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## Volunteer recruitment

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### What is volunteer recruitment?

Volunteer recruitment is the process of matching an organization's needs with a volunteer's interests and skills. The needs of the organization should link back to the organization's mandate and be supported by a well-designed role (position description) that identifies tasks and responsibilities.

Volunteer recruitment is also about locating the right people for the job. A good recruitment plan is vital to your volunteer program. You don't want to reach out to just anybody; you want to reach out to potential volunteers who are appropriate for the role. A good recruitment strategy will help you focus on this.

### Why is recruitment important to your volunteer program?

Recruitment is important to your volunteer program because:

**Your organization has goals it wants to achieve.** By ensuring that you recruit and place the "right" volunteer into a role that has been carefully planned, you will assist your organization in meeting goals.

**You want the best people for the job.** Recruiting isn't just about placing anybody into a position. Recruiting is about placing the person whose skills and experience match the needs of the job.

**It allows you to use your resources in the most effective way.** Proper recruitment and placement of a volunteer is far less time consuming than recruiting and placing a volunteer into a role that is not appropriate for them or the organization.

### How can you utilize trends to assist you in recruiting?

You want to ensure that the changes that have occurred in society and how people volunteer are reflected in your recruitment plan. We know from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (2000) ([www.givingandvolunteering.ca](http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca)) and subsequent analysis from Volunteer Canada that:

- Fewer people are volunteering
- Volunteer job design is becoming more vital to attract volunteers
- Young people volunteer to gain work-related skills
- More seniors travel or have multiple activities and therefore have less time available for volunteering
- More new Canadians volunteer to develop work experience and to practice language skills
- Volunteers are looking for opportunities for growth and skill acquisition through volunteer development

- Volunteers are looking for: a meaningful way to spend their time; ways to contribute their skills to an organization; a well-planned role; volunteer opportunities that benefit the organization, the community and themselves.

Ask yourself: “What do these trends mean to my volunteer program?” “If I am not getting the right volunteer, have trends changed in such a way that I may be recruiting for positions that do not fit people’s time and lifestyles?”

## How do you recruit a diverse base and reach new volunteers?

A recruitment strategy or plan is a must for your volunteer program. A general call for help will not ensure that you are matching skills to needs. When developing a recruitment plan, think of the four P’s of marketing. In very simple terms:

- **Product.** Your product is a volunteer position or a range of volunteer opportunities.
- **Place.** Where are they – the potential volunteers? Identify places where potential volunteers might be. If you have developed a position description, this information will be in there as you have described the tasks and skills required for the job. This will tell you a lot about “*who*” you are looking for.
- **Price.** Do not think about it, as “*what is the volunteer prepared to pay*”, but rather “*what is a volunteer prepared to invest*”. What time requirements are needed, what motivations. Ask yourself “How can I demonstrate that the price is worth the experience?”
- **Promotion.** Identify different methods and media that you might use to reach your audience. Again, think of your audience and who they are and ensure the method and media match that.

### A recruitment strategy guideline using the 4 P’s of marketing

Your recruitment strategy actually begins within the initial planning and job design components of your volunteer program. Think of these questions as they relate to the different components of your volunteer program and to the 4 P’s. By answering these questions, you will have begun to develop your recruitment strategy.

	Product – The Volunteer Position
<p><b>Planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What outcomes do you hope to achieve through the recruitment of new volunteers?</li> <li>• How do new volunteers fit into this picture?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Job Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create the position</li> </ul>	
	Place – Where are they?
<p><b>Job Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What type of person will be the best match for this position?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recruitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do you think you could find this person?</li> </ul>	

	<b>Price – Needs, Motivations, and other Considerations</b>
<b>5. Recruitment &amp; Job Design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors would influence a person’s choice to fill this position.</li> <li>• How could you make your volunteer position attractive to them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Interests</li> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>
	<b>Promotion – What way of reaching these people will give you the best results?</b>
<b>6. Recruitment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What “vehicle” will best reach these people?</li> <li>• What message will grab their attention</li> </ul>	

When developing your strategy consider that it is sometimes necessary to modify a position to make it attractive or available to a particular type of volunteer. The changes should always lead to fulfilling the mandate of your program and organization. Never compromise your organization or put its people in a position of risk.

**What are some recruitment techniques?**

**The number one method of recruiting volunteers still seems to be ‘word of mouth’.** That is not to discredit that there are other ways you can recruit volunteers into your organization. Consider these techniques:

**Friendly network.** Talk to current volunteers and staff, perhaps clients or people who are receiving your services. A word of caution though: always follow through with screening and risk management practices even if a volunteer referral comes from someone already connected to your organization.

**Electronic.** Websites can be used: yours, your local volunteer centre, or other organizations that may have links to your site. Other forms of electronic recruitment techniques are email lists and fax lists, however, it is recommended that these are used with permission.

**Print.** Such as newsletters, local papers, flyers, posters etc.

**Media.** Television, radio, or other types of presentations.

When developing recruitment messages, review samples of other recruitment messages and ask yourself: What works in this message? What catches my attention? What is missing? Then, write your recruitment message, which should include:

- Statement of need
- How the volunteer can help (what roles or tasks they will perform for the organization)
- Benefits of the position
- Skills required
- Screening practices

**Organizations also need to ensure that they are recruiting from a diverse volunteer base.**

You may be missing the opportunity to involve people into your organization by limiting who you are targeting. Be open to including a diverse range of volunteers including families, seniors, students, new Canadians, and youth. Ask yourself: Are my recruitment materials written in such a way as to reach out to a diverse volunteer base? Further: What modifications can I make that would allow a diverse range of volunteers while still meeting the program goals?

**Resources**

Ellis, S. J. (1996). *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*. Philadelphia, PA. Energize Inc.

McCurley, S. & Lynch, R. (1996). *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources in the Community* Downers Grove, IL, Heritage Arts Publishing.

Graff, L. (2005). *Best of All: The Quick Reference Guide to Effective Volunteer Involvement*. Dundas, ON: Linda Graff And Associates Inc.

*Volunteer Connections: Creating an Accessible and Inclusive Environment* (2001). Ottawa, ON: Volunteer Canada.

*Volunteer Connections: Family Volunteering: Making it Official* (2001). Ottawa, ON: Volunteer Canada.

*Volunteer Connections: New Strategies for Involving Older Adults* (2001). Ottawa, ON: Volunteer Canada.

*Volunteer Connections: New strategies for Involving Youth* (2001). Ottawa, ON: Volunteer Canada.

**Acknowledgement**

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