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Thank you to all participants in the 2021 and 2022 waves of the Canadian Social Connection Survey and our focus group participants. This work would not have been possible without your meaningful insights and contributions.



Funders/Sponsors

Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC)

Alex Price, PhD

GenWell Project

Pete Bombaci, BA
Bobbie Breckenridge, BSW, RSW
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Other Research Sponsors



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

Volunteering is a cornerstone of community and resilience in Canada, contributing significantly to the socio-economic fabric of the nation and to individual well-being. Despite the importance of volunteerism, volunteering is in decline and many non-profits report facing difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers. Responding to these challenges, this report offers evidence-based recommendations to revitalize volunteerism:

Recommendations for Organizations

- **Successfully Engage New & Ongoing Volunteers:** Emphasizes the importance of detailed and transparent volunteer position descriptions to attract and retain volunteers.
- **Harness Momentum & Enthusiasm:** Streamline volunteer onboarding processes.
- **Enhance Policies, Guidelines, and Manuals:** Advocates for the consolidation and clarity of volunteer-related materials to ensure ease of access and understanding.
- **Incorporate Flexibility:** Highlights the need for adaptable volunteering roles to accommodate diverse schedules and commitments.
- **Incorporate Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA):** Calls for prioritizing and actively promoting IDEA in all aspects of volunteer engagement.
- **Recognize Volunteer Value:** Stresses the importance of acknowledging and appreciating volunteers' contributions to foster a sense of value and belonging.
- **Reduce Costs, Increase Convenience:** Addresses financial and logistical barriers to volunteering, suggesting practical support measures.
- **Facilitate Positive Social Connection:** Encourages initiatives to enhance the social aspects of volunteering, promoting community and belonging.

Recommendations for Government, Policymakers, and National Volunteer Organizations

- **Provide Core Funding to Volunteer Organizations:** Suggests direct financial support to ensure the sustainability of volunteer programs.
- **Provide Volunteer Tax Credits:** Proposes tax incentives for volunteers and businesses that support employee volunteering, to alleviate financial burdens.
- **Create a Modern, Centralized Platform for Volunteer Opportunities:** Recommends the development of a national platform to efficiently connect volunteers with opportunities.

Conclusion

This document is designed to be a detailed guide aimed at enhancing volunteer engagement and effectiveness throughout Canada. We advocate for a collaborative approach that involves volunteer organizations, government bodies, and policymakers to implement strategic, impactful changes. It is our goal to ensure the continued vitality and sustainability of volunteerism, thereby strengthening Canadian communities and the nation as a whole.



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BACKGROUND

The Importance of Volunteering

Volunteering, defined as the act of individuals offering their time and skills to benefit others without the expectation of financial compensation, is a key part of civic and social life. This altruistic activity plays an important role in fostering societal cohesion (Davies et al., [2024](#)), enhancing the capacity of organizations to achieve their missions, and promoting the personal development and well-being of volunteers. The significance of volunteering extends across various dimensions, including societal benefits, organizational advantages, and individual growth, making it a multifaceted phenomenon worthy of in-depth exploration.

Societal Benefits

At the societal level, volunteering is an important mechanism for addressing a wide range of social, environmental, and economic challenges. It mobilizes resources, generates social capital, and facilitates the provision of essential services, particularly in areas underserved by governmental and private sectors. Through the collective efforts of volunteers, communities experience improved resilience (Papadaki & Kalogeraki, [2017](#)), heightened social awareness (Berry & Workman, [2015](#)), and enhanced quality of life (Cattan et al., [2011](#)). Moreover, volunteering fosters a sense of community (Vannier et al., [2021](#)) and belonging (Luque-Suárez et al., [2021](#)), bridging divides (Kaplan, [2008](#); Ridge & Montoya, [2013](#)), and promoting inclusivity by bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds towards common goals.

Organizational Advantages

For organizations, particularly non-profits and community-based entities, volunteers are indispensable. They provide a broad spectrum of skills and labor that augment the organization's capacity to fulfill its mission. Effective recruitment, management, and retention of volunteers are crucial strategies for maximizing their contributions. Organizations that excel in these areas benefit from increased operational efficiency (Chui & Chan, [2019](#)), innovation (Bier et al., [2023](#)), and the ability to expand their services. Furthermore, a strong volunteer base can significantly enhance an organization's legitimacy and community engagement, fostering a positive public image and attracting additional resources.

Individual Well-being

For the volunteers themselves, engaging in volunteer activities offers numerous personal benefits. It presents opportunities for skill development and employability (Giancaspro & Manuti, [2021](#), Paine et al., [2013](#)) and career exploration (Duffy & Raque-Bogdan [2010](#)). Volunteering is also associated with enhanced psychological well-being, as individuals experience a sense of purpose and fulfillment (Kim et al., [2020](#)), and community connection (Vannier et al., [2021](#)). The act of helping others can lead to increased life satisfaction, reduced stress levels, and a healthier lifestyle (Kim et al., [2020](#)). Additionally, volunteering provides a platform for individuals to exercise empathy, compassion, and altruism, contributing to their moral and emotional growth.

Challenges in Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

Recognizing the benefits of volunteering, millions of Canadians engage in volunteer opportunities each year. In fact, in 2018, a total of 24 million Canadians spent 5 billion hours volunteering — providing the equivalent of 2.5 million full-time jobs worth of economic value to their communities (Hahmann, [2021](#)). Yet, despite the known benefits to volunteering for both the individual and the community, 67% of Canadian non-profits struggled to recruit new volunteers in 2022, and 51% struggled to retain existing volunteers (Statistics Canada, [2022a](#)). In response to declining volunteer resources, 17% of these organizations had to cancel their services and another 35% had to reduce the scope of the services they provide (Statistics Canada, [2022b](#)).

The difficulty in recruiting new volunteers can be attributed to a variety of factors. Changes in societal norms, busy lifestyles, and a lack of awareness about volunteering opportunities contribute to this trend. Additionally, potential volunteers may not find opportunities that match their skills, interests, or schedule availability, leading to a mismatch between volunteer offerings and organizational needs.

Furthermore, retaining volunteers presents its own set of challenges. Factors such as a lack of support, inadequate recognition, and insufficient training can lead to volunteer dissatisfaction and turnover. Moreover, without a clear path for development or engagement in meaningful work, volunteers may feel undervalued and disengage from the organization.

The consequences of these recruitment and retention challenges are substantial. As noted, a significant percentage of organizations have been forced to cancel or reduce their services. This not only affects the intended beneficiaries of these services but also diminishes the social and economic value that volunteers bring to the community. The reduction or elimination of services can lead to unmet needs within communities, particularly for vulnerable populations who rely heavily on the support provided by non-profit organizations.

“24 million Canadians spent 5 billion hours volunteering — providing the equivalent of 2.5 million full-time jobs worth of economic value to their communities.”

OBJECTIVES

Recognizing the challenges posed in the recruitment and retention of volunteers, this report aims to identify strategies that could enhance these processes. In doing so, we engage with the volunteer perspective – acknowledging, of course, that there are a variety of challenges and difficulties that may not be optimally represented from this vantage point. Nevertheless, we believe that the perspectives of volunteers provide key insights into how programs can best engage future volunteers in meaningful work.

METHODS

To represent volunteers' perspectives, we undertook a mixed methods study consisting of three primary stages:

- **Quantitative Study:** We analyzed data from the Canadian Social Connection Survey to answer the following questions:
 - Who is volunteering?
 - What motivates Canadians to volunteer?
 - How do these motivations vary across demographic factors including age, gender, ethnicity, income, and geographic context (e.g., rural vs urban)?
- **Qualitative Study:** We conducted a series of 6 focus groups between September 11th and October 24th, 2023. We spoke to volunteers with a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, and we asked them to share what motivates them to volunteer, what barriers they face to engaging in volunteer work, and their suggestions for organizations to reduce or eliminate these barriers.
- **Community Discussion:** On December 8, 2023, we hosted an online dissemination of our findings and discussion of results with eight community leaders in the non-profit and volunteer management sectors. Our volunteer leaders have experience in community organizations including Community Volunteer Connections, Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver, North Shore Community Resources, Langley Volunteer Bureau, the Canadian Red Cross, Volunteer Canada, and United Way British Columbia.

Based on these activities, recommendations were developed to meet the needs identified by volunteers. These recommendations are provided below, integrating evidence from our research activities. While these recommendations are not exhaustive and we acknowledge the many constraints under which non-profits operate, we offer these recommendations as a tool to support organizations as our society contends with declining rates of volunteer engagement. We are immensely grateful for Canadian volunteer organizations' dedication, forward-thinking, and meaningful impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

The landscape of volunteering is constantly evolving. This offers organizations many opportunities to improve the ways they recruit and retain volunteers to maximize their impact. We identified core opportunities including strategizing to engage new and ongoing volunteers, enhancing policies, guidelines, and manuals for volunteers, and incorporating flexibility to accommodate volunteer needs. Further, there are opportunities to incorporate Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) across the organization, recognize volunteer value, reduce costs for volunteers, and facilitate positive social connection.



Opportunity 1

Successfully Engage New and Ongoing Volunteers

Background

Our fast-paced world necessitates that volunteers be intentional about where and how they spend their time. Would-be volunteers want to know what they are signing up for as early as possible and in as much detail as possible (similar to a job description). People who are already volunteering want to know how their work contributes to the organization's overall goals so they can impact the causes they care about. Often, volunteer position descriptions are nonexistent, too vague, or out of date, which can be discouraging to prospective volunteers.

Recommendations

- Provide different mechanisms for **advertising positions**, **sharing position details**, and **making space for prospective volunteers to ask questions** – volunteers are looking for different amounts of detail at different stages when they are considering volunteering.
 - **Advertise opportunities** in a way that captivates volunteer interest and share on a variety of platforms (social media, community bulletins, organization websites, etc.).
 - Consider hosting **volunteer job fairs** (in-person or virtual) for volunteers in rural areas who may have limited access to hearing about volunteer opportunities and would appreciate the opportunity to connect with someone in person.
 - Leverage existing networks to reach a wider audience. For example, [Connect Fredericton](#) provides a calendar of volunteer events and connects volunteers to opportunities. Online platforms such as [Eventbrite](#) can be used to post volunteer information sessions or volunteer fairs.
 - **Share details** – volunteers may have **questions** about the atmosphere, accessibility, and working conditions of a particular volunteer opportunity (e.g., “How much will I be standing?” or “Will the room be wheelchair accessible?”) but may be reluctant to ask these questions. Provide a **position description** that has these details clearly outlined. While advertisements are constrained by space, having this information available on your website can be an effective way to balance an effective ad while also giving volunteers the necessary information they need to take the next step and sign up.
 - **Be transparent and up-front about potential or certain costs** to volunteers (e.g., bringing your own supplies), required trainings, and other incidentals (e.g., background checks) during the earliest stages of recruitment.
 - Consider hosting an **online or in-person information session** that a prospective participant can attend *prior to a large investment of time applying to the volunteer opportunity*. Ideally, volunteers can learn the specifics of a position and get answers to their questions before having to fill out applications, complete trainings, and invest financially.

- Keep your **website and public-facing materials updated**. Many volunteers found it challenging to find current opportunities and many look for their opportunities online. Keeping your website current will make it easier for volunteers to find you!
- **Education and training** would be useful to help organizations write thorough, comprehensive, and accurate position descriptions and advertisements. Volunteer hubs can provide volunteer organizations with **tips, tools, and resources** to educate their local organizations on how to best share information on volunteer positions.

Resources

- <https://smallbusinessbc.ca/article/how-to-create-an-effective-video-ad-for-your-small-business/>
- <https://www.volgistics.com/blog/marketing-volunteer-opportunities/>
- <https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/employees/recruit/writing-job-description>
- <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/tools-resources/how-create-strong-job-advertisements>
- <https://volunteeringhub.org.au/writing-a-role-description/>
- <https://volunteeringhub.org.au/writing-a-position-description/>
- <https://www.google.com/grants/>
- https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.volunteertoronto.ca/resource/resmgr/Online_Resources/Workbook/VRR.pdf
- <https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=353>

Opportunity 2

Harness Momentum and Enthusiasm

Background

When volunteers reach out to organizations about an opportunity, they are often energized to get started and contribute to causes they care about. As one example, there is a large influx of newcomers to Canada who have high interest in volunteering but may be discouraged by delayed processing times that come with immigration paperwork and background checks. Organizations can nurture this enthusiasm by engaging the volunteer right away before that enthusiasm begins to wane. We know organizations can be immensely busy and may not have extra resources to devote to outreach, and often this may be the responsibility of a single individual. Where possible, welcoming volunteers may be a task you can delegate to your seasoned volunteers.

Recommendations

- **Capitalize on volunteer enthusiasm** early! Bring volunteers in to meet the team or get them started on small tasks right away.
- During “down seasons” (e.g., for emergency response volunteers), **find ways to keep volunteers involved and engaged**.
- **Keep in contact** and have **clear, open channels of communication** with prospective volunteers. It is much better to let a prospective volunteer know what you are up to and give an approximate timeline of when they’ll hear back than to not follow-up at all.
- **Find other ways that newcomers can participate** even before official onboarding (e.g., administrative work with appropriate supervision, attending events as community members).
- Provide a **direct report supervisor or a point of contact** to check in with.

Resources

- <https://www.volunteeralive.org/docs/Strategic%20Volunteer%20Engagement.pdf>

Opportunity 3

Enhance Policies, Guidelines, and Manuals

Background

Volunteer policies, guidelines, manuals, and trainings are important to volunteers and organizations alike. Volunteers want to have these materials clearly outlined and easily accessible, but they can be cumbersome, scattered, decentralized, difficult to find, and hard to understand. Likewise, it is important to organizations that volunteers understand these materials. However, there is often a mismatch between organizations' intentions with these materials and volunteers' actual perceptions of implementation of the information in them. Volunteers may sign initial onboarding materials without reading or understanding them, creating issues for organizations down the line.

Recommendations

- **Package materials clearly** – rather than having individual documents, consider having a package or set of materials that volunteers can easily reference and review. Remember that some volunteers may not be able to easily access/navigate materials that are online.
- Consider **talking to volunteers in person or in a virtual training session** about these materials during their onboarding and give them the time and space to ask questions. This may ensure that the volunteer and organization are on the same page. Live engagement may be more beneficial than large packages of materials.
- Consider engaging volunteers in the **construction of the rules/agreement**.
- **Explain the “why”** – explain why a policy is there and the purpose of it to help volunteers better connect, engage, and retain materials.
- **Optimize trainings** – volunteers want clear and thorough but not overly intensive or redundant trainings. They also want organization members to be equally well-trained in relevant tasks and competencies (e.g., Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) training).
- Provide clarity on possibility or lack of potential for **transitioning to employment**. As some roles segue into employment positions and others do not, providing upfront information on this is useful to volunteers.
- Volunteer hubs may benefit from **asking their organizations and members** if they have clear policies, manuals, and codes of conducts in place.
- Many organizations feel overwhelmed at the idea of coming up with policies and manuals. Volunteer hubs can create and distribute templates for organization to use, and/or **provide a workshop** that helps individual organizations craft their own materials.

Resources

- <https://www.volgistics.com/blog/guide-to-creating-volunteer-handbook/>
- <https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/volunteer-handbook>
- https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.volunteertoronto.ca/resource/resmgr/Online_Resources/Workbook/Volunteer_Handbook_Final.pdf

Opportunity 4

Incorporate Flexibility

Background

Volunteers increasingly want flexibility as they face growing pressures on their time and resources. More people than ever work “gig” jobs, and they may have little control over their free time. It is no surprise that volunteers overwhelmingly mentioned that flexibility (e.g., in hours per week, days per week, the expected duration of the role, etc.) is a key consideration in whether they will volunteer with an organization. For many organizations, offering this flexibility can be challenging.

Organizations often say that they need a 100-hour commitment for the year, or 4 hours per week, but this isn't feasible for populations with unpredictable and ever-changing schedules (e.g., students). This often leads prospective volunteers to decline volunteer opportunities that they are excited and passionate about.

Recommendations

- **Redesign roles** so that they can be feasibly undertaken by a wide range of potential volunteers.
 - **Shorten shifts and divide opportunities.** Consider splitting a 4-hour shift into two 2-hour shifts.
 - Provide a **“menu” of options** for volunteers to select different opportunities of different durations as their schedules change. This allows volunteers to hand pick what works well for them. It also provides volunteers with a sense of autonomy.
 - Advertise a diverse set of volunteer opportunities (some remote opportunities, some in-person, variety in tasks, etc.).
 - When possible, have a range of **shorter-term** (a few months) and **longer-term** (several year) commitments to meet different needs.
 - Provide **one-off volunteer opportunities.** These are increasingly desired by volunteers.
- **Meet volunteers halfway.** If a volunteer is only able to attend a portion of their shift, rather than finding coverage for the entire shift, consider finding coverage only for the portion the volunteer cannot cover. This will allow the volunteer the option to participate where they can, when they can. This will help communicate the value of volunteer contributions.
- **Consider having “back-up” teams** to alleviate the pressure on volunteers to show up when they don’t have the capacity. This shows that you respect their time and understand they may need to take time off. Aim to reduce feelings of guilt, indebtedness, and burnout in volunteers – these are often barriers to engaging in volunteer work.
- It can be difficult for organizations to schedule volunteers. Likewise, it can be difficult for volunteers to get scheduled at times that work with their schedules. **Use platforms that allow volunteers to pick their own schedules and choose the time slots they want** – there are both paid and non-paid versions of these platforms.

Resources

- Volunteer management/scheduling software
 - <https://www.betterimpact.com/>
 - <https://www.volgistics.com>
 - <https://www.volunteermark.com/>
 - <https://yourvolunteers.com/>

Opportunity 5

Incorporate Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)

Background

Many volunteers mentioned the importance of organizations prioritizing inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA). Organizations should make it clear through their actions and policies that they value IDEA.

Recommendations

- **Promote IDEA** from the beginning
 - **Provide accommodations** when possible. Show understanding when accommodations are needed.
 - **Include accessibility information** in advertising and recruitment materials for prospective volunteers (e.g., elevator access).
 - For example, mentioning, “we are on the second floor, but the building has an elevator” shows you have accessibility in mind and are aware of potential accessibility constraints.
 - In instances where you are unable to provide an accommodation (e.g., the building is on the second floor and there is no elevator), communicate this information early.
 - **Highlight volunteer stories** from underrepresented and diverse volunteers.
 - Tailor your recruitment language to **explicitly welcome individuals from all backgrounds**
 - **Promote inclusivity** from the initial interview by ensuring **interviewer and staff competency in IDEA**.
- **Hear from members of marginalized communities and identities** to know how to best serve them.
 - **Ensure physical and psychological safety** for volunteers by reducing stigma and being aware of cultural and religious biases that may make volunteers feel excluded or not allow them to participate.
 - **Walk your talk** by having diversity higher up in the organization. When possible, the composition of the organization should represent the community that it serves
- **Incorporate accessibility measures before volunteers need to ask for them.**

Resources

- <https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=454>
- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/about-the-bc-public-service/diversity-inclusion/learning-resource>
- <https://candiversity.com/courses/diversity-and-inclusion-training-for-volunteers/>
- <https://canadianequality.ca/services/training/>

Opportunity 6

Recognize Volunteer Value

Background

Volunteers appreciate when organizations recognize their contributions. Even though volunteers are unpaid, receiving benefits such as volunteer banquets or 'thank you' emails is important. Volunteers appreciate feeling valued and respected (both by the organization and recipients of their services), receiving support from their organizations, open communication, and trust from and in the organization. Further, volunteers may be motivated to volunteer for a variety of reasons (e.g., career, networking, to engage in fun activities, try new things, etc.). In our study on volunteer motivations in a national sample of Canadian volunteers, we found six distinct profiles of Canadian volunteers, ranging from individuals who are strongly motivated by values to those who are interested in career advancement and self-growth. No matter the motivation, volunteer organizations can show gratitude for volunteers' service and promote their meaningful engagement in volunteer work.

Recommendations

- **Promote meaningful experiences for volunteers** that can facilitate fun, creativity and learning new things, growth, purpose and fulfillment, positive emotions, exploration of interests, religious beliefs, career or educational enhancement, and more.
- **Connect volunteers' roles to values** that are important to them. Encourage new volunteers **to take skills/aptitude/values assessments** to find activities that will be meaningful for them and match volunteer tasks to their skills or desired areas of growth.
- Regularly show **appreciation for volunteers** and their impact.
 - Say thank you (even in emails)
 - Provide awards/recognition
 - Show volunteers their impact
- Foster a **healthy organizational culture**.
 - Volunteers come in to do their work with many skills and valuable experiences, despite being unpaid and sometimes working with paid members of organizations. Watch out for power dynamics between paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers bring important skills and experience to their roles and they want to feel appreciated by the organization.
 - Communicate that you trust your volunteers to complete their tasks and do them well.
- **Show volunteers you support them** and ensure that volunteers know the organization "has their back."
- **Invite and incorporate volunteer feedback** to show that you value their perspectives.
- **Continue clear communication channels and responsiveness** that begins with volunteer recruitment.

Resources

- <https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/tools/doc/SkillSelfAssessment-EN.pdf>
- <https://www.wildapricot.com/blog/volunteer-appreciation-guide>
- <https://www.galaxydigital.com/blog/volunteer-appreciation>

Opportunity 7

Reduce Costs, Increase Convenience

Background

Many volunteers reported barriers to volunteering relating to personal costs to engaging in volunteering. Volunteers shared that financial costs (e.g., bus tickets, purchasing supplies, buying meals), convenience of location (e.g., accessibility by public transport), lack of access to food at mealtimes while volunteering, and other factors related to costs and incidentals discouraged them from volunteering. Volunteers feel that their service should not set them back financially and expect organizations to support them when they can.

Recommendations

- **Consider restrictions and costs** that may come with engaging in volunteer work and be **upfront** about these costs and incidentals early in the process (e.g., even when advertising opportunities). If you cannot reduce these barriers, it is helpful to be transparent and provide information.
- **Support volunteers with costs/incidentals where possible.** Consider:
 - Providing meals/snacks to volunteers working long shifts.
 - Remuneration (e.g., reimbursements for public transport).
- **Leverage partnerships**
 - Ask cab companies to donate rides for volunteers to get to their destinations or ask local grocery stores/food purveyors to donate excess food to volunteer centers.
- **Make trainings and onboarding affordable and thorough.** Volunteers commonly report that expensive trainings and background checks are a barrier to volunteering.

Resources

- <https://www.grantwatch.com/grants-for-nonprofits>
- <https://victoriafoundation.bc.ca/grants-funding/other-funding-sources/>

Opportunity 8

Facilitate Positive Social Connection

Background

Volunteers are eager to find social connection. For some volunteers, volunteering may even be their primary source of social connection. Volunteers often find volunteer opportunities through invitations or encouragement from people in their existing social network. Feeling welcomed, having good relationships with people in the organization and the people they're serving, feeling like they belong, engaging with like-minded communities, and working toward shared goals are all ways in which volunteers appreciate and engage in social connectedness as they volunteer. On the other hand, interpersonal conflict and the volunteer modality can interfere with positive social experiences.

Recommendations

- **Host volunteer socials** or make space for volunteers to get to know one another. Hosting a volunteer banquet is one way to bring volunteers together while also showing your appreciation for their efforts.
- **Provide volunteer debriefing** as needed, especially for emotionally intensive volunteer work. It's important for volunteers to have someone to talk to, for both support after negative experiences and sharing enthusiasm from their positive experiences.
- **Foster a healthy social environment** through promoting inclusivity, communicating openly, and making all volunteers feel welcome.
- **Provide volunteers with a direct report contact** to ensure they feel supported and have someone to check in with.

Resources

- https://www.energizeinc.com/how_to_volunteer_management/employeevolunteer_relations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT, POLICYMAKERS, AND NATIONAL VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

We recognize that governments, policymakers, and national volunteer organizations face substantial logistical, financial, and practical constraints to supporting volunteerism. However, given the immense value volunteers bring to our communities, we offer the following recommendations to promote volunteerism. These include providing core funding to volunteer organizations, tax credits to volunteers, and creating a centralized platform for accessing volunteer opportunities.



Opportunity 1: Provide Core Funding to Volunteer Organizations

- Non-profits are often dependent on grants to fund their operations and provide the important services they provide to Canadians. However, many of the costs that are essential to the provision of these services (e.g., administrative costs, program delivery) are not covered by project grants. Project funding is often insufficient to cover the administrative costs associated with the application process and reporting necessary to receive the funding.
 - Providing core funding would support the longevity and continuity of the programs and services.

Opportunity 2: Provide Volunteer Tax Credits

- Just as tax credits are offered to individuals who make charitable donations, volunteers mentioned that a tax credit for their hours of service would enable them to continue volunteering by alleviating some of the financial burden they experience from engaging in volunteer work (see opportunity #7 above on costs and incidentals).
 - Offer tax credits to volunteers and businesses who provide employer-supported volunteering opportunities – this may be a cost-effective way to sustain volunteering.

Opportunity 3: Create a Modern, Centralized Platform to Present Volunteer Opportunities

- Allow organizations to list opportunities and sort them based on interests, demographic information, and other identifying factors on a national level. This will streamline the process for volunteers searching for volunteer opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this report, we have aimed to provide recommendations for organizations, government, and policymakers to promote the recruitment and retention of volunteers. Our analysis, grounded in both quantitative and qualitative research, have identified a wide range of opportunities and strategies for optimizing volunteering.

Our recommendations emphasize the necessity of crafting detailed and transparent descriptions of volunteer roles, streamlining and clarifying volunteer-related documentation, incorporating flexibility in volunteer assignments, and ensuring the principles of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) are central to volunteer engagement strategies. Additionally, acknowledging and valuing the contributions of volunteers, alleviating financial and logistical barriers to participation, and nurturing positive social connections emerge as fundamental to enhancing volunteer engagement and retention.

For government, policymakers, and national volunteer organizations, we underscore the importance of providing core funding, offering volunteer tax credits, and developing a modern, centralized platform for volunteer opportunities as essential measures to support the sustainability and effectiveness of volunteer programs.

In summary, we advocate for a collaborative approach to the implementation of these recommendations, recognizing the shared responsibility of volunteer organizations, government bodies, and policymakers in ensuring the vitality and sustainability of volunteerism in Canada. By addressing the challenges identified and seizing the opportunities for improvement, we can strengthen Canadian communities and enrich the nation's social fabric. The collective action of all stakeholders is crucial in revitalizing volunteerism, thereby contributing to a more resilient, inclusive, and vibrant society.

