

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR ENGAGING NEWCOMER VOLUNTEERS:

A GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS



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Acknowledgements

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WRITTEN BY Paula Speevak Sladowski, Director, Programs, Policy and Applied Research, Volunteer Canada

Melanie Hientz, Manager, Special Projects/Volunteer Engagement Tools And Resources, Volunteer Canada

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS RESOURCE:

Sara Bennett, Program Assistant, Volunteer Canada

EDITORIAL REVIEW

Ruth MacKenzie, President and CEO, Volunteer Canada

Leith Bishop, Managing Director, Operations, Institute for Canadian Citizenship

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Layout & Design – **Lenny Kuiper** LKDesign.ca

Translation – **Roxane Delisle**

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A NEWCOMERS GUIDE TO VOLUNTEERING



Building Blocks For Engaging Newcomer Volunteers

INTRODUCTION

Engaging newcomers¹ in building communities, through volunteering and citizen engagement, calls for welcoming organizations, supportive practices and intentional outreach. Organizations can tap into rich experiences, skills and cultural competencies while newcomers connect to their communities, gain Canadian experience and develop new skills. Everyone benefits – organizations have greater capacity, communities are more inclusive and people have the opportunity to grow and shape their society.

Yet there are some challenges for newcomers to get involved in community organizations. In fact, many immigrants who have lived in Canada for more than 10 years are still experiencing barriers to participation because of attitudes, structures and practices.

A wealth of excellent material has been developed to help communities and engage newcomers meaningfully. Organizations have asked for a broadly accessible guide that consolidates current information and links organizations to practical tools and resources. **Building Blocks for Engaging Newcomer Volunteers** builds upon the rich experiences and expertise in the non-profit and voluntary sector to support inclusive community engagement strategies, organized into six sections:

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- 3 Creating Welcoming Organizations 11
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¹The term “newcomer” is broadly defined as someone who is new to Canada, regardless of their status and length of time in the country.



01. Newcomers to Canada

Canada's cultural vibrancy and economic prosperity is built upon people who have chosen to make a new home in Canada. One out of five Canadians were born outside of Canada² and immigration now accounts for close to 80% of Canada's population growth.³ Each year, approximately 250,000 people come to Canada, as refugees and landed immigrants, settling in communities around the country. Most settle in urban settings, with the majority being in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, where 35% of Canada's population lives. Rural and smaller urban centres are beginning to create initiatives to attract newcomers to their communities.

Canada's immigrants come from more than 200 countries from Asia, Europe, Americas and Africa. The diagram on the following page, developed by the National Post in February 2012, illustrates where immigrants to Canada come from and where they settle. The chart on page 6 provides a breakdown of how many immigrants have settled in cities, in each province and territory.



² Statistics Canada, [Overview and Facts About Immigration](#)

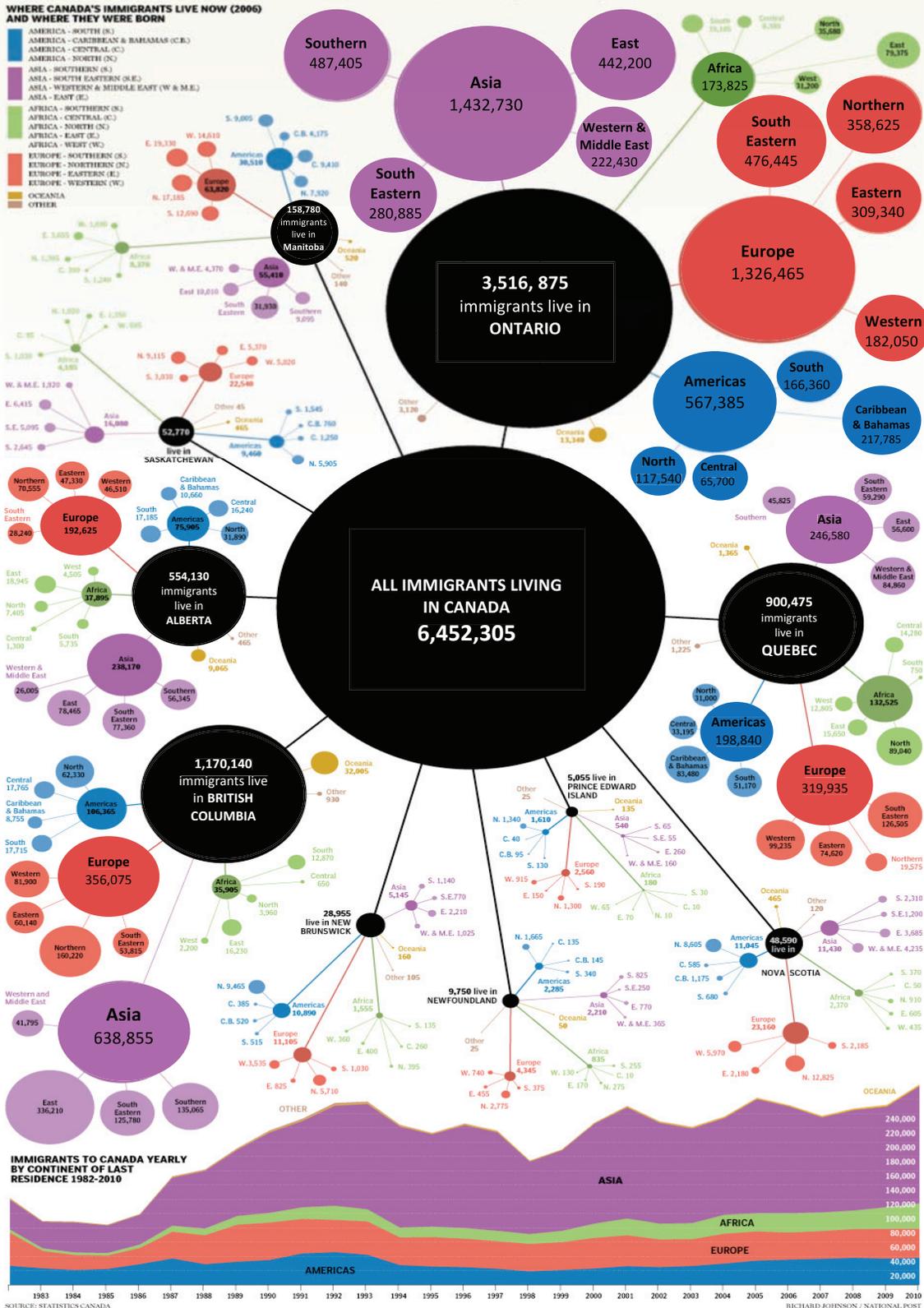
³ Statistics Canada, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/kits-trousses/issues-enjeux/c-g/edu01c_0002c-eng.htm, accessed May 2012



NATIONAL POST, FEBRUARY 2012

THE HOMELANDS & HOMES OF NEW CANADIANS

The 2011 census released this week revealed Canada's 68-leading 5.9% growth rate is largely due to immigration - two-thirds of the nearly two million people added to the population since the past census were immigrants. The breakdown of where they came from will come in later releases, but the 2006 census offers a strong indication of long-term trends:





PRELIMINARY TABLES – Permanent residents by province or territory and urban area, 2006-2010*

Urban area	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
St. John's	397	380	481	454	493
Other Newfoundland and Labrador	111	166	135	149	188
Newfoundland and Labrador	508	546	616	603	681
Charlottetown	490	900	1,360	1,630	2,493
Other Prince Edward Island	75	92	83	93	88
Prince Edward Island	565	992	1,443	1,723	2,581
Halifax	1,966	2,023	2,057	1,792	1,803
Other Nova Scotia	620	500	594	632	605
Nova Scotia	2,586	2,523	2,651	2,424	2,408
Saint John	547	523	560	585	655
Fredericton	486	409	544	493	563
Moncton	262	345	365	479	424
Other New Brunswick	351	366	387	356	483
New Brunswick	1,646	1,643	1,856	1,913	2,125
Montréal	38,401	38,684	38,882	42,531	46,460
Québec	1,800	2,076	2,033	2,364	2,629
Ottawa-Gatineau (Québec part)	1,020	1,125	1,155	1,199	1,536
Sherbrooke	1,103	1,016	1,046	993	1,148
Trois-Rivières	343	305	274	376	314
Other Québec	2,017	1,994	1,829	2,028	1,894
Québec	44,684	45,200	45,219	49,491	53,981
Toronto	99,289	87,139	86,900	82,637	92,181
Ottawa-Gatineau (Ontario part)	6,279	5,798	6,286	6,297	7,173
Hamilton	4,036	3,680	3,806	3,778	4,004
Kitchener	3,321	3,205	2,914	2,823	3,058
London	2,979	2,459	2,338	2,464	2,938
Windsor	2,781	2,215	1,951	1,892	1,836
St. Catharines-Niagara	1,599	1,384	1,235	1,114	1,259
Oshawa	745	859	734	799	759
Guelph	774	705	751	630	613
Kingston	415	378	416	396	437
Barrie	427	404	357	418	358
Thunder Bay	180	145	142	122	155
Sarnia	157	169	139	127	153
Peterborough	161	161	152	201	139
Leamington	120	91	116	99	125

cont'd



Urban area	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*
Belleville	108	95	126	108	118
Greater Sudbury	134	138	138	146	116
Other Ontario	2,387	2,291	2,377	2,808	2,694
Ontario	125,892	111,316	110,878	106,859	118,116
Winnipeg	7,715	8,480	8,140	9,972	12,340
Other Manitoba	2,332	2,474	3,078	3,549	3,463
Manitoba	10,047	10,954	11,218	13,521	15,803
Saskatoon	1,164	1,618	2,061	2,564	3,178
Regina	821	910	1,406	2,058	2,567
Other Saskatchewan	739	988	1,368	2,268	1,872
Saskatchewan	2,724	3,516	4,835	6,890	7,617
Calgary	11,823	11,246	13,038	13,708	16,100
Edmonton	6,444	6,540	7,517	8,508	11,007
Wood Buffalo	320	431	478	681	691
Red Deer	293	567	676	537	585
Lethbridge	268	279	298	483	556
Other Alberta	1,568	1,798	2,193	3,100	3,701
Alberta	20,716	20,861	24,200	27,017	32,640
Vancouver	36,299	32,956	37,466	34,628	37,329
Victoria	1,267	1,270	1,491	1,482	1,517
Abbotsford	1,387	1,306	1,397	1,368	1,360
Kelowna	403	531	603	605	592
Nanaimo	210	284	245	284	258
Kamloops	177	168	226	268	228
Prince George	152	142	148	180	175
Chilliwack	167	194	199	228	161
Other British Columbia	2,021	2,110	2,217	2,397	2,556
British Columbia	42,083	38,961	43,992	41,440	44,176
Whitehorse	56	69	100	156	323
Other Yukon	9	14	10	18	27
Yukon	65	83	110	174	350
Yellowknife	93	71	110	87	108
Other Northwest Territories	5	17	17	20	29
Northwest Territories	98	88	127	107	137
Nunavut	12	19	50	10	19
Province/territory not stated	16	52	52	0	2
Total	251,642	236,754	247,247	252,172	280,636

* Data for 2010 are preliminary estimates and are subject to change. For 2006-2009, these are updated numbers and may differ from those of Facts and Figures 2009. Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, RDM, Preliminary 2010 Data



02. Volunteering among Newcomers and Longer-term Immigrants

Volunteering changes throughout a person's life cycle and is influenced by people's personal goals, values, family traditions, passions, and personalities¹. An added variable for newcomers is how long they have been in Canada. 39% of immigrants, over 15 years of age volunteer an average of 162 hours per year.² While this rate is lower than those born in Canada (49%), immigrants tend to volunteer more hours annually. Those who have been in Canada for less than 10 years have a slightly higher rate and a higher average number of hours than those who have been in Canada between 10 and 30 years. This is likely due to their availability before they enter the paid labour force, the fact that they are more likely to be in younger age groups, and that they are looking for some of the integration and career development benefits of volunteering. Those who have been in Canada for more than 30 years have a higher volunteer rate (42%) and contribute higher numbers of hours (192 per year). This may be because many in this group are senior adults, retired, and have higher levels of language skills.

WHERE PEOPLE VOLUNTEER: Immigrants are more likely than Canadian born volunteers to volunteer in religious organizations, arts and culture, international organizations, and hospitals. Canadian born volunteers are more likely than immigrants to volunteer in social services, sports and recreation, education and research and health-related causes.

WHY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER: Whether or not someone is born in Canada, people volunteer for similar reasons. Immigrants are slightly more likely to volunteer to contribute to the community, to use skills and experiences and to explore one's own strengths. Canadian born volunteers are more likely than their immigrant counterparts to indicate that they have a personal connection to the cause as their reason for volunteering with the organization.

VOLUNTEER ROLES AND TASKS: The roles and tasks of immigrant volunteers are varied; however, Canadian born volunteers are more likely to take on positions as organizers, fundraisers, coaches and referees. Research also shows that boards of directors in non-profit organizations are not reflective of the diversity of Canadian society or of immigrant involvement. This points to the challenge that many organizations have with involving immigrants in positions of authority and leadership.³

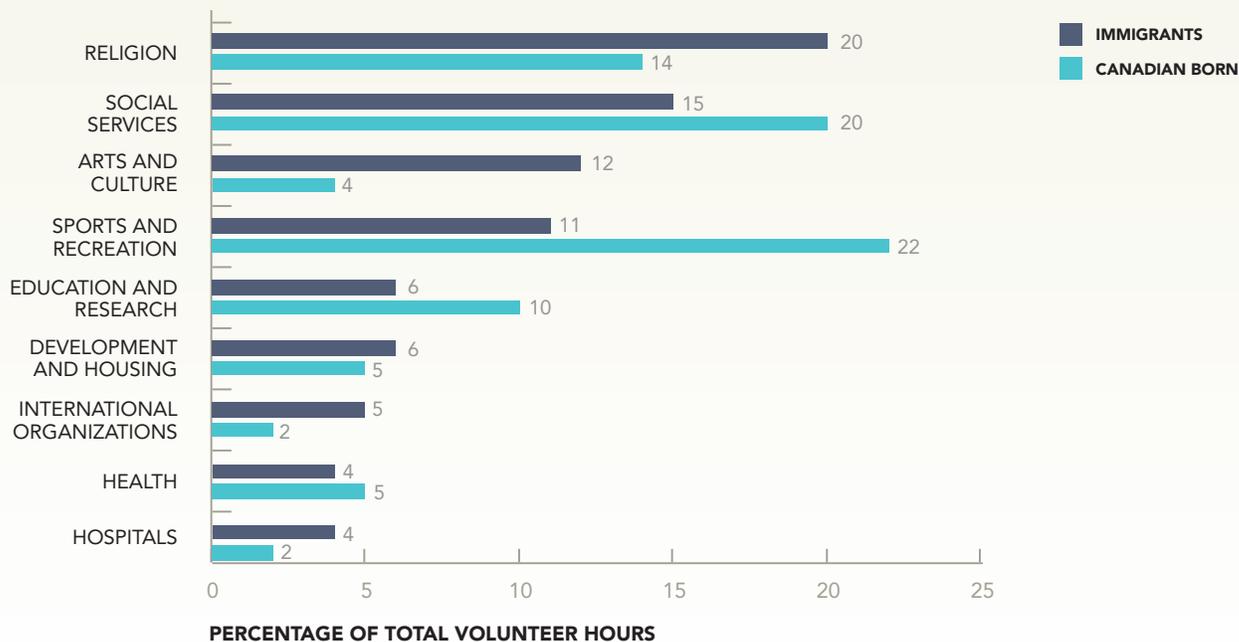
¹ Volunteer Canada (2010). Bridging the Gap – Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities. Research Summary Report, http://volunteer.ca/files/Bridging_the_Gap_English.PDF

² Statistics Canada (2012), [Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating](#)

³ Bradshaw, Patricia & Christopher Fredette, (2011), The Inclusive Non-profit Boardroom: Leveraging the Transformative potential of Diversity, The Nonprofit Quarterly

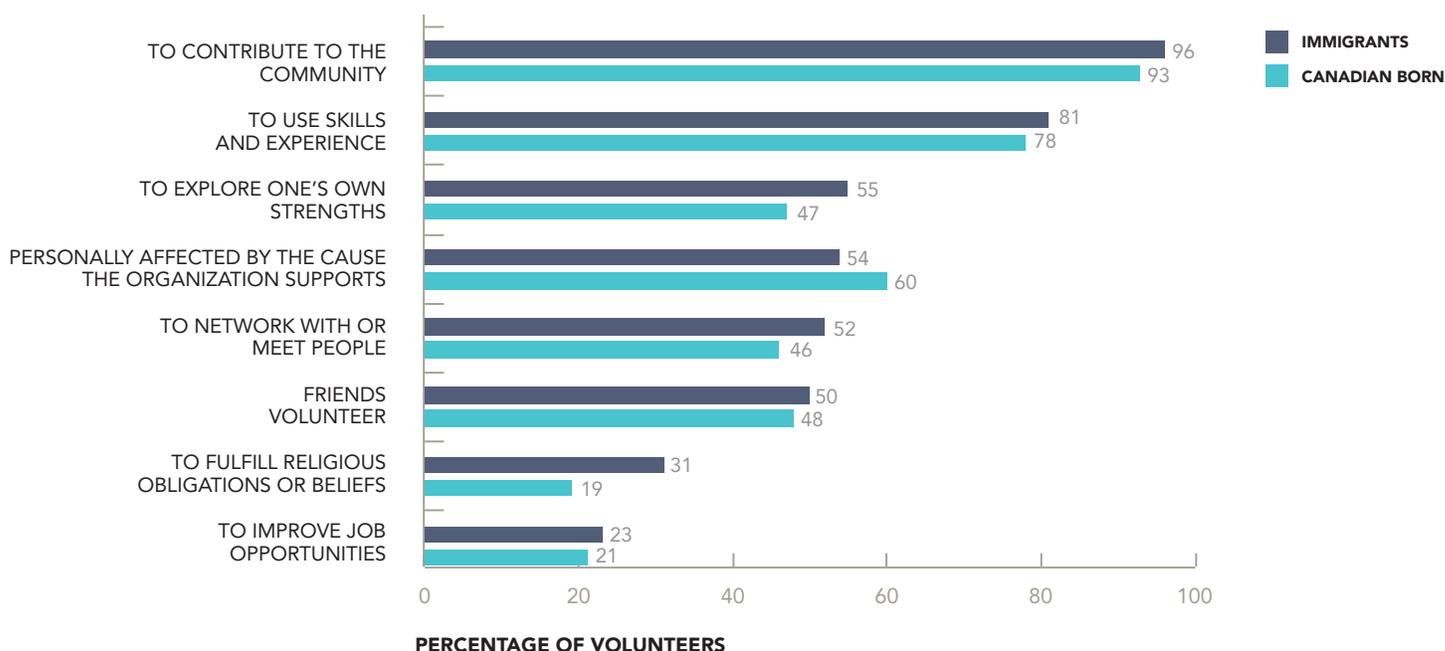


Percentage of total volunteer hours given to different types of organizations, by immigrant status, volunteers aged 15 and over, 2012



Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010.

Reasons for volunteering,¹ by immigrant status, volunteers aged 15 and over, 2012



¹ Reasons for volunteering with the organization to which the volunteer gave the most hours (main organization).
Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010.



03. Creating welcoming organizations

Aside from assistance provided to find housing, employment, language training, health and social services, settlement and integration workers often recommend volunteering to newcomers as a way to connect to their new communities. Some of the concrete benefits of volunteering include practicing a new language, learning new skills, gaining Canadian experience and making social contacts.

BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES: There are also tangible benefits and outcomes for organizations when attention is paid to creating a welcoming organization. The National Volunteer Skills Centre in Australia identifies the following benefits:⁴

- Widening the pool of potential volunteers
- Volunteers from diverse backgrounds and experiences bring new perspectives
- Raising cultural awareness amongst both paid staff and volunteers
- Strengthening positive relationship with local communities

INTEGRATED HUMAN RESOURCES: A starting point to creating welcoming organizations for newcomer volunteers is to examine the human resource policies and practices for paid employees, student placements, internships and volunteers. The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations has created a comprehensive resource, *Beyond the Boomers: A Guide for Building and Immigrant Workforce in the Nonprofit Sector* that includes a tool to help organizations review their systems, structures, and culture. The checklist on the following page is an excerpt and the link below will take you to the full document.



⁴Volunteering Australia (2006), *Involving Volunteers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, National Volunteer Skills Centre



OUR ORGANIZATION	✓	NOTES
Can articulate a business case for engaging newcomers	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has referenced a commitment to inclusion and diversity in our mission, value statement, or policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has communication materials that depict a multi-cultural organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provides diversity training to staff and volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is familiar with Human Rights legislation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Participates in workshops and policy dialogue regarding diversity and inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is familiar with resources available to help organizations become more welcoming to newcomers	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Has a diversity and inclusion strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>	



04. Supportive Practices

Organizations have developed a range of supportive practices to engage newcomer volunteers. These include:

- Assessing the language fluency requirements of positions to see what is actually necessary for each task
- Matching a newcomer volunteer with an experienced volunteer to provide one-to-one orientation and training
- Creating bridging opportunities for newcomer volunteers to help them participate in the core services and leadership opportunities

Volunteer Ottawa created a practical tool for organizations, [Untapped Resources: Opportunities for Volunteers with limited English and French Language Skills – A Self-Assessment Tool for Program Managers.](#)





The Check-list below is adapted from this resource:

IN OUR ORGANIZATION	✓	NOTES
<p>OUTREACH/RECRUITMENT: Communication materials and recruitment process is suitable for potential volunteers with limited English and French Language Skills</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>INTAKE: Front-line staff and volunteers are equipped to welcome people with limited English or French language skills and to provide information about volunteer opportunities</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>SCREENING: Screening policies and practices are designed with fairness and sensitivity</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>ORIENTATION: Group and one-to-one orientation is adapted with translation, interpretation, or non-verbal communication</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>INTEGRATION: Volunteers and staff are provided with training and support to effectively integrate newcomer volunteers</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>BUDDY SYSTEM: A newcomer volunteer is matched with an experienced volunteer to support orientation, training, and integration</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>BRIDGING OPPORTUNITIES: Opportunities are available that progressively develop newcomer volunteers' skills and language fluency.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



05. Intentional Outreach

In addition to creating welcoming organizations and supportive practices, actively engaging newcomers as volunteers requires intentional outreach. Forming relationships with settlement agencies, integration workers, second language training programs and cultural associations can be the best avenue to promote the opportunities in your organization. Longer-term immigrants can serve as cultural bridges and provide leadership on the development of outreach strategies.

Individuals and organizations may also be willing to participate in task forces, brainstorming sessions, or to review policies and communications materials to ensure that the information is both clear and culturally responsive to diverse communities. Finally, translating promotional material into a range of languages will reflect positive practices and attitudes – signalling to people that you are serious about wanting their involvement and willing to put resources in place to ensure that your message is broadly understood.



CHECK-LIST FOR INTENTIONAL OUTREACH:

IN OUR ORGANIZATION	✓	NOTES
Relationships are established with settlement agencies, integration workers, second-language training programs, and cultural associations	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Longer-term immigrants are engaged as leaders of outreach strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Organizations and individuals with personal or professional immigration experience are invited to participate on task forces and to review policies and communications materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Material is translated into a range or languages	<input type="checkbox"/>	



06. Resources and References

RESOURCES

A CULTURAL COMPETENCY LENS

The United Way of Windsor-Essex County developed *Building Bridges: A Guide for Making Volunteer Programs Accessible to Persons of Diverse Cultures with Various Levels of English Language Proficiency*. Using a cultural competency lens, an audit tool was created, based on the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement. This resource offers an audit tool that is aligned with the standards of practice in the [Code](#).

NATIONAL SURVEY ON CITIZENSHIP

The Institute for Canadian Citizenship released the results of a national study on citizenship which confirmed public opinion that community involvement is considered to be part of being a good citizen along with openness, acceptance, and welcoming of diverse cultures.

“Three themes emerged from the survey that dispel many myths surrounding Canadians’ beliefs on citizenship.

The first shows Canadians have a consistent definition of what it means to be a good citizen - being involved in the community and accepting those who are different are seen as very important parts of that definition.

Second, Canadians have a confident, comfortable attitude towards citizenship and its current legal requirements.

The third demonstrates that Canadians - regardless of whether they’re Canadian or foreign-born - hold similar views, including the notion that someone born outside of Canada can be just as good a citizen as someone born in Canada.”

— [Institute for Canadian Citizenship, media release, February 2012](#)



WEBSITES

GetVolunteering is a website that shows how to get the most out of life through community involvement. Learn how you can have an impact on your community for a chance to give back to your community, wherever you live in Canada.

At **Volunteer Canada** (www.volunteer.ca), we encourage all Canadians to get involved in their communities and we work with all types of organizations to engage today's volunteers. Our expertise is backed by original research, practical knowledge, and our unique network of insight, which includes a broad range of organizations, from individuals to local volunteer centres to national corporations with thousands of staff.

The Institute for Canadian Citizenship is a national, non-profit organization that engages Canadians in citizenship through innovative programs, campaigns and partnerships designed to ensure new citizens are welcomed and included as equals, create meaningful connections among all Canadian citizens, foster a culture of active, engaged citizens and celebrate what it means to be Canadian.

GetInvolved has partnered with Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial to develop customized profiles that make it easier for volunteers and non-profits to make meaningful connections across Canada.

CharityVillage features the latest in non-profit news, jobs, information, tools and resources, and is Canada's leading online community for non-profit and like-minded professionals – connecting them to ideas, opportunities and each other.





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