



Volunteer Connections:

New strategies for involving youth

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Version française également disponible.



Canada

Foreword

Volunteer Connections: New Strategies for Involving Youth is one of a series of four volunteer program management manuals prepared by Volunteer Canada. These manuals are designed to assist both professional administrators of volunteer resources as well as individuals who find themselves recruiting, managing, overseeing and supporting volunteers.

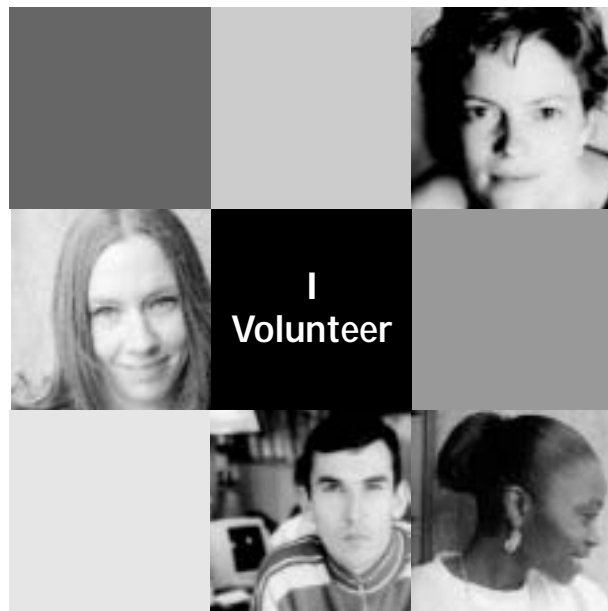
Each manual includes practical information on how to involve specific populations of volunteers into an organization's volunteer programs and goals. Tips and strategies for enhancing volunteer management are offered.

The goal of these materials is to address the daily challenges that organizations and groups face when seeking to involve youth, people with disabilities and older adults as volunteers. The set also includes a manual on employee volunteerism that addresses the impact, opportunities, and challenges faced by voluntary organizations in involving them.



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Introduction

Every year, more than 7.5 million Canadians volunteer their time, skills and energy to improve the lives of others. Increasingly, these volunteers are young. Today, one in five volunteers in Canada is under the age of 25.

For organizations that include young people in their volunteer base, the rewards are plentiful — for them, their communities and the volunteers. Young people bring a unique mix of passion and enthusiasm to their volunteer activities. They are curious and energetic, eager to contribute to their community and to the lives of others.

In recent years a number of youth volunteer programs have emerged that require young people to volunteer (school programs, Community Service Orders, workfare). The labour market in Canada has also changed dramatically, especially for entry level workers, and oftentimes young people start off in the job market through a volunteer position.

These trends have resulted in an increasing demand for interesting, skills-oriented volunteer work. In turn this is putting pressure on voluntary organizations to create a supply of such positions. But, as volunteer program managers and organization leaders know, it's not always that easy to change organizational habits, to make the necessary modifications to policies and practices that create more volunteer opportunities for youth. In most cases, organizations will extend existing volunteer positions to young people without taking the time and resources needed to craft something youth-specific. In other cases, organizations are reluctant to involve youth as volunteers given the difference they bring in attitude, availability and interests.

Volunteer Connections: New Strategies for Involving Youth has been written to help organization personnel think through the benefits, and challenges, of getting young people involved as volunteers. The manual intends to encourage reflection, and perhaps even some debate, while offering practical suggestions and resources for moving forward.

Youth volunteers are not leaders of tomorrow, not the hope of the future — rather they are the leaders of today and the future is now!

Youth volunteers can challenge previous ways of thinking, doing and feeling. They are full of ideas and they have much to contribute.

Becky Anderson (Calgary)
Volunteer Coordinator, Canadian Cancer Society



Youth Volunteerism—An Emerging Trend

In the past, the traditional Canadian volunteer was never portrayed as young. She (and it was very often a woman) was a stay-at-home wife, financially supported by her husband, who spent her time doing good works. However, there is no way to tell whether this stereotypical picture is correct because volunteering statistics were rarely captured. In legend however, and very likely in fact, the traditional volunteer was never a teenager!

Nonetheless, there has always been a cohort of young people in Canada actively committed to community. Girl Guides and Boy Scouts have fostered generations of socially active youth. Faith-based volunteering involves thousands of young people. Many schools have programs to inform students about citizenship and civic responsibility; some have programs that facilitate community work. Youth-serving agencies in Canada, such as YM/YWCA's, Boys and Girls Clubs, and 4-H include youth service as an element of their programming. Young people have a strong tradition of involvement in the sport and recreation sector, often moving from participant to helper to junior coach.

In 1987 Statistics Canada carried out a major national survey on volunteering. At that time the volunteer rate among 15 to 24 year-olds was 17 per cent. Ten years later, the rate had jumped to 33 per cent. Clearly things had changed in Canada and the context and influences relating to youth volunteering had become considerably different.

Even a cursory understanding of the Canadian economy of the late 1980s and early 1990s indicates that the job prospects for young people were grim — especially for those out to get that all-important first job. The baby boomers had taken up a huge percentage of the available jobs. Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1980, was caught in the tail wind of this large, highly educated juggernaut of workers. While a higher percentage of Generation Xers had post-secondary education than any group before them, in the absence of available jobs it didn't really matter. Technology also had its impact. Many entry-level jobs such as office administration, manufacturing, and machine operation became mechanized. Even the service industry was in a position to be more demanding; potential workers were asked to have experience and skills.

Young people turned to community service as a way to learn work skills, establish employment experience and prove their abilities. School counsellors, youth workers and parents identified volunteer work as a viable choice for summer and part-time activities.

The data from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) provides a picture of volunteering in Canada, and offers a glimpse into the activities and motivations of all volunteers, including youth. A number of fact sheets and a complete overview of survey results may be found online at www.nsgvp.org.

The most significant difference between young volunteers (15 to 24) and their older counterparts is their motivations for volunteering. While older volunteers cite a variety of reasons including social and cause-related motivations, youth overwhelmingly identify the desire to develop work-related skills as their primary motivation. Almost half of the youth surveyed (46 per cent) said they volunteered to develop new skills, and 65 per cent said that they chose to volunteer because they believed it would help them get a job. A quarter of youth volunteers indicated that their volunteer work had, in fact, helped them get a job.

Whether related to the issue of motivation, or reflective of overall time-use trends, another significant change seen between 1987 and 1997 is the amount of time contributed to volunteering. A reduction of average hours is observed across all age groups. The change among young volunteers is significant. The number of hours volunteered by a typical youth aged 15 to 24 in 1987 was 174 hours a year. By 1997, this average had dropped to 125 hours and was as low as 115 hours for the youngest volunteers of all, 15 to 19-year-olds.

The survey also gives a glimpse into what young volunteers in Canada actually do. Almost 40 per cent volunteer in the areas of culture, sport and recreation. Another 35 per cent participate in “youth volunteer events.” Youth do not volunteer heavily in arts, health or social services. Anecdotal evidence points to a high interest among youth in the environmental sphere but the statistical support for this is difficult to ascertain. Volunteering for the environment was only identified by two per cent of all respondents.

These statistics provide clear evidence of what young people are looking for in a volunteer experience. In 1998, a study in the United Kingdom identified what young people do not want. In the study, entitled “Vanishing Volunteers: Are Young People Losing Interest in Volunteering,”¹ young people identified “image, lack of time, lack of information, and lack of gatekeepers” as major barriers to volunteer involvement. The young people who participated in the survey shared perceptions that volunteering is boring, poorly organized, and primarily something that older (middle class) women do. Respondents said that it is difficult for them to find people who can tell them when and where to volunteer and that often they sense resistance to young volunteers within organizations.

The young people interviewed listed eight characteristics they are seeking in volunteer activities :

- **Flexibility** – they seek spontaneity and choices in volunteering
- **Legitimacy** – information about the range and significance of the volunteer position
- **Ease of access** – more information and easy access points
- **Experience** – stimulating, interesting, relevant activities
- **Incentives** – tangible rewards, especially references
- **Variety** – opportunities to fulfill personal interests and goals
- **Organization** – efficient, but informal, relaxed, supportive
- **Laughs** – enjoyable, satisfying and fun

The author of the study, Katharine Gaskin, goes on to suggest a number of strategies that organizations might take to address these desires. Later in this guide we discuss how each of these needs can be met through good volunteer program design.

The NSGVP was carried out on the cusp of another significant trend impacting youth volunteering in Canada. The results of the 2000 NSGVP will provide statistical evidence of the impact of “mandatory volunteering” on youth volunteer rates.

Mandatory volunteer programs began to emerge in Canada during the mid-90s, although some forms have been around for longer. Mandatory volunteer programs, however structured, require people to volunteer. In the case of Community Service Orders, volunteering is presented as an alternative to incarceration for a crime. In the case of workfare, people are required to do community service or risk losing social assistance.

The most far-reaching mandatory volunteer programs in Canada are those being introduced into the education system. As of 2001, two provinces have introduced a requirement to volunteer in order to graduate from high school. Many other provinces have similar policies under consideration. The most sweeping of these programs is in Ontario where every high school student is now required to do 40 hours of community involvement prior to graduation.

It is impossible to know — and it is likely irrelevant and perhaps even unfair to try and assess — to what degree any volunteer is motivated by charity versus self-interest. The NSGVP statistics clearly indicate a strong interest by young people to develop work skills, gain experience and position themselves within the labour market. Mandatory volunteer programs may result in youth being forced to volunteer who would not have elected to do so without the program requirement. And yet, how many young people will enter into a volunteer position for those reasons only to find themselves deeply affected by the power and impact of the experience?

Whatever the reasons, Canada is in a position to benefit from this cohort of young people volunteering at higher rates than ever before. This trend offers a remarkable opportunity to voluntary organizations. It also challenges them to create mutually beneficial volunteer programming. Youth volunteers need to be positioned to help organizations get the work they need to do done. Voluntary organizations need to help youth volunteers to develop work skills, and to track and evaluate their work-related experience.

Involving Youth as Volunteers— the Challenges and Benefits

Canada's voluntary sector is a rich and diverse community of approximately 180,000 organizations. Voluntary organizations work across a wide spectrum of sub-sectors — health, social service, environment, sport and recreation, arts and culture, faith, international aid and equity seeking.

In addition to these sub-sectors, a large number of organizations work horizontally across the sector. This group would include research and advocacy organizations, funders (like United Ways or Community Foundations), and numerous equity seeking groups representing the interests of their members or specific targeted populations such as people with disabilities, women or aboriginal peoples.

A large number of associations also exist in the sector. These are organizations that generally convene a sub-set of other organizations either around a shared mandate, population served or specific area of interest.

Finally, any discussion seeking to define the voluntary sector in Canada needs to at least acknowledge organizations such as hospitals, schools, universities and municipal community programs. While these entities may not perfectly fit into the voluntary sector they are key in providing a range of social, health and educational services to Canadians while involving millions of volunteers.

It is highly unlikely that any voluntary organization in Canada would actually refuse to involve youth volunteers. The vast majority would generally welcome a young person who sought out a volunteer position. Why then have so many youth-serving organizations, local volunteer centres, and managers of volunteers identified a lack of opportunity for youth volunteers? The answer centres around the question of degree: the degree to which the organization actually welcomes youth volunteers; the degree to which young people are looking for, or hoping for, a volunteer experience that will meet their unique needs; and the degree to which young volunteers will be expected to “fit in” to an existing volunteer program, both in terms of the kind of work to be done and the context in which it is done.

While most charities and not-for-profits will make minor adjustments to their existing volunteer programming to involve youth, few have created uniquely youth-oriented volunteer opportunities. One could ask “Why not?”

Contrary to a popular myth there is little hard evidence in Canada that the voluntary sector has a dearth of volunteers. There are certainly parts of the sector that struggle to attract and retain volunteers. Generally these are in either remote and isolated geographic areas or are organizations whose work is particularly difficult or needs a long term commitment. It can be hard, for example, for organizations that serve street people or people with mental health disabilities, to find volunteers.

Organizations that hope to have volunteers make a long-term commitment such as Big Brothers, or Scouts and Guides may have difficulties recruiting volunteers. Churches and other faith organizations have a perennial need for Sunday and Saturday School teachers. On the other hand, there are organizations that regularly turn away potential volunteers — hospitals for example, or others who find themselves at certain times of the year (Christmas) with too many helpers.

On balance it appears that no real volunteer recruitment crisis exists in Canada and that most organizations have enough volunteers, most of the time. Given this relatively stable situation it can seem like a lot of work for an organization to think about involving youth as volunteers, and the motivation to do so can be more theoretical than pressing. People who recruit and manage volunteers know that young people need a different kind of support, different training, different positions and different recognition. But why bother?

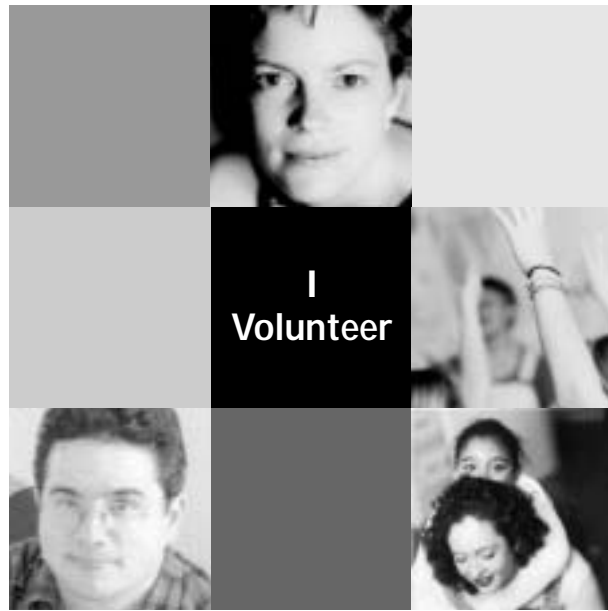
The simple answer is that it's the right thing to do. People who work in the voluntary sector are interested in social development, in the well-being of others, and the health of society as a whole. We are people people. We know that it's good for young people to be given a chance to serve and to grow. It is good for our program participants to encounter young people, whether they be seniors being visited or children, learning a new skill, or adults running a marathon. It is good for our society to be inclusive and to foster inter-generational opportunities.

Involving youth as volunteers is also good for our organizations and for our programs. Young people bring a fresh and energetic perspective to the things in which they are involved. Many have outstanding technology skills or language abilities; they have benefited from a different and more enriched education than their baby boomer or older counterparts.

One of the great strengths of the voluntary sector is how it allows small groups of people to come together, identify a need, and build a solution. However, one of the most challenging things about the sector is how these numerous small groups of people can become inward looking, stagnant and overly homogenous. Voluntary organizations need to constantly renew and refresh themselves. What better way to do so than to involve a cross-section of volunteers of all ages, from all walks of life, with different backgrounds and varied expectations?

Young people are curious. They often challenge the status quo, which is generally a creature of some other generation. In our changing world, where information and practices move at the speed of the Internet, determinedly maintaining the status quo can be a dangerous strategy. Today's youth are the leaders and consumers of tomorrow. Their opinions and input can help voluntary organizations adapt to change and be prepared to meet the needs of the future.

It takes work to properly involve young people as volunteers. Our boards and programs will be changed as a result. So what is stopping us? Nothing that a little planning and program development won't address. Read on.



Ready to Grow — Involving Youth as Volunteers

Change doesn't come easily to many of us and especially in organizations that may depend heavily on "brand" recognition, having a well established place in community or beloved traditions. Voluntary organizations depend heavily on oral history given how frequently the leadership at the board level may turn over. We tend to be fond of establishing solid, well researched practices and policies. We can be resistant to changing them.

If an organization has never actively sought out youth volunteers it would be naïve to think that the decisions that need to be taken to undertake the necessary organizational changes will be made quickly, or involve only one or two people. While some organizations' decisions about volunteer management are completely in the hands of the manager of volunteers, we suggest involving the board in the deliberation on whether, and how, to involve youth as volunteers in your organization.

We recommend using the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement as a tool to consider each element of volunteer programming in your organization and its relation to youth involvement. It may also be useful to use the code as a starting place for a larger discussion within the organization about volunteers in general. If your board of directors has endorsed a well-conceived overall policy on volunteers, you can likely move immediately to a discussion about making programs and volunteer opportunities more youth-friendly. If, on the other hand, little organizational consideration has been given to broader issues around volunteering it might be difficult to start discussing youth involvement.

The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement articulates a standardized set of values, principles and standards that reflect current thinking in Canada around volunteer programming in general. Volunteer Canada recommends that all voluntary organizations in Canada adopt the code and assess their current policies and practices against it. The code provides a straightforward and easy to understand "bottom line" for volunteer involvement and programming. It is highly unlikely that an organization would be uncomfortable adopting the values and standards as presented. Prefacing a board level discussion about youth volunteering with the broader conversation about adopting the code will ensure that all the relevant parties are starting from the same basic understanding.

The exact nature of a board discussion on volunteers will depend on the size and structure of the organization and the designated role and responsibilities of the board. Most boards seek to be an advisory body primarily focused on governance and oversight.

In this context a board discussion on youth volunteers will be philosophical and strategic in nature, focussing on the following questions:

- Do we accept the values, principals and standards for volunteer involvement as laid out in the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement?
- Given our commitment to having a diverse and accessible volunteer program, we would be very pleased to welcome youth as volunteers in our organization... do we want to go further by investing targeted human, and possibly financial, resources to create a youth volunteer program or youth specific volunteer opportunities in our organization?
- What are the benefits of doing so — to our organization, our community, our constituents and / or clients?
- What are the potential drawbacks?

To foster the discussion it will be helpful to have some of the following:

- How many youth are currently engaged in your organization as volunteers? Do you have any comment on the successes, or challenges, of having these younger volunteers?
- How much work needs to be done to adapt the organization's volunteer policies and practices to be youth friendly? What does it entail? How many hours? What will this cost both in terms of time and any other hard costs?

What do you feel the benefits will be? Examples may include the following:

- We need volunteers in certain areas and feel that youth would be effective volunteers in this area.
- Our funders (constituency, members, clients) will view the involvement of youth in our organization favourably. We know this because...
- We are being approached on a regular basis by young people interested in volunteering and we don't feel that we have many interesting or appropriate opportunities to offer them.
- All our volunteers are the same age and we don't think that's good for us!
- We need help with our computer systems, Internet use, music program, and we believe that young people will bring helpful skills in these areas.

You will also want to be ready to discuss the potential drawbacks of involving youth as volunteers. Common concerns about youth volunteers often include the following:

- Young people will be less likely to make a long-term commitment and, as a result, there will be a high turnover rate among these volunteers.
- Youth will not be reliable—they may arrive late or leave early; they won't complete tasks properly, or won't show up at all when you are depending on them.
- Young people will take more supervision and training.
- We'll have to reward and recognize these volunteers differently.

To some degree each of these concerns is valid. However, all of them can be alleviated by good planning and program design. It should also be noted that it is not only youth who can be unreliable or in need of lots of training and support. And, as in all things, the negative side of the ledger needs to be balanced with a discussion of the positive attributes youth bring to their volunteer position: energy, passion, a sense of fun and adventure.

Once the board and senior staff of the organization have made the decision to move forward, someone — probably you — will need to create a new program or adapt the existing one to make the organization more open and interesting for young volunteers. The remaining sections of the guide are designed to help you in your work. It must be pointed out however, that there is no easy one-size-fits-all approach to designing and enabling youth volunteer involvement. It is virtually impossible to write a single guide that would be equally helpful and relevant to a Scout troop, an online advocacy organization and a hospital. In the end, the strategies and suggestions will mostly serve to jog your thinking and help you get started.

Back to the Drawing Board

In many charities and not-for-profit organizations the volunteer program is in fact not a program at all. There are volunteers who do things and there are volunteers who lead things and no one thinks of any of this as a program and no one ever set out to design the way volunteers are involved.

The organization probably got started by a small group of people who didn't even consider themselves volunteers at the time. They created a response to a need, got some sort of infrastructure up and running, and eventually began to either hire people to do some of the work, or to recruit more volunteers. The activities, roles and work of the organization developed over time. Perhaps at some point an individual was taken on — either as a volunteer or in a paid capacity — to organize volunteer recruitment, training and recognition. In a small number of cases the organization may even have developed policies and procedures that prescribe the ways that volunteers should be involved. Most likely the majority of organizations have some pieces in place, and more to do in terms of creating a seamless, well articulated and policy-guided volunteer program.

Given this reality, the best way to start thinking about youth volunteer involvement might be to go right back to a set of fundamental questions about volunteers in the organization overall. Try working through the assignment below. You may wish to do so merely by considering each item in your head as a preface to rolling up your sleeves to work on the youth program. On the other hand, you may like to convene a little working group (staff, volunteers from the organization, people external to the organization interested to help) and work through the items as an exercise.

EXERCISE

■ *Briefly describe what our mission is.*

■ *Who do we serve? What general characteristics do our clients or constituents have?*

■ *How do we achieve our mission i.e. what do we do?*

Consider the work of the organization as a series of tasks, or jobs strung together. At the moment some of these jobs are done by paid people (maybe), some are done by volunteers. Perhaps some of the work doesn't get done at all.

There are probably a number of jobs that are well articulated whether there is a formal job description for them or not. There are probably other jobs that fall into the category of "we could do that if only we had the time, the money, the people etc." Consider all of these opportunities as you work through the exercise.

Take note that in every organization the mix of paid and unpaid people will be different. For the purpose of this exercise it shouldn't matter whether the work is done by a staff person or volunteer however it may be helpful to consider whether there are any aspects of the work that mean that it is more suitable for one over the other. By stepping back and thinking objectively about the work that needs to be done we can sometimes identify possible new volunteer positions, or work that needs to be funded in order to be able to hire someone. However our primary purpose here is to consider youth involvement...

■ *Consider each existing job and answer the following questions:*

- *What is the time commitment for these tasks?*
 - *When is the work scheduled?*
 - *What skills are required to do these tasks?*
 - *Do we provide appropriate training to enable a person to do the tasks?*
 - *What is the setting for this job?*
 - *What is the social environment for this job? Is it solitary work or teamwork? Who are the other team members?*
 - *Are these tasks something a young person would be able to do?*
 - *Considering the way the job is designed, would it appeal to a younger volunteer? If yes, why? If not, why not?*
 - *Is there something about this job that makes it unsuitable for a younger person to do?*
-

Once you have completed this exercise for each position in the organization you will have a good idea of how youth friendly your current volunteer opportunities are. You will also have identified any jobs not suitable for youth. You may have been able to identify what changes could be made — to the social environment of a job perhaps, or to the training provided — that could increase the likelihood that a young person could, or would want to, take on a volunteer position.

Thus far you have spent time considering existing work in the organization and ways to make volunteer positions more appropriate for youth volunteers. A more comprehensive effort to involve youth will include one of two strategies:

- A. You may want to consider grouping a number of the “jobs,” setting them aside to be only done by youth, i.e. create a youth volunteer project or program.
- B. You may want to create a new project designed specifically to be done by youth.

Now that you have completed the job-by-job analysis it’s a straightforward proposition to implement strategy A. Strategy B requires a little more thought. Consider the following:

- Is there something about our mission that could lend itself to a project to be done by youth?
- Is there an aspect of our client services (member services, constituent communication) that could be structured to be run by and delivered by youth?
- Are there issues that we would like to get youth input on? Could we set up one or more youth advisory projects or committees?
- Could we or should we create a youth position on our board?
- Is there a special event that we can change to be youth delivered or youth-targeted? Is there a new event we can think of that could be delivered by youth?
- Is there a youth-run fundraising strategy or event that makes sense for our organization?

As you come to the end of this exercise you should have identified ways to make current volunteer positions more youth-friendly, and one or more youth volunteer projects that could be introduced into your organization.

The hard part is done. The next steps are fairly administrative. You'll need to adjust existing job descriptions or write new ones. Consider the recruitment strategy to reach out to young people for the jobs. Create training and orientation sessions related to the positions and projects. And finally, you need to consider how the organization will recognize younger volunteers.

There are countless resources that describe, in general, how to recruit, train, manage, oversee, screen and recognize volunteers. Check the Volunteer Canada Web site at www.volunteer.ca for references and refer to the Guide to Volunteer Program Management Resources. The following sections comment on each of these elements of volunteer management from a youth involvement perspective. We leave it to the reader to have — or to get — the baseline practice information in each area.

Making Your Organization Youth-Friendly

- Start by involving youth volunteers in short-term projects. This approach provides a chance to evaluate your newly created systems and make improvements and changes without adversely affecting the progress of a long-term project.
- Schedule “dress-down” days in your organization to create a casual environment for your youth volunteers. If you do this it is important to post signs so your customers know this is a staff / volunteer initiative.
- Have occasional “dress-up” days for your youth volunteers, so they can learn about and practice professional etiquette.
- Incorporate images of youth into your office decor. Are there images of young people in your artwork, posters, or organizational literature? You may be able to get youth-friendly posters from local youth organizations, volunteer centres, or from Volunteer Canada.

Recruitment

The NSGVP confirms what most volunteer recruiters know: the majority of volunteers get involved because they are asked to by someone they know. Much volunteer recruitment happens by word of mouth. Many voluntary organizations have additional tried and true methods for recruiting volunteers. Some organizations use newsletters, bulletins or newspapers to advertise volunteer opportunities. Others post notices in public places such as university common centres, shopping malls or the Internet. Many charities and not-for-profits access the referral services of a volunteer centre.

The most successful recruitment occurs when there is a good match between the outreach to find volunteers and the available volunteer opportunity. In other words, the call for volunteers goes out to people or places that are relevant to the job. For example, posting a position for computer support at a technical school or high-tech firm, or announcing a volunteer driver position to the parents of children involved in a program.

In addition to targeting the right places and people, a good recruitment strategy makes use of clear and detailed job descriptions. These documents include a number of elements:

- information about the work to be done
- the skills and experience needed
- the skills and experience to be gained in taking the job
- a thorough outline of the time and duration of the position
- a description of the training to be provided
- a brief overview of the organizational and, or, program goals and objectives
- information about the application, interview, screening and selection process

Your organization likely employs some or all of these approaches. Now consider whether your usual methods of recruiting volunteers will reach young people, and whether your recruiting materials will be of interest to them.

We have identified three basic aspects to recruitment: finding the right places to post or advertise the available position; gaining access to people who may be interested in, or suitable for, the volunteer position; and using a job description and a good descriptive document. It helps to look at each of these through a youth “lens.”

1. FINDING THE BEST PLACES TO ADVERTISE FOR YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

The best place to recruit youth is where young people are: schools, colleges and universities, youth clubs and programs, certain shopping malls, movie theatres and arcades. Many young people log onto the Internet regularly, so it is another good place to advertise. Take a look at the Volunteer Canada online volunteer recruitment tool the Volunteer Opportunities Exchange (VOE) at www.voe-reb.org. The VOE is connected to many Web sites often used by young people including SchoolNet and the Volunteering Works! sites.

A number of local volunteer centres have close relationships with schools and many have created a database of available youth and youth volunteer positions.

2. GAINING ACCESS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

You will find potential youth volunteers in the same places that you post available positions. However, there are other ways to capture the attention of young people. Teachers and counsellors can easily introduce the possibility of volunteer work to young people. A single conversation with a school principal or teacher might net you a number of interviews with potential volunteers. You might ask to speak to a class, or club at the local high school, college or university. If possible, bring a current volunteer (ideally a young person) to talk about the volunteer work that you offer.

Create an announcement targeted to the parents of teens and young adults and post it at workplaces, churches, or community centres. Encourage parents, as well as young people, to call for more information.

3. USING A JOB DESCRIPTION

You have already considered how attractive and suitable your agency's volunteer positions are to young people. The job description should use language that reflects this youth focus. Describe the work as interesting, high energy, and results oriented. Give an impression of active and productive work to be done.

A job description targeted to a youth volunteer describes the skills requirements in inter-personal terms rather than technically. The description may say that you are looking for an enthusiastic person, a quick learner or someone with excellent people skills, instead of requiring experience working with people, or in the specific task area.

Youth will be more likely to volunteer if they know they will receive training. Highlight this in the job description. Where possible, describe the training as being done by, and with, other young people. For example, “this volunteer position includes a one day training and orientation for all new participants,” or, “participation in the youth volunteer club orientation session is a prerequisite for this volunteer position. The session is offered one day per month.”

Make it very clear what kind of skills and experience the volunteer will gain and tie these to the job market. For example, you may say “an excellent opportunity to learn teaching and coaching skills,” or “volunteers will gain experience and will receive a certificate (or reference) upon completion of their term,” or, “an outstanding opportunity to develop administration skills working with computers and office systems.”

Youth are attracted to short-term opportunities and are looking for volunteer positions that can be done part time or in short, intense spurts. Offer volunteer jobs requiring one evening a week (5 to 9), or one day a month (Saturday or Sunday), or a summer or holiday stint of two to three weeks duration.

From the outset, all volunteers appreciate knowing the purpose and goals of the organization or program. Young volunteers will be particularly interested to see immediate and action oriented impacts. Recruitment materials for an organization that provides social services could refer to basic statistics: every year xxxx people are homeless in our community... xxxx people come to our centre for counseling... xxxx children participate in our sports program. The job description could also include some reference to the importance of the volunteer program, “our youth volunteer program is well known for its energy and for the fun our volunteers have together... more importantly they know they’re making a real difference in our community.” Another tact is to have one or two brief testimonial statements as part of the document: “I love being a volunteer at the centre, it’s fun and I know what I’m doing is important,” or “I can’t believe how much I’ve learned as a volunteer here at _____.”

As presented earlier, the British study by the Institute for Volunteering Research² identified eight key interests of young volunteers. Based on these, the researchers have created the FLEXIVOL model. Consider how you might incorporate these strategies into your youth recruitment program:

1. Flexibility

Young people seek choice and spontaneity, short-term and long-term opportunities. Provide volunteer assignments that can be done after school, on weekends, or during school holidays. Offer flexibility around exam time.

2. Legitimacy

Provide information about the full range of volunteer work you have available and explain its significance. Young people want to know how they are making a difference.

3. Ease of Access

Make sure that information is available on your organization and the volunteer position. Be clear about how you will help the volunteer prepare for a position, explain what kind of training you will provide.

4. Experience

What skills will they learn through the volunteer position and how will these skills further their career paths? Explain the relevance of volunteer experience – make direct connections with employment possibilities.

5. Incentives

Offer tangible rewards, especially references. Can you connect them with potential employers?

6. Variety

Young people want an opportunity to explore their interests and work towards personal goals. Can you promise them work that will keep them learning about new things?

7. Organization

These volunteers are looking for an efficient but informal environment. They want to participate in a relaxed and supportive workplace. Reassure them that they won't be overwhelmed with policies and procedures. Let them know that checklists or phone (or e-mail) check-ins are as valid as written reports.

8. Laughs

Young people want their volunteering experience to be enjoyable, satisfying and fun.

Orientation and Training

One of the most important ways to meet the needs of volunteers and the needs of the organization is to ensure volunteers are properly trained. All volunteers should receive a basic orientation to the organization and their program areas. Training should be provided on any general organizational protocols and on the specific tasks to be carried out.

Many volunteers indicate that receiving specialized training is an incentive to choosing to volunteer. Skills development, and the chance to extend work experience in new areas, are major motivators for volunteers. Young people are particularly motivated by the work-related aspects of volunteering. They are interested in volunteer work that helps them gain work experience, and allows them to try out the skills that they may have developed in school, or on their own. Young people may have very limited work experiences. They also need the chance to learn the social aspects of work behaviour such as communications, work site norms, and time management.

Establishing a good training regime for volunteers is not always easy. In organizations where human resources are pushed to the limit, it can seem difficult to make time for anything but direct service. Good trainers can be hard to find. Not everyone is able or interested in taking on a teaching role. There may also be concerns that training youth volunteers is not a good use of time. Why invest in training if the volunteer will only be there for a short time?

All of these concerns are valid. And yet we know from experience, and through volunteering research, that good training increases the productivity of volunteers. It acts as an incentive to attract people to the organization in the first place, and it keeps them there. We also know that access to training and development is a highly regarded form of volunteer recognition.

We recommend that the training program you choose relates back to the job design and the job descriptions. Obviously, if a volunteer makes a short-term commitment of less than 20 hours you are not going to require four hours of training. Nor will you place a short-term volunteer into a technically or personally challenging position. Consider the volunteer positions you are offering and identify the amount, content and approach to training needed for each one.

The nature of the training program will be determined by your decision to include youth volunteers in a general session (which will likely be the case if the young volunteer will be working alongside volunteers of all ages), or whether you are preparing young people for a specific youth project. In the latter case, you have the opportunity to create a uniquely youth-oriented training approach. However, when young volunteers are being trained with older people, you should be aware that they will move through the experience differently.

Young volunteers will likely view the training with a combination of two attitudes. On one hand, you will probably be speaking a language they barely understand — all work sites have their own culture, jargon and style. This is probably quite foreign to a young person who may not have very much experience outside of school, home and youth activities. Young people come into the training with less contextual information than older people, and much less experience. On the other hand, young people are in a learning mode. It can be less challenging for them to learn a new technical skill, or to absorb the information being thrown at them. The ability to take in and retain new information and apply it to behaviour is a skill like any other. It is a skill that can get rusty. Older adult volunteers can sometimes find it harder than their younger counterparts to sit through a training and orientation session.

Alternatively, young people often have shorter attention spans and will generally be more interested to learn by doing than to sit and work through theory. They don't want to receive a lot of written materials, and are comfortable being taught through computer — based instruction, videos, and other multi-media.

The most comfortable training setting and style for young people is relaxed and fun, with lots of time for socializing. Youth are less likely to appreciate a formal training session, which carefully follows a set agenda. Their energy and desire to see quick results may be at odds with that approach.

The most challenging situation is a combined training session of a few young people and a number of older volunteers. If properly managed, this kind of mixed session could be both fun and instructive for all the volunteers involved. You will need to consider the style and approach to learning of the different volunteers in the session and try to meet all their needs. In such a situation it is a good idea to implicate the participants. At the outset of the session ask them to identify the way they like to learn, how they want to receive information (written format, by reviewing a Web site, through a presentation, by talking in small groups), and overtly acknowledge that you have a mix of styles in the room and challenge the group to make sure everyone's needs are met.

The danger of a training session where young people are seriously outnumbered is that you will lose their interest, and possibly the participation. In this scenario the trainer must pay particular attention to the needs of the young person. Be sure that the young participant receives concise information, understands how the training relates to the development of their skills and work experience, and satisfies their need for social interaction. Try to buddy up the young person with another volunteer — it's easier to break down the divide between generations on a one-to-one basis than it is in a group setting. Spend some time with the young volunteer to make sure he, or she, is not feeling overwhelmed or disengaged. You might ask the young person to help you with

equipment or with handing out materials, or with set up and tear down of the room. Make sure that you include youth volunteer examples in your training discussions.

If you have created a special youth volunteer activity in your organization and are planning the training element, be prepared to have fun. The orientation and training will set the tone for the whole initiative. Youth participants are watching closely to see how you communicate, and whether the organization is open to their input and energy. Include youth in the planning and delivery of the training. There is no time in life when we are more influenced by our peers than when we are young. Involving youth in putting forward the information and instruction for the program will have a powerful effect. Energy levels among young people are different too, so build in lots of physical activity, site visits, role-plays and practice sessions. What young people don't want is a lot of written instruction and lengthy classroom sessions. This will feel too much like school and not enough like real life (it's not completely clear that older adults want this kind of training either!).

Providing appropriate skills and communication-based training is key to the success of your volunteer programming. Successful training helps volunteers feel more satisfied with their experience, and it helps volunteers do a better job for the agency. Young people cite the opportunity to develop work-related skills and experience as a major motivation for volunteering. Invest in training them well. Your organization will be rewarded and so will they.

YOUTH VOLUNTEER TRAINING TIPS

Timing

- Be clear about how long your presentation will take—and stick to it!
 - Generally, shorter is better, even if this means you will have to schedule more than one session.
-

Information Materials

- Evaluate any hand-outs that you will be using:
 - Is the language level appropriate?
 - Is the content clearly written? Be concise and use everyday language.
 - For example, descriptions of the organization's mission, mandate, and objectives should read: Who We Are, What We Do, and How We Do It.
 - Is the content meaningful to younger volunteers? They need to know about the bus routes not the parking procedures.
 - Do you use colour in the materials? Can you print materials on coloured paper?
 - Do you provide a binder or folder to organize these materials?
-

Teaching Methods

- Explore a variety of techniques, this is a great opportunity to be innovative.
- Put on short skits to teach important points.
- Write and record a 30-second radio commercial for a volunteer task. Have fun with sound effects. Play the commercial as an introduction to a training session.
- Use an audiotaped, scripted phone conversation as a teaching tool.
- Try role-playing to explore new situations and help to build a volunteer's confidence.
- Set up an electronic discussion board on your organization's Web site.
- Encourage volunteers to post their questions and comments.

Supervision and Evaluation

Supervising and evaluating volunteers can present a challenge to voluntary organizations. In some cases, these elements of good volunteer management require resources that organizations don't have, namely the time for someone to do it, or the expertise in human resource systems. In other cases, the nature of the volunteer position may not easily lend itself to supervision (although evaluation is always possible — even for a very short-term contribution). Finally, individuals with the responsibility to recruit and support volunteers can feel uncomfortable doing anything but sharing heartfelt thanks!

Providing volunteers with regular supervision and periodic evaluation is an important way of ensuring that their contribution is meaningful — for them, and for the organization. This is particularly true for young people, who often have little work related experience and are seeking (and need) the support and feedback of the organization. Without adequate supervision the volunteer may feel that they are unable to meet the needs of the position, or they may find themselves doing things wrong. Nothing could be more discouraging. A negative first volunteer experience is bad for the organization and may discourage the young person from volunteering again.

Supervision provides young people with guidance, encouragement, support and on-the-job training. It allows the organization to define the tasks to be done, and to maintain effective working relationships. Young people do not necessarily need any more or less supervision than other volunteers. What they do need is:

- A clear identification of who is supervising them
- An understanding of how supervision will be provided — as the work is done (working side by side with a supervisor or other worker), in separate supervision sessions, or in teams
- An opportunity to express their opinions and concerns
- Supervision that reflects the job description for the volunteer position and the orientation and training that has been provided

In some instances new recruits may feel overwhelmed, especially if this is a first experience at a job of any sort. A peer coach can help make the transition smoother, and at the same time provide the necessary supervision. The communication strategies that work best with young people are important to remember here, too. Youth may prefer to receive supervisory guidance through electronic means, or as they do the job, rather than in written format or through more formal structures. Young people may need to have things explained to them a number of times. Remember, they are likely adjusting to a whole new milieu. They are getting used to the rhythm and nature of formal work settings. Possibly, they are surrounded by adults they don't know, and they may find that intimidating.

Evaluation

Given the close connection for most young volunteers between their work and school aspirations and their decision to volunteer, it is extremely important to take the time to do thorough evaluations. Where it may be less important to a well established worker or a retiree to receive feedback about their work style, attitude and abilities, such information will be very helpful to a young person's development. Be prepared to give youth volunteers a written evaluation. Many young people can use this record to support school or work applications and requirements.

Everyone can benefit from self-evaluation. One of the most powerful tools you can have is the ability to know yourself, and to be able to correct your own actions and approach based on an assessment of how well you're doing a job, how others are responding to your work, your communication style, and your attitude. Youth is a time for self-exploration. In terms of psycho-social development it tends to be a period of intense self-interest. Young people are highly attuned to the opinions others have of them, particularly peers. Capitalize on these facts by letting the young volunteer do the work! Create a self-assessment tool for youth volunteers and let them set the tone and goals for their volunteer work and evaluation. You can put them in the driver's seat by asking them to evaluate themselves. Ask them to monitor their own development. See Appendix D for an example of a Volunteer Self-evaluation Form.

Tips on Talking About Evaluation

- Ask the young person what he or she is proud of in their volunteer work, what skills they have learned, and where they see possibilities for self-improvement. Then provide your impressions of these same issues.
- Don't forget to focus on more than work skills. Make the connection for the volunteer between their contribution and the goals of the program or organization.
- Quote wherever you can; tell them what clients or other volunteers or staff have noted about their style, their work habits or others aspects of their involvement.
- Use the "sandwich" approach. If you have a suggestion for change to make or a critique to offer, position the statement between two positive comments.
- Don't generalize. Be specific and use examples wherever possible. Avoid leading or vague questions such as "I think you're doing great, don't you?"
- Ask questions that allow volunteers to critique or identify challenges, "If you could change one thing about your volunteer position (the program, the training we did, etc.), what would it be?"
- Before introducing any potentially negative comments make sure the volunteer has had a chance to identify things he or she would like to change about their performance. You'll be surprised how often they put the finger on the very challenge you were about to raise.
- Be accepting of mistakes. Don't make a big deal about things done wrong. Make it clear that errors are a learning tool; as confidence grows, their mistakes will decrease.

Evaluation is not just about the organization evaluating the volunteer. To create a positive environment for youth volunteers, and in your continued efforts to do things better, encourage young people to express their opinions and suggestions. Doing so will model an openness to being evaluated and show how evaluative feedback can be helpful. Remember that they may feel threatened by criticizing the organization; reassure them that you welcome their feedback and want to improve.

Here are a few ideas on how you can elicit feedback:

- Include youth volunteers in relevant planning and decision-making in your organization
- Listen to their ideas, post their suggestions on a bulletin board
- Install a suggestion box
- Start an email discussion forum
- Ask a youth volunteer to act as a staff-youth liaison, conducting a regular check-in with youth volunteers, and providing feedback to the organization on its youth-friendliness

Screening

Volunteer screening helps create and maintain a safe environment, and ensures an appropriate match between volunteer and task. Volunteer Canada urges all organizations that involve volunteers to have a screening policy in place, and recommends the Safe Steps program to screen volunteer applicants. The 10 Safe Steps are listed below. For additional information on volunteer screening please see the Resource Section at the end of this guide.

THE 10 SAFE STEPS

Before you select a volunteer:

1. Determine the risk.
 2. Write a clear position description.
 3. Establish a formal recruitment process.
-

The selection process:

4. Use an application form.
 5. Conduct interviews.
 6. Follow up on references.
 7. Request a police records check, when appropriate.
-

Managing the volunteer:

8. Conduct orientation and training sessions.
9. Supervise and evaluate.
10. Follow up with program participants.

Screening youth volunteers

Three things come to mind when we consider screening youth. First, youth volunteers will be screened to the same extent as any other volunteer. Specific screening measures are determined by the level of risk in the volunteer position. A young person in a high or medium risk position needs to be prepared to undergo an in-depth screening process.

Second, screening youth presents particular challenges for organizations if a police records check is required (that is, when considering the person for a high-risk position). In that rare instance when you might be engaging an abusive or dangerous young volunteer, you will not be able to access police information (if any exists) about the individual if his or her crime was convicted under Young Offender status. On balance, it is probably best not to place young volunteers in high risk volunteer positions — that is, in volunteer jobs that would give them one-on-one or intense and personal access to vulnerable people (children, people with cognitive disability, frail seniors, people in severe emotional distress). By starting a young person in a low or perhaps medium risk position you will be able to spend time with the volunteer, provide good training, supervision and support. In time you may feel that they are appropriate for higher risk work.

Third, young volunteers themselves could be at risk for abuse or as potential victims. When considering the risk inherent in volunteer positions, you need to think about all vulnerable people within your organization. This may include young volunteers as well as young service receivers. The same steps you took to lower the risk of possible abuse for participants should be taken for young volunteers. Don't create situations that put them alone with other individuals for extended periods of time, build in lots of time for talking about their volunteer experiences, and make it easy for them to report any difficulties or discomfort they might have. When reviewing screening information (and there are many resources that will help you do so), the young volunteer must be considered as part of the equation.

While screening is undertaken to weed out any potentially dangerous or inappropriate volunteers, the actual steps are part of a standard human resource management process. However, even a fairly straightforward selection process can be a threatening exercise for some youth. This may be the first time they have ever had to complete an application form, or the first interview they have ever had. You can help by telling them in advance what to expect. Explain that you want to hear about their volunteering goals, and that you will work with them to plan their volunteer assignment. Get them to talk about themselves — ask them how they see volunteering helping them attain their future goals. Put them at ease by letting them know that every volunteer must undergo the selection and screening process.

Keep these considerations in mind as you plan your youth volunteer screening:

- Keep meetings casual and informal.
- Go over the application form with them.
- Explain the various screening steps, and make sure they understand that orientation, supervision, and evaluation are part of the process. Point out that these activities are necessary continuations of the screening process, and that they help to monitor the volunteer's fit with your organization.
- Give them tips on how to ask for references. Suggest whom to contact for a reference—a teacher, a family doctor, a neighbour, or even the parents of their friends.
- In some cases, parents will have to consent to their involvement. Be prepared to address questions from parents and to explain the importance of the screening process. You may have to send information home that requires a parent's or guardian's signature.



Recognition

Appropriate, sincere, timely and individualized recognition may be the key to the success of your volunteer programming. You have invested time and effort in creative and energetic volunteer recruitment and training. You have established policies and practices that support and protect volunteers. You have ensured that volunteer involvement in your organization is a positive element of achieving your mission. It would be a terrible waste to lose volunteers because they feel unappreciated.

Where training and supervision are best done in consistent and standardized ways recognition requires customization. Group recognition fails to point out the unique and personal contribution an individual volunteer has made. Each of us is motivated by different factors and, of course, contributes in different ways.

When you think about recognizing the contribution of young volunteers it is important to understand what brought them to your organization in the first place. What goals did they set for themselves? What aspects of the organization have they shown the most interest in. What have their successes been? Their challenging moments?

Some young people get a great deal of satisfaction from being part of an organization. These youth volunteers enjoy social recognition events where they can spend time with other volunteers. Stress that they are an invaluable part of your organization, and that, as part of the team, they make the work of the group stronger.

Other young people are motivated to volunteer to accomplish tasks. Appropriate recognition for these youth volunteers is to provide tangible evidence of their achievement — an announcement of how much money an event raised, or the number of public school children they have helped to learn to read. Let these volunteers know the impact they are making.

There are also young people who enjoy being recognized for their talents and accomplishments. They like being thanked, given gifts, and singled out for achievement. Consider publishing their names in your newsletter or at their school. Hang certificates in a public place recognizing their achievements.

Another group of young volunteers enjoy leadership opportunities. Reward them by appointing them to team leader positions. Seek their advice on how to improve practices in the organization. These volunteers will excel at helping you improve your youth involvement practices.

It is inappropriate to group volunteers together for recognition purposes. It would be deadly to include youth volunteers in recognition events or systems designed for older volunteers. Perhaps it's self evident but most youth volunteers won't want to attend the annual volunteer thank you tea... a MuchMusic party?... well maybe!

Young people identify strongly with their peers. Consider a recognition approach that seeks out youth-to-youth comments. Perhaps you can get feedback from other youth volunteers, from younger participants or recipients of service.

Conformity tends to be more important when we're young. Young people sometimes hate the spotlight, as they are not yet comfortable with standing out from their peers. You may wish to avoid volunteer recognition that puts a young person on the spot—asking them to step forward for an award or to make a comment to a group. On the other hand, always keep an eye open for the extrovert in the group, they might like to help you lead the recognition event and will likely be a big hit with their fellow volunteers.

In lieu of a potentially *embarrassing* event (any parent of teenagers will understand this reference!), you might create public recognition for the contributions of your young volunteers by creating a display, or making an announcement in a publication or on a bulletin board.

There is little else more powerful than a letter written to someone of influence. Write a letter of recommendation to the parents, principal, teacher, or employer of a youth volunteer. Be prepared to use specific examples of the work that has been done.

Talk to the young volunteers in your organization. Ask them how they want to be recognized. Explain to them how important it is that the organization, their supervisor, and the recipients of their efforts be able to express their gratitude. They will learn a valuable lesson, and they may surprise you by saying thank you right back. In the end good volunteer recognition is one of the most positive, and fun things about volunteer programming. Enjoy.

RECOGNITION TIPS

- Say thanks. It's cheap, easy and the results can be pure magic.
- Surprise your volunteers. Deliver some gesture of appreciation they don't expect.
- Pay personal attention to volunteers. Take some time to get to know what is happening in their lives, and then make an effort to ask them about it the next time you see them.
- Offer small rewards such as soft drinks, a box lunch or tickets to a movie.
- Give the volunteer a written testimony from spectators, staff and important people in the community who have noticed their contributions.
- Host a youth volunteer party or have a recognition ceremony.
- Give young people a T-shirt or other tangible recognition item relevant to youth volunteers.
- Consider ways to recognize each young person publicly within peer group settings and via school and community newspapers, church or synagogue bulletins, etc.

Footnotes

1. Vanishing Volunteers: Are Young People Losing Interest in Volunteering? by Katherine Gaskin, *Voluntary Action: The Journal of the Institute of Volunteering Research*, Volume 1, Number 1, Winter, 1998.
2. What Young People Want from Volunteering, by Katherine Gaskin, National Centre for Volunteering, UK, 1998.

Appendix A

Generation V: A Case Study

Generation V: the Enhancing Agencies program is a Volunteer Canada initiative designed to enhance organizations' volunteer capacity through youth leadership. The program is based on the premise that good volunteer management is proven to increase both the overall number of people who volunteer with an organization and their productivity.

This initiative — run by youth for youth — will increase the capacity of hundreds of Canadian charities while strengthening communities across the country.

The Enhancing Agencies program provides extensive training to youth interns and then places them in charitable organizations as managers of volunteers, bringing the organization new expertise in how to involve young people in its volunteer programming.

Kimberley Greening was a Generation V Intern. Here is her experience.

In June 1999 I started an internship with a large, well-known, non-profit health organization. At the time the organization did not have a volunteer department or a person in place to recruit new candidates or manage the few volunteers working there. My intern assignment was to fill the position of Manager of Volunteer Development.

After conducting a needs assessment, it was concluded that more public education was needed surrounding a youth-related health issue. After some months of research and hard work "Youth Educating Youth" (YHEY) was born. The YHEY program mission was to educate the young population about this health issue in a fun and exciting atmosphere. It was known from the assessment report that youth needed to be the target of education, so it made sense to have youth also be the presenters. The goal was to train youth volunteers, in teams of four to six, to visit youth-related community organizations to offer presentations on the health issue.

Through a recruitment campaign we began to search for young people to be youth educators and leaders. More than 35 applications were received in the first month and the screening process began. All applicants participated in a 30 to 40 minute interview with the Manager of Volunteer Development.

If the applicant was successful in the interview phase, he / she was required to provide three references. Depending on the outcome of the reference checks (i.e. positive feedback), the volunteer candidates were scheduled for orientation and training sessions.

An orientation session was newly developed to fit the needs of the youth volunteers. The orientation was presented in a relaxing atmosphere where a lot of interaction and group activities were encouraged. After orientation was successfully completed it was mandatory that all volunteers receive training.

Volunteers had to be trained to give presentations to youth aged 4 to 18. Highlighting the theme of learning in a fun environment, volunteers were encouraged to offer traditional and non-traditional presentations, such as performing skits and puppet shows, and playing interactive games. Volunteers received specific training on how to address questions or refer people elsewhere for answers. Although it was meant to be a fun experience for both the volunteers and the youth being educated, there was potential for problem situations. Volunteers had to be trained to sensitively deal with individuals who may be personally affected by this health issue.

Ongoing training was provided to volunteers once they began their presentations. During monthly meetings, volunteers were encouraged to bring suggestions of ongoing training sessions they would like to see offered. At the request of volunteers, experts from the community were invited to come in and speak on requested topics. These training sessions were an excellent way for the volunteers to get to know one another and indicated that the ongoing exposure to training was an important reason for their continued commitment.

After completing training, volunteers were assigned to teams to work on their presentation. Although all volunteers received training in leadership, each team had one leader who was responsible for maintaining team cohesiveness. This person was also responsible for checking in with the Manager of Volunteer Development on a regular basis to give a team progress report. Once the team completed their style of presentation it was reviewed by a select committee comprised of staff and members of the organization. After final approval teams were scheduled to present to youth agencies in the community.

A month after the volunteers started working they were offered an opportunity to formally evaluate the program, the Volunteer Manager, and their experiences to date. In addition, volunteers were encouraged to informally evaluate any aspect of YEY at any time by approaching the Manager. Program evaluations were also conducted by the youth who attended a presentation, as well as the leaders of the youth organizations who witnessed the presentation. Any recommendation or suggestion received was taken into consideration and discussed at the next YEY group meeting. These group meetings, in addition to allowing the volunteers to discuss the program, also offered an opportunity for the Manager to informally recognize volunteers' hard work.

Regardless of whether a volunteer contributes four hours a week or twenty, their commitment needs to be recognized. Staff prepared a breakfast buffet for volunteers. Volunteers won door prizes and were given tokens of appreciation. Volunteers were also given letters and cards commending them for doing a good job. Social events were planned every so often and special personal events in the volunteers' lives were recognized (graduations, finding a job and birthdays). It was obvious from youth evaluations that the regular presence of the Manager was essential in helping a volunteer feel important and needed in the program.

It had been my responsibility to help enhance this organization so it could provide maximum volunteer satisfaction, growth, productivity and retention. During my Internship guidelines were implemented in the recruitment, training, support, evaluation, recognition and retention of volunteers. In addition, three full-time programs were developed and implemented which caused the organization to experience exponential growth in volunteer resources.

Volunteering is a challenge, a privilege, and an opportunity, not only for the individuals who volunteer, but also for the organization supporting them.

Kimberly Greening

Appendix B

Reading: A Success Story

Two years ago, the Calgary Public Library set two goals: one, do more to bring young people into the library and, two, help young grade school students overcome reading or writing problems. By putting their faith in the city's high school student population, the Library met both goals in one extraordinary program.

“Our Reading Buddies Program matches junior and senior high school students with Grade One and Two kids who are struggling readers,” explains Maria Yakimovich, Volunteer Resources Officer at the Calgary Public Library. “Through the Program, an older student reads to a younger student for 90 minutes, one-on-one, once every week during the summer.”

Maria says teens were specifically targeted for the new Program. “We wanted to encourage students to check out the Library, to see how we could help them help themselves and others. The Reading Buddies Program was a perfect fit.”

Certainly, Calgary's high school students didn't disappoint. In the first year, 10 of Calgary's 16 public libraries adopted the Program. In 2000, the second year of Reading Buddies, 20 programs were in place throughout Calgary. One library now has 45 students reading to 45 grade school students in three separate programs.

“Right now, more than 300 young kids are being helped in their reading by high school students,” says Maria, “and we expect the Program to grow even more in years to come.” Already, she says, more high school students are stepping forward to volunteer than Reading Buddies can accommodate. As a result, the Library plans to add more individual programs while moving ahead with plans to make the entire project a year-round initiative.

“In addition,” says Maria, “we've outlined our program at the Alberta Library Conference and the Canadian Library Association Conference. Since then, we've had calls from at least 15 other libraries in Alberta and across Canada asking about what we've accomplished here.”

The Reading Buddies Program is based on a collaboration among the Library, the schools and the parents. Parents are invited to enrol their young children in Reading Buddies by their teacher.

Meanwhile, high school students who were part of the program in the first year but have moved on to university or college are now asking what else they can do for the Library or their community. And the younger students are learning about a lot more than literacy skills. “They're obviously delighted that these older students are stepping forward to help them like this,” says Maria. “It shows in their reading skills and their overall attitude to learning.”

Appendix C

Action Plan for Assessing Interest in Youth Involvement at [organization name]

1. First, send around this invitation to those you would like to attend the session.

YOU'RE INVITED TO SHARE YOUR IDEAS

In Canada today, one in five volunteers are under the age of 25. Organizations that involve youth in their volunteer base have found an increased capacity for accomplishing goals. By offering youth a chance to gain the confidence and skills that will support them in adulthood, we can take a positive step to ensure the growth and sustainability of our organization.

If you see ways in which we can take amore active approach to youth volunteerism, then please share your ideas.

Come to a brainstorming session at [where] _____, on [when] _____.

R.S.V.P. to _____ by [date]_____.

2. Prepare an Agenda.

Topics for discussion could include:

- Brief background on youth volunteerism (the introduction of this manual will help).
- Past and present volunteer initiatives our organization has been involved in, and the results/benefits.
- Future volunteer initiatives our organization would like to be involved in.
- What are our volunteer needs?
- Can involving youth volunteers help us meet our organizational goals?

It's important for you to gauge the attitude and response to the idea of youth involvement. Ask questions like:

- What talents, skills, and gifts can youth volunteers offer our organization?
- What experience, skills, and learning opportunities can our organization offer youth?
- What short-term and long-term benefits will youth involvement offer our organization?
- Are staff willing to mentor/supervise youth volunteers?

Finally, ask the group to consider:

- How can our organization change to include youth involvement?
- How can our organization prepare for youth volunteers?

Make sure someone records all the discussion and ideas generated in the brainstorming session.

3. Summarize your discussion and ideas in a short report. The feedback you receive from staff will help you assess interest in youth volunteer involvement. You can then approach the board or management with your ideas.

Appendix D

Volunteer Self-evaluation

My three main goals for this volunteer position are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Strengths I bring to the position:

Skills I'd like to develop/things I'd like to learn:

Who or what helped me to achieve my goals:

New skills I have learned:

Who or what helped me to acquire skills:

Areas where I have had difficulty:

Areas/skills that I feel need improvement:

What I have learned from this volunteer position:

Do I want to continue in this role or explore other opportunities within the organization?

Date

Volunteer's Signature

Resources

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Web sites:

Canadian Centre for Philanthropy

www.ccp.ca

Volunteer Canada

www.volunteer.ca

Volunteer Opportunities Exchange

www.voe-reb.org

Voluntary Sector Research

www.nonprofitscan.org

Volunteering Statistics

www.nsgvp.org

Volunteer Canada

Volunteer Canada is a national leader promoting volunteerism in Canada. We promote quality volunteerism to strengthen communities and develop capacity in the voluntary sector to engage citizens as volunteers.

Volunteer Canada works closely with four provincial centres (including the federation of 110 volunteer centres in Quebec) and 86 local volunteer centres throughout the country. Our shared mandate is to promote excellence in volunteerism in Canada. Volunteer Canada members include national charities, associations, non-governmental organizations, corporations and individuals.

The four objectives of Volunteer Canada are to:

- Promote the value and role of volunteers in Canadian society
- Provide resources and leadership to the volunteer centre movement
- Enhance the capacity of voluntary organizations to involve volunteers in their communities
- Participate in the national dialogue on citizen engagement and civil society

For more information on volunteering in Canada, please contact:

Volunteer Canada
1-800-670-0401
or visit our Web site at:
www.volunteer.ca

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