



## TIPS FOR VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Volunteers are critical to any successful event. The more organized you are, the better the experience will be for your volunteers. And hopefully, in the end, your volunteers will want to come back and do it all over again!

Here are some things to consider before you get started:

- **Identify the functional areas of your event**

Think ahead about what your group needs to do to get the job done. Try to get everyone on your committee involved in the development of your plan. Set goals together and think of ways you can achieve them. What does success look like? What are you trying to achieve? Once you get to this point, identify the skills, abilities or talents needed to accomplish the work. These will be your specific functional areas. Samples of your functional areas may include, but are not limited to, Finance and Administration, Sport Technical, Communications, Operations, Protocol, Volunteers, Marketing or Venue.

- **Organize your team**

Setting up an organizational chart of who reports to whom will really help your team stay organized and on track whether you are hosting a local tournament or organizing a festival, concert or provincial championship. There are several ways to set up your team but start from the top down as your executive committee, comprised of a chairperson and functional area directors, will be spending a lot of time together. You want to make sure that this committee will be able to make decisions efficiently and effectively. Place directors in functional areas where they have skills or past experience as much as possible. You want to create a culture of “value” from the beginning so once volunteers are “hired”, that culture permeates throughout your whole team. It is important to first assign a director of each functional area then assign a chair or team lead of each of the sub-areas under the functional area.

Some groups include board liaison positions who offer support to the executive committee on specific areas such as environmental sustainability or working with community partners.

- **Create Job Descriptions**

Job descriptions provide a clear understanding of what each person is responsible for. Include detailed examples of the recommended skills or requirements to do the job in order to best match volunteers with jobs (i.e. if they have to sit for four hours, let them know that; if they have to be able to carry heavy boxes for half the shift, include that). Yes, everyone is a volunteer



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and not getting paid for being involved in your event. But moving forward, your team will be able to be more efficient knowing that everyone is accountable for what is listed in their job description. Also, volunteers appreciate knowing what their role entails.

- **Recruit Volunteers**

A solid recruitment strategy takes time, however if done well, it will make your life easier. Start out by making a list of all the people you could approach. Ask everyone in your group to contribute to your list – everyone knows someone who knows someone who could help! You might want to identify a recruiter (or a couple of recruiters). This should be someone in your group who has the gift of the gab and who is not afraid to approach people and talk to them about your group. Do not be shy to ask people. One of the reasons people do not volunteer is because they have not been asked. Try posting volunteer opportunities on websites (events and community boards), engage new potential volunteers through social media or partner with non-government organizations with similar mandates (they may already have volunteers).

Be flexible in your approach to roles and how they are structured – if, for example, evening meetings do not suit everyone, meetings during the afternoon may be a solution. Look outside the club membership base for volunteers – e.g. does anyone have a parent, grandparent, or know of anyone who would be willing to take on a role? Advertise volunteer positions to local universities or disability support providers. Contact local service clubs or other community groups and do not forget to contact your local volunteer centre. Other potential avenues include cultural groups, the unemployed, youth and student groups and corporate volunteers.

Be focused on attracting, recruiting and assigning people to roles that suit their skill sets and personalities, as well as something they want to do. Just getting a warm body might fill your numbers but not work out for you in the end! You may ask for volunteers to request their top three areas where they might want to volunteer. Be mindful that they might not get their top pick. If you recognize that someone is volunteering in a role they may not have the required skills for, incorporate that into their training plan. Be mindful that people may like to volunteer outside of their comfort zone and try new things. Just because a person works as an accountant does not mean they want to be your treasurer!



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- **Include Diversity in your Volunteer Recruitment**

People with different backgrounds, languages, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas and perceptions. They can contribute to your volunteer team in many ways based on their unique personal experiences. By putting in a little effort, a diverse volunteer pool will become more representative of your audience, spectators, fans and your community.

- **Select Volunteers**

Once you have got them, you want to keep them! Give volunteers the material and information they need to do their job well. Keep the lines of communication open and relevant. Your volunteer director should maintain a database of registrations and monitor the status of everyone who has completed a volunteer application form. Your volunteer director will then review applications and direct them to the appropriate functional area chair for review and confirmation of skill sets. The functional area chair will contact the volunteer to welcome them to the team and to provide basic information about the role of the functional area and the volunteer needs. The volunteers will then be advised of the dates of the orientation session and the functional area training session that will provide them with additional information.

It is recommended volunteers be recruited in order of seniority in the organizational structure to ensure each level contributes to the selection, recruitment and placement of volunteers in their respective teams. Hence, directors and chairs will be among the first volunteers to be recruited.

- **Criminal Record Check**

The *Criminal Record Review Act* ensures that people who work with or may potentially have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults undergo a criminal record check by the Criminal Records Review Program (CRRP).

To support British Columbia's non-profit sector, volunteer organizations that are not covered by the Act, but have volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults, can have criminal record checks done by the CRRP for free.

Local municipal police departments can also perform criminal record checks; some charge, others do not. Be mindful that this process may take time, so start early as leaving it until the last minute could mean a lack of qualified volunteers for your event.



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Further information on the criminal record check process can be found at – [Criminal Record Check](#)

- **Training**

Now you want to ensure that all volunteers are comfortable with the role that they have been assigned and are knowledgeable on their tasks and responsibilities. To assist with this objective, your functional area directors and chairs should provide volunteers with the skills required by outlining the parameters of their position, clarifying roles and responsibilities and setting their tasks at an orientation or training session(s) which should include: An Introduction and Orientation; Job Specific Training; Venue Training and Accreditation or Uniform Distribution. To ensure all volunteers are knowledgeable about your event, they must receive the information needed to ensure they feel comfortable in their roles. Each volunteer should be provided a checklist, manual or handbook for reference. It is also important that all volunteers know that attendance at training session(s) is mandatory and will also help to ensure volunteers feel comfortable in their role.

Make sure all volunteers understand established communication channels – who they need to talk to for what. A simple “who’s who in the zoo” is critical.

If you are planning an annual festival or event, anticipate the need for regular re-training. Each year, volunteers new and old will require training.

- **Code of Conduct**

It is imperative that quality is at the heart of everything you do. All participants and clients are entitled to a high level of service. As a member of the event team, volunteers have a responsibility to care for those participants and clients. It is important that volunteers demonstrate a positive attitude, promote teamwork and provide quality service to participants and clients. Your volunteer code of conduct is the heart of how you do what you do. All selected volunteers should sign a code of conduct to confirm they have read, understood and will comply with the policies and procedures of the event. Areas to consider when writing a code of conduct include: Professional Behaviour, Drug and Alcohol Policy, Facilities and Property, Discipline Procedures, Harassment Policy and Health and Safety Conditions.



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It is just as important to know who is responsible for enforcing the code of conduct as it is to have a code of conduct. What does enforcement look like? How is it enforced and who enforces it are all key things to think about.

- **Recognition**

Volunteers need to feel both valued and valuable. Recognition should not only come at the end of the event in the form of a recognition event, but also contributions, talents and skills should be acknowledged throughout the event. Provide a thank you when it is warranted and let people know why you value their work and involvement with your group. You can show appreciation formally (a card, a plaque, etc.) or informally (a thank you, a smile, etc.).

- **Retaining Volunteers**

If you are planning to host this event annually, retaining volunteers should be a prime focus in the off season. Strategize how you will keep your volunteers engaged and interested throughout the year, i.e. sending quarterly updates or a mid-year get together. Keep them excited so that when it comes time to volunteer again, they are ready to join the team and possibly bring others with them!

If you remember anything, remember this: **Recruit, Educate, Deploy and Recognize**. If done properly, concentrating on these four areas will ensure your volunteers feel valued, knowledgeable and comfortable in their roles.

### Sources:

City of Thunder Bay

[http://www.thunderbay.ca/Living/recreation\\_and\\_parks/Events/Event\\_Hosting\\_Strategy/planning\\_guide.htm](http://www.thunderbay.ca/Living/recreation_and_parks/Events/Event_Hosting_Strategy/planning_guide.htm)

Scouts Canada <http://www.scouts.ca/vstk/>

**Note when accessing non-B.C. Government resources found in this toolkit:** *These websites are managed by other organizations and are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Province of BC.*