

2018 REPORT

Featuring innovations, research findings, discussion highlights and workshop tools from the November 7th, 2018 VECTor Conference for Volunteer Managers

Presented & compiled by

Volunteer Toronto



NTRODUCTION

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The 5th Annual VECTor Conference took place on November 7th, 2018 at the Yorkville Conference Centre, hosted by Volunteer Toronto. Seventy volunteer managers, coordinators and leaders came together to explore innovations and new research in the volunteer management sector. Through breakout discussions, mini-workshops, and networking opportunities, attendees explored shared challenges, new solutions and the next steps in enhancing volunteer engagement across Toronto. The ideas and insights from throughout the day, along with the resources from the afternoon workshops, are captured in this report.

Special Thanks

We at Volunteer Toronto wish to thank the attendees for their contributions, participation, and ideas during the VECTor Conference which will help benefit the volunteering sector. We also extend our thanks to presenters and staff for helping to make this VECTor Conference a big success. We encourage you to use these notes and highlights to improve your volunteer program and develop new promising practices.



Discussion Leaders/Workshop Presenters

Four excellent facilitators from Volunteer Toronto and other organizations brought discussions to life in the morning and afternoon breakout sessions.



Danielle Benton Volunteer Developer, West Neighbourhood House

Danielle is a passionate volunteer coordinator, facilitator, and trainer. Danielle is motivated by the potential to impact adult learning and organizational growth in community and volunteer programming within the social service, non-profit, and public sectors. Danielle has been working at West Neighbourhood House, a multiservice non-profit organization since 2015. Danielle is currently completing a Master's degree in Human Systems Intervention at Concordia University.



Sammy Feilchenfeld Training Specialist, Volunteer Toronto

Sammy provides on-site, on-demand, and online training for volunteer managers across Toronto and throughout Ontario. Trained as a high school educator, Sammy enjoys employing new educational technology in curriculum development and especially loves teaching and training professional learners in interactive settings. Sammy brings a wealth of knowledge from interactions with non-profit organizations and is a subject matter expert in volunteer legislation, policies, procedures, and diversity.



Iona Frost Manager of Community Engagement, Volunteer Toronto

lona is a community engagement professional with a decade of combined experience in non-profit, private, and public settings. Driven by her passion to support organizations that create positive and meaningful change, lona has worked on behalf of artists, women, newcomers, and youth. Prior to joining Volunteer Toronto, she led the education and outreach strategies for the Artists' Health Alliance and Times Change Women's Employment Service, developing programs focused on skills training, networking and poverty reduction.



Holly Procktor Coordinator, Volunteer Resource Management, Art Gallery of Ontario

Holly oversees the recruitment, orientation, training, support and recognition of 600+ volunteers; and also provides guidance, tools, and resources to a team of staff coordinators and a volunteer executive board.

INNOVATIONS IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT



Tracy Ford

Volunteer Coordinator,
Children's Aid Society of
Toronto

Growing Seed-funded Projects into Sustainable Programs using Volunteer Resources

Tracy is a creative thinker, envisioning innovative solutions to challenging issues facing non-profits and the people they serve. Some of the programs she has created for the CAS of Toronto include "Making the Most of Your Money," "Tuck Shop for Food," and "Story Time is Family Time."

Summary: By expanding beyond the number of volunteer hours or total volunteer numbers, robust data about volunteer resources can be collected to illustrate organizational and program impact. Ensuring all volunteer programs are aligned with the organization's mission and objectives are instrumental to collecting data on volunteer and client wellbeing, impact, success, and outcomes which can inform future program growth and sustainability. This kind of data should be collected by looking at volunteer performance, demand and added-value, which can provide insightful metrics and data-based story-telling.

Impact: Applying this data-informed approach can make it easier to apply for grants, showcasing how the impact of volunteer engagement can meet the program and funder objectives and increase sustainability. By assessing things like volunteer demand and the short-and long-term outcomes of volunteer work, CAS of Toronto was able to highlight the necessity of programs and the role volunteers play in maintaining and increasing capacity. For example, this data allowed them to identify where there were gaps in volunteer coverage (such as a food security project in the community) to focus energy on covering these gaps.





Jessica Pang-Parks Senior Specialist, Volunteer Engagement, Ontario, Heart & Stroke Foundation

Growing Seed-funded Projects into Sustainable Programs using Volunteer Resources

Jessica is a dynamic volunteer engagement professional whose portfolio with Heart & Stroke involves providing subject matter expertise for H&S employees. She implements volunteer stewardship and succession planning strategy in her role, and also serves as the 2018-2019 President of TAVA (Toronto Association for Volunteer Administration).

Summary: Heart & Stroke uses "Third Party Fundraising" to build ongoing affinity between community members and their cause, encouraging and empowering individuals to raise money for the organization. They have shifted their relationship with third party fundraisers from transactional, where the volunteers arranging fundraising events were considered donors, to relational, where these volunteers are celebrated and engaged as volunteers and ambassadors. These relationships turn fundraisers into community champions through stewardship and ongoing support.

Impact: Heart & Stroke found success by reaching and exceeding fundraising revenue goals and developing lifelong champions/supporters through these relationships. They found that building up leadership volunteers made their job easier down the road, as these leaders would help engage new volunteers. Through the support of staff, the fundraising volunteers felt like they had a deeper relationship, access to "Insider information" such as sneak peeks to the Annual Report, and could connect with other fundraising volunteers through unique volunteer appreciation. This welcomes volunteers to participate in a cycle of running their event while also feeling like a part of the Heart & Stroke team.



Finding Volunteer Champions

In this discussion group, participants explored the meaning of "volunteer champions" and what they bring to each organization. The discussion looked at the challenges that organizations face when relying on volunteer ambassadors, along with potential ideas to bring in new volunteer champions. Here are the takeways:

- » Each organization needs to define for themselves what a volunteer champion is and what they do or can do, such as being an ambassador or leading others
- » Get know your volunteers learn their motivations and enhance the potential for them to become champions
- » Some volunteers may have a sense of entitlement or identify themselves as champions even when they aren't – understand why these might feel this way and set clear boundaries for volunteers
- » When recruiting, acknowledge the potential for volunteers to become champions for your cause and bring the impact (and mission) front and centre
- » Setup a volunteer steering or advisory committee to create meaningful volunteer leadership roles that can shape future improvements to the volunteer program
- » Be aware of the impact of your workload and time constraints on stewarding volunteer champions – volunteers can help with this by leading training and assisting with volunteer engagement functions

Engaging Youth Ambassadors

In this discussion group, participants discussed the challenges and successes around finding amazing youth volunteers. The conversation explored the fresh ideas some organizations use to bring youth engagement to the forefront, while others use every opportunity to learn from youth when enhancing their program. Here are the takeaways:

- » When recruiting, focus on the skills potential youth volunteers can develop and practice in the role along with the passion they bring to the cause
- » Offer youth volunteers the same roles as any other volunteer give them responsibilities that ensure they take it seriously
- » Set up communication clearly with youth, using tools they are already familiar with like Facebook groups and text messages
- » Utilize a youth advisory committee to help shape youth programming and youth volunteering initiatives
- » Scale and adapt your volunteer training and orientation for youth to enhance interest and retention
- » Some youth volunteers may need help finding their passion, but once they feel motivated, you can guide them toward being ambassadors and lifelong volunteers
- » Consider offering life and career skills training as a benefit for youth volunteers, giving them another opportunity to prepare and learn for the post-school world

Getting a Seat at the Planning Table

In this discussion group, participants looked at where volunteer management "fits" in the structure of the organization, along with the voice of volunteer managers among leadership. The discussion explored the barriers and successes in getting a seat at the planning table to improve the volunteer program and all the organization's programs. Here are the takeways:

- » Get a sense of who you need to talk to and why: senior management and middle management can do different things
- » Look for your supporters, champions, advocates, and allies to get you to the planning table find someone who can then tell your story at the leadership table
- » Refocus your data to make your messaging clear and aligned with your goals, such as an increased recruitment or recognition budget
- » Overcome barriers to get what you're looking for by focusing on successes instead of issues, positioning the value of volunteers and acknowledging the real cost of engaging volunteers
- » Ensure staff and senior leadership know what it means to volunteer in your organization, including filling a volunteer role themselves
- » Build trust with your leadership team, develop your skills in working with management and remember that success is an ongoing process

Volunteers and Fundraising

In this discussion group, participants explored the role of all volunteers in fundraising, regardless of their responsibility. The discussion pondered whether every volunteer should be a fundraiser, and what would need to be in place to achieve this. Participants shared their challenges, barriers and successes to move the conversation forward. Here are the takeaways:

- » If all volunteers could be fundraisers, give them the right training, the correct messaging and the time to grow into that role
- » Volunteers are already practically and emotionally invested in your organization, they can increase your reach and open networks to enhance fundraising potential
- » Overcome capacity barriers by creating new opportunities that focus on fundraising, maximizing volunteer experiences and stories toward celebrating your organizations success
- » Keep messaging consistent, whether from a fundraising staff-member or a committee, and use the right tools to communicate with volunteers and potential donors
- » Integrate a good Client Relationship Management (CRM) tool to connect with volunteers and donors together, also allowing you to keep track of volunteer fundraising across departments
- » Consider the ethical ramifications of asking volunteers who are already donating their time to also fundraise and support the financial needs of the organization

RESEARCH IN VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT



Heather Johnson Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, Canadian Cancer Society

Volunteers in the Media: Gender, Emotional Labour and Language

Heather has been working within the non-profit sector since 2000 and in her current role is responsible for the engagement of leadership volunteers for many programs and campaigns available to Canadians fighting cancer in east-central Ontario.

Summary: Heather conducted a critical discourse analysis of media representations of volunteering, in which she found patterns in the language and imagery promoting gender segregation of volunteer roles and the division of emotional labour based on societal stereotypes. Her findings reveal insights towards reducing gender segregation and improving awareness of emotional labour obligations through deliberate language to increase the significance of volunteer contributions.

Research Questions

- 1. How does descriptive language and imagery contribute to the continued gendering of roles and/or the perpetuation of gender stereotypes?
- 2. How does the lack of gender equality contribute to the scarcity of acknowledgement of the emotional labour investment by volunteers?

Findings: Gendered language sometimes appears in the style of language selected to describe volunteer work in position descriptions. This speech is often feminine-coded speech employing terms such as patience, empathy, friendly, and welcoming. Volunteer roles are occasionally promoted as support roles and societal norms and expectations place responsibility for support roles onto the shoulders of women.

Emotional labour is the process of managing feelings and expressions to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job. Emotional labour is coded into volunteer roles as feminine, and can include: enthusiasm; being sensitive to people's needs; supporting clients' emotional, physical, and spiritual needs; being friendly, welcoming, warm, and supportive. Often, organizations do not make it clear in their recruitment language the extent of the emotional labour a volunteer may have to do.

Takeaways: Understand that the gendering of communication materials and the lack of disclosure about the emotional investment required by volunteers is not intentional. It reflects how difficult it is to unlearn societal stereotypes pertaining to gender and emotional labour. Things you can do:

- » Be aware of how language and imagery choices gender communications materials and select as many neutral terms as possible
- » Address the emotional labour expectations in volunteer roles and incorporate this information into recruitment and onboarding practices
- » When others create materials about your organization, program, and volunteers, review and edit to reduce language and imagery which reinforce gender stereotypes



Kasandra James Project Coordinator, Training Services, Volunteer Toronto

Recruitment: The #1 Volunteer Management Challenge Across Ontario

Kasandra has worked with Volunteer Toronto in multiple capacities, including providing volunteer management support and advice to over 650 non-profits across the city. In her current role, she delivers training for specific non-profit sub-sectors to overcome volunteer management issues.

Summary: As part of the Specialized Volunteer Management Training project, Volunteer Toronto sought to understand the volunteer management issues and challenges within five sub-sectors: mentoring programs, long-term care homes and hospice programs, festivals and fairs, hospital programs and associations, and sports leagues and associations. Through a province-wide survey, phone interviews with provincial associations and case study interviews, Volunteer Toronto found volunteer recruitment was the most common challenge among volunteer managers.

Research Questions

During the Needs Assessment phase of the project, Volunteer Toronto sought to:

- 1. Determine the biggest challenge faced by volunteer managers
- 2. Find out who is usually in the volunteer manager role, along with their responsibilities
- 3. Define sector-specific needs and challenges through open-ended questions

Findings:

- » The biggest challenge faced by volunteer managers is recruitment, ranging from two-thirds of respondents to 100% of respondents
- » In every case, recruitment is a primary responsibility for volunteer managers
- » Half or more volunteer managers across sub-sectors are staff, except in sports leagues and associations when they are overwhelmingly volunteers

Through interviews and case study conversations, we learned that organizations:

- » Have difficulty defining specific, attractive volunteer roles
- » Find youth volunteers hard to relate to
- » Have difficulty finding volunteers to fit the program structure and/or timelines
- » See volunteer support becoming more time-limited
- » Are impacted by the location of the role or facility in terms of volunteer availability
- » Are seeing decreases in motivation for ongoing commitments

Takeaways: Volunteer Toronto has identified the importance of core volunteer management training to help improve volunteer retention and increase the efficacy of recruitment to meet volunteer program needs. The primary challenges around recruitment are:

- 1. Short-term volunteering is a growing, popular trend
- 2. Volunteers feel disconnected between events, causing them to lose motivation
- **3.** Rural challenges around motivation, location of volunteer work and finding the right fit are just as important in urban settings

MINI-WORKSHOPS AND WORKSHEETS

Supporting Emotional Labour

In this workshop, participants dove deep into the role of emotional labour in volunteering. Highlights of the workshop are detailed below, followed by the worksheet participants worked through together.

The impact of emotional labour can be felt in a few different ways:

- » **Volunteer burnout** this manifests as exhaustion, cynicism or even just an overall decrease in work, such as not showing up or showing up late
- » Compassion fatigue "caring too much" and not having any care left to give, stemming from taking on the pain, troubles or challenges of others, and while not necessarily solving them, trying to ease the pain of too many, which can happen to volunteers who might have a relationship with a client who passes away
- » Vicarious trauma this is experiencing, re-living and/or taking on the trauma others have experienced; many clients in non-profits have experienced different life events, trauma, and/or stigma, and volunteers helping them (in all sorts of settings) might take on those experiences and subconsciously internalize them

There are a few different support systems you can use to help volunteers succeed:

- » Burnout supports offering volunteers time off, a change in roles, a change of shift, or some other opportunity to get a break from their existing work
- » **Buddy system** spreading some of the emotional labour among more volunteers, or even inviting volunteers to work together in the role
- » Assistance Program some organizations offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which can include a website, app and/or phone line for employees to get support; some insurance providers will allow you to extend this to volunteers as well
- » **Partnerships** you could explore working with service providers that can provide counselling, debriefing, self-care programs and other mental health supports for your volunteers; these will often have a cost but it'll be worth it to cover this cost to ensure your volunteers are successful
- » Self-care support introduce a variety of programs that support self-care and are open to volunteers, like yoga or movement classes, a quiet space in your facility, a "talking room" and materials that could be lent out to help with relaxation, like an herbal infuser

Supporting Emotional Labour Chart

Use this chart to list the roles and role types, the types of emotional labour risks you can expect, and what you can do (right now, or in the future) to help support these volunteers.

ROLE OR ROLE TYPE	EMOTIONAL LABOUR RISKS	SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION
Write specific roles or role types at risk of intense emotional labour	Consider risks of vicarious trauma, burnout and/or compassion fatigue	Think of supports you can use to help the volunteer and how you might implement them

Language in Volunteer Roles

In this workshop, participants explored the role of intentionally and unintentionally gendered language in volunteer positions. Highlights of the workshop are detailed below, followed by the worksheet participants worked through together.

In your role planning, look for these areas when avoiding gendered language:

- » Writing style sometimes, the way a posting is written can speak to pre-conceived notions of gender, such as a focus on empathy (care-giving) over authority (decision-making)
- » **Default pronouns** in some cases, position descriptions will use default pronouns, such as "the volunteer in this role will be involved with...she will do the following..." etc., whenever possible, this can be made neutral to avoid any references to a certain gender identity
- » Generalizing on motivations volunteer motivation data indicates women are more often driven to volunteer because they care about the cause and men are more often motivated to use skills and experiences, either way you want to provide general motivation areas for your roles, talking about the benefits of volunteering in the role
- » Limiting potential/opportunity avoid having someone specific in mind when you create a posting; for example, you might be looking for drivers in a specific program, and for whatever reason you mostly have male drivers, could you also change the language around "are you a great driver who wants to learn more about the city?"

When considering ways to evaluate the language of volunteer roles, are you using language that might attract or assume certain people are better suited to do the role than others? Are you speaking to the skills needed directly or are we simply talking about expectations?

When introducing more neutral language, think about how volunteers might self-screen themselves if there is a clear, concise, and neutral role description that focuses on the work the volunteer will do. Ideally, you want to try to disconnect the abilities from the volunteer's identity. It's ok if the abilities and identities are linked, your goal overall is to focus on those abilities first and foremost and try to attract every potential volunteer to the role.



Language Chart Tool

Use this chart to identify whether you think the term is masculine-coded (M), feminine-coded (F), or neither/both (X). Check out the Gender Decoder (gender-decoder.katmatfield.com) to find out the answers, and then come up with alternates or neutral terms for each option.

TERM	M/F/X	ALTERNATE(S)	TERM	M/F/X	ALTERNATE(S)
Assertive			Principled		
Agreeable			Reckless		
Driven			Communal		
Impulsive			Empathetic		
Honest			Gentle		
Interpersonal			Defensive		
Loyal			Objective		
Trusting			Persistent		
Opinionated			Leadership		
Logical			Sensitive		

List from the <u>Gender Decoder</u> and research by D. Guacher, J. Friesen and A. C. Kay, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, July 2011

Keeping Volunteers Connected

In this workshop, participants shared and discussed the tools to keep volunteers connected between events. Highlights of the workshop are detailed below, followed by the worksheet participants worked through together.

Whether your event is a single day or a week-long festival, you want to ensure your volunteers are having the best possible experience. This starts with effective training and, through the event, relies on good support systems. After the event or festival, be sure to celebrate your volunteers on the day and through meaningful ways afterward. Once your volunteers have had a positive experience with your event, there are a few opportunities to keep them connected:

- » **Every opportunity** letting volunteers know about ALL opportunities could transition an event volunteer to a program volunteer
- » **Year-round recognition** including event volunteers in recognition year-round (instead of just around the event) can help the volunteer feel a closer, valued connection to the organization
- » **Informal gatherings** bringing volunteers together informally at different times of the year can allow them to build social connections that can be enhanced at and between events
- Reaching out finding the best way to communicate with volunteers and using a variety of methods
 phone, text, e-mail, social media, and more to ensure volunteers don't forget about you
- » **Partners** partnering with other organizations to recommend your most committed volunteers, creating new opportunities

Volunteers are motivated for all sorts of reasons, and for events it could be anything including a personal connection to the cause, generally wanting to give back, using or developing a skill, or even meeting new people. Motivation plays a big role in what keeps volunteers coming back – and those motivations can also change!

When staying connected with volunteers, you want to use these motivations to your advantage – find out what motivates volunteers and celebrate those motivations in your communication and connections. This can help you increase your retention and decrease your need for recruitment since great volunteers keep coming back. For example, for volunteers with social motivations, host informal events, or have them help plan these events, throughout the year to bring volunteers together. Or if volunteers really want to give back to the cause, let them know all the other ways – from volunteering to supporting a food or clothing drive to donating to volunteering for other similar organizations.

Strategies to Stay Connected

Use this chart to identify how you'll use different communication and connection methods with your event volunteers and the tools you will need to be successful. For instance, you might use e-mail for a newsletter and a use a tool like Mailchimp to make it easier.

METHOD	HOW WILL YOU USE IT?	WHAT TOOLS WILL YOU NEED?
E-mail		
Informal event/in-		
person		
Social media		
Text message		
or phone call		

Transforming Roles into Short-Term Opportunities

In this workshop, participants explored tools and tips for meeting the growing interest in short-term volunteer roles. Highlights of the workshop are detailed below, followed by the worksheet participants worked through together.

When adapting your volunteer roles for short-term opportunities, consider the risk in the role. Risk is about the role and not about the volunteer in the role. This means when you assess the level of risk, you're focusing on the role itself and taking any potential volunteering individual out of the equation. Think about the following:

- » Who is at risk in the volunteer activity? Such as the client, the volunteer, the organization
- Where does the activity take place? Is there risk related to the location, the supervision (or lack there-of), the time of day
- » What is the volunteer activity? Is there risk involved with the work the volunteer will do, such as one-to-one client support, handling sensitive data, etc.
- » What does supervision look like? How will oversight affect risk and the client-volunteer relationship?

After you've answered these questions and taken a good look at the role of risk management, you can assess the necessary aspects of planning for a role to be short-term instead of long-term:

- » How much training is needed are you willing to devote a lot of time to train a volunteer who is short-term?
- » How long should a relationship be for success this has to do with how a program has been run in the past, so if there needs to be a client-volunteer relationship (and trust) built, can this be done in a shorter time period?
- » What impact will high turnover have would you need invest more of your time to manage aspects of the program if lots of volunteers come and go?
- » **How will you structure support** how will you provide support for short-term volunteers, especially if you have many doing the work at once?

Adapting your role involves looking at the components of the role and altering the structures for shorter-term opportunities. You can also pre-define a time limit (such as a couple weeks or months) or even a set number of hours (100 hours, 40 hours). You're also going to decide how supervision will work and also determine structures for evaluation. Overall, you're looking at the work the volunteer role normally completes on an ongoing basis and determining how this might look within a pre-set short-term role structure.

Using a friendly vistor role as an example, the duties of the role might change to a more casual friendly visiting program, without scheduled drop-ins on a weekly basis and more on a basis of when the volunteer and client have a time that makes sense, or it could be a group of volunteers coming together to play a board game or help with a project with the client or clients. For the responsibilities, maybe the paperwork stays the same but other aspects of the role, such as group meetings, might be restructured. Finally, oversight would be altered as there may be less time to build the bond between the client and volunteer, meaning supervision may need to be a higher priority. As you can see from this example, it may not always be possible to make changes to a role to allow it to be suitable for short-term volunteering.

Transforming Roles Chart

Using this chart, choose a role to transform and list the specific elements of the existing role and how those may need to be changed for short-term roles. For example, the screening for a longer-term role might be more intensive and have multiple steps – but for a short-term version of this role, you may have to limit to one in-person interview if the risk level is appropriate.

Role title:

Brief description:

EXISTING ROLE	SHORT-TERM ROLE CHANGES
Planning	
Position description	
Screening	
Orientation/training	
First shift	
Supervision	
Recognition	

THANK YOU

volunteertoronto.ca

344 Bloor Street West, Suite 404 Toronto, Ontario M5S 3A7

416-961-6888 info@volunteertoronto.ca

Compiled by Sammy Feilchenfeld December 2018

