

Whatever tools you decide to use, a clearly communicated screening process that is understood, remains ongoing, and is consistently applied from volunteer intake to exit. Keep in mind that screening is only one part of risk management. Each volunteer position requires its own risk assessment and screening methods required.

What types of screening measures does your organization use?
• To match potential volunteers to appropriate positions
• To assess risk & demands of the work

SCREENING TOOLS:
10 Steps of Screening - Volunteer Canada
The 10 Steps of Screening give clear guidelines for developing screening policies. These policies show an organization's commitment to safe and meaningful volunteer 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

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6. ORIENTATION & TRAINING
BUILDING A TEAM

Providing volunteers with a thorough orientation helps them understand the larger picture. The orientation should include, but not limited to: the organizational structure, the relationship between staff, volunteers, clients, services offered, and to the community at large.

Ensuring that volunteers receive the full benefit of training for their respective assignments not only helps facilitate a positive experience, it also reinforces the professional standard of best practice in all matters of volunteer engagement.

Have you created a welcoming environment for volunteers?
- Are volunteers able to see the relevance & application of their learning/ training?
- Do your volunteers feel comfortable?
- Have you created an atmosphere of encouragement?
- Do volunteers feel supported by staff and fellow volunteers?
- Are they able to learn in different ways?
- Are they able to share their learning experience in a positive way?
- Is it a meaningful learning opportunity?
- Are they able to have fun?
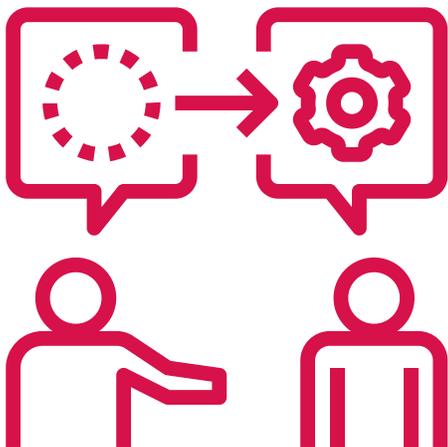
What training and orientation do you provide?
- How do you bring staff on board? Do you provide orientation and training? Who does the training?
- Does your organization provide orientation and training for volunteers? Who does the training?

7. SUPERVISION

Let's Be Clear: Supervision is all about relationships. Great supervisors understand the importance of establishing, building, and maintaining relationships with volunteers and staff alike. Supervision should take into account the organization's guiding principles, and like a constant thread, should run throughout the volunteer's experience. Supervisors provide meaningful training and allow volunteers to provide feedback.

The responsibility of supervision does not need to fall to one person alone, depending on the framework within the organization. Volunteers may be supervised by paid staff, or by other volunteers.

What does supervision look like at your organization?
- Are volunteers clear on their roles and responsibilities?
- Do they know who they report to? How to get in touch with that person?
- Are they aware of other people's roles? Volunteer and staff alike.
- Do they know their authority and the limitations of their position?
- Are they aware of the impact of their role within your organization?

8. VOLUNTEER RETENTION

Supported, Valued, Welcomed. A continuous effort in maintaining and sustaining volunteer relationships is an important detail and time well spent. The benefits are far-reaching, like a ripple in a pond, with a positive outcome of dedicated, happy, engaged volunteers.

Why do volunteers leave?

- No orientation & training
- No flexibility in volunteer opportunities
- No value in volunteer efforts
- Asking too much or too little
- No communication
- No follow up
- Unprofessional environment

8. VOLUNTEER RETENTION (CONT.)

What does volunteer retention look like in your organization?
- Are you still looking for long-term volunteers? Consider other options such as job share, short-term opportunities and volunteer leave.
- How do you keep volunteers engaged between opportunities?
- How do you demonstrate the outcomes volunteers are helping to achieve?
- How are you supporting or providing support to your volunteers?
- Do you have formal policy and procedures in place? What process do you have in place to check in and follow up?
- Do you take note when a passionate volunteer becomes quiet?
- Do you look for and AVOID volunteer burnout?

9. VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION: BEYOND THE DODADS

Recognizing that volunteers are an integral part of the organization. They are a highly valued resource of diverse individuals that make a contributing impact on a daily basis to achieve the organization's purpose or mission.

Volunteer recognition does not need to be complicated and can be achieved through a variety of formal and informal means.

When should we recognize volunteers?
- When they join your organization
- During time spent within your organization
- When they leave your organization

What recognition strategies do you currently use?
- Do you recognize volunteers for their contribution in an appropriate and timely manner? A simple thank you vs. a recognition ceremony.
- Do you encourage staff to make volunteer appreciation and recognition anongoing part of their daily operations?

10. RECORD KEEPING: MORE THAN JUST NUMBERS

Have you developed a process to track and evaluate volunteer program information? Tracking information does not have to be an overwhelming task. It can be as simple as a spreadsheet or a more formalized software program. Whatever process you decide to undertake, consistently follow-up from beginning to end will ensure the ongoing success and sustainability of a Volunteer Program.

How do you gather information needed in support of your volunteer program?
- Do you track training and orientation? (staff and volunteer)
- How do you track volunteer hours?
- What's the impact of volunteers in your organization? Internally and externally?
- Do you track volunteer satisfaction?
- Do you ask volunteers about interest/motivation and how they might like to be acknowledged?
- Do you track staff satisfaction and input with volunteer involvement?

11. ENGAGING A VOLUNTEER MANAGER/COORDINATOR

Part of best practice within any non-profit or volunteer driven organization includes engaging a qualified individual whether paid or unpaid, to manage volunteer resources. Establishing a great volunteer program does not have to be complicated or overwhelming. The right individual managing a well-organized, thoughtful, and supporting program can make the difference between success and failure.

While it is not always necessary to have a formal education in volunteer management, training and experience is always considered best practice. Seek out a local volunteer centre, volunteer management group, provincial organization, college or university in your community that offers training, workshops, resources and certification.

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11. ENGAGING A VOLUNTEER MANAGER/COORDINATOR (CONT)

Where to go for Volunteer Management Training and Certification?
Possibilities include:

Volunteer Centres

Volunteer Burnaby - Volunteer Resources Administration Online Training

Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives - Volunteer Management Series

Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada (VMPC)

Fédération des centres d'action bénévole du Québec (FCABQ)

Ontario Volunteer Centre Network

FINAL TOUGHTS

Whether starting or reviewing a volunteer program, whatever plan of action you decide to take, always consider the greater picture.

- If existing, what does your volunteer program currently look like?
- What might, could, and should your volunteer program look like?
- What are your greatest assets?
- What's your plan, and how long will it take to implement?
- Who will help you in the process? What will be their role and responsibilities?
- What are your potential barriers? How will you overcome them?
- Reflect on the opportunities rather than just the problems

And consider changing your mindset:

- From Volunteer Management to Volunteer Engagement
- From Recruitment to Invitation & Networking
- From Placement to Negotiate & Agreement
- From Supervision to Support & Relationships
- From Recognition to Acknowledgement
- From Controlling to Empowering
- From Preset positions to Position Sculpting

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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- [BMS GROUP - Insurance For Non-Profits](#)

- [Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI)](#)

- [Charity Republic (Volunteer Management Software)](#)

- [Ellis, Susan J: Energize Inc.](#)

- [Fédération des centres d'action bénévole du Québec (FCABQ)](#)

- [Graff, Linda L.](#)

- [Ontario Volunteer Centre Network](#)

- [The Co-Operators.ca - Insurance for Non-Profits](#)

- [Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada (VMPC)](#)