



2016 REPORT

Presentation topics, research findings, Discussion Group ideas and tools from the November 2nd, 2016 VECTor Conference for Volunteer Managers in Toronto

Presented & compiled by
Volunteer
Toronto



INTRODUCTION

On November 2, 2016, 50 volunteer managers, coordinators and leaders attended the 3rd VECTor Conference at Kensington Gardens, hosted by Volunteer Toronto. The Conference provided opportunities for discussion, learning, and relationship-building among organizations. This report is based on the feedback, findings and ideas of our speakers as well as all attendees. We at Volunteer Toronto thank the attendees for their contributions and look forward to working with the ideas presented to create meaningful tools for the voluntary sector. We also encourage you to look to these contributions and make changes to improve your own volunteer program and help move the sector's best and promising practices forward.

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Special Thanks

Volunteer Toronto would like to thank Kensington Gardens for hosting the 3rd VECTor Conference, all presenters & Discussion Leaders for their insights and facilitation skills, attendees for their participation and all members of the Conference Planning Team for coordinating a well-planned and executed Conference. This report would not be possible without your efforts.

Compiled by Sammy Feilchenfeld
December 2016, Volunteer Toronto

MORNING PROGRAM

Innovations in Volunteer Management

VECTor featured representatives from three organizations addressing the innovations in place in their volunteer programs that have resulted in improvements and increased capacity for the organization, and positive impact for the volunteers.

Innovation: Volunteer & Leadership Program with Life & Career Skills Training

The Neighbourhood Centre, a community organization in Toronto's east end that primarily serves a large newcomer population, runs a Volunteer & Leadership Program designed to enhance volunteers' life and career skills. The components of the program include training, mentorship, and volunteer-led projects. The training series is in high demand, and the capacity of the program is growing with past volunteers taking on the trainer role. Attendees to the training are often new to Canada (80% in Canada less than 5 years) and unemployed (75% of attendees).



Presenter:

Rejwan Karim
Interim Executive Director,
The Neighbourhood Centre

Impact: The program (and especially the training component) led to skills development for volunteer growth and potential employment, along with gaining Canadian work experience, expanding leadership capacity, reducing isolation of participants and improving overall well-being.



**Presenter:**

Elena Dumitru
SW Ontario & GTA
Regional Activism
Coordinator,
Amnesty International
Canada

Innovation: Application of the Networked Leadership "Snowflake" Model

The Snowflake Model of networked leadership has helped Amnesty volunteers deal with issues and challenges as a team, rather than having to defer to a single leader. The model focuses on building volunteer capacity and developing multiple leaders, increasing retention of volunteers. Amnesty uses the model to develop and maintain programs and to encourage youth and student engagement as volunteers and leaders.

Impact: By working with local and youth organizers, Amnesty is able to extend its capacity through the leadership of volunteers. This model encourages the development of skill sets in individuals so that volunteers can become leaders when previous volunteer leaders move on, allowing for seamless continuation of programs without negatively impacting clients due to changes in service or leadership.

**Presenter:**

Donna Morrison
Acting General Manager,
Volunteer Development
YMCA of Greater Toronto

Innovation: Two youth-led initiatives guiding the YMCA's program & volunteer development

Research shows that youth engagement becomes successful when youth have a voice and a positive adult ally. Because of this, the YMCA created a Teen Leadership Council and Youth Advisory Committee to the Board of Directors. The Teen Leadership Council encourages youth to become influential citizens and provides an opportunity to give back and shape the YMCA's volunteer program. The Advisory Committee supports the Board, participates in committees, and provides a youth voice to guide the YMCA in meeting its mission (and ensuring youth are given the right to have a say in the programs that affect them).

Impact: Adults behave differently when youth are in the room, listening to and acknowledging the voice and perspective of youth. New volunteer-led youth opportunities help give youth a sense of career direction. The Board and program planners appreciate and respect youth ideas in their planning.



Spreading Innovations Across the Sector

How can organizations focus on the needs & motivations of volunteers to create more robust programs that benefit the volunteers, the organization and the community?



Discussion Leader:

Aleksandra Vasic
Volunteer & Special
Projects Coordinator,
YWCA Toronto

Volunteer managers can centre the needs of volunteers by getting to know the volunteer as a whole person and staying in contact throughout the cycle of engagement. Using multiple channels and forms of communication and gathering feedback (including surveys, focus groups, informal conversations and feedback from clients & staff) can help volunteer managers determine what volunteers want and need to have a fulfilling and beneficial experience.

When taking this approach in a volunteer program, it's important to think about how to:

- Use the right tools (surveys, focus groups)
- Ask the right questions
- Find time & resources to make it happen
- Create a culture that supports feedback
- Find strategies to deal with challenges like low response rates, language barriers, lack of computers, and sparking discussions when people don't seem to want to talk

Solutions and strategies to consider:

- Use in-person, paper and online methods to collect information (lots of different opportunities to participate)
- Use an anonymous, public post-it board for feedback, both positive and negative
- Give staff the opportunity to recommend leaders and provide their feedback on volunteers
- Host informal networking sessions with volunteers before their shifts to allow them to connect (with each other and with you) and give feedback
- Avoid typecasting of volunteers – get to know them and their skills and motivations
- Remember the mission when meeting volunteer needs
- Encourage more diverse volunteer recognition that can serve more volunteers and their motivations
- Share success stories to show positive examples and role-modelling

"Feedback Methods & Understanding Feedback" can be found on page 17



Discussion Leader:
Kelly DeVries
Community Engagement
Coordinator, Volunteer
Toronto

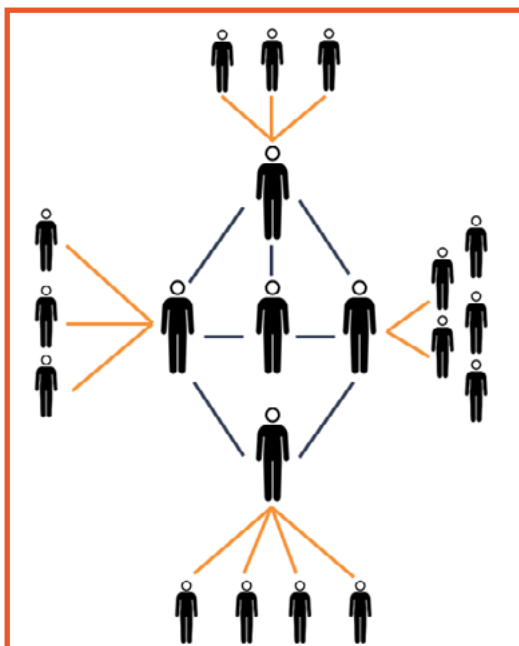
Based on the models presented in the first session, what changes can you make to improve your own programs right now?

Snowflake Model Guidelines:

The Snowflake Model can be used in volunteer programs as a way of building leadership, ownership and sustainability – this focusses on and recognizes the existing attributes of volunteers and strengths within the organization. The model relies on a networked leadership approach to leverage individual skills and support the program goals. Here are some guidelines that can be applied to any volunteer program:

- Establish a concrete goal – the snowflake can't be your whole program, but it can meet a specific need or drive a program
- Ask what volunteers want to do, want to achieve
- Centre the snowflake around a cause (cause-based volunteering) but lead it using volunteer skills
- Connect to your organization's mission
- Establish a clear process of communication between everyone in the snowflake (how hub leaders talk to main leaders, etc.)
- Create a group that works
- Provide leadership training and mentorship
- Allow for (and provide) feedback
- Determine ways to link snowflakes/ programs, such as regional or satellite-office connetions
- Volunteers can support the recruitment & selection process as part of their role

Building your own Snowflake requires knowledge of your volunteers' skills and the kind of work they want to do with your organization. Include this in screening and you could easily develop a network of leaders to give your snowflake shape on a regional, provincial or even national level. The model encourages leaders to guide the development of future leaders and continuously support each other – plus it prepares for attrition by preparing new leaders to fill in gaps.



Snowflake Leadership Model – connected leaders around the Volunteer Manager with a variety of skills & foci (such as social media, event planning), each supervising and working with different teams of volunteers

**Discussion Leader:**

Heather Johnson
 Manager, Volunteer
 Programs & Human
 Resources, Dixon Hall
 Neighbourhood Services

*"How to Host a focus
 Group" can be found
 on page 18*

How can organizations champion the ideas of volunteers & create opportunities to make changes and guide the creation of innovations?

Championing volunteer ideas starts with a shift in organizational culture and improved relationships between staff, volunteers and the volunteer resources department. While multi-site organizations (and some large organizations) struggle to create a cohesive process for communicating with the volunteer department, shifting focus to an asset-based approach to volunteering can improve communications and allow for volunteers to present their own ideas that can effect change.

Here are suggestions to help make the required shift in organizational culture:

- Communication between staff and the volunteer program:
 - ↳ Build better bridges between staff and the volunteer department by improving communication and getting more staff "on-board" with volunteers and how the volunteer department works
 - ↳ Establish guidelines for staff delegation to volunteers – should it go through the volunteer department or specific volunteer manager? Should there be a system in place to ensure volunteers aren't overwhelmed and can provide feedback?
 - ↳ Hold focus groups to get a sense of staff and volunteer perceptions of communication, delegation and volunteer recruitment; talk about ways to utilize volunteer ideas across the organization
- Volunteer skills utilization & development:
 - ↳ Create opportunities for volunteers to take ownership of programs they're involved in (taking leadership roles, leading training or orientation)
 - ↳ Volunteers are aware that their ideas and suggestions are welcome and will be considered, and that this input is a positive, valuable contribution to the organization
 - ↳ Understand and capitalize on the skills volunteers already have – this can help staff see the real value in volunteers
 - ↳ Provide better feedback opportunities for volunteers, and act on feedback when possible (use surveys, one-on-one conversations, a volunteer blog)
 - ↳ Create mentorship opportunities for longer-serving volunteers to pass on skills and knowledge to new volunteers, provide training and "train-the-trainers"

By understanding the value of volunteers (and valuing their feedback and skills), organizations can build capacity together. The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement is a useful tool to "sell" the value of volunteerism to senior leadership. Organizations can begin to consider volunteers as team members & partners ("not just extra bodies").

AFTERNOON PROGRAM

Research in Volunteer Management: Mandatory Community Service

In the afternoon session, Volunteer Toronto staff shared the findings of research conducted by the organization for the Conference. This research focused on Mandatory Community Service in the form of high school 40-hour community service requirements and Community Service Orders or Court Ordered Service as sentencing alternative.

Research: High School Student 40-Hour Program

The 40-hour program was created in 1999 by the Ministry of Education to encourage students to develop civic responsibility. All high school students must perform 40 hours of community service in order to graduate, making youth volunteers an important (and abundant) resource for the voluntary sector.

Volunteer Toronto sought to determine:

1. Whether the majority of youth volunteers were only seeking 40 hours to fulfill their requirement or whether they continue to volunteer beyond that point;
2. The goals & motivations of youth volunteers beyond the 40 hour requirement; and
3. What organizations can do to engage youth most effectively, during their 40 hours and beyond.

Research Method: Youth Auditor Focus Group

Volunteer Toronto's Youth Auditors are a group of 12+ high school students that review organizations' youth volunteer initiatives and provide recommendations to make the programs more youth-friendly. A Focus Group was held in October 2016 to get perspectives on the 40 hour program and address Volunteer Toronto's three main questions.

Unique Experiences

The participants cited that they each had unique experiences with the 40 hour program in schools in terms of structures (reporting systems), enforcement (expectations of annual hours, reward systems) and regulation (differences of what is considered acceptable). This means that youth are coming to volunteer programs with varying levels of support and information from their schools, and that their attitude towards volunteering is likely being influenced by their school's approach to the program.



Presenter:

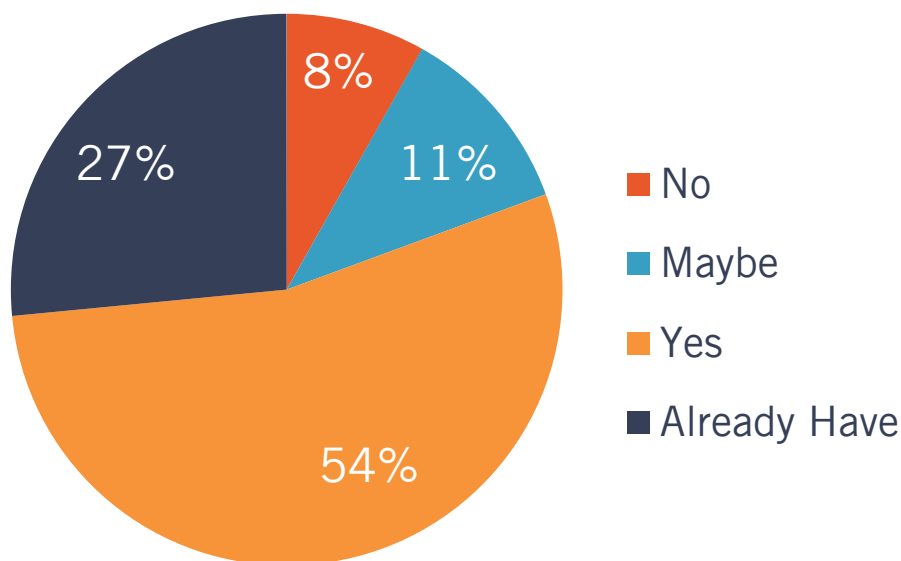
Kasandra James
Subscriptions Coordinator
& Youth Audit Lead,
Volunteer Toronto

	What makes the Youth Auditors such “super” volunteers?	What can organizations do to engage youth for and beyond 40 hours?
Impact	Knowing & understanding the impact of their work	Express appreciation, give the role a title, offer milestone incentives
Enjoyment	Having fun, socializing and doing work they like	Build community, provide snacks, have group opportunities
Development	Getting to learn new things, building job skills & resumes	Provide mentorship, promotions, exposure to different skills
Opportunity	Being exposed to a variety of organizations & opportunities	Create shifts that work for high school students

Research Method: Youth Expo Survey

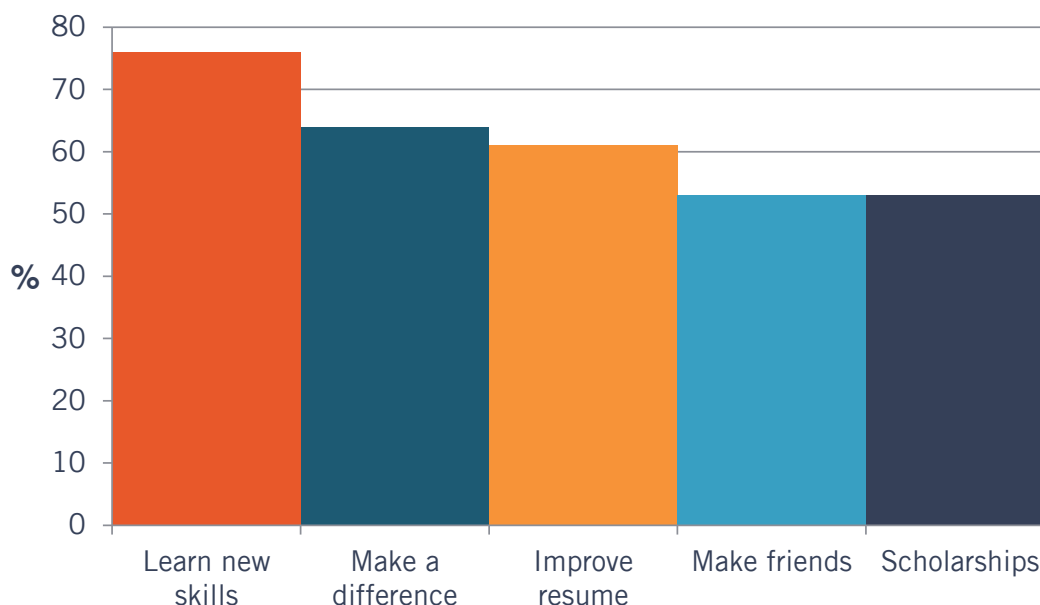
At the October 2016 Volunteer Toronto Youth Expo, over 1300 attendees spoke with organizations about youth volunteer roles. 98 youth completed a short survey about their experience.

Table 1 – Do you plan on going over & above the 40 hour requirement?



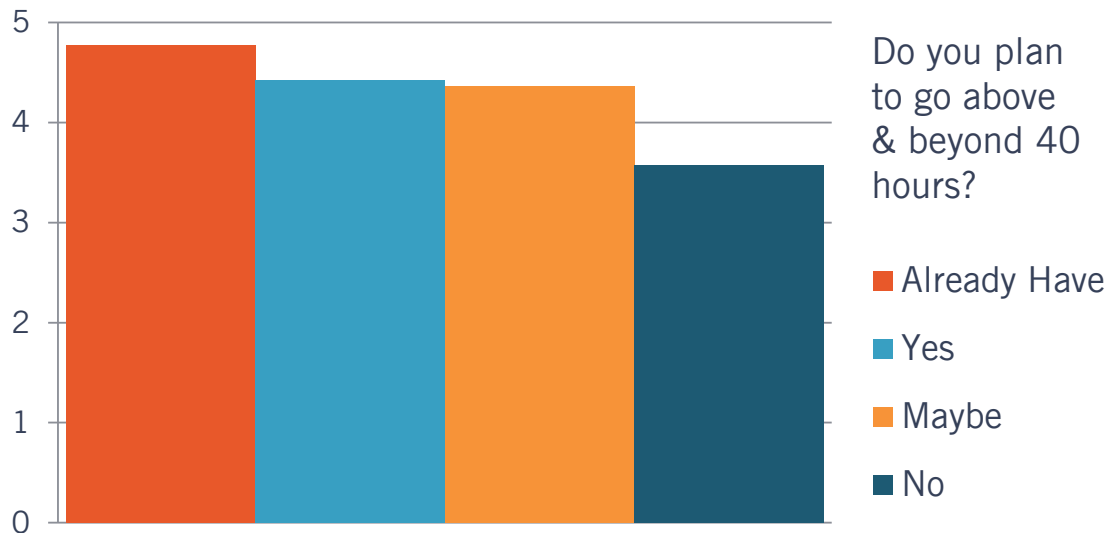
Over 80% of respondents either wish to or did go over & above.

Table 2 - What do you hope to gain from volunteering?



The vast majority of respondents selected multiple motivations, and only 4 people said that their only reason was to get their 40 hours.

Table 3 - Do you think you will benefit from volunteering, beyond fulfilling the graduation requirement? (1 not at all/5 absolutely)



Youth who believe they will benefit more, personally, from volunteering are more likely to go beyond the 40 hour requirement.

Additional resources can be found on page 21

Summary

- Youth volunteers aren't just out to get 40 hours, but they are motivated by practical concerns.
- Youth want a learning experience. Help them gain skills, explore career options, and build their portfolio.
- Focus on impact, make volunteering fun, and make volunteering accessible for youth.



Research: Court Ordered Community Service

A Community Service Order is a form of alternative, constructive sentencing that is less costly and punitive than incarceration. It is often ordered for first-time offenders and usually non-violent charges. The Ministry of Community Safety & Correctional Services notes that individuals could receive a CSO if the offence has no minimum term of imprisonment under the law. In cases when this isn't a first offence it's less likely that someone will receive this kind of sentencing.

Despite the intended benefits, CSOs can be a challenge to complete.

Volunteer Toronto sought to determine:

1. What barriers people with CSOs were facing when trying to find positions; and
2. How those barriers could be reduced.

Research Method: Telephone Interviews

Volunteer Toronto completed 9 brief telephone interviews with people who have completed (or are currently completing) CSOs. In addition, we completed 10 short interviews with volunteer managers to learn more about why they may not engage people completing CSOs.

A content analysis was conducted to identify common themes across all interviews with people with CSOs. Three common challenges were identified:

1. Conflicts with work schedule

Many roles take place during regular office hours while people with CSOs may have full-time or multiple part-time jobs and could risk losing jobs to compete hours.

"I had to take time off work to get my hours. I ended up losing one job as a result."

-Interview participant

2. Don't know where to start

When sentenced, very little information is given by the courts; very few programs ([Salvation Army](#), [Springboard](#), [Elizabeth Fry](#)) to match; left on their own to find roles.

3. Expectations of non-profits

Lack of information leads to inadvertent bias or fear around individuals with CSOs.

"One time I just said that it was a court ordered requirement, and they said no without saying why... I called back another day but this time didn't say anything about court ordered and then got the volunteer job."

-Interview participant

"At first I thought it would be very difficult, given the reason for wanting the hours. But once I contacted the organization and realized they were open to the idea, it was easier than I thought."

-Interview participant

Although experiences contacting non-profits to complete CSOs were mixed, there is reason to believe that some bias against engaging people with CSOs exists. For example, using Volunteer Toronto's website, only 4% of posted volunteer roles were listed as "suitable for volunteers with Community Service Orders" (See below).



To learn more about the reasons non-profits don't engage people completing CSOs, we conducted 10 more telephone interviews with randomly selected volunteer managers who posted positions on Volunteer Toronto's website and indicated that they were not suitable for CSOs.

Another content analysis revealed three common reasons for not advertising positions as suitable for CSOs:

1. Lack of information

Many of the volunteer managers who were interviewed don't know what court ordered volunteer hours are. Most had heard of court ordered community service, but several didn't know it could be part of their regular volunteer program.

2. Special conditions of CSOs

Many volunteer managers believe there may be many requirements for engaging CSOs that don't apply to other volunteers, making the process more complicated and requiring special expertise. In fact, the special requirements are generally quite simple: the need track the number of community service hours completed, and provide proof of completion (generally a letter).

3. Motivation concerns

Many volunteer managers were worried about engaging people who didn't want to be volunteering. Since they are required to perform the community service hours, rather than freely volunteering their time, volunteer managers worry that they won't be as committed as other volunteers with more altruistic motivations.

Summary

- People trying to complete CSOs have a difficult time finding positions, largely because they don't know where to start and they can't find positions that fit with their schedules.
- Although people completing CSOs sometimes encounter prejudice when looking for positions, often they find that volunteer managers are open to engaging them when asked directly.
- Volunteer managers may be hesitant to actively recruit people completing CSOs, because they don't know enough about the program and its requirements, and because they have concerns about the motivations of people who are forced to "volunteer".

Community Service Orders (CSOs) - Frequently Asked Questions

What are Community Service Orders?

CSOs are a form of alternative sentencing designed to be less costly and punitive, providing an opportunity for individuals to develop pro-social behaviour. It's considered a form of "diversion" sentencing.

"CSO is a court ordered sanction that directs a probationer or conditional sentence offender to perform a specific number of hours of community service work within a specified time period not exceeding 240 hours. Upon sentencing, the Judge will specify the number of hours to be completed on the Probation Order or Conditional Sentence." From St. Leonard's Community Services

Who might get a Community Service Order?

Individuals who receive CSOs are often first-time offenders involved in a non-violent crime. While this isn't the case for all individuals with CSOs, it is usually determined under these circumstances. Since a CSO is an alternative to incarceration, the associated crimes are usually less severe.

How do I engage volunteers with CSOs?

You should acknowledge the risk factor of all your volunteer roles, regardless of the potential volunteers in them. If you require police reference checks or vulnerable sector screenings for a role, then an individual with a CSO applying to the role would have the same requirement. You're not required to know what caused their court order, but you may need to know the number of hours they need to complete to satisfy the order.

What can I do to show volunteers with CSOs that our program is right for them?

- Ask if a potential volunteer has a specific number of hours to complete
- Have roles associated with specific project lengths that have a consistent number of hours
- Acknowledge that all potential volunteers are welcome to apply, regardless of their motivation
- Explicitly invite volunteers with CSOs to apply to applicable roles
- Ensure screening of all volunteers only asks for relevant information related to the role

Practical Applications of Research Findings

How can organizations meet their needs by engaging individuals with mandatory volunteer requirements?



Discussion Leader:

Kelly DeVries

Community Engagement
Coordinator, Volunteer
Toronto

To meet the needs of volunteers with mandatory requirements and the needs of the organizations, volunteer managers need to be creative, utilizing a variety of methods that can also support leadership needs.

First, volunteer managers must assess the needs of their own organization and department. This is a good time to think creatively about things like administrative work & paperwork, long-term projects, research and other dream projects.

Volunteer managers can explore short-term options for allowing a set number of hours to be met, including special events, fundraising campaigns, research projects and advisory councils/committees. Organizations can meet needs in different ways (such as clients becoming volunteers using their skills), allow for virtual volunteering, or be ready with admin projects that can be completed at any time. Volunteer programs can create partnerships and hold special projects to meet hour requirements and even use volunteers as trainers, mentors and leaders for other volunteers.

Suggestions for meeting the needs of the organization & the individuals with mandatory community service requirements:

- Being flexible with hours
- Creating evening/afternoon shifts that are shorter (for youth volunteers)
- Engaging volunteers as educators about Community Service Orders
- Newsletters to keep volunteers connected and know what's going on
- Flexible self-selection scheduling (if the option exists)
- Providing leadership, professional development & training certificates
- Sharing the impact of volunteer work
- Engaging youth and CSOs to have leadership roles in councils/committees

"Engaging Short-Term Volunteers" can be found on page 19





What part do organizations play in making youth life-long volunteers?

By focusing on engaging and thanking not only the youth themselves, but also their support group (friends and family), and by developing growth opportunities for youth, organizations can help transition 40-hour volunteers into lifelong volunteers.

Showcasing the value of long-term volunteering to youth:

- Including appropriate language from the start in position description
- Telling youth the skills they'll learn/gain
- Mentoring youth into leadership roles
- Sharing volunteers with other organizations (acknowledging that life-long volunteer doesn't necessarily mean life-long at your organization)
- Creating safer spaces for youth to engage, connect and give back (and provide feedback)
- Provide youth with resume-ready language about their activities which can be used to articulate their skills & abilities used and/or learned

Strategies:

- Develop flexibility to accommodate student schedules – projects and programs that operate after school, on breaks, time-limited based on availability such as summer break or semesters
- Engaging support systems to share the value of volunteering – providing thank you cards to volunteers' teachers, family members, friends ("Thanks for sharing volunteer with us, thanks to them we were able to make an impact")
- Talk about continuing as a volunteer early – start communicating that volunteering exists after 40 hours, after the project, or even after your organization
- Develop professional development/life & career skills training that can be supported by current and past volunteers – build a mentorship program to help grow youth connection with volunteerism

"Thanking Volunteer Support Systems" can be found on page 21

"Planning a Mentorship Program" can be found on page 22





Discussion Leader:
Aleksandra Vasic
Volunteer & Special
Projects Coordinator,
YWCA Toronto

What can organizations do to be more prepared and willing to take on court-ordered volunteers?

Organizations should clear up the lack of information and misconceptions around Community Service Orders (CSOs) and understand the social responsibility of the voluntary sector to change attitudes and engage CSOs by promoting success stories, ensuring roles that are suitable for CSOs and having access to accurate information.

A lot of the challenges around volunteers with CSOs have to do with a lack of information; what do organizations need to know that can help them embrace and advocate for these volunteers? Policies can be created to specifically address the engagement of volunteers with CSOs (including what kinds of roles they can do). With more information, CSOs can be actively recruited without the stigma. Organizations should share and celebrate success stories of volunteers with CSOs.

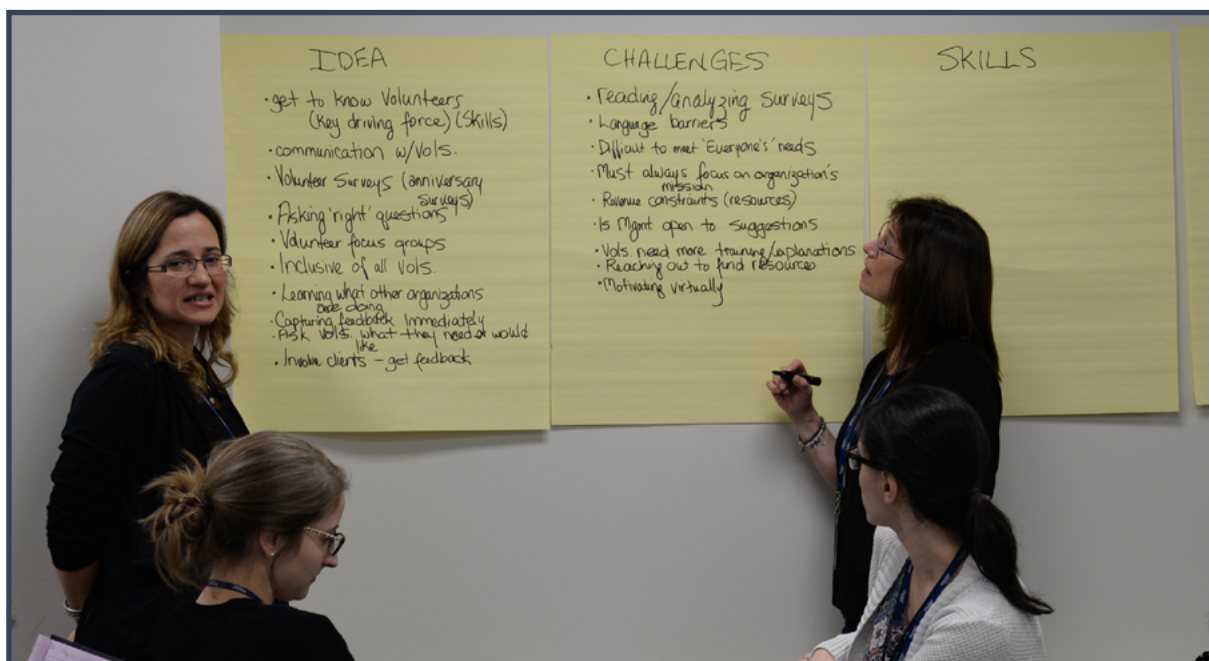
Additional tools:

- Include a section on the application asking if there is an hours requirement, how many hours are required and when they are to be completed
- Conducting a risk analysis to ensure roles don't require a Police Reference Check or Vulnerable Sector Screening ([read more here](#))
- Determine roles that have enough hours – short-term projects, admin support, etc.

Next steps for Volunteer Toronto around CSOs:

- Connecting with Corrections staff and sentencing to ensure the right information is provided – where to go, how to start
- Engaging with Subscriber organizations to check in on CSO engagement and see if suitable roles exist

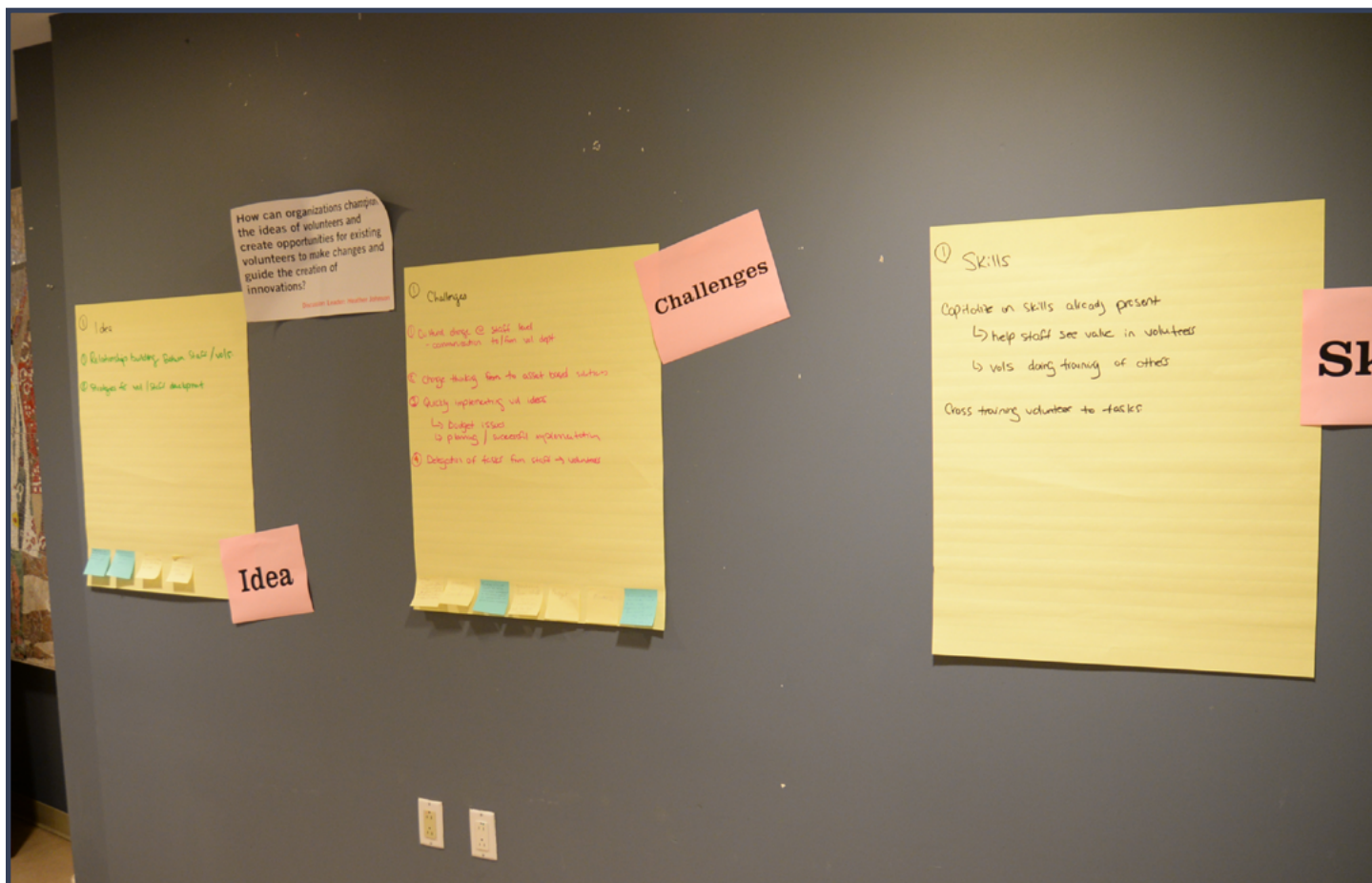
“Community Service Orders Frequently Asked Questions” can be found on page 12



TOOLS & APPENDIX

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Feedback Methods & Understanding Feedback

Surveys

Surveys are a quick, cost-effective way to reach large numbers and get a large amount of information with some detail. They can use a rating scale, yes/no questions and/or short answer responses. Surveys can be collected through in-person methods and digital methods (SurveyMonkey for online surveys, Feed2Go on iPad).

Best practices:

- Surveys should be easy to understand and the questions should be easy to answer – each question should cover one idea or topic
- Don't introduce bias into your question – don't frame questions in a positive or negative way, or give clues as to how you want someone to answer
- Keep response options similar – if you use a scale from 1 to 5, make sure 1 is always “disagree” or negative end and 5 is always “agree” or positive end for all questions

Interviews

Interviews allow you to collect in-depth, detailed information from a limited number of people, and can be formal or informal. This is a lengthier process than surveys and not practical if you want to connect with a lot of people.

Tip: When conducting an interview, remain neutral and consistent

Interview Options:

- Structured interviews are like reading a survey and writing responses, but allow you to collect follow-up information or clarify questions for the participant
- Semi-structured interviews can have pre-set questions but are more open-ended and discussion-based, allowing the participant to elaborate on their thoughts
- Unstructured interviews can rely on a theme or starting point (such as volunteer satisfaction) and the participant does most of the talking

Volunteer Evaluations

When evaluating volunteers, give volunteers an opportunity to provide their own feedback, either through two-way evaluation forms or other options (anonymous form, volunteer social network). A volunteer's evaluation should cover the program and their own supervision – you may not know the issues they're facing and how you can improve their engagement without their feedback. This feedback can also be received through one-on-one conversations and should be welcomed regularly.

Understanding Results

With all methods, the results you get will give you a different perspective of your volunteer program. Try not to dwell on negative feedback and instead use it to change course and make changes that will make your volunteers happy and your program successful. Focus on the opportunities – ideas from volunteers and stakeholders that can help you make those positive changes. If your feedback is primarily numbers based, such as participants pointing to being more satisfied or dissatisfied with aspects of the program, it will be easy to see which areas you need to focus on. With more anecdotal feedback, such as interview responses and comments from volunteers, it's important to ensure the feedback represents more than just the one respondent who shared it, as you want to meet the needs of your program at large if possible as well as your organization.

How to Host a Focus Group

What are Focus Groups?

Focus groups are facilitator-led, in-depth group discussions. They allow you to gain insight into shared experiences & opinions (especially from unique groups such as volunteers, staff, clients and more). The facilitator leads but doesn't contribute to the discussion.

How do they work?

A group of people come together around a common theme or identity to discuss a topic. By bringing different people together, you can get different perspectives on the same topic. The conversation may focus on the questions by the facilitator, but can also go in different directions based on what's been said.

How do I facilitate a focus group?

As facilitator, you should ensure your questions are open-ended and planned in a sequence moving from general to specific questions. You should ask for opinions ("what do you think of..."), ask simple questions ("do you have experience with..."), and make comparisons ("what do you expect from another organization?") Depending on your goals for the session, you may also want to give specific examples or choices for people to provide feedback on, such as suggestions on improvements, relevant data or comparisons with other organizations.

Important points for facilitation:

- Don't introduce bias or try to point the group in a specific direction
- Invite feedback outside of the main questions you've planned
- Encourage a personal perspective from each attendee

Sample questions:

- What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of the volunteer program?
- What could this program be doing differently to meet your needs more effectively?
- How can staff better support volunteers? How can volunteers better support staff?
- What do you want to see happen in our program?
- Do you connect with other volunteers on social media?

How do I plan a focus group?

You'll need a space for your group to fit comfortably, and ideally sit together at a table or in a circle. You'll also need an extra person to take notes, or the ability to record the session, so you can focus on facilitation. Book a time that is most likely to work for everyone – for staff, this should be during the work day, whereas for volunteers you can decide if the focus group is during a shift or considered a separate volunteer opportunity. If you can provide an incentive, such as food or a gift card, that can encourage more potential attendees as well. Also try to have more than one focus group to ensure you're getting different perspectives.

How do I analyze the results?

Identify the common themes that each group addressed – you might even see some common themes between groups, which would be especially important for you to look at. Also see if there are any strong negatives or ideal changes suggested by groups. One group may focus on one element while other groups could have a completely different approach. This may be an anomaly or worth investigating more.

Tips for Engaging Short-Term Volunteers

Types of Short-Term Roles

There are a variety of short-term & time-limited roles you could utilize:

- One-day events – community events, arts and culture days, fundraisers/foundation events, elections
- Multi-day events – festivals, sporting events, campaigns
- Disaster response – “immediate need” volunteers, short-term capacity increase
- Seasonal – sports seasons, academic year, summer, March break
- Project-Based– time-limited programs, grant projects, pilots, one-off projects

Important Considerations

Screen every volunteer

Even if the volunteer is a youth with only 10 hours left to volunteer, you must always find a way to screen your volunteers to make sure it's a good fit – get help from existing volunteers to conduct phone interviews or review applications to save you time.

Train every volunteer

While not every volunteer will be available for an in-person orientation or training session, all materials should be available to every volunteer through a handbook or website; you need to make sure your volunteers know and follow your basic rules and procedures, know how to complete their responsibilities successfully, and know enough about your organization and who they serve to be a good ambassador.

Supervise every volunteer

If your event or activity has more than a handful of volunteers, it could be very difficult to provide supervision for all of them; make sure you have senior volunteers, staff, board members or others you can rely on to supervise and oversee volunteer operations, especially for instances when volunteer hours must be tracked accurately.

Understanding Short-Term Volunteers

- Even if a volunteer only has a few weeks to complete their hours requirement, they shouldn't be expected to work two long shifts back to back
- Volunteers need a break regardless of their commitment or how long they're volunteering for; spread out shifts to ensure they can adequately rest and in the case of busier activities (events, festivals), give them an opportunity to be a spectator or community member as well, if possible
- Set the parameters of the volunteer's involvement from the beginning – if they have to get a certain number of hours by a certain day, make sure the shifts are spread out but will still meet the deadline
- Extend benefits to short-term volunteers when possible, such as training opportunities or recognition

Stay in contact with volunteers even after their required hours are complete – you never know when they may come back to volunteer with you!

Planning a Mentorship Program

Volunteer mentorship programs help to support sustainability and retention in the volunteer program and allow volunteers to take on leadership roles and pass on their knowledge to new volunteers. **Mentors** can:

- Help to ensure volunteers meet their expectations & understand the scope of the role
- Ensure volunteers don't break boundaries & understand the risks associated with the role
- Guide volunteers to perform properly, effectively, safely and successfully
- Role model their own volunteer work and provide front-line experience and knowledge

The two main participants of a mentorship program are the **mentor** and the **mentee**.

You need **mentors** before you can get started, so look for volunteers in your program who are looking to pass on their knowledge, take on a leadership role and/or enhance their volunteer experience. You should be looking for leadership skills or experience, a good knowledge of the organization and program, a supportive personality and a desire to pass on skills. Often, **mentors** are volunteers themselves, but they can also occasionally be staff, board members or even community members.

Next you'll want to identify the right **mentees**, which are usually newer volunteers, but can also be any volunteer who is looking to develop skills, change roles or eventually take on leadership roles themselves. Mentorship can also be a useful tool in helping to develop your volunteers, especially volunteers who need additional coaching to succeed. A mentorship relationship creates a unique opportunity for volunteers to find support from individuals who may have already dealt with the same issues volunteers are facing.

Making the Match

Once you find your **mentors** and **mentees**, you need to match the right ones together. Get a sense of the **mentee's** motivations for volunteering, and try to line those up with the motivations of the **mentor** as they are an ideal starting point. You can also match based on skills or roles.

The Mentorship Timeline

Many mentorship programs are longer-term, even 2 or 3 years. The timeline is at your discretion, but should include frequent, scheduled mentor-mentee check-ins. You should set a goal for the outcome of the mentorship relationship, such as the mentee becoming a leader or **mentor** themselves, or the expansion of the **mentee's** volunteer capabilities.



Thanking Support Systems

Thanking the support systems of volunteers is a great way to share the value of volunteering to others, and to help educate more people on the potential impact of volunteerism.

First, get to know the volunteer and who their support system might be. It could be a teacher or professor, a parent, sibling or family member, or a friend. While preparing thank you cards, notes or letters for the volunteer, ask if you can contact their support system as well (or invite the volunteer to share the additional thank you note with that person in their lives).

Write a note or card to the support person, and include some of the following:

- Thank you for letting us borrow volunteer's skills/time/expertise/knowledge/etc.
- Thanks to volunteer's involvement, we were able to make an impact through some details of volunteer impact
- Your support of volunteer has allowed them to thrive in this role
- We appreciate volunteer's contribution of different activities/tasks
- Thanks to volunteers like *volunteer*, we're able to *mission-impact statement*

This thank-you can take many forms, and can be as personal as you're comfortable with. What's important is that you can create an opportunity for your volunteer's support systems to understand volunteering and get a sense for why the volunteer has been doing what they're doing.

Want to learn more about the 40 hour program in Ontario, and service learning in general? You may find the following resources helpful!

Harrison, B. (2012). Valuable but flawed: Stakeholder perceptions of the Ontario mandatory community involvement program. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 8 (2).

Henderson, A., Brown, S., Pancer, S. M., & Ellis-Hale, K. (2007). Mandated community service in high school and subsequent civic engagement: The case of the "double cohort" in Ontario, Canada. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 36 (7), 849-860.

Horn, A. S. (2012). The cultivation of a prosocial value orientation through community service: An examination of organizational context, social facilitation, and duration. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41 (7), 948-968.

Meinhard, A., Foster, M., & Wright, P. (2005). Re-thinking school-based community service: The importance of a structured program. *The Philanthropist*, 20 (1), 5-22.

Yorio, P. L., & Ye, F. (2012). A meta-analysis on the effects of service-learning on the social, personal, and cognitive outcomes of learning. *Learning & Education*, 11 (1), 9-27.