

Why Involve Volunteers?

Does it seem like the same people are always coming to meetings and volunteering to help? Is that fair?

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the amount of time and effort you seem to put into meeting the needs of your group and your community, you are not alone!

It's difficult to find new people to help out, but it is essential. Even though bringing new people into the group can feel disruptive or slow you down, in the long run it will benefit you, your fellow group members and your community. As well, for many groups it is part of their mission to involve members of the community. Is it in your mission to involve volunteers?

INVOLVING VOLUNTEERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE - A CHECKLIST

Take Stock. Use the following checklist to identify what your group looks for when involving new volunteers. **When you look to engage people, do you look for individuals who:**

- provide a link with the community?** Volunteers are members of the community and in many cases may also be recipients of the services offered by your group. When recruiting new volunteers, think about people you know – those who have been involved in your activities, as participants or service recipients.
- bring different points of view?** Volunteers bring experiences and opinions that reflect their own unique backgrounds and ideas. This helps the group stay in touch with a variety of points of view, which in turn supports more effective decision-making. The diversity provided by volunteer involvement can help community groups stay current and relevant to the community.
- bring experience, knowledge and expertise?** Many groups are fortunate to have outstanding volunteers who have years of experience, specialized knowledge and unique abilities. These exceptional skills contribute to the value of your group and cannot be underestimated.
- help keep the group “down to earth” and focused?** Because volunteers are members of the community served by the group, they can make sure services remain practical and beneficial. It is the volunteer who often reminds the group about why it is there in the first place, and helps keep the focus on the group’s purpose.
- help identify solutions?** Volunteers work with groups while doing many other things in the community. By sharing his or her experience, the volunteer can help the group identify new ways of offering services and delivering programs.
- provide a voice in the community?** Volunteering is an effective way for people to contribute to the decision-making process in their communities, which supports our democratic society.
- get involved to make a difference?** Volunteers are motivated by a willingness to help out and make things better. The presence of volunteers in our groups is felt in a way that is quite different from that of a paid staff person. The very definition of volunteer involvement is to “give of your time and talents without expecting any payment”. When people get involved because they want to and have chosen to do so, it sends a sincere message of commitment and enthusiasm for the work.

While most community-based groups know that they depend on the contribution of volunteers for their survival, their contribution is also more important and is key to the success of the organization.

This is why it is vital to understand the value of volunteers, and the importance of supporting volunteer involvement.

As your group looks at ways of getting work done, we encourage you to consider “why you involve volunteers?”. Answering this question may help your group involve more people and achieve its goals!¹

There is an approach to finding, involving and keeping dedicated volunteers. It’s called **Volunteer Development** and it is made up of five stages. This **Fact Sheet** (no. 1 of 14) addresses the importance of **planning for volunteer involvement**.

For more information on the Volunteer Development Cycle or Volunteer Involvement, contact your local Volunteer Centre (www.volunteer.ca/volunteercentres).

Volunteer Development Cycle



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