Factsheet: Building Bridges: Strengthening Volunteer Engagement

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Volunteers play a vital role in forging stronger communities, promoting a sense of meaning and belonging, and delivering essential social services. In fact, volunteering serves as a safeguard for the very support systems we rely upon, especially when tackling the loneliness epidemic head-on. However, there is currently a volunteerism and participation crisis. How do we fix it? How can community foundations get more volunteers involved?

At A Glance:

Challenges

- Loneliness epidemic
- Social sector under duress
- Declining volunteer rates

The way forward

- Public Engagement
- Movement Building
- Investing in Change

How to Strengthen your Volunteer Engagement

Highlighting volunteer engagement in your overall strategic plan and creating a Volunteer Engagement Strategy are essential steps in maximizing the impact and effectiveness of your volunteer program. You want to foster meaningful relationships with your volunteers and align your organizational goals with community needs.

1. **Plan:** Make it a strategic effort for maximum impact through creating an impactful Volunteer Engagement Strategy and volunteer engagement part of your strategic discussions. (needs, role design, organizational strategy)
   a. How do you make an effective strategy?
● **Strategic focus:** Make volunteer engagement part of your strategic discussions.
● **Foster collective impact:** Partner, collaborate, share.
● **Invest:** Dedicate a leader, identify infrastructure needs.
● **Design meaningful experiences:** Identify trends, review roles, and re-design.
● **Leverage technology:** Embrace technology and invest.
● **Connect with expertise:** Volunteer Canada and Volunteer Centres.

2. **Engage:** Tactical outreach, recruitment and role assignment (an organized effort builds credibility and drives impact). Partner with other organizations and foster collective impact.
3. **Invest & Support:** Training and supervision (a supportive environment fosters retention and commitment)
4. **Recognize:** Recognition fosters retention and emotional connection (celebrate, nominate, commemorate)
5. **Evaluate:** Evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance at each stage

At Volunteer Canada, we embrace an optimistic outlook towards the future. As an integral part of the vibrant social sector, we are excited to confront challenges together, fostering a strong link between volunteering and active participation. We are part of a movement dedicated to creating a better tomorrow by addressing pressing social issues such as the loneliness epidemic, a fraying social safety net, and declining volunteering rates. Find out more at [volunteer.ca](http://volunteer.ca).

*Community Foundations of Canada is grateful for the collaboration of Volunteer Canada in creating this factsheet for community foundations.*