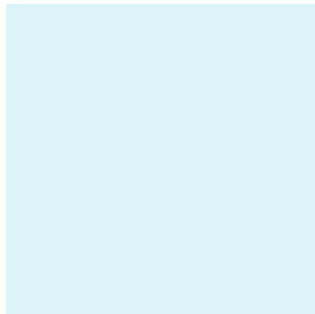
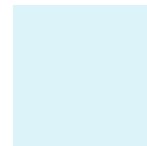


# **capturing the talents of newcomer volunteers**

**A Guide to Developing Effective,  
Culturally Inclusive Volunteer Programs**



**For Use by:  
Coordinators of Volunteer  
Programs, staff and  
organizations who work with  
volunteers**



**Funded by:**  
Canadian Heritage  
BC Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration,  
Community Liaison Division



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## Acknowledgements

This guidebook was made possible through the efforts of many people and organizations.

### The Inclusive-Practices Project Committee included staff from:

Burnaby Volunteer Centre  
Community Volunteer Connections  
Immigrant Services Society of BC  
MOSAIC  
North Shore Volunteer Centre  
Pacific Immigrant Resources Society  
Richmond Connections  
DIVERSEcity  
United Way Volunteer Centre  
Volunteer Vancouver



#### The Expertise



#### The Follow Through

### The Project Team:

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#### The Money

### Thanks to the Funders:

Canadian Heritage  
BC Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration

If you try something in this Guide that works well or maybe something doesn't work as well as we suggest it might in your organization, let us know. If you spot errors or omissions, please bring it to our attention. You can email us at [volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com) and we will be sure to correct in future reprints.



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## Welcome to the journey...

"Diversity, generally understood and embraced, is not casual liberal tolerance of anything not yourself. It is not polite accommodation. Instead diversity is in action, the sometimes painful awareness that other people, other races, other voices, other habits of mind have as much integrity of being, as much claim on the world as you do...We are all meant to be here together." (William M. Chase, "The Language of Action").

When there is a commitment to diversity there is a place for everyone who wants to participate and an invitation to those who have not yet considered participating. An inclusive volunteer program begins with this commitment. What does an inclusive program look like? It is a volunteer team that reflects the diversity of your community—age, gender, race, language, economic position, ability, religion, etc.

This Guide was developed to encourage you to take the journey to reflect on one aspect of diversity—the inclusion of newcomer volunteers. Fortunately, the steps your organization takes along this journey may have a farther-reaching impact than just newcomers—they may enable you to create an atmosphere where other groups not presently represented are also welcomed and included.

Our communities are changing and the demands upon our organizations are increasing. Organizations need to continually find new ways of being and doing, and so the journey begins...

*"I started volunteering because I wanted to be a real part of this community, the community of mosaic culture, where many peoples from various nations live in harmony and hopefully without any kind of discrimination. While I was working as a volunteer interviewer, I really enjoyed meeting lots of people with different backgrounds and helping them to find good volunteer positions according to their aptitudes and needs. Through this experience as a volunteer myself, I came to feel that I'm a real part of this community."*

Sang Yoon Kim, Volunteer Vancouver Interviewer



**Quote from  
a  
Newcomer  
volunteer**

## **Who should read this guide?**

The goal of this Guide is to encourage everyone who works with volunteers to capture the talents of newcomer volunteers by providing a welcoming environment in not-for-profit organizations. The Guide is packed with practical ideas and actions you can take to ensure your agency benefits from the rich experience and diverse skills of newcomer volunteers.

Creation of an inclusive volunteer program requires commitment at all levels of the organization in order for your efforts to be sustainable. Therefore we hope you will encourage Board Members, Executive Directors, Coordinator of Volunteers, staff members and volunteers to read the Guide and become actively involved in creating and sustaining an inclusive volunteer program.

## The Reason for This Guide

### Developing a Culturally Inclusive Volunteer Program Makes Sense

There are many compelling reasons to include newcomers in your volunteer programs.

1. Our communities have changed dramatically over the past decade and this trend will continue. Organizations that do not serve the full range of individuals within their communities are not fulfilling their responsibilities to their communities.
2. Diversity can bring a richness of ideas, experiences, skills, values and attitudes to organizations that actively embrace it.
3. Immigrants and refugees make good volunteers—they want to help, they want to be involved and they need the experience.
4. Voluntary organizations will need an ever-increasing pool of volunteers in order to carry out their mandates as government downsizes, the population ages and service needs increase. With their talent and skill, newcomers will be an important source of volunteers.
5. People will more readily access the services of organizations when they see their own culture reflected there. It is very important to a client that someone in an organization can speak their language and understand their culture.
6. Daily contact with volunteers from different communities increases an organization's understanding of the community and has the potential to diminish stereotypes and generalizations that often contribute to discrimination and racism.
7. Agencies that develop an inclusive mindset toward newcomers will be more inclusive of other groups of people as well.
8. The Multiculturalism Acts of BC and Canada and the Human Rights Act recognize both the right and the need to achieve equality for all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of

Creating an inclusive volunteer program does not happen by itself.

Does your volunteer program have the staffing resources to adequately respond to this changing landscape?



## Notes:

Canada and British Columbia and to ensure that all Canadians have equal access to programs and services. Organizations need to fulfill their legal obligations as they relate to these pieces of legislation.

9. Funding agencies are becoming increasingly more attuned to the need for accountability to the whole community, and many require demonstrated proof of inclusion before committing funding.

### **A changing landscape and Demographics**

There are few British Columbia communities that are untouched by the arrival of new immigrants. The province receives approximately 40,000 new immigrants and refugees every year. Today, approximately 27% of BC's population is foreign-born. There are, of course, regional differences. In the northern half of the province and along the Eastern edge, the percentage of foreign-born is lower but in Metro Vancouver it is closer to 40%. According to the 2006 Census, there are indications that more immigrants are choosing to settle in smaller metropolitan areas, so matter where you live in BC this issue is relevant. Visit [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca) for more information on the 2006 Census, and <http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/immigration/pdf/FACT-Regional.pdf> for a provincial fact sheet.

Although the vast majority of immigrants possess some English language ability, many of these new arrivals come from countries where English is not the primary language. In fact, the 2006 Census revealed that 70.2% of foreign-born in Canada reported a mother tongue other than French or English. While many must improve their English skills, still they bring a wealth of education, skill and experience. All wish to settle and integrate into Canadian society as quickly as possible.

At present, immigrants and refugees are volunteering and contributing to their communities in many different ways throughout British Columbia. These newcomers seek volunteer opportunities for social contact, to learn about Canadian society, gain work experience and make a contribution to their new communities. At the same time, many face barriers when they try to access and engage in meaningful volunteer work. Though they possess immense talent and a desire to help, newcomers often feel shut out of volunteer opportunities.

## What blocks newcomers from volunteering?

Part of the problem is just simply time. It takes many years for any individual to fully settle and integrate into a community. Newcomers cannot be expected to formally volunteer at the same rate as the general population because they are not aware of the opportunities, and there are many pressing issues competing for their time. Yet we do see the gap between volunteer levels of immigrants and general population lessen over time. And in fact, one recent study revealed that many immigrants and refugees are active volunteers within their own ethnocultural communities, providing many of the supports that might be otherwise obtained through community organizations, including providing housing, food, rides, information, emotional support and more. Yet there is more to the story.

### Volunteer programs in general frequently lack resources

- In many organizations there exists the magical belief that volunteers will somehow organize themselves. Some organizations have no Coordinator of Volunteers and many others have no paid staff at all. Managing volunteers is added to the work of an already busy person who may or may not have any training or experience in volunteer management. Even when there is a trained Coordinator of Volunteers they are often busy recruiting volunteers, conducting training sessions, addressing staff concerns, and coping with day-to-day challenges, leaving little time to step back and assess how things could be improved.
- Accommodating the needs of a newcomer may be viewed as extra work, not worth the effort. Organizations may take the "easier" route and only involve volunteers who speak English well, understand the workplace culture and communicate in a familiar style.

### Lack of organizational awareness about issues of inclusion

- Individuals working in different organizations have varying degrees of experience and expertise around issues of inclusion. Not only that, individuals working within the same organization frequently have differing understandings about what inclusion looks like. Staff may be operating in a vacuum, with no cohesive, organization-wide

# Notes:

framework to guide them; therefore the organization cannot respond effectively to the needs of immigrant volunteers.

- The benefits that result from integrating newcomer volunteers may not be discussed within the organization, thus limiting the organization's reasons for moving forward.
- The barriers that newcomers face often go unrecognized because the newcomers themselves are not raising them; in fact, they may even be staying away from the organization because the organization does not send out welcoming messages and actively reach out to them.

## **Commitment to change is not always consistent at all levels of the organization**

- Many organizations have not devoted the time and resources to look strategically at the needs of newcomers or to follow through on the necessary actions. Boards, senior management, staff and volunteers at all levels have a responsibility to embrace inclusion and take the steps necessary to move toward that goal.
- Some Coordinators of Volunteers speak of their attempts to place newcomer volunteers only to experience resistance from the staff who will supervise the volunteers. Not all staff in the organization may have embraced the philosophy of inclusion, and without a unified message from the top and throughout the organization, the organization will not move forward.

## **Discrimination is still prevalent**

- According to Unequal Access, a report prepared for Canadian Race Relations Foundation (2000), racial discrimination still exists in Canada, but is more subtle or hidden than in the past: "Although Canada's labour force is becoming increasingly diverse, racial minorities still face limited access to employment. Racism is still persistent at the individual and systemic levels, although overt forms of racism are generally seen as socially unacceptable."

## Your challenge — to capture the talent of newcomer volunteers

### Commitment

Creating an inclusive volunteer program takes time. Few volunteer programs have the staffing resources to adequately respond to this changing landscape, but respond they must. All levels of your organization, from the Board and Executive Director to the staff and volunteers, need to be committed to including newcomers throughout your volunteer program. This may require decisions that will change certain aspects of your volunteer management practices. This commitment might look like the following:

- Educate everyone in your organization about diversity and cultural inclusion. Publications and training are available through Settlement and Multiculturalism Branch, a division of the Ministry of Attorney General (Phone: 604 660-2203 email [ag.sam@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ag.sam@gov.bc.ca)) as well as various settlement and multicultural organizations.
- Provide an opportunity for everyone to learn about the change process, how to do it effectively, what to expect during the process, the work that is involved, and the time you need to allow. This training is often available through your local Volunteer Centre.
- Establish a process to identify areas that could be improved and allocate the resources necessary to implement the changes. (This is usually done at the Board and Executive Director level).
- Get agreement from the staff that they will be involved. Allow the staff to define their role in the process.
- Invite volunteers to participate in the planning process.
- Conduct a self-assessment with all individuals in your organization (Board, Executive Director, staff and volunteers) (Chapter 1 Toolbox).
- Develop a plan with the Board, Executive Director, staff and volunteers to implement changes and evaluate your progress.

## **Resources**

All change requires resources in order to successfully implement, support, monitor and evaluate as the changes proceed. Board members and managers will need to make decisions about resources—time, people, expertise, and technology.

Review this guidebook with your Board to help you decide what resources are needed to begin the process and then set up check-points along the way to ensure that progress is being made and adequate resources have been provided.

## How to use the guide

Knowing that everyone is busy, this Guide has been designed so that you can read it from cover to cover or choose a particular chapter to focus on. It is intended to be a working document, so we have left space on the outside margins of the pages for you to make notes.

Throughout the Guide you will see symbols to guide you toward the various tools and resources found within the guide. They include:



Action icon outlines manageable actions your organization can take towards inclusion. There is an action plan form at the end of each chapter to solidify your commitment to implementing change.



A checklist is provided at the beginning of each chapter so that you can evaluate your program before reading the chapter.



Quotes from volunteers and Coordinators of Volunteers



Resources to help you in this work



Tool box - sample forms, check lists, and other tools to help you in your work

## Terminology & Language Usage

### **Newcomer Volunteers:**

In this Guide we use newcomer volunteer to describe immigrants, refugees or refugee claimants who are new to volunteering in Canada.

A newcomer volunteer may:

- be a recent arrival to Canada (i.e. roughly within the last three years) or may have lived here for many years but not been involved in volunteer activities in a formal way
- have limited English skills, a lot of English skills or may be fluent in English
- be a youth, adult, or senior

- be experiencing many profound challenges and dilemmas as a person settling and adjusting or may be making the transition to this new culture easily.

**ESL volunteer:**

A person for whom English is not their first language, although it may be their third or fourth or seventh! The range of English language competency includes basic phrases to being able to apply English skills comfortably in a professional English workplace.

**We avoid the use of:**

- Multicultural volunteers
- Diverse volunteers
- Ethnic volunteers

*As in "We're recruiting multicultural volunteers"*

*As in "We're recruiting diverse volunteers"*

*As in "We're recruiting ethnic volunteers"*

**We use instead:**

- Volunteers from diverse ethnocultural or linguistic backgrounds
- Volunteers from the South Asian community

**Supervisor:**

The term "supervisor" encompasses anyone who has responsibility for overseeing or involving volunteers in the work they do. This includes paid staff or unpaid staff, whether they are trained or untrained in volunteer management, regardless of the size of the volunteer program or its level of organization.

## CHAPTER 1

### Start planning for an inclusive volunteer program

*"You've got to think about 'big things' while you're doing small things, so that all the small things go in the right direction."* Alvin Toffler

*"If we refuse to imagine a better situation, we are unlikely to get one."*  
Steve McClurley & Rick Lynch in Volunteer Management

Imagine a volunteer program where people of differing ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds and languages are engaged in meaningful activities and working together to meet common goals: a program based upon the principles of access, diversity, equality and respect. That is an inclusive volunteer program!

An inclusive program does not happen without planning and an inclusive planning process. To create and sustain this goal you will need a clear vision, defined outcomes and a commitment at all levels of the organization to follow the plan through to completion. Whether you are launching a new program or managing an existing one, take time now to articulate your own vision for inclusion.

Write your vision on a sticky note or tape it to your telephone to remind you every day of your goals. Share your vision with others in your organization—informally in the lunchroom or formally at staff/volunteer meetings. Talk about it, think about it, re-write it, and gain more of an understanding of what implementing your vision would mean to you, to your organization, and to your volunteers (both current and future).

Seek out allies, both inside and outside your organization, who support your vision. Talk to your volunteers and the staff who have been most supportive or who have a stake in the outcome. Invite them to get involved as you begin planning how you will implement this change in your organization.

The checklist on the next page can help you get started. Soon manageable tasks will flow from your vision and you'll begin to see the results of your planning and visioning.

Access

Diversity

Equality

Respect





## Checklist for Planning and Organizing Your Volunteer Program

### Notes:

**Do a quick evaluation of your present program by checking the boxes that reflect your current practice.**

- ☐ Our local demographic information is up-to-date.
- ☐ We network with settlement and multicultural organizations.
- ☐ We have recently completed a diversity self-assessment and we have identified areas for improvement.
- ☐ Our volunteer program goals and mission statement reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- ☐ We have written volunteer program policies and procedures that reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- ☐ Our procedures and forms are as accessible as possible.
- ☐ Staff and volunteers have the training and support they need to work in a culturally diverse environment.
- ☐ Newcomers are included in the planning process for the volunteer program.

**What areas does your program need to develop? Read on for strategies that can help you incorporate the above practices into your volunteer program.**

## Strategies for planning a culturally inclusive volunteer program



### Learn about your community and your clients

To ensure your volunteer program is accessible to the entire community, you need to become familiar with the many "communities within communities" that make up the rich tapestry of life in BC.

#### Quick Tips:

- **Take a walk** around your immediate neighbourhood and take notes on what you observe.
- **Gather** demographic information from: Immigrant Settlement Agencies; Multicultural Organizations; School Boards (ESL & language spoken at home); Statistics Canada (Chapter 1, Resource); Health Regions; the Aboriginal, Multicultural & Immigration Programs Department of the B.C. Ministry of Attorney General, and the United Way.
- **Spend** one hour each month reading local papers, bulletins, etc. to update your community information file.
- **Share** what you have learned about your community's demographics with your organization's volunteers and staff.
- **Update** your mailing lists to include contacts with multicultural and settlement organizations.
- **Review** some of the available on-line resources for information on the "Cycle of Culture Shock" (just type cycle of culture shock into your web browser).



## Assess your present situation

Determine where you need to go by conducting an organizational self-assessment. (See Chapter 1, Toolbox for an example.) This assessment will help you to see the relative strengths (i.e. areas your volunteer program reflects inclusion) and where you still have work to do. This process is also a good way to equalize knowledge throughout the organization. An assessment should explore the organization internally and externally (i.e. what you know about your community, how connected you are to the community).

To ensure you get an accurate picture of your organization you need to consult with all of the key players—clients, staff, volunteers, Board of Directors and community resource people. If you do not have any volunteers who are new to Canada within the past 2 years, invite some of your clients who are newcomers to join the process. If these resources are not available, an immigrant-serving organization may be able to provide outside expertise. You can do a full assessment or begin with completing one small piece at a time. Model inclusiveness by keeping everyone informed of your progress and what you've learned as you proceed.

### Quick Tips:

- **Make** some realistic goals, both short-term and long-term based on what you have learned in your self-assessment. Draw up the action plans that cover the steps necessary to accomplish your goals. (Be sure to identify checkpoints along the way so you can recognize your hard work and see the results as you're moving toward your goals.)

Your action plans may include the following:

- Organizational readiness (attitudes, willingness, commitment)
  - Gathering/equalizing knowledge
  - Program Policies and Guidelines
  - Volunteer Intake Forms
  - Volunteer Management Procedures
  - Delineation of Roles and Responsibilities
  - Staff Training and Support Needs
  - Resources needed
- 
- **Look** over your volunteer profiles every June and December to ensure that your volunteers reflect your community demographics.

To ensure you get an accurate picture of your organization, you need to consult with all the key players—clients, staff, volunteers, Board of Directors and community resource people.



## Write guiding principles, policies and goals for the volunteer program that reflect inclusion

Writing policies and procedures can demonstrate your commitment to intentionally build an organization that supports inclusion at every level—from the volunteers to the staff to the board of directors.

For example:

*"Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to the gender, ability, age, race, sexual orientation or other condition."*

*"To support our commitment to inclusion, all written material will be in plain English. "*

*"To make our volunteer program as accessible as possible, volunteers will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses such as bus fare, parking, . . ."*

### Quick Tips:

- **Review** the BC Human Rights Code to ensure you are meeting your legal obligations.

#### BC Human Rights Code

A person must not (a) refuse to employ or refuse to continue to employ a person, or (b) discriminate against a person regarding employment or any term or condition of employment, because of the race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, [...] political belief, religion, [...] employment or to the intended employment of that person.



## Develop an infrastructure that supports inclusion

If you begin recruiting newcomers before you develop a welcoming, supporting environment in your organization you may become very frustrated. Without support, the newcomer will quickly realize that your organization is not a safe place for them. They may leave soon after joining you or they may remain but not do a very good job. As a result, others in the organization may become much more resistant to including any other newcomers in the near future.

# Notes:

## Quick Tips:

- **Ensure** that everyone in the organization understands the role of volunteers, their recruitment and training process and how newcomer volunteers benefit the organization.
  - Schedule volunteer program updates for staff meetings on a regular basis.
- **Assess** the training needs of your supervisors. Do they have experience supervising others? Do they have a basic philosophy of appreciation and respect when working with newcomer volunteers?
  - List what you need to do to equip your supervisors to work successfully in a diverse environment. What training and support will this require?
- **Evaluate** all the printed information that originates from your department—registration/application form, information packet, contracts, etc. Are they clear, simple and easy to read? Ask an ESL teacher, an ESL student, a newcomer volunteer or a settlement organization to look them over and provide feedback.
- **Budget** for “access” costs to assist newcomers with such items as childcare, bus fare, training costs. This may make the difference between whether a newcomer can volunteer with you or not.
- **Conduct** a brainstorming session with supervisors, staff and newcomers to explore how your volunteer program can help newcomers realize their hopes and aspirations through volunteering.



## **A Diversity Self-assessment for the Board of Directors, Staff and Volunteers**

### **Who are our clients/potential clients?**

1. Who are we supposed to serve? What are their needs?
2. Who are we actually serving? Do our clients reflect the broader community?
3. Has the client base and their needs changed since we started the volunteer program? What are those changes? How has the volunteer program changed in response?
4. What client needs remain unmet? How can our volunteer program help us serve our clients better?



### **Who are our current volunteers? Potential volunteers?**

1. What is the demographic makeup of our community? Do our current volunteers statistically reflect the community we serve and/or the community we live in? (i.e. newcomer, age, gender?)
2. What are the motives of our current volunteers for volunteering at our organization? What are their expectations? Are we meeting their expectations?
3. What groups not presently represented could be included in our volunteer program?
4. What are possible motives for them to volunteer at our organization?
5. How could they help in our existing work? How could volunteers from new groups help us in our work?

Assessing  
agency  
readiness  
and  
commitment  
to diversity  
involves the  
whole  
organization

### **Do we have an inclusive vision for our volunteer program that is shared by all?**

1. How does the vision of the volunteer program reflect a commitment to diversity?
2. Is the purpose of our volunteer program clear and understandable to potential volunteers in immigrant communities?
3. How do newcomer volunteers contribute to the planning process? If they do not, how could they contribute?
4. What are the supervisors' perceptions of working with newcomer volunteers?
5. What Board/organizational policies are in place to sustain our commitment to inclusion?

### **Do we have the infrastructure in place to maintain a culturally inclusive volunteer program?**

1. Do we have clear written procedures to support newcomer volunteers? What do we do to ensure all supervisors and volunteers are familiar with them?
2. What skills do supervisors need to work effectively with newcomer volunteers? Do they have these skills?
3. Is there support and training available to enable supervisors to work more effectively and respectfully with newcomer volunteers?
4. Have we allocated adequate resources to support our volunteer program effectively? What extra resources are needed? Where can we get them?



## My Action Plan

### Planning

The two areas I have chosen to address and the specific actions I will take to improve my planning for an inclusive volunteer program are:

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

II. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

I want to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_(date).

☐ Hooray! We did it!





## Resources

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### Community Resources

Community Volunteer Connections Library  
#200 - 25 King Edward Ave, Coquitlam BC  
604-529-5139      [www.volunteerconnections.net](http://www.volunteerconnections.net)

Volunteer Vancouver Library  
1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC  
604-875-9144      [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

Douglas College Library  
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster BC  
604-527-5467

MOSAIC  
1720 Grant St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Vancouver BC  
Contact Volunteer Services at 604 254-9626 or  
[volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com)      [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com)  
(Extensive bibliography available in the area of cultural awareness,  
diversity, organizational change, etc.)

Immigrant Services Society of BC  
501-333 Terminal Av, Vancouver, BC  
604-684-2581      [volunteer@issbc.org](mailto:volunteer@issbc.org)      [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org)

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
28 West Pender St, Vancouver BC  
604-684-1628      [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca)

## Books and written publications

Brislin, Richard W. & Romoko Yoshida. *Improving Intercultural Interactions*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994. Modules for training an organization in cross-cultural awareness. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

AMSSA. *Cultural Diversity in Organization and Business: Gaining a Competitive Advantage*. Vancouver: Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, 2000. A guide for organizations that desire to become more effective in today's fast-changing markets and demographics. It is for organizations who need help in the process of organizational change to value and manage cultural diversity. Available on their website [www.amssa.org](http://www.amssa.org)

Dudley, Alison and Kassam, Tahzeem. *Making Your Volunteer Program Culturally Diverse*. WADV Annual Conference. 2000. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

Kehls, L. Robert & Knight, John M. *Developing Intercultural Awareness*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1995. Cross-cultural training for staff.

Ministry of Attorney General, Multiculturalism and Immigration. *2001 Multicultural Profiles ("Snapshots of immigrant population and ethnocultural composition)*, based on census data. Also find the link for the BC Immigrant Mapping Project.

Stevens, Sara Bowe. *Community-based Programming for a Multicultural Society: A Guidebook for Service Providers*. Winnipeg: Planned Parenthood Manitoba. Telephone 204-982-7800 An excellent Canadian resource on outreach to ethnocultural groups, organizational change and culturally sensitive service delivery (among other topics).

DIVERSEcity. (formerly Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society) *Multicultural Training Project for Cross-Cultural Programs at Surrey Delta Immigration Services Society*, Surrey: Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society 1996. Address: #1107-7330 137<sup>th</sup> Street, Surrey BC. Telephone: 604-597-0205.

DIVERSEcity. (formerly Surrey Delta Immigration Services Society). *Staff Training Binder for Working with Newcomers and ESL Volunteers*. Surrey: Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society, 2000. Address: #1107-7330 137<sup>th</sup> Street, Surrey BC. Telephone: 604 597-0205.

Vancouver Crisis Line. *Introduction to Multicultural Organizational Change: Cross Cultural Training for Crisis Line Volunteers*, Vancouver: Vancouver Crisis Line, 1993. This workshop material is available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

We stress the need not to stereotype in this manual, however it is often helpful to obtain cultural profiles of different countries to help with gaining a greater understanding of newcomer volunteers. Two sources are recommended:

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Cultural Profiles Project*. <http://www.cp-pc.ca/english>. The cultural profiles provide an overview of life and customs in the profiled country. Accessible on-line or in hard copy.

Geolux Communications. *CultureGrams*. Linden, Utah: Axiom Press. Updated annually, each four-page CultureGram provides clear, concise information about the daily lives of people in a given country, their customs and courtesies, lifestyles, government and a short history. Available for purchase. [www.culturegrams.com](http://www.culturegrams.com) or phone 1-800-528-6279 or fax (801) 378-7075.

## Useful Websites

[www.amssa.org](http://www.amssa.org)

The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA) of British Columbia is a coalition of over 80 organizations providing multicultural programs and immigrant settlement services throughout the Province of British Columbia. Good resource for best practices.

[www.compasspoint.com](http://www.compasspoint.com)

Board Café offers a menu of ideas, opinion, news and resources to help board members in their work. Several good articles on diversity.

[www.canada.gc.ca](http://www.canada.gc.ca) Federal government publications that include the areas of diversity, inclusion.

[www.icdr.com](http://www.icdr.com) Bookstore for cross-cultural publications.

[www.jibc.bc.ca](http://www.jibc.bc.ca)

The Justice Institute Library publishes a list of available resources on diversity, etc. each month.

<http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/immigration/index.htm>

Community Profiles and BC Immigrant Mapping Project. Also Directory of Immigration Resources.

[www.statcan.ca/english/census2001](http://www.statcan.ca/english/census2001) and

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census/index.cfm>

2001 census data and some 2006 census data (as it is released)

[www.volunteer.bc.ca](http://www.volunteer.bc.ca)

Volunteer BC. Practical resources and tools for volunteer management.

[www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca) Volunteer Canada - excellent source of volunteer management resources.

[www.imagine.ca](http://www.imagine.ca) Imagine Canada. Great articles and research on volunteering.



## CHAPTER 2

### Position Design

A critical part of your volunteer program is designing interesting and meaningful volunteer positions and then writing clear, easy-to-understand position descriptions. Using the term "position" rather than "job " is a very important clarification for newcomers because this clearly defines the difference between paid and unpaid positions. If newcomers hear the terms used interchangeably, they may think that volunteering will lead directly to paid employment.

#### **A well-designed position:**

- Supports the mission of the organization.
- Benefits the clients of the organization.
- Attracts the appropriate volunteers.
- Reduces the turnover of volunteers because it is interesting and meaningful.
- Becomes a tool to help determine volunteer suitability for a particular position.

#### **A well-written position description:**

- Serves as an effective recruitment tool.
- Ensures that potentially good candidates are not screened out unnecessarily.
- Helps the volunteer understand the expectations and challenges of the position.

By design, positions can exclude or include.

Done well, they will attract the talent of highly trained foreign professionals

## Notes:

- Creates a safe and healthy working environment.
- Defines an agreement between the volunteer, Coordinator of Volunteers, the organization and, if applicable, the staff member who will be working with the volunteer. This can prevent confusion of responsibilities.
- Provides a record of what the volunteer has done for the organization.
- Provides the basis for a fair and supportive evaluation process.

**Something to remember when designing  
a volunteer position:**

### **Involve both supervisors and volunteers in position design**

- The position design will be more accurate when the individuals who will supervise the volunteer participate in the design process. They are in a good position to know what the position should include and what is expected from the volunteer.
- Supervisors will be better prepared to receive and work with volunteers when they have been involved in the volunteer position development process.
- Volunteers who have been in the position before can identify what aspects of the position are motivating and what changes are needed to enhance the volunteer experience. This information is often gathered during the volunteer's evaluation process. Implementing change based upon the volunteer's feedback is an excellent way to recognize a volunteer's contribution.

Use the checklist on the next page to help you get started.



## Checklist for Position Design

**Do a quick evaluation of your present program by checking the boxes that reflect your current practice.**

- ☐ We have up-to-date, written position descriptions for all positions.
- ☐ Our position descriptions give all the necessary information.
- ☐ Our position descriptions are written in plain language.
- ☐ Our English language requirements are a legitimate requirement of the position, and we identify tasks and functions that must be accomplished in English, rather than requesting a particular level of English.
- ☐ We have reviewed our position descriptions to reflect the motivations and diverse backgrounds of today's volunteers.
- ☐ We modify position descriptions to meet individual needs and are prepared to make reasonable accommodation as required by the BC Human Rights Code.
- ☐ We involve newcomer volunteers in designing challenging positions and/or projects.

**What areas does your program need to develop? Read on for strategies that can help you incorporate the above practices into your volunteer program.**



## Strategies for designing inclusive volunteer positions and writing inclusive position descriptions



### Learn about your community and your clients

The work volunteers are asked to perform should be outlined in written position descriptions. Putting ideas to paper makes you give serious thought to the mandate of your organization and how the volunteers support that work. Upon reading a position description, some prospective volunteers will realize the position is not for them and will screen themselves out before going through the entire application process, leaving those who are truly interested.

### A volunteer position description should include:

- Title of the position
- Purpose of the position
- Supervisor of the volunteer
- Duties and responsibilities of the position
- Requirements such as length of commitment, days and times of the program, skills required
- Orientation, training provided
- Benefits

### Quick Tips:

- **Use** plain language: write out abbreviations, don't use unusual spelling ("thanks" not "thanx") and avoid figures of speech (e.g. "green thumb" or "number cruncher"). Choose position titles that reflect the role not just a program name (i.e. *GoGetters* may be the name of your seniors program, but "GoGetter Volunteer" as a title lacks clarity).
- **Write** your position descriptions from the point of view of the reader—what benefit is it to the volunteer to do this work?
- **Field-test** your descriptions with an ESL class or clients from a settlement organization and act upon their feedback before actually posting the position. (Chapter 2, Toolbox: Plain Writing Tip Sheet and Sample Position Description in Simple English. Also see Resources)

Field-test  
your  
descriptions  
with an ESL  
class or some  
volunteers.



## Clarify the level of English required

It is often tempting to ask for "good English or excellent communication skills" for every position, but does the position really require this? For each position ask: What are the actual occupational requirements of the position? What could we do to make reasonable accommodation in this situation? Establishing legitimate language requirements and adjusting positions to suit the person ensures all are treated with fairness and respect and also fulfills obligations to the BC Human Rights Act.

We must remember that a person's ability to perform the work required is not necessarily the same as their ability to understand and act upon instructions. To identify the level of English needed it is important to separate the task of receiving instruction from the actual work tasks. Ask yourself and the supervisory staff the following questions.

"What listening tasks will the volunteer need to do?  
Any alternatives?"

"What speaking tasks will the volunteer need to do?  
Any alternatives?"

"What reading tasks will the volunteer need to do?  
Any alternatives?"

"What writing tasks will the volunteer need to do?  
Any alternatives?"

Keep in mind that factors other than language skills can impact on an individual's ability to understand and follow instructions. Some of these may be:

- Noise level in the room
- Anxiety level of the volunteer
- Ability of instructor to communicate clearly
- Opportunity for the volunteer to clarify instructions
- Sufficient time given for asking questions

Could you design your training to compensate for volunteers who need extra assistance in English? For example, if your volunteers work with Alzheimer's patients but have had no experience with the illness you would probably include Alzheimer's education as part of their training.

Ask yourself:

"What part of this work requires fluent English? "Are there parts that do not?"

# Notes:

Why not also accommodate the needs of volunteers who meet all your other requirements but have a low English level?

## Quick Tips:

- **Assess** what part of the position actually requires English language skills. Consider whether the position can be shared between a volunteer with low English and another volunteer with higher English skills.
- **Start** volunteers with basic English skills in an easier position at the beginning. Once they have gained language skills and feel more comfortable, encourage them to move into a more challenging position. Don't forget about them once you have done the initial placement. You want everyone to benefit from their contributions and that may mean giving them more responsibility as they gain experience.
- **Give** beginner English speakers a written list of common phrases (phonetic spelling as well as proper spelling) used in the position and suggest they have a friend or their ESL teacher review it with them. If they bring it back with translation, you might want to verify that the translation is accurate. Note: Begin with a few words and phrases and as the volunteer asks questions, add to the list.
- **Inform** your newcomer volunteers that you expect them to expand their workplace language on their own too.

## Case Study:

*A Senior Care Centre has a Volunteer Visitor position. They presently require volunteers to have "excellent English". The rationale for this is that the senior's are hard of hearing and get frustrated if they cannot understand the volunteer.*

*What functions might a Volunteer Visitor be required to perform in English? How could the Centre determine an applicant's knowledge of English? Should all volunteers be required to provide some proof of their language skills? How about a young person (fluent in English) who has very poor grammar? Is there any way the organization might make "accommodation" for an applicant who is not proficient in English?*



## Appeal to the motivations of newcomer volunteers

The settlement process is challenging, so it's natural that newcomers who have settled may feel compelled to do something to assist other newcomers to settle. However, this is not the only reason they choose to volunteer; for the most part, their motivations are the same as other volunteers. According to the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating<sup>1</sup> the top four reasons people volunteer were:

1. *To help a cause they believe in*  
*Consider: Immigrants and refugees come from all walks of life. The causes they will support are wide and varied.*
2. *To use their skills and experience*  
*Consider: People with a university education are the most likely group to volunteer. BC is attracting more immigrants with higher levels of education than ever before.*
3. *They have been personally affected or know someone who has been affected by the cause the organization believes in*  
*Consider: Immigrants have the same range of experiences that the general population does, and are just as likely to be connected to your mandate.*
4. *To explore their own strengths.*  
*Consider: More immigrants today are destined for the labour market than 10 years ago. They are seeking the opportunity to test their skills in a new market, make transitions from one career to another, and to make their way in a new work environment.*

There are some benefits to volunteering that are unique to newcomers, and you can consider these benefits when designing your positions.

Consider designing your position to:

- Give an opportunity to practise/improve English
- Encourage opportunities to friends and expand social networks
- Provide meaningful Canadian workplace experience, gain a reference, or expand a résumé
- Show how a Canadian office/organization is run
- Create opportunities to learn about Canadian culture
- Capture the knowledge your newcomer volunteers bring and integrate it to make your program better

A volunteer who is achieving their goals is more likely to enjoy what they are doing, do it well and remain with your organization for a longer period of time.

<sup>1</sup> Fact Sheet #27, Published by Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, March 2000.

# Notes:



## Modify position descriptions to meet individual needs

No two volunteers are the same and often individuals do not "fit" the position in exactly the way you had planned. Be flexible and invite the newcomer volunteer to customize the position in order to capitalize on their individual strengths and experience. Before agreeing to the final outline, be sure to run it by the individual who will supervise the volunteer—they may not welcome the surprise of the volunteer doing something rather different than what was originally planned. Newcomers will likely want to stay with you longer when they are challenged and have the opportunity to apply their personal skills to their volunteer work.

### Case study:

*An individual who had been a librarian in Costa Rica for 10 years applied to volunteer with a particular organization. Looking at her strengths and experience, the organization expanded the volunteer position to include working with their central filing system. This was a "win-win" situation for both the volunteer and the organization.*

Many newcomers are unemployed and often want to volunteer until they find work. Since a daytime commitment for three months or more may be difficult for a newcomer who is also looking for employment, consider alternative a volunteer schedule for the job seeker.

### Quick Tips:

- **Create** positions where the volunteer can give more hours per week than originally requested but does not have to stay with you for several months.
- **Allow** a person to complete their volunteer commitment evenings or weekends in the event they get daytime work. Many people have access to technology that would make it possible for them to volunteer from their home. If this is not possible, can you reassign them to a task that would fit in their schedule?



**One  
Coordinator of  
Volunteers  
saves →**

*"At our organization, 80% of our volunteers are seeking work. Thus, when designing positions we try to be flexible about the time commitment we ask for. In positions where it is appropriate, we ask for a total commitment of 60 hours to be completed in whatever time frame the volunteer chooses. This works better than asking for a three or six month commitment. In fact most volunteers complete more than 60 hours."*



## Create a range of positions that can capture the talents of newcomers

Brainstorm with clients, staff and volunteers about needs they see, gaps in the current program, and how volunteers could be involved in helping in these areas.

For example, one Seniors Centre matched up a skilled web-based database designer from Iran whose English was limited with a local IT expert whose time was limited. The local IT designer took responsibility for overseeing the project and communicating progress reports to the organization and the newcomer volunteer performed the actual technical work.

This same organization encourages an atmosphere of initiative and innovation among their volunteer teams. As a result, these teams have created and managed numerous projects. One very successful project was providing entertainment from their different cultures that both entertained and educated the residents during Multiculturalism Week. Working together, they were able to get support from several different consulates—including prizes and a performance from a visiting overseas choir. The volunteers themselves had contacts and “leverage” that the organization staff did not have.

When developing new volunteer positions in the agency, look internally to your current newcomer volunteers. Do any of them have skills in this new area? Is there anyone whose skills are currently underutilized? Invite them to help you in designing the new position. You will benefit from their expertise and creativity and they will feel appreciated for the work they do. And don't forget about positions with committees of the Board. You could always pair up an existing member with a newcomer for mentoring.

### Translation and Interpretation

Organizations often look to newcomer volunteers to provide translation and interpretation services as the need arises. Done well it can enhance your organizations' reach in the community; Done poorly can lead to translation embarrassments or interpretation disasters. Consult with others in your community who offer this volunteer service to find out what the application criteria should be and the training required before deploying a volunteer. Your organization should also have a policy that outlines when these volunteer services will be utilized and where.

Your newcomer volunteers may be highly skilled and able to fill technical or information gaps.

They can also have a positive influence on the overall culture of the organization.

Create opportunities where they can share methods, ideas and knowledge from their home country.

To respect your volunteers, do not assume that a newcomer wants to provide this service or that they have the skill level to provide it in an adequate manner.

If you have an on-going need for these services or if you feel it can be done effectively, design a specific position description and develop some guidelines and training before recruiting anyone.



## My Action Plan

### Position Design

The two areas I have chosen to address and the specific actions I will take to make our position descriptions inclusive of newcomer volunteers are:

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

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II. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

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I want to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_(date).

☐ Hooray! We did it!





## Simple English Position Descriptions

### Volunteer Child Care Helper

#### Purpose

Our Child Care Helper Volunteers assist paid staff to make our Centre a safe and warm place for young children to play and learn. All children in our Centre are 24 months to five years old.

#### Your Staff Contact

Your staff contact is \_\_\_\_\_. She will train you, and you can speak with her if you have questions or problems.

#### Schedule

Our Centre is open Monday to Friday 9-12:30 and 1-4:30. You are scheduled for one volunteer shift per week for three months. Your shift is:\_\_\_\_\_.

#### Your Child Care Responsibilities

- Help set up equipment and supplies for classes and put away when finished
- Greet the children and their parents when they arrive
- Play with children - let them lead at times
- Help children to choose suitable activities (craft table, reading area, housekeeping corner)
- Help gather children for story time
- Help children to put toys away when it is time
- Help with special events (parties, field trips)
- Use our Centre's language and behaviour for child supervision
- Stop children from running in the Centre

Please do not:

- Give advice to parents about their child
- Be alone with any child - always have another adult in the room
- Discipline a child

These are the responsibilities of paid workers.

## Child Care Helper Position Description Continued

### **Other Responsibilities**

- Sign in and out every day
- Attend training sessions as we ask
- Phone your staff contact if you are late or cannot volunteer

### **To be selected you must**

- Like to work with young children
- Be patient, friendly and caring with the children
- Be willing to learn about how we work with children
- Be willing to have a criminal record search completed

### **Training**

On your first day, daycare staff will explain our Centre's rules for volunteering with young children. You will receive a training booklet to read. Each day staff will explain your tasks for the day. You can ask questions if you are not sure what to do.

### **You will receive**

- Training about our Centre and about daycare for young children
- A reference after you complete your three month commitment successfully



## Resources

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### Community Resources

Community Volunteer Connections Library  
#200 - 25 King Edward Ave, Coquitlam BC  
604 529-5139      [www.volunteerconnections.net](http://www.volunteerconnections.net)

Volunteer Vancouver Library  
1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC  
604 875-9144      [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

Douglas College Library  
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster BC  
604 527-5467

MOSAIC  
1720 Grant St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Vancouver BC  
Contact Volunteer Services at 604 254-9626 or  
[volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com)      [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com)  
(Extensive bibliography available in the area of cultural awareness,  
diversity, organizational change, etc.)

Immigrant Services Society of BC  
501-333 Terminal Av, Vancouver, BC  
604-684-2581      [volunteer@issbc.org](mailto:volunteer@issbc.org)      [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org)

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
28 West Pender St, Vancouver BC  
604-684-1628      [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca)

## Books and written publications

Hamson-Wong, W., Shenton, S., Shayo, P., and French, S. *Multicultural Multilingual Volunteers. A Guidebook for Community Organizations*. Burnaby Volunteer Centre & Burnaby Multicultural Society. Although this guidebook is intended to be a resource for the appropriate use of trained multicultural, multilingual volunteers it has good suggestions when used in context. Available through Volunteer Burnaby, MOSAIC and Community Volunteer Connections Library.

*Interpretation and Translation in Richmond*. A 1995 Project. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

Mission Community Services Society. *Volunteer Translator/Interpreter Manual—Enhancing Skills and Knowledge—Putting Them Into Practice—the E.S.K. Project*. Mission: Mission Community Services Society, Multicultural Program, 2001. Telephone: 604 826-3634.

Penny Goldsmith, Gayla Reid, Sidney Sawyer. *Reaching Your Readers. A Fieldtesting Guide for Community Groups*. 1993. Legal Services Society of BC. A guide for community groups, advocacy groups, and self-help organizations that are planning, writing, and designing publications. Available by writing to: Penny Goldsmith, Box 2269 VMPO, Vancouver BC  
Or pennyu@vcn.bc.ca

Volunteer Canada. *A Matter of Design: Design Theory and Application to the Voluntary Sector*. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada, 2001. Challenges organizations to fundamentally re-think the involvement of volunteers, starting with an examination of mission and moving through the elements of volunteer involvement. Available at: [www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)

## Useful Websites

[www.plainlanguagenetwork.org](http://www.plainlanguagenetwork.org)

Look for resources for using plain language.



## CHAPTER 3

### Recruitment

With our aging population, government restraint, and reports of shrinking volunteer involvement across Canada, it is likely that we will need more and more volunteers in the coming years. Newcomers to Canada are presently a large untapped resource for our volunteer programs. However, we will not see large numbers of newcomer volunteers in our organizations without some extra effort to open the way for them.

Volunteer recruitment is the process of inviting and engaging people in the work of your organization. A good recruitment process considers questions such as: How prepared is the organization to receive the volunteers? How can the program appeal to different motivations for volunteering? Where should we target our advertising for the best results? The goal is to find the "right" volunteers for your program and organization.

Before you begin recruiting newcomers, take a look at your organization through the eyes of a newcomer.

*Will they feel welcome?*

*Will they understand what the organization does, what the people around them are doing and why they do it?*

If there is no long-term commitment to becoming an inclusive organization, newcomers will probably have difficulty accessing volunteering in your organization or decide to leave. We need to guard against newcomers becoming "sacrificial lambs" for the sake of diversity. It's important to consider these questions before recruitment actually begins.

In 2007 Canada admitted the highest number of temporary and permanent residents in our country's history.

With this trend likely to continue, there will be an increasing pool of newcomer volunteers to recruit from.

## Notes:

Why do people choose to volunteer in one organization rather than another? Belief in the mission of the organization is the number one reason people give for their volunteer commitment. Another reason people give for their involvement is simply — "Someone invited me to join". If you are not attracting newcomers, perhaps one reason is that they simply do not know about your organization and the good work you do, or maybe they simply haven't been asked to join!

There is, however, more to recruiting newcomers than simply putting up a poster or asking someone to join our organization. This chapter outlines some areas that have the potential to increase awareness and successfully recruit volunteers from newcomer communities.

Use the checklist on the next page to help you get started.



## Checklist for Recruitment

**Do a quick evaluation of your present program by checking the boxes that reflect your current practice.**

- ☐ We have relationships with ethno-cultural groups and media, immigrant-serving organizations, and immigrant community leaders.
- ☐ We invite immigrant community leaders to our events and activities.
- ☐ Our reception area is welcoming to newcomers. There are visuals that indicate to newcomers that they are welcome at the organization. Our receptionist is trained in helping newcomers.
- ☐ When explaining our application process to newcomers, we explain the steps clearly and are ready to be flexible if needed.
- ☐ We respond to all volunteer inquiries, and if unable to place, we provide encouragement and appropriate referrals.
- ☐ All our staff and volunteers (both current and former) are familiar with our goal to include immigrant volunteers.
- ☐ We target places immigrants may gather or visit, such as places of worship, cultural events and centres, ESL classes, immigrant agencies, local schools and shops.
- ☐ We consistently check our written recruitment materials to ensure they are in plain language.
- ☐ We use photographs and visuals wherever possible to illustrate what we do as an organization.

**What areas does your program need to develop? Read on for strategies that can help you incorporate the above practices into your volunteer program.**



## Strategies for Recruiting Newcomers for Your Volunteer Program



### Build relationships with immigrant communities

An inclusive organization builds and maintains strong relationships with different communities and groups. The organization's profile is raised when it sends consistent messages of welcome to all communities. If your organization has a positive profile in various ethnocultural communities and settlement and multicultural organizations, you will likely be more successful in recruiting newcomer volunteers.

#### Quick Tips:

- **Compile** a list (with contact names phonetically spelled) of ethno-cultural associations, immigrant settlement agencies and places of worship in your community. Visit or make a personal telephone call to introduce yourself, your organization and the volunteer program. Ask them to help you spread the word about your volunteer opportunities. Perhaps they can identify key community leaders who can assist you.
- **Honour** the traditional ways that ethno-cultural communities pass on information by working within their information networks. Ask their community members how you can do this appropriately.
- **Extend** personal invitations to volunteer to the people you are trying to reach, including individuals and immigrant community leaders.
- **Establish** a referral network with Coordinators of Volunteers who have newcomer volunteers in their programs. Make your volunteer opportunities known to these organizations and keep them up-to-date on your program/s.
- **Avoid** quick fix solutions such as finding only one volunteer to fill one language-specific role (i.e. a Russian speaking volunteer to visit with your Russian patient). Instead, develop a recruitment plan that allows you reach a variety of volunteers within several ethnocultural communities.

You may be surprised by the positive feedback you receive from immigrants and non-immigrants alike through recruitment campaign that stresses inclusion.



## Create a positive first impression for newcomers

It takes courage for a newcomer to approach an unknown organization for the first time and ask to be a volunteer. In fact, they may not even ask to be a volunteer; they may simply ask "what can I do here?" or "what does this place do?" It is important to make the time to explain your organization and ensure all immigrants who contact you feel welcomed.

The physical layout of your facility can also impact the impression you make on newcomers. Take time to look at your entry from the perspective of a newcomer. Are all signs in English? Is there a friendly person on hand to greet visitors? Are images in posters reflective of people from different places and cultures?

The "formalized" application process often used today can be off-putting to someone who is used to helping neighbours in an informal way. If you use a "formalized" application process (and there are many good reasons to do so), take time to explain what the steps are and offer assistance through them. A helpful introduction may make the difference as to whether they follow through with the application process or not.

Avoid making assumptions about a newcomer's level of English or their ability to do well in your volunteer position based upon a telephone call or application form alone. Give them the chance to meet with you and go through the application process before making your final decision.

Rejection can be confusing. Imagine how it feels to be told your help is not wanted. If you are not able to involve a newcomer at the time of their inquiry, invite them to return again at a specified time that will work better. Provide them with referrals to other organizations, complete with addresses, phone numbers and contacts.

Make a commitment to respond to all inquiries even if you do not have a position available at the present time. As with any potential volunteer, many newcomers to Canada become disheartened if they do not get a response to their inquiries.

*"It's sometimes difficult to get the first door opened when you are a newcomer. Volunteering in a field I enjoy is important to me. It keeps me optimistic about eventually resuming my teaching career in Canada."*

Rashmi, PIRS ESL Teacher's Assistant Volunteer



**Quote from  
a  
newcomer  
volunteer**

# Notes:

## Quick Tips:

- **Gather** print materials in different languages and with different images for display in your reception area. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees website also has some great educational posters (in English) about refugees, as well as the text from the International Bill of Rights that you can print and put on display.
- **Train and equip** your receptionist with skills to welcome the newcomers. (i.e. training in speaking plain language and the importance of being patient and respectful). Remember, the receptionist is often the first contact a newcomer has with your organization and first impressions are lasting ones.

When possible, inform the receptionist that a prospective volunteer is coming to see you. Give the receptionist their name (with proper pronunciation) so they can greet them personally.

- **Spend** a little more time when a newcomer calls for information. Answer their questions patiently and try to put them at ease about the application process. Outline the steps clearly and simply. Remind them of what to bring with them when they come in to apply for the position. Give them suggestions as to who would qualify as a reference (e.g. their ESL teacher, settlement worker). If you require a criminal record check for a particular position, let them know about it from the beginning.
- **Track** the participation rate of different groups from the beginning to the end of the recruitment process in order to identify barriers that you may need to address.



## **Spread the word and actively promote your organization to newcomers**

All the messages your organization sends out—a volunteer recruitment poster, a fundraiser, or an announcement of the services provided by your organization—have an impact on public awareness and who will be attracted to your organization. This means that recruiting for diversity in your volunteer program involves everyone in the organization—the board of directors, the receptionist, the program staff and current (and former) volunteers. Ask yourself:

"What messages do we currently send out to immigrant communities?"

"How do we send these messages? Who sends these messages?"

"Do we know if newcomers receive these messages? What is their impression of these messages?"

Ensure that all staff, volunteers and board members have up-to-date information on how to become a volunteer with your organization and can provide this at any time to potential volunteers.

Newcomer volunteers who have a positive experience with your organization can help you build relationships and strengthen your service delivery by connecting your organization to their community networks. Invite your present newcomer volunteers to spread the word about your organization and volunteer positions.

### **Quick Tips:**

- **Speak to ESL Classes**—they are a wonderful source of talent. Provide simple, easy-to-read handouts. Be prepared to begin the application process immediately after the class rather than asking the newcomer to make several trips to your office.

In many communities, there are different ESL programs catering to different language levels from beginner to advanced. ESL students are often good volunteers because they are usually highly motivated to learn, have the support of their teachers and can clarify English terms in class.

Invite your present volunteers to spread the word about your organization and volunteer positions.

Many ESL instructors are pleased to have you talk with their students about volunteering for your organization. Upon reviewing your volunteer position descriptions, the instructor can guide you to the appropriate class where students have sufficient language skills for your position.

- **Ask** owners of local businesses that cater to specific ethno-cultural communities to support your program by putting up your posters, donating volunteer recognition items, and encouraging their employees to volunteer in your programs.



## Use Print Campaigns Appropriately

Printed material such as an advertisement, poster, or public service announcement can be effective in reaching newcomers because print has the ability to be in many places at the same time and people can read it at their own pace.

When you post notices around your community or recruiting websites, remove them as soon as possible after the position is filled. It can be very discouraging (as well as confusing) to a newcomer to find out that the opportunity is no longer available. This experience may reduce their incentive to follow-up on another notice at a later date.

Write and speak in plain language. Use fewer words, simple words, present tense and common verbs to communicate most effectively. Avoid figures of speech (e.g. "green thumb"). (Chapter 3, Toolbox: Recruitment ad in simple English)

### Ten Tips for Simplifying Your Written English

1. Omit needless words
2. Avoid foreign language words
3. Use orthodox spelling
4. Put statements in positive form
5. Keep related words together
6. Do not take short cuts at the cost of clarity
7. Keep it as simple as possible-vocabulary for a grade 6 level
8. Write from the point of view of the reader
9. Leave lots of white space on the page
10. Use simple present tense

Since "a picture is worth a thousand words", illustrate advertisements with graphics wherever possible. When choosing images, select faces and images that represent a variety of backgrounds. Avoid stereotypical images and cartoons. For this reason, photographs (with permission) may be better than clip art. Your ethno-community relationships may be able to help you in this area.

Just as  
raising one's  
voice does  
not help an  
ESL speaker  
to  
understand  
any better,  
using a  
larger  
font  
does not  
ensure that  
the ESL  
reader can  
understand  
what you  
have written.

Don't assume that newcomers will know what tasks are involved in your positions. Give them the information they need to make an informed decision as to whether they should apply for the position or not. If possible, indicate the specific language tasks in your advertisement as well. For example, one of the duties described in the advertisement for a warehouse volunteer position at a food bank might read: "Read and check expiry dates on food package labels."

#### Quick Tips:

- **Use** the words "Volunteer Position" rather than "Volunteer Job". "Job" may indicate paid employment to some newcomers.
- **Reflect** the experiences of immigrant Canadian volunteers in your recruitment pamphlet with quotes and photographs of newcomer volunteers. Don't forget to mention the ethno-cultural communities your agency supports as well.
- **Indicate** on your advertisements that you are an equal opportunity employer and committed to the principles of employment equity.
- **Send** press releases of current volunteer needs to all your local community and ethnocultural papers.
- **Submit** a general interest article that features a newcomer volunteer to your local community and ethnocultural papers.
- **Develop** a simple camera-ready ad with your organization's name and logo for the newspaper to insert wherever they have a small space that needs to be filled.
- **Use** graphics that reflect different cultures but avoid using stereotypically.



## Action Plan

### Recruitment

The two areas I have chosen to address and the specific actions I will take to bring me closer to my goal of attracting and involving newcomer volunteers in our organization are:

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

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---

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II. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

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---

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I want to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_(date).

☐ Hooray! We did it!





## Sample Poster in Simple English

**Do you like to grow flowers?**



The garden at Mercy Hospital provides rest and beauty for people who are in the hospital.

**We need volunteers in our garden to:**

- Water the flowers
- Pull out weeds
- Fertilize the flowers
- Plant new flowers

We provide all tools.

To learn how you can help, phone  
the Volunteer Coordinator  
604-123-3455 between 9 am - 1 pm Monday - Friday

Mercy Hospital is at 1234 East 56<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Fictiontown, BC



## Resources

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### Community Resources

Community Volunteer Connections Library  
#200 - 25 King Edward Ave, Coquitlam BC  
604 529-5139      [www.volunteerconnections.net](http://www.volunteerconnections.net)

Volunteer Vancouver Library  
1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC  
604 875-9144      [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

Douglas College Library  
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster BC  
604 527-5467

MOSAIC  
1720 Grant St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Vancouver BC  
Contact Volunteer Services at 604 254-9626 or  
[volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com)      [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com)  
(Extensive bibliography available in the area of cultural awareness,  
diversity, organizational change, etc.)

Immigrant Services Society of BC  
501-333 Terminal Av, Vancouver, BC  
604-684-2581      [volunteer@issbc.org](mailto:volunteer@issbc.org)      [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org)

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
28 West Pender St, Vancouver BC  
604-684-1628      [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca)

## **Books and Written Publications**

Goldsmith, Penny; Reid, Gayla; Sawyer, Sidney. *Reaching Your Readers. A Fieldtesting Guide for Community Groups*. British Columbia: Legal Services Society of BC, 1993. A guide for community groups, advocacy groups, and self-help organizations that are planning, writing, and designing publications. Available by writing to: Penny Goldsmith, Box 2269 VMPO, Vancouver BC or pennyu@vcn.bc.ca

Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada. *Stronger Together—Recruiting and Working with Ethnocultural Volunteers*. Ottawa: Voluntary Action Directorate of the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, 1990. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library. Tips on recruitment, interviewing, training and support for ethnic minority volunteers.

## **Websites**

<http://www.unhcr.org/directory.html> for educational materials you can display and statistical information about refugees.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Application and Screening Process

Most organizations now follow steps that are considered standard practice across Canada to determine whether a particular volunteer will be suitable for their organization and/or for a particular position. These steps include the application form, the interview, reference checks, criminal record and sometimes health checks.

The formal application process commonly used is often a turn-off for newcomers who are used to more casual volunteering. Imagine the surprise of a newly arrived immigrant with time on his hands who is told he needs to provide three references just to help out! You need not lower your standards or take more or different risks for newcomers, but sensitivity to how a newcomer perceives your application process helps.

**During the application and screening process, you have the opportunity to:**

- Learn about the volunteer's interests and skills.
- Provide prospective volunteers with information about the organization and the volunteer program as well as the requirements of particular volunteer positions.
- Determine whether the prospective volunteer is a "good fit" for any (current or future) position in your organization.
- Assess any potential risk to the organization, the volunteer or clients.

This Chapter provides strategies to reduce the difficulties for newcomers throughout the application and screening process.

Use the checklist on the next page to help you get started.

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**DISCLAIMER:** This chapter provides ideas on how to modify screening processes and tools in order to be more inclusive of newcomer volunteers. It is not a legal document. It is not intended for determining what screening methods you should utilize, or determining who will be a good volunteer for your organization. Please consult with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and Regulations or the Citizenship Act and Regulations for specific legal requirements regarding Immigrants and volunteering and/or consult with your local Volunteer Centre staff about available resources for developing an appropriate screening plan that incorporates strategies for risk management.



## Checklist for the Application Process

**Do a quick evaluation of your present program by checking the boxes that reflect your current practice.**

- ☐ Our forms/materials are all written in plain language and we choose language that is inviting rather than restricting.
- ☐ We provide an opportunity to learn about the program and what they may need to prepare.
- ☐ All of our interviewers have been trained in cultural sensitivity and to set aside their own personal biases.
- ☐ We have reviewed our selection criteria for biases or assumptions about newcomers to Canada, and we follow the Human Rights Code with respect to the questions we ask on the application form and during the interview.
- ☐ We give newcomers an opportunity to meet and talk one-on-one. We schedule enough time for interviews and meet in a quiet private place.
- ☐ We are flexible about appointment times and formats.
- ☐ We explain fully the process of background checks.
- ☐ We accept non-traditional references.
- ☐ We have access to trained interpreters.
- ☐ We have a graduated entry plan or buddy program for newcomers with language barriers.
- ☐ We know about other volunteer positions available in the community and when necessary refer newcomers appropriately.

**What areas does your program need to develop? Read on for strategies that can help you incorporate the above practices into your volunteer program.**

## Strategies for an inclusive application process



### Make the process welcoming and understandable

Most of volunteering in Canada today is quite a “formal” process, much like a job interview. For many newcomers this comes as a great surprise. Since they have been encouraged to volunteer, they expect their skills will be welcomed. Newcomers are often very confused when they discover that it will take several weeks to get involved. A simple message on your voice mail, a knowledgeable receptionist who takes the time to answer questions over the phone, and/or a printed brochure outlining the volunteer application process in your organization are all very helpful to those who are volunteering for the first time.

#### Quick Tips:

- **Design** clear and simple application forms. Remember, although application forms are part of the screening process, if they are too long or difficult for newcomers they lose their effectiveness in recruiting potential volunteers. (Chapter 4, Toolbox: Registration Form in simple English)
- **Explain** to the newcomer what information must be provided on the application form. This will ensure that they bring the names and phone numbers of references, etc. with them.
- **Invite** the volunteer to a “meeting” rather than an “interview”. A meeting sounds less intimidating to someone who is unfamiliar with the formal process involved in becoming a volunteer in Canada.
- **Conduct** the interview in a quiet, private location to show respect to the interviewee and keep distractions to a minimum.
- **Show** photos of other volunteers at work in your organization to help explain what the volunteer will be doing.
- **Allow** sufficient time for interviewing—try to plan for an hour. You may need to speak slower or provide more explanations, and skilled immigrants will appreciate the chance you give them to tell you about their background, education and training.

Interpretation is a skill. Interpreters should be trained and prepared properly.

- **Train** bilingual interviewers in the major languages of your community. When bilingual staff are asked to act as interpreters, it is important that they are not overburdened with the added task of interpreting. Set limits to what staff will be asked to do and be sure their work schedule is adjusted appropriately. If staff does not have time to help you in this regard, recruit and train volunteers. All interpreters should be trained and prepared properly and should know what is expected of them.
- **Consider** adding a component of general "volunteering in Canada" information into your orientation process, to cover things that newcomers may not know about the more formal system of volunteering in Canada, including volunteer rights and responsibilities, options for volunteering, how references are gained, etc.



### **Increase cross-cultural interviewing skills**

In many organizations, the Coordinator of Volunteers conducts all the volunteer interviews. Some organizations also ask the supervising staff to interview the potential volunteer before their placement. It is important that anyone who interviews is aware of how much an interviewer's own personal biases may interfere with their assessment of a potential volunteer's suitability and how, as a result, the newcomer may be screened out unfairly.

Ask interviewers to identify their own personal biases and assumptions. Here are some questions to reflect on:

"What thoughts do I have about a person who speaks English with a strong accent?"

"What do I think of when I hear 'a newcomer to Canada'?"

"What assumptions do I make about a volunteer when they ask a lot of questions in an interview or ask no questions at all?"

Basic hospitality is a concept that translates across cultures and is an important element in interviewing volunteers. Smile, offer some small talk, offer a beverage or simple refreshment, and take the time to listen and allow the person to tell you about him or herself beyond just responding to your questions.

## Quick tips:

- **Offer** diversity training to everyone who interviews newcomers. There are workshops, publications and articles available through Volunteer Centres, immigrant-serving organizations, ethno-cultural societies and lots of free online content. (Chapter 4, Toolbox: Tips for Communicating with ESL speakers).
- **Ask** the correct pronunciation of the newcomer's name, noting it on the application.
- **Explain** the "meeting" process to the newcomer at the beginning of the interview.
- **Acquaint** yourself with culturally specific observances such as Ramadan. (Ramadan is the fasting month for Muslims.) If you are in doubt, don't be shy about asking, and if you stick your foot in your mouth, just offer a simple apology and invite the person to tell you more. Most people are happy to explain elements of their culture, and are not offended by honest questions that are aimed at gaining more understanding between two people.
- **Hold** off on "first impressions". Speaking on the telephone, leaving a voice message, answering questions in English during the interview can be very intimidating. First impressions may be very unreliable in these situations and could screen someone out prematurely.



## **Assist newcomer volunteers in meeting eligibility requirements**

### **Background checks:**

Volunteer Coordinators are responsible to put in place risk management tools to ensure clients, volunteers and the organization is protected. To this end, the volunteer management profession has established a standard of screening that includes reference checks and, as needed, health, driving and criminal records checks. However, these processes are to be used in conjunction with other screening tools and should not be the only criteria to determine an applicant's suitability for a volunteer position. All procedures and policies must be applied fairly to all.



# Notes:

Permanent Residents are thoroughly screened for criminal inadmissibility before their arrival in Canada, and the security screening process is very thorough.

It is possible to inadvertently design a policy that unfairly prevents immigrants and refugees or other groups from volunteering. For example, if your policy states that volunteers must produce a clean criminal record for the past 10 years, you have the potential to exclude many immigrants and refugees simply because they cannot provide a criminal record or reference check based upon a specified period of residency in Canada (such documents can be hard to obtain from outside the country of origin).

This type of policy may also exclude younger people. For example: If your organization requires a clear criminal record based upon the last 10 years then the minimum age for volunteers must be 29. A younger person cannot provide proof of a clear record for that time period due to the fact that criminal records can only be obtained on adults aged 19 or older. Policies and practices regarding background checks must be applied equally to all volunteers; Test your policies well.

It is unreasonable to expect recent immigrants and refugees to be able to provide a criminal record for longer than they have lived in Canada. It may also be discriminatory to exclude a whole group of people based on this requirement alone.

For more information about the immigration screening process visit the Citizenship and Immigration website at [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca) and search for "police certificate".

## Quick Tips:

- **Explain** to the newcomer the need for, and the process of, criminal record checks, health and reference checks.
- **Provide** letters of request for health checks and criminal record checks that the newcomer can take to the doctor and the police respectively.
- **Accept** references from a landlord, an ESL teacher, or a settlement worker as well as from an employer or personal friend.
- **Develop** screening policies that can be fairly applied to more recent arrivals, and offer alternatives if specified time requirements cannot reasonably be met.

## **Authorization to volunteer:**

Persons from all immigration categories may be eligible to volunteer in Canada and should not be excluded because of their immigration status. To exclude on such a basis could be deemed discriminatory. However there are some conditions that may apply to individuals who are not Permanent Residents or Canadian Citizens.

There may be conditions placed on an individual's immigration documents, such as "may not work in health care". Individuals who have particular conditions placed on their immigration documents should be encouraged to consult an Immigration Officer before proceeding to volunteer in any activity that might contradict these conditions.

Of utmost importance is the need to conduct oneself in accordance with the reason for admission into Canada. For example, a visitor to the country is admitted for the purpose of sightseeing and visiting family or friends. Therefore if volunteering becomes the "main activity" that occupies that individuals' time, he or she may be in violation of entry conditions. To be safe, he or she should consult an Immigration Officer, and ensure volunteering remains "incidental" to the main reason he/she is here until advised otherwise by a qualified official. This might similarly apply to international students and other groups.

There are also requirements to ensure that the benefits (i.e. financial gain, experience, training) derived from "work" are offered to permanent residents and Canadian Citizens. These benefits, called "valuable consideration" could include (but are not limited to) transportation allowance, formal training, meals and other benefits that can be derived from volunteering. Volunteers without a work permit who apply for volunteer positions in which there is 'valuable consideration' may need to verify the position is deemed "exempt from work authorization" or receive work authorization for the purpose of volunteering in that position.

To do this he/she can contact the CIC call centre 1-888-242-2100. It will be helpful to the potential newcomer volunteer to have a clear written description of the position (with any benefits clearly stated), as well as a Position Letter Offer from the organization where they wish to volunteer. If advised to proceed with a work authorization application, it can be downloaded from the CIC website at [www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/work.html](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/work.html) or by contacting the call centre. It is important to note that each position in

each organization requires verification; the permit is not transferable nor is there a "general volunteer" permit.

Though this may result in a waiting time for the volunteer before beginning to volunteer, it should not completely screen out the newcomer. The wait time could be used for checking references, an orientation session, etc.

### **Employment Insurance:**

Newcomers who are on Employment Insurance (EI) when they apply to volunteer with you may not realize that volunteering could put their EI in jeopardy. Technically, individuals receiving EI are supposed to be looking for employment Monday through Friday. That may rule out a regularly scheduled daytime volunteer position. If you know your volunteer is receiving EI, you may recommend that they check with Service Canada ([www.servicecanada.gc.ca](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca) or 1-800-622-6232) and get permission to volunteer to protect them from losing their EI benefits. If they receive permission, you can place them without any concern.

### **Quick Tips:**

- **Ask** "Are you legally entitled to work in Canada?" and/or "Are there any conditions to your authorization to work in Canada?" during the interview, explaining the reason for the question.
- **Explain** the requirements to newcomers who do not yet have work authorization, or who are on EI.
- **Assist** newcomers to consult the relevant sources, and encourage them to return to you after they have verified their volunteering will not jeopardize any other requirements. Reassure them that you value their skills and want to be able to give them a volunteer opportunity.



## Accommodate Language Barriers

Many newcomers begin looking for volunteer opportunities very shortly after arriving in Canada. They are attending ELSA classes and determined to improve their English as quickly as possible. By giving newcomers an opportunity to join your organization you may be amazed at how quickly they improve.

### Quick Tips:

- **Provide** a “buddy” for the newcomer. The buddy has the English skill level required for the position and can help the new volunteer learn the English vocabulary required for the work.
- **Design** a graduated entry plan with positions requiring low English skills to positions requiring higher English skills.



## Refer newcomers you do not accept to another volunteer organization

It takes a great deal of courage for many newcomers to begin looking for a volunteer placement. They may have come to your organization because you were nearby or they heard about you from a friend. If you do not have a position for them, they may have no idea what to do next. You can support them by having information available to give them the needed encouragement to keep looking. Give them information (verbal and written) on how their local Volunteer Centre or another organization that can help them. Be in touch with other Volunteer Program Coordinators who have positions available and provide the newcomer with a contact name and number. Don't send the newcomer away empty-handed, but always with your encouragement to keep looking for the right position.

If you accommodate one volunteer who has good English but lacks a desirable skill, then it may be argued that you could also accommodate a newcomer volunteer who lacks English but meets other skill requirements.

**Quick tips:**

- **Ask** the individual if they would like you to phone ahead to another coordinator to ensure that the position is still available and perhaps even set up an appointment for them.
- **Access** the Volunteer Centre's website in your office (if you're online and your community has a Volunteer Centre) and surf through the volunteer opportunities. Show them how to use the site and explain some of the positions that they might be interested in.



## My Action Plan

### The Application Process

The two areas I have chosen to address and the specific actions I will take to place and involve newcomer volunteers in our organization are:

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I want to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_(date).

☐ Hooray! We did it!



## Tips for communicating with those for whom English communication is a challenge

- Communication is a two-way process involving both listener and speaker. Take equal responsibility for your part in the communication.
- Show respect for the other person.
- Look at your own style of communication - your speaking tone, approach (direct or indirect), volume, choice of vocabulary, and use of body language and non-verbal cues.
- Make time for the person and reduce distractions around you.
- Allow time for an ESL speaker to think and respond. It may take them up to four times longer to respond.
- Avoid the use of jargon and organization/non-profit specific terms.
- Clarify your understanding and ask the other person to clarify their understanding of what has been said.
- Slow it down. Present one idea at a time.
- If you have not been understood, repeat the same thing using the same words and allow time for the listener to think before you speak again. If you are still not understood, repeat the statement again but using key words only this time.
- Practise speaking in a more simple manner when you are alone.



## Sample Volunteer Program Registration Form in Simple English

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name/s: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why do you want to volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What volunteer work do you want to do?

☐ Office Work (using computers) ☐ Child Care ☐ Bingo Game Helper

3. Please list your work and volunteer experience (from Canada and home country)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What other interests can you share with others?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What days and times you can volunteer?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. How many times per week do you want to volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How long can you continue to volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Who can we phone for a reference?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you know him/her? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you know him/her? \_\_\_\_\_

I allow \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organization) to collect personal information related to my education and employment history, and to talk to the references I have given. I understand that the information obtained will be kept confidential. I understand the information I have given may only be shared with relevant people in order to place me as a volunteer and to manage my volunteer placement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's signature





## Immigration Letter Template

(Date)

(Volunteer's name & address)

Dear (Volunteer's name):

I am pleased to offer you the volunteer position of Child Care Helper for Mercy Family Centre. Mercy Family Centre is a non-profit organization, which serves low-income families.

You will assist our staff to care for a group of ten children ages 2-5 while their mothers attend our parent's group. You will be volunteering every Friday from 9 am to 12 pm for six months.

I have included a copy of the volunteer position description. This is a volunteer position; you will not be paid for this position and no staff will be laid off or lose pay as a result of your volunteering activities. You will receive \_\_\_\_\_benefits from this position.

Before you can begin, you will need to pass a medical examination. Please arrange this with your family doctor and complete it as soon as possible.

We look forward to having you join our volunteer team.

Sincerely,

Coordinator of Volunteers



## Resources

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### Community Resources

Community Volunteer Connections Library  
#200 - 25 King Edward Ave, Coquitlam BC  
604 529-5139      [www.volunteerconnections.net](http://www.volunteerconnections.net)

Volunteer Vancouver Library  
1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC  
604 875-9144      [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

Douglas College Library  
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster BC  
604 527-5467

MOSAIC  
1720 Grant St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Vancouver BC  
Contact Volunteer Services at 604 254-9626 or  
[volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com)      [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com)  
(Extensive bibliography available in the area of cultural awareness,  
diversity, organizational change, etc.)

Immigrant Services Society of BC  
501-333 Terminal Av, Vancouver, BC  
604-684-2581      [volunteer@issbc.org](mailto:volunteer@issbc.org)      [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org)

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
28 West Pender St, Vancouver BC  
604-684-1628      [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca)

### Books and written publications

Dresser, Norine. *Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1996. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

McDonald Series. *Communicating Across Cultures*. Cross Cultural Communication International Inc. 1991. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

Sorti, Craig. *Cross Cultural Dialogues*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1994. Includes 74 brief encounters illustrating cultural differences across 10 different cultures.

### **Useful Websites**

[www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)

Citizenship and Immigration Canada site for information on the immigration process and on work permits.

## CHAPTER 5

### Orientation and Training

Orientation and training contributes to a positive team environment where volunteers perform effectively and staff members are equipped to support and supervise these volunteers. By designing your orientation and training to meet the diverse needs of all volunteers and staff, you ensure a safe and supportive experience for everyone—your clients, your volunteers and your organization.

An orientation session is very important and should cover the basic information about your organization and the volunteer program. What is the mission of your organization, your vision, history, programs and future directions? What do people do in your organization? What expectations do you have for volunteers? What are your facilities, equipment, and program structure? Who are the people with whom the volunteer will be working? Orientation sessions may be held before individuals make formal application to the organization or they may be conducted after the volunteer is accepted.

#### **A well-designed orientation helps your volunteers to:**

- Feel welcomed and included
- Commit to your organization and their services
- Understand the purpose and role of volunteers in the organization and their relationship to staff
- Agree to meet the expectations regarding commitment, scheduling, punctuality, workplace safety and lines of authority

Training, which covers the specific work the volunteer will be doing, follows the orientation and is often conducted by the person who will be directly supervising the volunteer.

#### **A well-designed training program helps your volunteers to:**

- Learn the skills and terminology required for the position
- Feel confident to do their and look for ways to perform better

By designing your orientation and training to meet the diverse needs of all volunteers and staff, you ensure a safe and supportive experience for everyone.

**Effective volunteer orientation and training helps staff to:**

- Accept volunteers in their programs
- Trust volunteers to do a good job

**Well-designed training programs for the staff will help to:**

- Build their skills in supporting and supervising volunteers
- Be realistic in their expectations of volunteers
- Know how to handle problems and where to go for help
- Become confident in their abilities to orient and train volunteers

There are many practical steps you can take to modify existing orientation and training procedures so that you are meeting the needs of newcomer volunteers along with everyone else. There are also many opportunities to develop new, innovative training models to meet the changing needs of your volunteers and staff.

Use the checklist on the next page to help you get started.



## Checklist for Orientation and Training

**Do a quick evaluation of your present program by checking the boxes that reflect your current practice.**

- ☐ We explain the purpose of all the volunteer orientation and training to newcomer volunteers.
- ☐ We involve our volunteers in designing our orientation/training sessions.
- ☐ We are flexible in our approach to orientation and training. Our training includes printed material, verbal instruction, a range of training styles and, when appropriate, hands-on experience.
- ☐ Our written materials are in plain language.
- ☐ We translate our key training materials (i.e. technical terms, safety information) into the common languages spoken by our volunteers and/or provide lists of vocabulary that they can research on their own.
- ☐ Our staff has the skills to train/facilitate in cross-cultural environments.
- ☐ We follow up each volunteer after they complete the orientation/training session.
- ☐ We have a buddy system for new volunteers.

**What areas does your program need to develop? Read on for strategies that can help you incorporate the above practices into your volunteer program.**

# Notes:

Offering training options is more effective than a one-size-fits-all model for orientation or training.

## Strategies for Developing Inclusive Orientation and Training Sessions



### Ensure newcomer volunteers understand the purpose and format of orientation and training

If your newcomer volunteer applicants are nervous, you can ease their worries by reassuring them that they will be adequately prepared for their work within your organization. Clarify what sessions are mandatory (e.g. the orientation) and give the newcomer plenty of advance notice so they can make the necessary arrangements to attend.

#### Quick Tips:

- **Use** plain language to describe the value of attending the orientation and training sessions. If you have photos of previous orientation groups or training sessions, use these to introduce what the sessions are all about.
- **Ensure** that all new volunteers have a written invitation identifying the location, time, date of the sessions with your name and contact number.



### Address the orientation needs of newcomers

Providing adequate orientation for newcomer volunteers will help to create an even playing field where they can excel along with your traditional volunteers. Orientation is your chance to ensure all your volunteers understand your work and its importance to the community. It's also a chance to explain what you expect from volunteers and prepare them for what is coming next. For example, the idea of helping others is common to most cultures, but being evaluated on your helping may not be a familiar concept to all.

Include some aspects of "Volunteering in Canada" workshops in your general orientation. You can refine your topics as you go along, but start with some basics such as:

- Top reasons why Canadians volunteer
- How Canadians see themselves in relation to volunteering
- How volunteers make a difference in the community and the range of opportunities available
- Benefits of volunteering
- Rights and responsibilities of volunteers

### Quick Tips:

- **Incorporate** relevant aspects of Canadian volunteer culture into all orientation/training sessions and materials. E.g. expectations of punctuality, proper dress code, etc.
- **Include** various styles of learning - reading, listening, watching and doing - when you design your training. For example, when teaching volunteers the correct procedures for using a wheelchair: 1) provide written instructions; 2) review the materials verbally; 3) demonstrate with a wheelchair; 4) allow each of them to practice with the wheelchair.
- **Review** your general orientation information from the perspective of a newcomer. Talk to newcomers and ask them what questions they have about volunteering. Some of these questions may be "Who do I talk to when I have a question about my position?" and "If I get a paid job, can I continue to volunteer?"



### Address individual needs during training

People have different needs and learning styles, whether or not they are a newcomer. You may need to customize your standard sessions or develop new sessions to meet these needs. One of the ways to customize orientation and/or training is to offer both group and one-on-one sessions since schedules and comfort levels may make it easier for some to learn in private rather than with a group of strangers.



### Quick Tip:

- **Ask** your volunteers what will help them achieve success in the work they do in your organization. They may be able to give you ideas that will enhance your orientation/training. The more volunteers are consulted about their own development, the more they will feel valued within your organization.



**If the trainer doesn't fit the volunteer,  
try another style not another volunteer!**



### Overcome language barriers

Written  
instructions  
for a  
volunteer  
who does  
office work  
might  
include:

The font  
style and size  
you prefer

Spellings of  
names

Suggested  
file name and  
location

Reminders to  
use spell  
check

Newcomers with English language barriers are not illiterate—many newcomers speak, read and write several languages. Now they are in Canada, they must learn yet another language and they are working hard to become fluent in English. To show respect and help build confidence, use plain language both when speaking and writing.

Newcomers with lower levels of English tell us that it is very difficult for them to absorb too much information at one time. Condense your written materials to say only what you need to say. At the same time, it is important to include all the relevant details. Don't assume anything! Clear step-by-step directions reduces the likelihood volunteers will feel frustrated and of staff becoming disappointed or even blaming the newcomer for what is essentially a failure of the training process.

You may not need to translate all your training materials into all relevant languages, but you can identify the main languages of your potential volunteers and translate key areas. This will help the newcomer learn the English terms as well as ensure a safer working environment. If you decide to ask volunteer translators to work on non-sensitive material, always have one or two others who are fluent in both languages to proofread and give you feedback on the translation before giving it out. Note: when the material to be translated is technical, legal, sensitive or related to health and safety issues it is advisable to use a professional translation service.

### Quick Tips:

- **Ask** a local ESL teacher to invite their students to review your materials and give you feedback about words and concepts that are difficult to understand.
- **Seek** advice of experts when using translators. (Your community networks may be able to provide the expert that you need).
- **Provide** word lists—staff titles, program names, common words or phrases used on-the-job. Refer to the lists during the training period. These lists can be in English only or translated as well. If in English only, encourage the newcomer to take the list home and use their dictionary to find the definitions. When they bring the list back, you can quickly check it for accuracy before giving them a new list.
- **Train** staff on the importance of using demonstration when explaining new tasks to volunteers who have lower levels of English.

# Notes:



## **Ensure that all trainers of volunteers have cross-cultural training skills**

When supervisors are supported by the organization and confident in their own skills, they are better trainers and more willing to make the effort to train the volunteers in their program. Good training increases confidence and enables volunteers to integrate into the organization more quickly and perform better.

Ask your supervisors to identify problems or challenges they have in delivering the training to newcomers, and what extra support they need in this area. This can help you determine what training would be appropriate and beneficial for them. Since time is valuable they will likely be willing to attend a workshop that provides them with practical tools to make their job easier. (Chapter 5, Resources)

If supervisors do informal "on-the-job" training, ask for a brief outline of training topics and how they train. One Coordinator of Volunteers in an organization that works extensively with newcomer volunteers initiated a very helpful training procedure for this type of training. In consultation with the supervisors, she developed checklists that cover all the areas that must be covered before a new volunteer begins working in their department. Upon completion of the training, the supervisor signs off on the checklist and returns it to the Coordinator who then places it in the volunteer's file. The checklist reminds the staff of all the necessary areas to cover and assures the Coordinator that the volunteer has received adequate training.

### **Quick Tips:**

- **Put** your name on the mailing list of organizations that offer cross-cultural training so you are aware of upcoming workshops on topics of diversity that you or other staff can attend. Keep an up-to-date training inventory that lists the staff who have been trained and those that still require training.
- **Recognize** the staff who take diversity training, or who have trained a certain number of newcomers. Celebrate their commitment to diversity throughout the whole organization.

- **Partner** with a settlement or multicultural agency to offer workshops for staff on diversity-related issues such as "Slower and Lower English".
- **Budget** for staff training if it doesn't appear anywhere else in the organization's budget.



### **Follow up after the orientation/training and provide extra support if needed**

For some newcomers, the official orientation and training will provide all they need before they begin their work. Others may want to discuss what they heard and ask for clarification when necessary. Some may need encouragement and the promise that you will be there for them should they need to talk about their experience. A newcomer may smile and write on their evaluation form that it was a good training but don't assume that they understood the instructions. Check for comprehension.

#### **Quick Tips:**

- **Ask** questions of the volunteer to see whether they understood the orientation/training materials completely. If the volunteer had any problems understanding, you should catch it early and fill in their knowledge gaps. After working in the position for a short while, the volunteer will be able to identify further questions that have arisen.
- **Develop** a respectful evaluation tool that determines if the newcomer can actually do the task before placing them in the position alone.
- **Ask** the volunteers what they liked about the orientation/training and what else they think might help them in their responsibilities. This feedback will help you continually improve the orientation/training design.
- **Encourage** the staff to evaluate the training based upon their experience with the volunteer.

Check in with your volunteers to see whether they understood the orientation or training completely.

- **Create** a buddy system for volunteers. A buddy system provides good support for any volunteer but it is especially effective for volunteers for whom English communication is a challenge. (Chapter 5, Toolbox: The Buddy System).



**Quote from  
a newcomer  
volunteer**

*"I'm volunteering at Reach Dental Clinic and Holy Family Hospital. I'm able to see, speak to people and be useful. I can practice English. Attending Reach Dental Clinic, I was shown aseptic techniques, x-ray films using machines and I had the opportunity to observe dental procedures. I started to gain dental vocabulary. At Holy Family Hospital my assignment is special events every Friday. I help to cover the tables, accompany the residents out of their room. I can socialize to residents, staff and other volunteers."*

Svetlana was fairly new to Canada and learning English. She had a background in the dental field and wanted to see how it was done in Canada. Some of her duties at the Dental Clinic were cleaning cubicles and instruments, stocking drawers, calling patients from reception and seating them.



## My Action Plan

### Orientation and Training

The two areas I have chosen to address and the specific actions I will take to improve the orientation and training for newcomers in our organization are:

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I want to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_(date).

☐ Hooray! We did it!



## Toolbox

### The Buddy System

The buddy system links an experienced volunteer with a newcomer volunteer for a limited period of time in order to help the new volunteer integrate successfully into the organization and develop the skills needed for their position.

The buddy system is an excellent way to support new volunteers in your organization while, at the same time, recognizing the skills of your experienced volunteers by placing them in a position of increased authority and responsibility.

More than likely your experienced volunteers believe in your cause and in the importance of volunteers and want to help ensure that the program continues well into the future. Many of them will remember what it was like to be a new volunteer in your organization and they will be glad to help someone over the first few "humps".

Most newcomers want to practice their English, meet new friends, understand Canadian culture and learn about their work. For these things to happen, they need someone to talk to that they can trust, someone they feel understands and can take the time for them and that's what you want the buddy to provide.

What do you need in place for a successful buddy system?

1. Experienced volunteers
  - a. Choose experienced volunteers in your organization who are committed, dependable and do their work well in the same area in which the newcomer will be working.
  - b. Look for volunteers who have shown an openness to diversity, who enjoy being with people, are kind, smile a lot and don't mind going out of their way to help someone else.
  - c. Look at your volunteer interview information to see which individuals may have indicated an interest in this kind of opportunity when they first came to you.
  - d. Invite specific individuals (don't do a general recruitment for this one) to an orientation session to explain what you'd

like to set up and how they could be involved. Ask for their input before beginning anything.

2. Create clear agreed-upon guidelines for the program, including how to resolve any problems that may arise.
3. Hold a short training session for the experienced volunteers.
4. Provide clear communication (both verbally and in writing) to the staff on how the buddy system will work and who will be the buddies in their department.
5. Hold an information session for the experienced and new volunteers to outline the guidelines and introduce the buddies to each other.
6. Conduct periodic check-ins either in person or by phone to see how things are going.
7. Plan a formal evaluation at the end of the buddy period. This information will be invaluable for training, recruitment, etc.
8. Recognize the experienced volunteers and the contribution they have made to your organization. This could be in the newsletter, at official events, in the annual report, etc.





## Resources

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### Community Resources

Community Volunteer Connections Library  
#200 - 25 King Edward Ave, Coquitlam BC  
604 529-5139      [www.volunteerconnections.net](http://www.volunteerconnections.net)

Volunteer Vancouver Library  
1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC  
604-875-9144      [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

Douglas College Library  
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster BC  
604-527-5467

MOSAIC  
1720 Grant St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Vancouver BC  
Contact Volunteer Services at 604-254-9626 or  
[volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com)      [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com)  
(Extensive bibliography available in the area of cultural awareness,  
diversity, organizational change, etc.)

Immigrant Services Society of BC  
501-333 Terminal Av, Vancouver, BC  
604-684-2581      [volunteer@issbc.org](mailto:volunteer@issbc.org)      [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org)

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
28 West Pender St, Vancouver BC  
604-684-1628      [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca)

### Books and written publications

Fowler, Sandra, Editor. *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc, 1995. Helpful in developing training Chapters for newcomers.

Ki-Low-na Friendship Society. *Handbook for Volunteers at Ki-Low-na Friendship Society*. Kelowna: Ki-Low-na Friendship Society, 2001. Telephone: 250-763-4905. A good example of plain language.

Mission Community Services Society. *Volunteer Translator/Interpreter Manual—Enhancing Skills and Knowledge—Putting Them Into Practice—the E.S.K. Project*. Mission: Mission Community Services Society, Multicultural Program, 2001. Telephone: 604-826-3634.

MOSAIC Volunteer Program. *Volunteering in Canada*. Vancouver: MOSAIC. Orientation to volunteering in Canada conducted regularly in Vancouver for newcomers. Available through MOSAIC, Telephone: 604-254-9626 or volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com.

SHARE. *Thrift Store and Food Bank Orientation Manual and Policies*. Coquitlam: SHARE, Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library. A good example of plain language.

Sorti, Craig. *Cross Cultural Dialogues*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc, 1994. 74 brief encounters with cultural differences representing 10 different cultures.

Stevens, Sara Bowe. *Community-based Programming for a Multicultural Society: A Guidebook for Service Providers*. Winnipeg: Planned Parenthood Manitoba. Telephone 204 982-7800 An excellent Canadian resource on outreach to ethnocultural groups, organizational change and culturally sensitive service delivery (among other topics).

DIVERSEcity (formerly Surrey Delta Immigration Services Society). *Multicultural Training Project for Cross-Cultural Programs at Surrey Delta Immigration Services Society*, Surrey: Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society 1996. Telephone: 604-97-0205

DIVERSEcity (formerly Surrey Delta Immigration Services Society). *Staff Training Binder for Working with Newcomers and ESL Volunteers*. Surrey: Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society, 2000. Telephone: 604-597-0205.



## CHAPTER 6

### Supervision and Support

*"Well-supported volunteers tend to stay longer, perform better and learn more while on the job and leave happier. As managers, we must make sure that the people for whom we are responsible are both willing and able to do the work of our organization. The broad term for this is supervision and support, but, in reality may include coaching, training, supporting, encouraging, correcting, advising, delegating, listening, observing, advocating, evaluating and, sometimes terminating."*

(Volunteer Management. Rick Lynch & Steve McCurley)

A 2001 study done by the Homewood Centre for Organizational Health at Riverslea reported that employees (and volunteers) experience higher levels of stress on the job when:

- They don't know the expectations of their employer
- They don't get enough feedback about their performance
- They don't know if anyone cares about the work they are doing

How much more true could this be for a newcomer volunteer who is in an environment that is unfamiliar and at times even intimidating to him/her? Newcomer volunteers need support and guidance to perform their work well, to feel safe, and to have a sense of personal well-being. With this kind of support, they will seek out other challenges and opportunities within your organization that will benefit both you and the volunteer.

As managers, we must make sure that the people for whom we are responsible are both willing and able to do the work of our organization.

## Notes:

Good supervision requires training and a recognition that time is required to supervise well.

### **Strike a balance between your needs and the needs of your volunteers**

Coordinators of Volunteers often have a heavy workload with outcomes to achieve and deadlines to meet. It would be unrealistic for any organization to run a volunteer program that put the needs of the volunteers above the needs of the organization and their clients.

On the other hand, it is undesirable to lose potentially great volunteers because the volunteer program lacks adequate support for newcomer volunteers. These volunteers may carry their impressions of your organization out into their communities, impacting your ability to attract other volunteers.

It may take more time at the beginning to put adequate support systems in place, but, in the long term, this investment will bring dividends to everyone—the program, the staff, the volunteers, the clients and the organization. Good supervision requires training and a recognition that time is required to supervise well. The organization's values will be reflected in their commitment to make this happen. Supervisors need to be affirmed for the work they do with the volunteers—appreciation and recognition for their time and effort will hopefully result in their personal commitment to be “top-notch” supervisors.

Please remember that the term “supervisor” refers to all individuals, whether paid or unpaid, who must “achieve planned results through others” (Volunteer Management, Rich Lynch & Steven McCurley). In many organizations the Coordinator of Volunteers directly supervises the volunteers. However there are times when other individuals over whom the Coordinator has no direct authority supervise the volunteers.

### **Communicate, communicate, communicate ...**

Good supervision is dependent upon good communication. All supervisors are very busy and finding ways to communicate in a meaningful way with all your volunteers on a regular basis can be a challenge. It is important to evaluate your methods of communication from time to time and make improvements. Are you using plain language in your written and verbal communication? Are you sensitive to the individual needs of your volunteers? There are courses and books that can be very helpful in the ongoing challenge to communicate effectively to everyone in your

volunteer program as well as throughout the organization. This may be an area that you can put on the budget for the coming year.

## **Understand the difference between feedback and evaluation**

Feedback is usually done on an ongoing basis during the course of our day. The encouraging words "good " or "let me show you an easier way to do that" are feedback. Feedback provides an individual with a sense of how they're doing and, at the same time, gives them the chance to make changes before it's too late; Giving and receiving feedback is an essential part of supervising and supporting volunteers. Always remember that when you give feedback to another individual you need to be sensitive to their comfort level and respect their privacy. Some feedback is appropriate in public while other feedback should only be done in private. Because feedback is time-sensitive, it is most effective when it is given as close to the action/behaviour being addressed as possible. You will find helpful tips on effective feedback later in this chapter.

Evaluation, for the purpose of this manual, is the scheduled, more formal time when the Coordinator of Volunteers and the volunteer meet to talk about how the volunteer is doing. This will be covered in Chapter 8.

Read on for ideas to help you support and supervise your newcomer volunteers and, at the same time, ensure that supervisors are able and willing to provide effective and sensitive support and supervision.

Use the checklist on the next page to help you get started.



## Checklist for Supervision and Support

**Do a quick evaluation of your present program by checking the boxes that reflect your current practice.**

- ☐ We equip supervisory staff with appropriate skills to help them work effectively with newcomers.
- ☐ We clarify lines of authority both verbally and in writing.
- ☐ We assess and address the individual emotional needs of newcomer volunteers within our organization.
- ☐ We have a support system for volunteers such as a buddy system.
- ☐ We encourage and support supervisors to set aside time to get to know the volunteers with whom they are working.
- ☐ We give regular feedback—both positive and corrective—to our volunteers.
- ☐ We ask our volunteers to evaluate the type of support we provide.
- ☐ We act on our volunteers' feedback.
- ☐ The supervisors and volunteers tell us that there is an atmosphere of trust and openness between them.
- ☐ We are flexible in scheduling newcomers who are looking for employment.
- ☐ We involve newcomers in the organization beyond their specific positions.

**What areas does your program need to develop? Read on for strategies that can help you incorporate the above practices into your volunteer program.**

## Strategies for supporting and supervising newcomer volunteers



### **Build agreements with supervisors and ensure that they are trained in supervising newcomer volunteers**

Supervisors must have a clear understanding of what is required to provide a supportive environment for newcomer volunteers and where their role as supervisors fits in this process. The Coordinator of Volunteers may need to advocate on behalf of the supervisors within the organization to ensure that effective supervision can take place. A policy affirming the organization's commitment to provide a supportive environment for everyone will be helpful when planning for the necessary supervisor training or asking for the time commitment required to supervise/support the volunteers within a particular department.

#### **Quick Tips:**

- **Offer** a mini workshop for anyone who will be supervising newcomer volunteers. Explore personal supervisory strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan that offers ongoing support to anyone who supervises volunteers.
- **Discuss** a potential placement with the supervisor before placing a newcomer volunteer in their department. Ask the supervisor to identify any resources they need from you to help them appropriately supervise and support the volunteer. If possible, set up a time for the supervisor to meet with the volunteer. Check in periodically to see how the placement is progressing.
- **Explain** the role of the supervisor to the new volunteer during introductions to the supervisor on the volunteer's first day. This ensures that they have both heard the same information. Make it clear to both that if any problems arise they can come to you (or whatever other options are appropriate for your organization).
- **Encourage** supervisors to suggest an alternative if a shift has to be cancelled. E.g. would the supervisor like the volunteer to come another day to make up for the missed shift? Can the newcomer contact another volunteer who could replace them? Is there a list for

Explore personal supervisory strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan that offers ongoing support to anyone who supervises volunteers.



## Notes:

this? Although the newcomer is expected to have the same level of commitment as other volunteers and the organization's needs must come first, the newcomer may need some flexibility in their hours to accommodate their job search. This should be clarified before placement to ensure that the supervisor is comfortable with this arrangement.



### **Clarify authority and expectations**

The newcomer volunteer may have developed an extensive educational background and work history before coming to Canada. Lack of local credentials or proficiency in English means they are starting over, often in an entry-level capacity. They may:

- Feel frustrated because they are unable to use previously acquired skills in their volunteer assignment
- Be experiencing a loss of self esteem related to loss of status
- Desire to move ahead as quickly as possible
- Desire challenge
- Want volunteer work that closely matches their past employment goals

Authority is understood in different ways throughout the world. The newcomer volunteer may need to know:

- The level of authority allowed to volunteers within your organization
- What they have authority to do
- To whom they should direct questions
- How frequently questions can be asked without appearing unable to do the work
- In what areas they can show initiative and how to do so
- How they can become involved in more challenging roles

Encourage supervisory staff to talk with newcomer volunteers about their expectations in the work place. At the same time, supervisors need to be aware that authority issues may impact the newcomer volunteer. Emphasize the need for supervisors to work together with the newcomer volunteer to help them gain satisfaction from their volunteer assignment while at the same time staying within their boundaries. Supervisors should clearly communicate (both verbally and in writing) to the volunteer what

they can do and what they cannot do. Always encourage the volunteer to ask questions whenever they are in doubt.

Some newcomers are very anxious to regain their former status (e.g. a medical doctor who can no longer practice medicine) and may require very detailed clarification of their authority/responsibilities and close supervision until they learn their boundaries.

## Quick Tips:

- **Keep** a copy of all written directions given to the volunteer in their file. This provides a record that will be helpful when correction is needed and also during evaluation. Ask supervisors to always copy you whenever they write out directions to the volunteer.
- **Update** the volunteer training material based upon the feedback you receive from both the supervisor and the newcomer.
- **Use your newsletter** to remind volunteers of basic expectations or bring them up-to-date on new procedures.



## **Encourage your staff to get to know their volunteers and build relationships with them**

While a new volunteer position may be exciting for some newcomers, other newcomers may have a high level of anxiety when they first begin working with your organization. Possible factors that may influence the emotional state of a newcomer are:

- The level of isolation they are experiencing in other areas of their lives
- Their confidence level when entering any new situation
- Familiarity with the organization, its purpose and culture
- Their comfort level in learning new skills
- The skill level they have to reach to do their assigned task
- Their style of learning, pace of work
- The level of challenge in the position

Supervisors must be aware that volunteering can be more difficult for some people than others. Loss of status, struggles with English, lack of information about the cultural context can leave an otherwise confident person feeling unsure of themselves in certain situations and even make

## Notes:

the performance of tasks that were once performed with ease back home much more stressful.

On top of learning all the cultural nuances and mastering a new language, we know that the development of social networks is important to successful settlement. Newcomers need and want to develop personal and professional relationships in order to feel that they belong in the community and in their new country. A meaningful volunteer position can go a long way in providing these networks.

Supervisors need to recognize the importance of setting time aside to talk with the volunteer so they can get to know one another better. When appropriate, words of encouragement that emphasize the positive aspects of the volunteer's contribution to the organization can give the newcomer the grounding they need to continue their work with confidence and a sense of fulfillment. Sharing a cup of tea and taking a break from shoptalk creates a chance to build trust.

Allow your volunteers time to visit with other colleagues in the workplace and form genuine friendships (within reasonable limits). Socializing can help to lessen the profound feelings of loneliness, homesickness and a sense of disconnectedness as they try to adjust to their new community. Immigrants who have already formed significant relationships with people will not be as reliant on their volunteer connections for support, but for some it can be a vital part of their social network.

### Quick Tips:

- **Check in** with your volunteers after the first or second time they volunteer and ask open questions such as: *"What do you enjoy about volunteering here?"* or *"What concerns do you have, if any?"* and *"How does this position meet your expectations?"*
- **Remind** the newcomer often that they can talk to you or their supervisor anytime.
- **Book time** at the beginning of volunteer shifts to circulate among your volunteers to catch up on what has been happening in their lives.
- **Set up** a buddy system. (Chapter 5, Toolbox: The Buddy System).



## Give feedback with sensitivity

Everyone needs to know how he or she is doing and where he or she could improve. Often an individual can “sense” that something is wrong but since no one talks to them about it, they try to guess what’s wrong — often incorrectly. People get angry because they assume the person is deliberately doing something wrong when, in fact, they were never shown how to do it properly.

Why do we hesitate to give corrective feedback? Many times it is simply a matter of too much to do and too little time. It’s easier for a supervisor to “repair” what was done wrong than to take time to show the volunteer how to do it properly. Another reason may be that the supervisor has not had a model of positive feedback in their own life and so finds it difficult to know how to give feedback to someone else. Perhaps our feelings of pity for “the poor immigrant” may hinder us from taking the initiative to help the newcomer improve and learn the skill properly. We must remember that the newcomer is with us because they want to learn to do things well. We are not helping a newcomer when we overlook their mistakes. (Chapter 6, Toolbox: Feedback Record)

Some volunteers may wonder if their work is meaningful because they never receive any thanks or expressions of appreciation. Taking the time to say a simple “thank you” is common courtesy and respect as well as part of our supervisory responsibilities. We must check up on ourselves periodically to make sure we are showing appreciation throughout our day.

There are individual and cultural differences in how feedback is given and received. Explain how feedback is given in your organization and why it is that way. Stress that there is no shame intended, and that you encourage volunteers to ask questions and get clarification at any time. As part of your interview process, ask the newcomer how they would like you or a staff member to give them feedback. It is important to be sensitive to a volunteer’s wishes. Offer options if you can. Some people are uncomfortable with public praise but they appreciate hearing that they are doing a good job in a written note or a quiet one-to-one visit.

## Notes:

As part of your interview process, ask the newcomer how they would like you or a staff member to give them feedback.

### Quick Tips:

- **Get to know** your volunteers individually and encourage supervisors to do this as well. Find out how the volunteers would like to receive feedback—written or verbal, scheduled appointment or spontaneously. Make note of their preferences and allow for some flexibility so that the feedback is not a negative experience for either volunteers or staff.
- **Develop** the habit of regularly giving volunteers positive feedback. Do not underestimate the need to hear positive comments.
- **Write** staff guidelines for giving feedback that will ensure that any negative feedback is done respectfully and privately. (i.e. the “sandwich approach” with the area for development or change slipped in between two positive comments).
- **Check** carefully to ensure that any interpretation given is correct and there is agreement about what has been said between all three parties if you have an interpreter present while you give feedback.
- **Provide** a mini-training session over lunch for supervisory staff on the art of giving feedback. Do some role-playing and share some experiences where they would like help in doing better the next time.
- **Touch** base with the newcomer after corrective feedback to see if they have anything to add.
- **Follow up** a verbal discussion with a printed memo and place a copy in the volunteer’s file.
- **Invite** a newcomer volunteer to share how they give feedback in their culture. For example, you might ask “If you saw a co-worker doing something wrong or unsafe, what would you do in your home country to correct it?”



## **Involve newcomer volunteers in the organization in a variety of ways**

## **Notes:**

The more newcomers know about your organization, the more they can initiate and problem-solve in their positions. At the same time, you build loyalty to your organization when you include the newcomer in aspects of the organization that are beyond the scope of their assignment. This exposure may also help the newcomer learn how not-for-profit organizations work in Canada and recognize other opportunities for their personal growth and development.

For example, one local agency received an overwhelming response to a workshop they offered on how boards and committees work in organizations. Newcomer volunteers and ESL students who attended the workshop appreciated the opportunity to find out why boards and committees exist and what people do when they serve on one.

Many newcomers are highly skilled but because of their English level, they are not able to go directly into your "higher" level positions. By involving them beyond their basic position, you will be able to benefit from their skills as they gain more confidence in English and you can place them in more challenging positions sooner.

### **Quick Tips:**

- **Include** newcomers on an event planning committee. Be sure you provide some training on committee responsibilities and give on-going support through their committee experience.
- **Involve** newcomer volunteers in team meetings and organizational training.
- **Invite** newcomers to participate in your volunteer program evaluation process and planning for the coming year.



**Quote from  
two  
newcomer  
volunteers**

*"My teaching career started ten years ago in my native land Sri Lanka. I first felt isolated in a new country, having left behind a good career and comfortable lifestyle. My volunteer work is an enjoyable and gratifying way of being occupied. I consider this a stepping stone to upgrade my skills and gain more experience and education"*

**Pamini, PIRS Children's Program Volunteer**

*"Last summer I moved to Canada as an independent landed immigrant. All new immigrants need to adjust lots of things in order to live here. I believe volunteer experience is very helpful to get used to new life in Canada. I am very happy to work for Volunteer Vancouver., My goal is to become a counselor for new immigrants. I'm wishing immigrant people feel great to work for people who need help."*

**Akiko Hayashi, Volunteer Vancouver**



## My Action Plan

### Supervision and Support

The two areas I have chosen to address and the specific actions I will take to improve the supervision and support newcomer volunteers receive in our organization are:

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

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---

---

II. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

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I want to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_(date).

☐ Hooray! We did it!





## Tips for Supervisors

1. Find out how the volunteer wishes to be addressed and learn to pronounce and spell it properly. Avoid well-intended but potentially belittling comments such as "Your name is so hard to pronounce."
2. Take time to greet the volunteer whenever you see them and inquire how they and their family are doing.
3. Affirm the newcomer when you see them performing well. Don't wait until they do something extra special.
4. If you must correct something they are doing, take them aside to a quiet, private place. Don't ignore mistakes in an attempt to be kind.
5. Explain what they are doing that you would like to see corrected. Be sure to find out what they understand about the situation. Give them specific steps for improvement, making sure they understand what you expect from them and why.
6. If there are English barriers, prepare written instructions as well as verbal instructions so they can read them at their own pace. If they read the directions before you meet with them, they may feel more confident to discuss the situation.
7. If you are correcting something, don't soften the blow by touching your volunteer's arm - unless you know he/she welcomes it. Keep your voice neutral, without hostility in your tone or body language.
8. Follow up on volunteers who miss a shift. Be sure they know they are missed and their absence noticed.



## Sample Feedback Record Form

### Monitoring and feedback for:

Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_

Feedback given by \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Overall performance:

- ☐ Understands instructions
- ☐ Performs tasks accurately
- ☐ Punctual
- ☐ Dependable
- ☐ Follows directions

### Area/s that need improvement:

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### Volunteer will put effort into:

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### Staff will:

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Follow-up date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Resources related to supervision and support of newcomer volunteers

### Community Resources

Community Volunteer Connections Library  
#200 - 25 King Edward Ave, Coquitlam BC  
604-529-5139      [www.volunteerconnections.net](http://www.volunteerconnections.net)

Volunteer Vancouver Library  
1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC  
604-875-9144      [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

Douglas College Library  
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster BC  
604-527-5467

MOSAIC  
1720 Grant St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Vancouver BC  
Contact Volunteer Services at 604-254-9626 or  
[volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com)      [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com)  
(Extensive bibliography available in the area of cultural awareness,  
diversity, organizational change, etc.)

Immigrant Services Society of BC  
501-333 Terminal Av, Vancouver, BC  
604-684-2581      [volunteer@issbc.org](mailto:volunteer@issbc.org)      [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org)

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
28 West Pender St, Vancouver BC  
604-684-1628      [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca)

### Books and written publications

*Body Language and Gestures. Article available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.*

Brislin, Richard W. & Romoko Yoshida. *Improving Intercultural Interactions*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994. Modules for

training an organization in cross-cultural awareness. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

Dresser, Norine. *Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1996. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

McDonald Series. *Communicating Across Cultures*. Cross Cultural Communication International Inc. 1991. Available through Community Volunteer Connections Library.

Sorti, Craig. *Cross Cultural Dialogues*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1994. Includes 74 brief encounters illustrating cultural differences across 10 different cultures.

DIVERSEcity (formerly Surrey Delta Immigration Services Society). *Staff Training Binder for Working with Newcomers and ESL Volunteers*. Surrey: Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society, 2000. Telephone: 604 597-0205.



## CHAPTER 7

### Recognition

People need to feel appreciated and valued, and recognition is the key to volunteer retention.

Every individual is different and is motivated and inspired by different things. Despite each individual's differences, you can never say thank you too often. Beyond the day-to-day informal appreciation, there are many ways to thank newcomer volunteers (and all your volunteers) for the work they do. Your demonstration of genuine and meaningful appreciation to newcomer volunteers is likely to gain you their ongoing commitment and loyalty to your organization. It will also help you to develop a good reputation within the immigrant community, leading to future donations and more volunteers.

Volunteer recognition helps newcomers to Canada:

- Feel a part of the organization (they may feel displaced in so many other areas of their lives)
- Know that they are doing good work (they may feel undervalued because their skills and work experience have not been recognized by employers)
- Acquire references for work or school
- Establish themselves in the community.

Read on for ideas on how to help you develop an inclusive recognition program.

Use the checklist on the next page to help you get started.

Accepting ideas and ways of doing things that are different than your own demonstrates an inclusive attitude and is more meaningful than a recognition party.



## **My Checklist for Inclusive Recognition**

**Do a quick evaluation of your present program by checking the boxes that reflect your current practice.**

- ☐ We recognize volunteers in ways that are both culturally appropriate and relevant to their lifestyle and needs.
- ☐ We acknowledge the special holiday seasons of all our volunteers and staff.
- ☐ We do not make assumptions or generalize about holiday celebrations but rather check things out with our volunteers before proceeding.
- ☐ We express appreciation to our volunteers daily.
- ☐ We have a committee that includes newcomers to plan recognition events such as Volunteer Recognition Week and to design volunteer recognition awards.
- ☐ We provide our volunteers with access to training, resources and networking opportunities.
- ☐ We make sure that the community is aware of our volunteers and their work.

**What areas does your program need to develop? Read on for strategies that can help you incorporate the above practices into your volunteer program.**

## Strategies for recognizing the work and contributions of newcomer volunteers



**Take time to learn about your newcomer volunteers' reasons for volunteering, and tailor your recognition accordingly**

The most common reason people volunteer is to support a cause they believe in, but this is not the only reason newcomer volunteers will join your organization. In fact, many newcomers may not be familiar with exactly what you do when they first join but as time goes by, they will become strong supporters of your work if they are a satisfied volunteer.

The recognition you give to newcomers will be most effective when it is linked to their motivation for volunteering. Annual events can be very appreciated and well attended, but can miss the mark for some if your volunteer is there primarily to build skills. Recognition is as much about valuing skills and providing meaningful opportunities as it is about certificates and events.

Visit Volunteer Canada's website for great resources about the motivations of volunteers, and be sure to check in with your newcomer volunteers. Do they need a reference letter? Do they want to meet new friends, practice their English, or belong to a group? Use the information you get through volunteer interviews and feedback sessions to when developing your recognition program, and develop a program that gives you flexibility to meet individual needs.

When you promote a highly-motivated newcomer into a more responsible position where they will be able to improve their skills or even learn new skills, you have provided valuable recognition for that volunteer. (Always check with the newcomer to make sure they are comfortable with a change and/or added responsibility.)

## Notes:

The recognition you give to newcomers will be most effective when it is linked to their reason for volunteering.



## Notes:



### **Letters of reference are helpful to newcomers who are establishing themselves in the community**

From the beginning of the immigration process, newcomers are encouraged to volunteer in order to obtain "Canadian experience" and gather reference letters to that effect. A well-written reference letter can change someone's life.

Do not be afraid to establish a minimum service requirement before giving the reference letter. Employers want to be assured that the newcomer has gained the required experience from your volunteer placement and that can only happen when they work for a period of time in your organization.

#### **Quick Tips:**

- **Offer** to provide a reference only after a certain length of service (e.g. 30 hours). Explain this criterion clearly at the contract stage and remind volunteers about it as incentive throughout the placement.
- **Help** newcomer volunteers fill out forms for educational or training programs or employment applications.
- **Provide** an "Acknowledgement of Volunteer Participation Letter" which describes the volunteer's position description and their skill level.



### **Help newcomers to gain access to community activities**

Newcomers may be on a very limited income and they appreciate the opportunity to participate in activities that would otherwise be prohibitive because of the cost. A newcomer may also appreciate your help in reducing the expense of volunteering. Providing their bus fare may be more significant to them than a t-shirt.

#### **Quick Tips:**

- **Offer** financial assistance for bus fare, childcare, meals etc. If this is not possible, take time to help newcomers find information about how to access affordable daycare for their children or how to buy fare-saving transit tickets (if this is an option in your community).

- **Provide** newcomer volunteers with tickets to events such as the movies or hockey game.
- **Create** a volunteer information board where you can post notices of community events. Encourage your staff and volunteers to add to it.



## Build relationships

Many newcomers hope to build friendships during their volunteer experience. You can foster great opportunities for team building through your volunteer program.

### Quick Tips:

- **Include** volunteers in activities with staff (eating lunch in the staff room, potluck lunches, birthday celebrations over coffee, etc.) so they can socialize and get to know one another.
- **Provide** a volunteer phone list (with their permission) to allow for relationships to develop outside the newcomer's shift.



## Consider the cultural appropriateness of volunteer recognition

When in doubt, ask the volunteer about the suitability of a recognition award. Some newcomers may not want to be the centre of attention but others may enjoy it. Don't make assumptions such as "Chinese people don't like..." Hold a focus group with a cross-section of your volunteers to find out what they think of your ideas and invite them to give their own ideas.

### Quick Tips:

- **Be aware** of special holiday seasons for all your volunteers and ask the newcomer/s if and how they want to celebrate their holiday. For example, a simple recognition of their new year is a significant gesture that will not go unnoticed. One long-term care home invites their volunteers and staff to plan and carry out a special event for

Relax. No one expects you to be a cultural expert and know every celebration around the world. Whew!

But...when you have volunteers who are foreign-born, why not invite them to explain important holidays and how they are celebrated?

the residents during their culture's holiday season. The volunteers love to share their dress, customs and food with others during this time and the residents enjoy the party (a win for both the volunteer program and recreation department). (Chapter 7, Resources: AMSSA Multi-faith Calendar).

- **Be sensitive** to religious observances that include fasting such as Ramadan and Lent when scheduling events that include eating. Celebration may be appropriate for you during this time but they may choose to not participate. (Chapter 7, Resources: AMSSA Multi-faith Calendar)
- **Build** celebrations around Multicultural week in February or March 21, the International Day for the Elimination Of Racial Discrimination.



### **Remember to offer day-to-day recognition**

Everyone is motivated when they feel appreciated on a regular basis. Since not all volunteers will be around for annual events, day-to-day recognition ensures that no one's work goes unnoticed.

#### **Quick Tips:**

- **Say** "Thank you" with a smile and really mean it. At the beginning of the day, at the end of the day or during the day—your volunteer will appreciate hearing these words!
- **Give** feedback often. Be sure your volunteers know if they are doing a good job and, if necessary, help them understand how they can improve.
- **Write** notes in the sign-in book
  - "Thank you for volunteering."
  - "Your help as a volunteer is appreciated."
- **Let them know** they will be missed if you know they will be away.
- **Send** written thank-you notes to volunteers whenever they have gone "the extra mile" or they have accomplished something that you know was a significant learning for them. This could be done when you

observe that their English is improving or when they initiate more frequent conversations with clients and staff.

- **Use** simple gestures such as making different types of beverages available - not all cultures are as coffee crazy as we in North America!
- **Say** thank you in the newcomer's mother tongue. Ask your newcomer volunteers how to say it in their language, or visit [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org) online and access their online "Wiktionary" of translations. We've included a sheet in the resource section of this chapter for you to record them.



## **Include newcomers in a recognition planning committee**

Because recognition events can be quite time-consuming they are often postponed or even overlooked. Setting up a recognition planning committee comprised of volunteers and supervisors benefits everyone. This provides an opportunity for volunteers to work in a new area, lightens the load for everyone and ensures that the recognition will be appropriate and more reflective of the interests of the volunteer themselves. This committee is an excellent place for newcomers to learn new skills, develop friendships and share their recognition preferences.

### **Quick Tips:**

- **Write** simple terms of reference in plain language before inviting a newcomer to join the committee and ensure that the newcomer understands their responsibilities when you recruit them.
- **Be available** for questions from the newcomers as the committee progresses.
- **Choose** a committee chair that understands the needs of the newcomers and is committed to ensuring that the newcomers are active members of the committee.



### **Provide newcomer volunteers with access to training, resources and opportunities for networking.**

Canadian employers and professional associations may not recognize the skills and qualifications of newcomers. Any opportunity for local training can enhance a newcomer volunteer's employability and build their self-confidence.

#### **Quick Tips:**

- **Offer** workshops and training classes for volunteers. These may be directly from your organization or in partnership with a local business or educational institute that can offer free space in their programs for your newcomer volunteers.
- **Encourage** staff to set aside a few minutes to discuss their work with a newcomer volunteer. The staff can help the newcomer understand how to access job opportunities or training.
- **Talk** to previous volunteers who have either found employment based upon their volunteer experience with you or are presently looking for work. Their experience can help you assess whether the on-the-job training you provide is adequate for future employability. For example, employers want reception experience but most also ask for computer experience as well. Can you combine these in the position so that the volunteer has a useful reference from you?
- **Create** an employment board with postings and training opportunities that volunteers can access.
- **Develop** a policy about internal postings. Will your volunteers be invited to apply for employment opportunities within your organization before they are posted externally?



## Support your newcomer volunteers to raise their profile in the community

## Notes:

The immigration or refugee resettlement process can strip away many of the things that gave status in the former home country. For their own well-being and their future prospects, newcomers need to re-establish their position in ways that are culturally acceptable here. Public recognition boosts confidence and helps people to feel valued, and can lead to work or other opportunities. (Of course, it is important to ensure you have permission from your volunteers before making any information about them public).

### Quick Tips:

- **Feature** a volunteer of the month with a photograph and brief story in your organizational newsletter, their ethnic community newspaper and/or the local community newspaper. Make sure you give the volunteer extra copies to share with friends and relatives.
- **Invite** a newcomer volunteer to accompany you to volunteer fairs and agency promotional activities. For example, a volunteer with the Food Bank was invited to talk on the radio about volunteering during a Food Drive promotion. He was very excited because many people who knew him heard his voice on the radio. (This is also an excellent newcomer recruitment tool!)
- **Ask** your local community cable channel or cultural channel to feature a newcomer volunteer/s. This could be done in conjunction with promoting your organization's services, discussing a community issue, or during Volunteer Recognition Week.
- **Show** tangible appreciation. In many cultures gift giving is a cultural expectation and displays your honour of a person. Certificates, while unappreciated by some, can be an excellent token for newcomers who are trying to establish themselves in a new community.
- **Hold** a meet and greet for your newcomer volunteers to give them a chance to network with influential people. Ask your staff and long-term volunteers to help you build an invitation list of important people in the community, including owners of local businesses, politicians, community leaders, and colleagues in other organizations. Send them a letter explaining your event, and inviting them to participate.



## My Action Plan

### Recognition

The two areas I have chosen to address (from the checklist) and the specific actions I will take to bring me closer to my goal of improving the way our organization recognizes and appreciates newcomer volunteers.

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I want to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_(date).

☐ Hooray! We did it!



**Create your own list of ways to say “thank you” in other languages**





## Resources

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### Community Resources

Community Volunteer Connections Library  
#200 - 25 King Edward Ave, Coquitlam BC  
604-529-5139      [www.volunteerconnections.net](http://www.volunteerconnections.net)

Volunteer Vancouver Library  
1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC  
604-875-9144      [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

Douglas College Library  
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster BC  
604-527-5467

MOSAIC  
1720 Grant St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Vancouver BC  
Contact Volunteer Services at 604 254-9626 or  
[volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com)      [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com)  
(Extensive bibliography available in the area of cultural awareness,  
diversity, organizational change, etc.)

Immigrant Services Society of BC  
501-333 Terminal Av, Vancouver, BC  
604-684-2581      [volunteer@issbc.org](mailto:volunteer@issbc.org)      [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org)

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
28 West Pender St, Vancouver BC  
604-684-1628      [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca)

### Books and Written Publications

AMSSA. *Multifaith Calendar*. Produced annually, the calendar contains the dates and a summary of the festivals and holy days of the main world religions and of First Nations Peoples. Telephone: 604-298-5949; Fax 604-298-0747 or [www.amssa.org](http://www.amssa.org)

## Useful Websites

<http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/immigration/multiculturalism.htm>

Download a great *Celebrate Multiculturalism* poster that you can email to your volunteers or print and display in a prominent place. Also access BC's Multiculturalism Act.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiktionary>

Wikipedia's free online dictionary.



## CHAPTER 8

### Evaluation

This chapter will help you to create an inclusive evaluation process that looks at your volunteers themselves as well as your volunteer program. If you are just starting out and want to evaluate your volunteer program in order to determine what steps you need to take to create a more inclusive volunteer, you may want to first read the Welcome Chapter and Chapter One, and complete the Diversity Self-Assessment tool included in the Welcome Chapter.

If you have worked toward recruiting and welcoming more newcomers into your program, you will see obvious indicators of diversity—people from various cultures working together because there has been an increase in the number of newcomers applying for your volunteer opportunities. This is just one of many positive outcomes of an inclusive volunteer program. The presence of people from various cultures will increase your organization's appeal to other newcomers.

However, do not be tempted to stop there. Like fundraising, working toward cultural competence and inclusiveness requires a continual commitment and is an ongoing process. Few organizations can afford to say "Fundraising? We've been there and done that." Celebrate your success when a particular goal is achieved - in fact, celebrate your achievements every chance you get -- and, at the same time, ask, "How can we continue to build and support a more diverse volunteer program?"

Ongoing evaluation is a necessary element of any good program. It helps you to see where you are doing well and identify areas that could be improved. Planning and evaluation are linked - as you set your goals, be sure to consider how and when you will evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts. Schedule in a more formal evaluation where you can step back from the day-to-day work you are doing and get a broader overview of your program.

This approach works for evaluating volunteers as well. When assigning tasks, be sure to plan time for regular review and feedback (as discussed in Chapter 6) as well as planning for formal volunteer evaluation.

## Notes:

Volunteers need to know if they are doing well and where they might be able to improve. Taking the time to sit down with a volunteer and discuss the work they do in your organization tells a volunteer that they are personally important and their work is of value. Listening to your volunteers is one of the best ways to learn what you, your program or your organization might need to do to improve. Clear feedback on progress and the celebration of the volunteer's good work will increase performance as well as aid in retaining the volunteer—a win for everyone!

Read on for ideas on how to enhance the volunteer's evaluation process as well as how to evaluate your program/organization for inclusiveness.

Use the checklist on the next page to help you get started.



## Checklist for Evaluation

**Do a quick evaluation of your present program by checking the boxes that reflect your current practice.**

- ☐ Formal evaluation is practiced throughout our organization with budget and time allotted to encourage it to take place.
- ☐ The organization holds the Coordinator of Volunteers accountable for a thorough annual evaluation of the program.
- ☐ Our annual volunteer program evaluation process includes measuring our progress toward becoming more inclusive.
- ☐ The volunteer program/organization is committed to continuous improvement and is willing to change whenever necessary.
- ☐ We evaluate all of our volunteers on a regular and ongoing basis (including those with limited roles or basic English).
- ☐ We make sure the newcomer volunteer understands the evaluation and their part in the process.
- ☐ We give our newcomer volunteers several options in how they would like to be evaluated, taking into account their English comprehension and comfort level.
- ☐ We use different methods to gather the evaluation information from our volunteers and supervisors, which take into account differences such as language, etc.
- ☐ Our evaluation forms have been reviewed and they are simple and use plain English.
- ☐ We act on the information we receive from our newcomer volunteers during the evaluation.
- ☐ We act on the feedback we receive from our staff and supervisors during the evaluation process.

- ☐ We involve newcomer volunteers when we develop our goals for the coming year. These goals are based upon our evaluation results.

**What areas does your program need to develop? Read on for strategies that can help you incorporate the above practices into your volunteer program.**

## Strategies for evaluating your progress in creating an inclusive volunteer program

Notes:



### Formally evaluate your programs for inclusiveness

A thorough evaluation process will measure how successfully newcomers are integrated into your volunteer program. Because time is always limited, it is best to schedule your program evaluation on your calendar several months ahead. If you wait until you have some "free" time you may find that you never get around to doing any formal evaluation. Look at the "cycles" in your volunteer program and, if possible, schedule your evaluation for a slower period in the year. Use a yearly action plan to ensure that you have a budget for evaluation and designate a specific time to conduct the evaluation.

If you do not have an evaluation process, you may want to consult books on Volunteer Management, attend a workshop or ask your local Volunteer Centre for ideas on how to evaluate your volunteer program. Invite a few newcomer volunteers to help you develop your volunteer program evaluation process. During the actual evaluation, ensure that newcomer volunteers are asked to provide feedback about the program and make suggestions about how it could work better. Ensure they are informed about the results of the evaluation and the changes you plan to implement as a result of their suggestions.

Incorporate some of the following questions into your program evaluation (and see Chapter 8, Toolbox: Volunteer Program Evaluation Questionnaire):

### Are we aware of and responding to the community?

- How have the demographics of our community changed since our last demographic survey? Does our volunteer program reflect the present demographics of our community (cultural background, mother tongue, time since arrival in Canada, etc.)? e.g. If 10% of our community has arrived within the last 5 years from Southeast Asia, does our volunteer team reflect this percentage?



- How many newcomer volunteers are in this organization right now? Has the number of newcomer volunteers increased/decreased in the last year? By how much? Do we know why this has happened?

**Are newcomer volunteers integrated throughout the organization?**

- Are newcomer volunteers involved in a full range of volunteer activities?
- Does the composition of our Board reflect the community? Does the board understand that individual newcomers do not necessarily represent their entire community? Are there enough newcomers on the board to empower them to be active participants at the decision-making level of the board?
- Do we have board committees that provide an opportunity for newcomers to learn how to participate at the governance level of our organization?
- Do the volunteers who provide our core services reflect the community?
- What volunteer opportunities do we have for individuals for whom English communication is a challenge or who may need a shorter time commitment in order to get them started in our organization?
- Have we made reasonable accommodation for the needs of individual volunteers (for example, modified a position for a volunteer for whom English communication is a challenge; used flexibility in scheduling around job interviews)?
- How have we benefited from the contributions of newcomer volunteers?

## Have we developed an infrastructure that supports inclusion?

- Have there been any difficulties between staff/newcomers/other volunteers? How did we resolve these difficulties? What did we learn from these difficulties? What procedures and/or training have we put in place to prevent similar difficulties from recurring?
- Is our retention rate for newcomers similar to local-born volunteers? Have we tracked why newcomers leave? Have we consistently invited them to return in future?
- Have we trained supervising staff in providing performance feedback and conducting evaluations?
- Have we developed and advertised inclusive policies and procedures?
- Has an ESL instructor and/or volunteer with an ESL background reviewed our application form/process to identify difficulties?
- Do we require levels of English that are really necessary for particular positions? E.g. Does this position really need "advanced English skills"? Do we have an objective way of measuring the levels we require?
- Are the position descriptions written in plain English?
- Do our newcomer volunteers feel a part of the team?

### Case Study:

*"Wai Ming volunteered for a year as a receptionist for our small non-profit. During her training, I promised to meet with the receptionists after three months to talk about any of their concerns or suggestions for improvement. After three months, we met for coffee and the receptionists were very open about what they liked and didn't like about the position. I learned that they wanted more work to keep them occupied, they were interested in more training so they could provide more help to the public, and they needed assurances that they were doing a good job."*

What could the organization do in response to this feedback?



← One  
Coordinator of  
Volunteers says:

# Notes:

Read on to find out how they handled the situation.

*"With this information, we took a new look at the position description, asked a staff member to conduct a training session for the receptionists and evaluated the way we affirmed the volunteers on a day-to-day basis.*

*When Wai Ming resigned to look for work, I sent her an exit questionnaire, emphasizing how much we valued her input. She came in for a visit and I had the opportunity to again express our appreciation for her work and learn from her on-the-job experience in our office. Wai Ming shared that prospective employers were looking for a skill combination of receptionist and word processing and, unfortunately, our position had not given her many opportunities to develop her word processing skills. Upon her advice, we decided to add word processing to the position in order to help our volunteers build our skills for future employment."*

## **Have we developed a feedback process?**

- Do we get feedback from our newcomer volunteers? How have we shown our appreciation for their feedback? Have we acted upon their suggestions? Have we informed them of the action(s) we will take regarding their suggestions?
- Do we get feedback from staff working with newcomer volunteers? How have we shown our appreciation for their feedback? Have we acted on their suggestions? Have we informed them of the action(s) we will take regarding their suggestions?

## **Are we using an inclusive approach in our evaluation process?**

- Are newcomer volunteers involved in the evaluation of our program? How many are involved? How are they involved? How were they recruited? Do they represent a cross-section of our newcomer volunteers? Could they be involved in writing the evaluation? Could they assist in conducting the evaluations?
- Do we accommodate for different comfort levels and English levels in the evaluation process?

- Verbal evaluations may be easier for high level English speakers while others may want to take the form home and answer it at their own pace.
  - One-to-one may be easier for a person who is not confident to speak out in a group. Some may need more time to understand what you say and think about how to respond in English.
- Are our evaluation forms written in plain English? Have we reviewed forms for vocabulary level? Have we eliminated idioms, jargon and unclear phrases?
  - Do we ask a variety of open and closed questions that will encourage the volunteer's response? Do we ask questions that might be relevant to the goals of a newcomer volunteer (i.e. gaining work experience in Canada, making friends, fitting in, learning about Canadian systems, etc.)

"Tell me what you like about volunteering here?"

"What work experience or work related skills have you acquired?"

"Who has been the most helpful to you here? What did they do that was helpful?"

- Do we invite newcomers to help us develop the questions for their evaluation?



## Evaluating individual volunteers

Volunteers deserve to know when they are doing well and where they can improve. Evaluation can enhance and improve an individual volunteer's performance. At the same time, the information you receive creates an opportunity to problem solve that can improve your program and possibly your organization.

It is important to schedule the volunteer's evaluation on a regular timetable. Since many newcomers need to know how they are doing early in their volunteer experience, a short evaluation after the first month may be a good idea. A probation period (e.g. 3 months) is often useful as

## Notes:

well. At the end of the probation period the newcomer understands that you will meet with them to talk about how they are doing, what support they need and if they will continue as a "regular" volunteer. After the probation is over, the formal evaluation for the volunteer should take place once a year if possible. Many organizations try to schedule the volunteer's evaluation within their anniversary month. The entire non-profit sector is undergoing great change in the area of "short-term" and "long-term" commitment. Most individuals who are interested in volunteering today do not want to make a commitment for longer than 6 months. Your evaluation timetable will need to take this into account, ensuring that evaluations are done while the volunteer is still with your organization.

Evaluation needs to be documented. It can be as simple as a checklist or more detailed with a written account of the discussion. To protect privacy, this information must be kept in a secured file. If you and the volunteer agree to work on some goals for the coming year be sure to put them in writing and give the volunteer a copy so that they can refer to them regularly.

Due to language concerns, cultural apprehensions and/or lack of experience with any type of evaluation process, the newcomer may be concerned when they realize they will be part of an evaluation. Explain to the volunteer that the information you receive in the evaluation will be the basis for any reference from your organization. This will help the newcomer feel more comfortable about what will be said to a potential employer. At the same time, this written data provides you with objective information that you can rightfully share with anyone doing a reference check.

### Quick Tips:

- **Explain** the evaluation process (with specific times such as at the end of the first month, probation period, etc.) during the orientation so that volunteers are not surprised when the time comes for their evaluation. Link the evaluation with what you say in a reference letter.
- **Offer** different evaluation options such as a personal meeting with the Coordinator or a written take-home evaluation.

- **Measure** for performance based upon the position description. Make sure it is up-to-date and that the volunteer understands what it says. Don't "surprise" the volunteer with areas of responsibility that were not outlined in the position description.
- **Evaluate** the volunteer's language comprehension in light of the position description - that is, focus your comments on performance of tasks. Don't devalue the skills the volunteer brings to your organization based upon their language skills.
- **Encourage** the newcomer to tell you what they have experienced/observed in the program and/or your organization. Assure them that their point of view is an important component of your program evaluation.
- **Look** for remedies when a staff member reports that a volunteer isn't working out. When you hear a comment such as "I need a volunteer with better English", it might be appropriate to inquire further by asking "What do you think might help you communicate more effectively with beginner English speakers?"
- **Conduct** personal exit interviews with volunteers. You can learn a great deal in an exit interview with the volunteer. Provide a written questionnaire to volunteers if they want their comments to be anonymous. (Chapter 8, Toolbox: Volunteer Exit Feedback & Evaluation Form).
- **Ask** yourself, "How could I have delivered that feedback in a more constructive way?" if a volunteer does not respond well to your request for improvement. "Could there be cultural differences I am not aware of that affects how the volunteer sees this situation?"



## My Action Plan

### Evaluation

The two areas I have chosen to address (from the checklist) and the specific actions I will take to bring me closer to my goal of improving our evaluation process to make it more effective and inclusive for newcomer volunteers.

I. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

II. \_\_\_\_\_

Actions to take: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

I want to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_(date).

☐ Hooray! We did it!



## Volunteer Program Evaluation Questionnaire<sup>2</sup>

Volunteer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for all the work you do as a volunteer. Please answer the following questions. Your answers will help us to improve to make our agency a good place for everyone to work.

1. I am satisfied with the volunteer duties I am given.

Always      Usually      Sometimes      Never

2. I am given the information I need to do my volunteer work.

Always      Usually      Sometimes      Never

3. I am able to understand instructions given to me.

Always      Usually      Sometimes      Never

4. I ask if I need more information.

Always      Usually      Sometimes      Never

5. I feel useful when I am volunteering.

Always      Usually      Sometimes      Never

6. Staff makes me feel welcome and thanks me for my work.

Always      Usually      Sometimes      Never

7. I have enough work to keep busy.

Always      Usually      Sometimes      Never

---

<sup>2</sup> Volunteer Program Evaluation modified from original produced by Pacific Immigrant Resources Society, Vancouver BC.



When I volunteer, I need: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I think this program would be better if: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I began to volunteer here, I wish I had been told: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your  
ideas.



## Volunteer Exit Feedback and Evaluation Form

We are always trying to improve our volunteer program. As one of our volunteers, we welcome your help to identify areas in which we can do better. Please be as complete and honest as you can in answering the following questions. All of the information collected will be kept confidential, but it will be used to ensure that others who volunteer will receive the best possible treatment.

1. How long did you volunteer with us? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What program were you placed in? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What volunteer position did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Why are you leaving? (Please check all that apply.)

☐ Task was accomplished   ☐ Moving to new location   ☐ Need a change

☐ Did not like task I was given   ☐ Did not feel welcome

☐ Did not feel what I did made a difference   ☐ Other time commitments

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. What benefits do you think you have gained from volunteering here?  
(Please check all that are true.)

☐ Met new friends   ☐ Confidence with speaking English

☐ Learned new skills   ☐ Added to my resume   ☐ Got a reference

☐ Gained better knowledge of Canadian community

☐ Gained better knowledge about different cultures

☐ Work experience to help get a job

☐ Others:

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6. What did you like best about volunteering with us?

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7. What suggestions would you make for changes or improvements in our volunteer effort?

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8. Overall, how would you rate your experience in volunteering with us?

Very good

Average

Poor

9. Other Comments:

Thank you for your comments and for volunteering with us.

We appreciate the help you have given us to assist our clients and our community.



## Resources

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### Community Resources

Community Volunteer Connections Library  
#200 - 25 King Edward Ave, Coquitlam BC  
604-529-5139      [www.volunteerconnections.net](http://www.volunteerconnections.net)

Volunteer Vancouver Library  
1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC  
604-875-9144      [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

Douglas College Library  
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster BC  
604-527-5467

MOSAIC  
1720 Grant St, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Vancouver BC  
Contact Volunteer Services at 604 254-9626 or  
[volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com](mailto:volunteerprograms@mosaicbc.com)      [www.mosaicbc.com](http://www.mosaicbc.com)  
(Extensive bibliography available in the area of cultural awareness,  
diversity, organizational change, etc.)

Immigrant Services Society of BC  
501-333 Terminal Ave, Vancouver, BC  
604-684-2581      [volunteer@issbc.org](mailto:volunteer@issbc.org)      [www.issbc.org](http://www.issbc.org)

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
28 West Pender St, Vancouver BC  
604-684-1628      [www.successbc.ca](http://www.successbc.ca)

### Books and written publications

Hunter, Sylvia. *Effective Organizations: How Culturally Diverse is Your Organization?*

Volunteer Management, Steve Hurley and Rick Lynch. 1996. Heritage Arts Publishing, Downers Grove, IL.

Now that you have reached the end of this self-paced guide, review your Action Plans from each Chapter and commit to taking the action you have identified.

By using this guide you can help fulfill the aspirations of newcomer volunteers and, at the same time, develop a dynamic and powerful volunteer program.

