



Volunteer Toronto

Advanced

Giving Volunteers Feedback

Resource Guide & Workbook

Compiled by the Engaging Organizations Department

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Using this Resource Guide & Workbook

The Giving Volunteers Feedback resource guide & workbook has been compiled by Volunteer Toronto to help community groups, non-profits and charitable organizations with the basic tools to effectively maintain and value their volunteers.

Each resource has been selected to give you an idea of the straightforward needs of each step of the process. It is important to remember that these are guidelines informed by best practices; you can adapt them to your situation as needed.

Giving Volunteers Feedback

Giving Volunteers Feedback in many forms is essential to ensuring your volunteer program is running smoothly and effectively working toward your organization's mission. Along with providing feedback, your evaluations can help you encourage good behaviour and improvements in volunteers. By being a coach for volunteers, you can help them work with the feedback they've received and become the best volunteers they can be. There are two main sections for this workbook:

Feedback & Evaluations

- Feedback/Evaluation Form Templates *Page 2*
- Template 1: Completed by Volunteer *Page 4*
- Template 2: Discussion Items *Page 6*
- Template 3: Completed by Supervisor *Page 8*
- Giving Negative Feedback *Page 9*
- Volunteer Satisfaction Survey *Page 10*
- Addressing Difficult Situations *Page 11*

Performance Coaching

- Six Approaches to Communication *Page 13*
- Good Coaching Exercise *Page 14*
- Poor Performance Case Study *Page 15*
- Poor Performance Scenarios *Page 16*



YOUR MISSION

Whenever your organization is engaging volunteers, it's important to remember your organization's mission. It's your goal as a volunteer coordinator, manager, or supervisor to ensure that your volunteers contribute to the mission and goals of your organization in whatever role or capacity they hold. This will make it easier to justify further volunteer involvement and recruitment and to increase their impact across your organization.

Feedback/Evaluation Form Templates

About the Templates

Each of the three feedback form templates are designed for different formats – filled out by volunteer, volunteer-supervisor discussion topics & notes and filled out by supervisor. Use your risk analysis of the role to determine which format (or which combination of formats) makes the most sense for the role. *The information about each template is on this and the next page in order to allow you to make copies of the blank templates without any text.*

Template 1 – Completed by Volunteer

The first template allows volunteers to provide their own feedback using a rating scale system to make it easier for volunteers to respond. It is broken into three sections – orientation & training, supervision and workload. Additionally, there is space for the volunteer to answer descriptive questions and provide comments.

Anonymous Feedback - This form could be useful as an anonymous feedback tool. Receiving feedback from multiple volunteers will provide you with a sense of volunteer satisfaction and needs. This information can help you plan the next stages of your volunteer program or better prepare for future volunteers. One of the negative aspects of anonymous feedback, however, is that you will not be able to meet the needs of individual volunteers directly, especially with a follow-up discussion about their feedback.

Choose to make the form anonymous if you're looking for **a general sense or scope of volunteer satisfaction, engagement, preferences and/or needs.**

Make the form require a volunteer's name when you want **specific feedback to help improve an individual volunteer's growth, satisfaction and capabilities.**

Feedback/Evaluation Form Templates

Template 2 – Discussion Items

This template provides framing questions for a conversation between a volunteer and their supervisor. The evaluation conversation should take place in the following order:

Part 1

The supervisor should note their thoughts, comments and feedback for the volunteer under specific areas.

Part 2

The supervisor should share these comments as well as ask questions of the volunteer to assess their satisfaction and engagement and to ensure their needs are being met.

Part 3

The volunteer and supervisor should address areas of concern that have come up in the conversation and determine the action plan to solve these issues.

Template 3 – Completed by Supervisor

This template is a form to be filled out by the supervisor and provided to the volunteer at a set evaluation time, or can even be sent by e-mail or another means of communication. The format allows for notes on specific topics and a different kind of scale that reflects the volunteers performance relevant to targets.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FORM

Deciding which format of evaluation or feedback form you want to use should be based on the volunteer role - level of risk, level of supervision, frequency of evaluation. If your volunteers have a higher level of responsibility, you may want to encourage them to fill out their evaluations. If your volunteers have straightforward tasks, you can have a discussion about their work or fill out the evaluation form yourself.



Template 1 - Completed by Volunteer

Name	
Position	
Period of Evaluation	
Supervisor	

Rating Scale:

1 - Needs Improvement **2** - Fair **3** - Good **4** - Very Good **5** - Excellent

Orientation & Training

The goals and purposes of this organization were clearly explained	1	2	3	4	5
The description for the position was reviewed and procedures were explained	1	2	3	4	5
Boundaries were identified and consequences were made clear	1	2	3	4	5
Training was effective and provided the tools needed to perform the assigned task	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Supervision

Supervisor was available when I had questions or needed information	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor's attitude was professional	1	2	3	4	5
Expectations were clear and supervisor was transparent	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Workload

The role provided enough tasks and responsibilities to keep me busy	1	2	3	4	5
The time commitment for the role provided adequate time to complete tasks	1	2	3	4	5
There were opportunities to expand my role or my workload	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

What other training or growth opportunities would you like to see offered?	
What additional tools would make your work more effective and/or pleasant?	
How could organization improve its volunteer – staff structure and/or relationships?	
Do you have any additional questions or comments?	

Signature of Volunteer		Date	
Signature of Supervisor		Date	

Template 2 - Discussion Items

Name	
Position	
Start Date	
Review Date	
Supervisor	
Coordinator (If Applicable)	

Part 1 - Supervisor/Coordinator Items to Address

Knowledge of the Position – <i>Volunteer has:</i> overall knowledge of the position/tasks and relationship to the agency, do they meet or exceed requirements or need improvement
Quality of Work – <i>Volunteer is:</i> accurate, thorough, follows procedures, fulfills duties
Dependability – <i>Volunteer is:</i> timely, attends shifts, punctual, meets goals, reliable
Teamwork/Interpersonal Relations – <i>Volunteer has:</i> ability to work with others; positive relations with staff, other volunteers and clients; cooperative nature
Personal Qualities – <i>Volunteer:</i> takes initiative, is creative, goes beyond the call of duty, is willing to help in other areas
Other Issues/Concerns/Suggestions Supervisor may have?

Part 2 - Volunteer Discussion

Are your needs being met? Do you: require more training? Require more organizational information? Need clarification on policies/procedures? Need more responsibilities, hours, or work?

Are your expectations being met? Is the position: what you expected? Keeping you interested in continuing? In line with organization's mission? Not meeting your needs?

What is your overall satisfaction with organization and with the actual position?

Other Issues/Concerns/Suggestions Volunteer may have?

Part 3 - Action Plan

Concern - Raised in Discussion	Action Plan to Address Concern

Date of Next Review	
Signature of Volunteer	
Signature of Supervisor	
Signature of Coordinator	

Template 3 - Completed by Supervisor

Volunteer Evaluation		
Volunteer Name:		Date:
Area	Comments and/or Suggestions for Improvement	Rating
Does the volunteer... • fulfil the requirements of the role • meet deadlines on a regular basis • have an adequate/reasonable workload • have the appropriate resources to fulfil their role		
Does the volunteer... • arrive for their shift on time • fill out their volunteer log • check in with you or staff when they arrive		
Does the volunteer... • communicate issues with you • ask you for strategies and advice to help them succeed • show improvement each shift/evaluation • seek and take your advice		
Does the volunteer... • relate well with stakeholders • relate well with staff • build and maintain effective working relationships		

Rating Scale:

1 (Below Target) - 2 (Approaching Target) - 3 (On Target) - 4 (Above Target) - 5 (Beyond Target)

I acknowledge that my supervisor has gone over this evaluation with me in full, and I understand the areas in which I need to improve.

Volunteer Signature		Supervisor Signature	
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Giving Negative Feedback

When giving volunteers negative feedback, there are a few things to help make the situation easier for you and the volunteer:

- Don't give negative feedback or intervene in a situation if your emotions are high – take time to calm down
- If it's necessary to give feedback right away, find a quiet place for a private conversation; otherwise make a date for a one-on-one meeting with the volunteer soon
- Discuss the volunteer's behaviour in the context of its impact on the organization and program
- Set limits, constraints and rules to your conversation
- Document the conversation
- Make sure to follow-up after to ensure changes are occurring and you are supporting the volunteer

Formulating negative feedback

Plan your criticism

- Warn the volunteer that you have some constructive criticism
- Set an objective for responding to the criticism
- Focus on the task and the behaviour, not on the volunteer themselves

Make the criticism motivating

- Encourage the volunteer to want to act and improve, rather than feel they have to change
- Indicate the positive outcome (and impact on your organization and program) from a change in behaviour
- Use "I" statements

Provide constructive criticism through a "DESC" statement

Description of the problematic behaviour – specific, factual, based on feedback or observations

Explanation of why it is a problem – impact of the behaviour on you, the organization, other volunteers

Specify change that you would like to see – how can the volunteer change, express confidence, ask for suggestions

Consequences of making the change – positive consequences, motivating for the volunteer

Sample Volunteer Satisfaction Survey

Have this survey filled out by volunteers to assess their level of satisfaction with their role, the program and the organization. As noted in the evaluation form template notes, this can be associated with individual volunteers or made anonymous.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel that my work contributes directly to the organization's mission.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel appreciated by my supervisors.	1	2	3	4	5
My skills are being put to good use.	1	2	3	4	5
I have the right amount of work to keep me busy without feeling overwhelmed.	1	2	3	4	5
I have been well trained for my role.	1	2	3	4	5
I have the opportunity to ask for help when I need it.	1	2	3	4	5
My volunteer work helps me meet personal goals.	1	2	3	4	5
I get adequate support from supervisors or mentors.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, I am satisfied with my volunteer role.	1	2	3	4	5

Addressing Difficult Situations with Volunteers

Addressing difficult situations with volunteers can be unpleasant – it can sometimes seem easier to avoid conflict than to deal with it directly. But putting it off and hoping it will go away is not a good strategy – sometimes addressing difficult situations requires empathy and sensitivity, but the most important piece is to ensure you feel justified in your actions in order to act with confidence.

First you need to determine situations where you need to intervene

A situation requires intervention when:

- It requires you to repeatedly invest time and energy, and/or
- It could affect the services provided by your organization in a meaningful way

Difficult situations and problems could come from multiple sources, including: leadership or management style, organizational culture, equipment, training, role description, working conditions, relationships, communication, diversity, instability, stress and/or volunteers who are difficult to manage.

Volunteer issues can come from the organization, their role, or your relationship with the volunteer, or they could be internal to the volunteer, stemming from a difficult situation (personal, health, family) or their own personality.

When managing problem situations with volunteers, there are two ways things could go:

Managing problem situations badly	Managing problem situations well
• de-motivation of other volunteers • waste of time and energy • reduction in productivity and work quality • contagion amongst other members of the team, staff and volunteers • absence or reduction in communication within the organization • increase in absenteeism • fatigue, depression, burnout	• shared sense of relief • renewal of energy and motivation • self-affirmation and openness towards others • increased self-awareness • brings out creativity • develops problem solving skills

When faced with a difficult volunteer conflict, start by analyzing the situation

1. Identify the problem
2. Evaluate if immediate or deferred intervention is required
3. Whose problem is it?
4. If it's the volunteer's problem, is it a question of **knowledge**, **ability** or **will**?
5. Who and what could contribute to a solution?

There are a few different ways to respond to conflict when addressing difficult situations with volunteers

- **Competing/Forcing** – intervene without consideration for other person's needs, appropriate when quick, decisive action is required
- **Accommodating/Soothing** – neglect your own needs in order to satisfy those of the others person, when it is important to maintain the relationships
- **Avoiding/Withdrawing** – refuse to address the situation directly, appropriate when some reflection is required
- **Collaborating/Problem Solving** – attempt to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of both sides, when time permits & the issue is important to both sides
- **Compromising/Sharing** – make a compromise, possibly temporary, more or less satisfactory to both sides

It's your choice how you respond to conflict using these strategies – to effectively manage behaviour and difficult issues, it is important to be aware of your own preferences and skills when dealing with conflict, understanding when each strategy is appropriate (or not) and practicing and developing your skills with these strategies.

If there is no apparent solution to the problem that can be attempted in the short term, it may be worthwhile to focus your energy elsewhere to keep from getting burnt out or exhausted!

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Giving volunteers negative feedback can be one of the most challenging aspects of your role as a manager of volunteers. By making expectations, boundaries and consequences known in the position description and throughout the volunteer's engagement, it will be easier to have negative feedback discussions.



6 Approaches to Communication

Adapted from Heron's model of intervention, these six approaches to communications will encourage better dialogue between you and your volunteers and foster greater performance in your projects and programs.

Style	Approach	Examples of communication
"Telling"	Be a Guide - Give advice and guidance - Tell them what to do	If I were in your place I would... In that situation, you need to... In my opinion, you should... When that kind of situation happens it's better to... I think you should...
	Be a Great Source of Information - Explain background and principles - Help the person understand concepts and practices	This article/book/blog is a good source of information The context and background of that situation is... In this sector, this how we... The best sources of information in the sector are...
	Be an Honest Mirror - Challenge their thinking - Tell them what you think is holding them back - Help them avoid making the same mistake again	What would you do differently next time? What can we learn from this? How do you think you contributed to that outcome? Why do you think that keeps happening? What are the weaker parts of your resume? How can you take this from thought to action?
"Facilitating"	Be a Friendly Ear - Help the person express their feelings - Provide empathy	How did you feel about...? It must be difficult (frustrating, confusing etc.) to... Do you have any concerns about...? Is there anything else you want to discuss? Are you comfortable with your decision?
	Be a Set of New Eyes - Ask questions to encourage fresh thinking and a new point of view - Encourage the generation of different options and points of view	What do you think would happen if... What's the best thing that could happen? What's a small thing you can do to get closer to that? Brainstorm: Name 10 different ways you could reach this objective. If (someone they admire) were in this situation, what do you think they would do? So far you've mentioned the following options. Which one seems most exciting to you?
	Be a Cheerleader - Provide praise - Show them they have your support	Congratulations, you deserve it! You are qualified for that position. That's a great idea! You are working hard towards your objective What did you do to accomplish that?

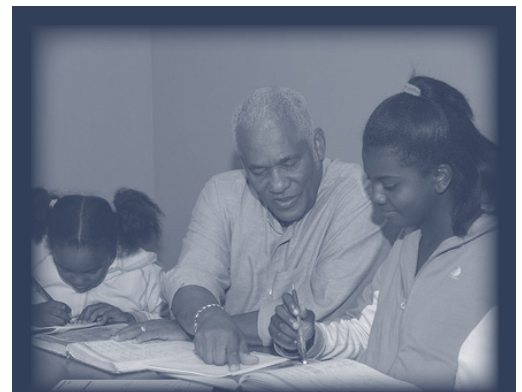
Good Coaching Exercise

What does it take to be a good “coach”?

Coaching your volunteers can help to improve their performance and to increase their satisfaction with their volunteer experience. A volunteer who has a good coach, instead of just a supervisor, will be more likely to understand their responsibilities, be dedicated to the role, and be able to master new skills and adjust to changes in the program.

Use the questions below to spark some insights about what it means to be a good coach:

When someone first starts, a good coach does the following things:
When a person is not performing as expected, a good coach will...
When the person does well, a good coach will...
Aside from providing instruction, a good coach provides...
A good coach understands the importance of...



WHAT'S A COACH?

“Coach” it has come to mean trainer, teacher, tutor, supervisor and other guiding or leading roles. By coaching your volunteers, you go above and beyond supervisory duties to ensure the success of your volunteer program. In most sports, the coach is influential to the athlete’s success, so with every project and program you work on with your volunteers, always aim to get them at the top of the podium and at the top of their game.

Poor Performance Case Study: Chris

Chris is a volunteer co-facilitator with one of the groups that runs on Tuesday mornings. He co-facilitates with Jim. He has been to the orientation and has signed off on the roles and responsibilities of a facilitator. You have observed that he is good with the youth and that he can relate well to them. He has shared that he feels a strong motivation to support them in their path.

Since he started 3 months ago, Chris has been absent on 2 occasions. The first time, he left a message on the answering machine the night before to indicate that he would be unable to be present and Jim facilitated alone. On the second occasion when Jim was away on vacation, he did not show up and a staff member had to cancel some appointments to step in and facilitate the group.

On another occasion, as the meeting was starting and Chris was absent, Jim called him. He ended up scrambling and arriving for the second half of the meeting. Chris makes most of the meetings, though he often arrives just as the meeting starts.

His responsibilities include arriving early to speak with Jim to plan the meeting and set up the room. Jim often has to ask the youth to help him set up, and ends up not having time to chat with them and personally greet the new participants at the beginning of the meeting.

You have already spoken to Chris once to remind him of the requirements of the position. What is your next step?

What is the problem?

How would you assess the issue according to these factors?

The frequency:

The disruption:

The impact:

How would you address the problem with Chris?

Practice Scenarios: Performance Coaching

The following are a variety of scenarios of poor performance with their own questions. Additionally, answer the questions on page 18 to help you work through the scenario.

Scenario 1 - Ade

Ade is the head of a committee responsible for organizing an important public event for your organization. 3 weeks before the event, you contact her about another matter and happen to ask how the preparations are going. She answers that she and the committee are just about to get started putting it together. You express your concern, as you know that there is a lot of work involved and Ade answers that she knows what she's doing. In the end, the event goes well but many personal schedules were affected by the last minute organization. Everyone on the committee is exhausted and resents the intense demand on their time the event required in the 3-week lead-up.

For next year, what can be done before the event, (as well as during and after the event) to ensure that Ade and the committee reach their objectives in a more satisfying way?

Scenario 2 - Arnold

Arnold has been a loyal volunteer at your organization for the last 14 years. He has been with your organization since it was a small grassroots group and has seen it grow into a national agency. Recently, he tried to initiate a new type of activity to get high-risk kids more involved in recreation. He was met with concerns about insurance and risk-management. He encountered what he calls a "mountain of bureaucracy," was asked to fill out a project proposal and submit it and never heard back from the National office. Arnold doesn't understand; all he wanted to do was help some kids. He is in your office and has told you that he's had enough and he's quitting.

How can you handle the situation to keep a good volunteer from quitting and keep his motivation up?



BEING PREPARED FOR ANYTHING

Use past instances of poor performance or behaviour issues to create scenarios you can use in training volunteer supervisors. This way, they can be directly related to your organization's service delivery model and better meet the needs of your volunteers.

Scenario 3 - Committee

You decide to attend a meeting of one of the volunteer committees that are involved with your organization.

Once you are at the meeting, you notice that out of 14 members, only 8 are present. Of those present, 3 or 4 do most of the talking at the meeting and the others seem to have no comment on the decisions being made. At the end of the meeting, the same 3 or 4 people, seeming exasperated, take responsibility for doing what needs to be done for the next meeting and the meeting is adjourned.

What can be done to help this committee and its members have a more productive and satisfying experience?

Scenario 4 – Aditya

Aditya is a new volunteer. He has just moved to Toronto from Vancouver where he was involved with a different agency that works towards a similar cause as your organization. You are glad to have found an enthusiastic and experienced volunteer, as you had been looking for someone for a while.

You explain to Aditya that next month he will be attending an orientation and a training session for volunteers. He responds that he doesn't see why that is necessary because he had a management position at the previous agency and already knows what he needs to know for the position. Also, he doesn't want to wait before he gets involved.

What are the options for handling this situation?

Scenario 5 - Li

Li has been volunteering for the same organization for three years. He is dedicated to their cause, and he's always been reliable and hard-working. However, over the past few months, Li has stopped checking in with his supervisor. He still seems to be doing the work, but it's getting harder and harder to get him to submit the number of hours he's working or the activity log that he's supposed to fill out. Although there haven't been any complaints about Li's work, his supervisor needs to be able to keep track of what he's doing and when he's doing it.

What's the best way to reach out to Li to start a conversation?

Scenario 6 – Caitlin

Caitlin has been volunteering with your organization for three months. She is caring and compassionate, and seemed like a great fit for the position during her orientation and training. Unfortunately, Caitlin has missed several meetings with clients. Although she lets the clients know ahead of time when she'll have to reschedule, she never lets her supervisor know until after the meeting was meant to take place. A client that she is working with has complained that she's unreliable; she has had to reschedule too many meetings on short notice.

How can you ensure that Caitlin – and all volunteers – can communicate upcoming absences or issues to supervisors in a more timely and efficient way?

Scenario 7 - Maxime

Maxime is an off-site volunteer who successfully completed his orientation and training. He checks in with his supervisor regularly to let them know how many hours he's working and what he's doing. When asked how he's doing, he says everything is going well and he's enjoying the work. However, when his supervisor asked for feedback from a client, the client reported that Maxime often seems uncomfortable during their meetings and that he doesn't offer any practical information to address the client's questions.

Are there other ways for Maxime to self-assess his efficacy in the role?

Questions for all Scenarios

How do you support the volunteer?

Is this a volunteer problem or a supervision problem?

What might be their reasons for poor performance?

What sort of feedback would you give them?

What sort of feedback would ask for?

Volunteer Toronto

Giving Volunteers Feedback

Resource Guide & Workbook

Next Steps

To continue your volunteer management journey, there are a number of other workbooks created by Volunteer Toronto to assist you every step of the way:

Basic

- Planning, Recruiting & Selecting
- Training, Supervising & Supporting
- Evaluating, Retaining & Developing
- Engaging Group Volunteers
- Professional Development for Managers of Volunteers

Intermediate

- Planning for Volunteer Involvement
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Volunteer Selection
- Training & Orientation
- Volunteer Retention & Recognition

Advanced

- Accessibility and the AODA

Check out our **Online Learning Centre** for a variety of courses to further enhance your learning and improve your practice - go to volunteertoronto.ca/?page=OnlineLearning

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