



**Vounteer Management Resources  
Sports Leagues and Associations**



**Volunteer  
Toronto**

# Who is a Volunteer?

## Definition of “volunteer”

A key distinction when determining who you are managing as a volunteer manager is to define who is and isn't a volunteer. You might have people coming in and out of your group, giving their time when they can, or even as a one-off opportunity. These volunteers are what we refer to as **support volunteers**. It's important to put some time into exploring the effectiveness of your volunteer program and defining the role of your support volunteers.

## Which role is which?

It is important to identify who is a volunteer and who is a member (or who is both). If possible, you should get anyone who identifies themselves as a volunteer to give some feedback and get a better sense of how their work helps your organization. Most importantly, you want volunteers to clearly know their expectations and understand they have a specific, formal role in the organization (sometimes beyond “parent of child in a program”).

## Membership in sports groups

Members could be participants, family members of participants, supporters and unrelated volunteers. If some members come and go doing volunteer responsibilities, try to set clear terms, commitments and duties for those volunteer roles. If others are interested in being volunteers with no relation to participants, ensure they know they are equal members of your support team.



## What is a member?

Having a membership model can be helpful - as both an effective fundraising tool, and a mobilization resource. Obviously, it is also a pool from which you can get new support volunteers. It is important to make a distinction between volunteer and member because you have to manage and communicate differently between volunteers and members.

So what is a “member”? That depends on what you decide is best for your group. According to Sasha Daucus at Fundraiser Basic, some groups, such as residents' associations, consider anyone that lives in their community to be a member. You need to define who your target group is, and then refine from there.

# Maintaining Relationships

Maintaining relationships with your volunteers year-round can be a challenge, especially when your volunteer program is seasonal or has considerable down-time. Using the chart below, list different ways you can use each method to stay connected to your volunteers.

METHOD	HOW WILL YOU STAY CONNECTED?
<b>Online (e-mails, social media)</b>	Example: Quarterly “off-season” newsletter e-mail to highlight what volunteers are up to at different times of the year
<b>Events</b>	
<b>New programs</b>	
<b>Recognition</b>	
<b>Perks/benefits</b>	
<b>Sharing impact</b>	

# Measuring and Improving Volunteer Engagement

The Conference Board of Canada has identified 8 drivers of employee engagement. The list below is an adaptation of these 8 drivers you can apply to your volunteers and volunteer program through support and supervision.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Trust and integrity   | 5. Pride in the organization/cause                   |
| 2. The work of the role  | 6. Working with other volunteers (and staff)         |
| 3. The impact of individual contribution on organization performance | 7. Volunteer development                             |
| 4. Personal/professional growth opportunities                        | 8. Relationship with supervisor/manager of volunteer |

You may notice that some or all of these line up with the motivations that brought your volunteers to your organization. The effectiveness of these drivers depends on each volunteer’s needs and motivations, but having most or all of them in place will help you ensure your volunteers are engaged and actively working toward the mission of your organization.

How do you measure your volunteer’s level of engagement or satisfaction? You can use a survey (with the drivers in mind) like the one, below to assess and determine which drivers you may need to enhance to improve satisfaction and engagement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel trusted to do my work (1)	1	2	3	4	5
My work is fulfilling and enjoyable (2)	1	2	3	4	5
I have the right amount of work (2)	1	2	3	4	5
My work is contributing directly to the mission (3)	1	2	3	4	5
I am making an impact on our community (3)	1	2	3	4	5
My volunteer work helps me meet my goals (4)	1	2	3	4	5
I believe in the mission of this organization (5)	1	2	3	4	5
I can meet and work with other great volunteers (6)	1	2	3	4	5
I feel well trained and prepared for my role (7)	1	2	3	4	5
I can to ask for help when I need it (7/8)	1	2	3	4	5
I feel appreciated by my supervisor(s) (8)	1	2	3	4	5

*If you’re seeing a lot of “disagrees” for certain responses, consider how you can increase these drivers for your volunteers and improve their engagement.*

# Setting Expectations Template

Setting up your volunteers for success involves ensuring they have the right information from the beginning. To do this, you'll need to set volunteer expectations of what volunteers will do in the role and what guidelines need to be in place for them to perform their role well. Follow these steps to set the right expectations from the beginning.

## Step One

Provide and clearly communicate guidelines of what is expected — write out these guidelines here.

## Step Two

Give examples of good behaviour (not breaking rules or boundaries) — write out some examples here.

## Step Three

Identify the consequences of positive and negative performance — list consequences for both here.

## Step Four

Describe the protocol for managing and improving poor performance — write out the next steps if the volunteer breaks a rule here.

# Role of Volunteer Managers

## Who is a volunteer manager?

If you work with volunteers or have any responsibility for volunteers as members of your team, you are a volunteer manager. That might mean recruiting volunteers, being a contact person for volunteers, or even training them in their roles. You may, as a team, decide to elect a particular member of your group to be a dedicated volunteer manager. It might be this person's sole responsibility to recruit, train, and oversee volunteers. However, the reality is that in many organizations, volunteer management is a responsibility that is shared amongst core members.

## Shared approach

Shared volunteer management can create a collaborative atmosphere and avoid overwhelming one person with all of the duties related to coordinating volunteers. You should know that communication is the key to success. Every person involved in managing volunteers must know what they are responsible for. Try dividing tasks like recruitment, supervision and discipline.

## Volunteer retention

A major component of volunteer management is keeping volunteers engaged. There are five key aspects of volunteer retention: motivation, adequate support, recognition, communication, and evaluation and feedback. Recognition is especially important as volunteers want to feel appreciated and valued for their work, and this often needs to come from the volunteer manager to be effective.



## Make it clear to volunteers

Use the volunteer management approach that best meets your needs. You want to avoid sending mixed messages to support volunteers: Imagine being a support volunteer and hearing one thing about your responsibilities from one volunteer manager and then something else entirely from another! Mixed messaging could lead to support volunteers leaving the group — definitely not something you want to have happen.

## Volunteers moving on

Despite your very best efforts, you will inevitably find that occasionally volunteers will leave your group. Don't despair! This is not a reflection on you or your abilities as a volunteer manager. Sometimes volunteers just move on, other times things might come up in their lives that will impact their commitment. Remember that volunteers leaving your group is normal and can be expected.

# Volunteer Program Planning Template

To help you plan out your volunteer program, use this action planning tool based on the main components needed for a successful volunteer program.

ACTION PLAN				
<p><b>Goal:</b> <i>Identify the goal of your volunteer program. This goal should contribute to your organization's mission, and should fit within your organization's strategic plan.</i></p>				
ACTION	TIMELINE	PEOPLE	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT
<p><i>List each action that will be taken in order to reach the goal.</i></p> <p>Recruiting volunteers</p>	<p><i>Identify the intended start and end dates for each action.</i></p>	<p><i>Identify the person responsible for overseeing each action, as well as any others who will be involved in its implementation.</i></p>	<p><i>Identify all resources needed to complete the action, such as money, transportation, and materials.</i></p>	<p><i>Identify how you will measure success once you have completed each action.</i></p>
Supervising volunteers				
Motivating volunteers				

# 6 Approaches to Communication

Being an effective volunteer supervisor requires good communication skills. 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”	<b>Be a Guide</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give advice and guidance</li> <li>Tell them what to do</li> </ul>	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...
	<b>Be a Great Source of Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain background and principles</li> <li>Help the person understand concepts and practices</li> </ul>	This article/book/blog is a good source of information The context and background of that is situation is... In this sector, this how we.... The best sources of information in the sector are...
	<b>Be an Honest Mirror</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenge their thinking</li> <li>Tell them what you think is holding them back</li> <li>Help them avoid making the same mistake again</li> </ul>	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? How can you take this from thought to action?
“FACILITATING”	<b>Be a Friendly Ear</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help the person express their feelings</li> <li>Provide empathy</li> </ul>	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?
	<b>Be a Set of New Eyes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask questions to encourage fresh thinking and a new point of view</li> <li>Encourage the generation of different options and points of view</li> </ul>	What do you think would happen if... What’s the best thing that could happen? Brainstorm 10 different ways you could reach this objective. If (someone they admire) were in this situation, what do you think they would do? Which option you’ve mentioned seems most exciting to you?
	<b>Be a Cheerleader</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide praise</li> <li>Show them they have your support</li> </ul>	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?



# Keeping Tabs on Volunteers

One of the challenges of supervising volunteers is keeping tabs on all of them at once. It's not possible for you to be in a hundred places at the same time, so a variety of methods can be used for you to know what's going on with your volunteers, even when they're in the same facility.

## Volunteer logs

Volunteers can be expected to fill out logs at the end of their shift. They can range from simple logs asking for shift times, a rating scale to indicate how the shift went and any comments to more robust logs asking for specific details and more information about interactions with clients or other aspects of the role. These can even be made using online survey tools.

## Online tracking system

Some volunteer management software tools have capabilities for volunteers to check-in/out of shifts as well as record details on the activities of the shifts. The capabilities range based on need and software cost, so consider your total volunteer numbers and what systems would work for you.

## What kind of info to look for?

- Shift start & end times
- Self-assessment of how the shift went
- Specifics on work completed
- Client(s), staff, volunteer(s) worked with
- Comments or stories
- Anything alarming/cause for alarm
- Satisfaction with volunteer role overall
- Questions for next shift



## E-mails and phone calls

Checking in by e-mail and/or by phone may use a lot of your time but can be an easy way to connect with your volunteers. You can ask that they e-mail you after shifts, or you can set up times for phone calls. It's important to get the full picture of what happened on a shift, so having a formalized system in place for communicating this way would be important.

## Reports from others

Even though you may not be able to oversee a volunteer's work, there may be other supervisors and staff that can give you their report. If they notice something especially out of the ordinary or questionable, they should let you know right away so you can follow up with the volunteer.

# The Importance of Training

Training is an opportunity to:

- » Provide volunteers with specific information about their role
- » Ensure volunteers have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their roles safely and effectively
- » Explore volunteer boundaries or other important topics deeply
- » Provide volunteers with learning related to their personal or professional goal

## When to train volunteers

Training should be provided at the start of a volunteer's role but also on an ongoing, proactive basis. When possible, provide training regularly throughout the volunteer experience – including monthly in-person trainings or online offerings. Some training can or should be mandatory while others can be optional and more beneficial for the volunteer than the organization specifically.

## Ongoing training

Higher-risk roles will usually require more ongoing training. For instance, if a volunteer is engaged to provide support to clients with serious illnesses, training should be provided up front and refreshed throughout the volunteer's engagement on the necessary knowledge of maintaining safe and healthy practice with these clients.

## Adult learners

Most of your volunteers are “adult learners,” individuals who are not currently in a formal learning environment. Adult learners tend to be internally motivated, self-directed and goal-oriented. You should focus your training efforts on using practical tools like games, scenarios, case studies and assessments to enhance the learning process.



## How does learning happen?

Learning is the process of transforming a person's previously held knowledge, skills and attributes. This takes place through two main stages: sensory intake, which is how someone takes in information; and processing and interpreting the information, comparing with their own knowledge and experiences. Examples for each include:



### Sensory Intake

- » Hearing instruction or stories from a facilitator
- » Seeing handouts, slides, videos or other visual media
- » Experimenting with a case study, role play or activity relevant to the learning material



### Process & Interpret

- » Using individual reasoning methods
- » Comparing new information with what a learner already knows
- » Referencing past experiences or held beliefs and applying this to their own context

# Training Short-Term Volunteers

For your short-term event, activity or opportunity, you may have a very large number of volunteers – it’s integral that all of your volunteers receive training of some kind so they can:

1. Know how to do their role properly
2. Know more about your organization to ensure it is a good fit
3. Know about emergency protocol, rules, policies & procedures

## Planning training

Since you may not be able to bring in all of your volunteers for a face-to-face orientation, make sure you focus on the essentials by answering these questions: what will the volunteer do? How will the volunteer support your work and make an impact? What will your volunteer say if asked about your organization? What will your volunteer do in the case of an emergency? Who does your volunteer report to?

## Orientation options

When planning your orientation and training, there are a few methods you can use, including live or pre-recorded online webinars, “drop-in” rotating orientation, a volunteer handbook, or even day-of-event orientation at the start of your activity. No matter which method you use, you should **prioritize the mission** and talk about the **value and impact** of the project or event the volunteers are a part of.

Use this chart to determine the method you’ll use to cover each important area of training:

TOPIC	METHOD
Learning about the event/activity	
Learning about the organization	
Meeting supervisors/ understanding reporting structure	
Understanding boundaries & rules	
Getting to know event facility/ space	

**You can also use the volunteer handbook to enhance and add to your orientation and training, especially highlighting policies, procedures and important contextual information.**

# Adult Education Basics



## Adult learners

Nearly all volunteers you train would be considered “adult learners” as they are outside of a formal education experience. Adult learners tend to be internally motivated, self-directed, and come with some pre-existing knowledge. They are goal oriented and want to be respected. This might also mean adult learners want to jump ahead, so use practice learning opportunities like scenarios and role playing.

## Learning is a process

The process of learning changes a person’s previously held knowledge, skills and attitudes, and happens over three stages:

- » In the first stage, a person receives new information. Everyone has different preferences for how they take in information, such as hearing, seeing or experimenting with something.
- » In the second stage, a person will process this new information. There are a variety of factors that influence how someone processes information, such as personality, reasoning methods, and physical & cognitive capacities.
- » In the third stage, a person will interpret the new information. If the new information is different from what the person already knows, they will reference a past experience and/or held beliefs to make sense of it in their own context.

## Making sense of it all

The processing & interpretation stages are all about making sense of the new information and applying it to what someone already knows:

- » Personality Influences - These revolve around the way people manage their learning, and often means learners are either practical, active, observational or theoretical, though of course many are a bit of everything.
- » Methods of Reasoning – Things like learning environment, social vs. solitary learning, performing vs. theorizing information can all impact how each person will reason or deal with new information, much like the learning types at the bottom of this page.
- » Capacities to Learn – Physical and cognitive capacity can also impact how information is processed and interpreted, and each person will use different techniques based on their abilities. Trainers should be mindful of accessibility needs as well.



visual learner



auditory learner



verbal learner



physical learner



logical learner



social learner



solitary learner

# Training Volunteers with Motivations in Mind

When preparing to train your volunteers, it's important to consider the motivations that brought each volunteer to your organization. Motivations include wanting to make a contribution to the community, using skills, being personally affected by the cause, networking with others or improving job opportunities. Use the chart below to determine how you might use each motivation in training to keep volunteers engaged from the beginning.

TRAINING STYLE	MOTIVATION	CONNECTION
Scenario	Making a contribution	Showcase the impact volunteers will make in the role by using a scenario activity of a real interaction
Icebreaker	Networking with others	Use an icebreaker that will encourage volunteers to meet each other, forging connections for later in the role
Learning new skill relevant to the role	Use skills and experience	When teaching a specific skill, identify the value of the skill to the role but also the uses in day-to-day life as well





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