



Fact Sheet: Getting Your Work Done Well - Volunteers, Consultants, Staff

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Choosing a way to take care of business is an important decision for your foundation, and one to revisit from time to time as your foundation evolves. Small foundations use volunteers, consultants, paid staff — and, quite often, a combination of the three. Which arrangement is right for your foundation right now?

Start here: What are the tasks at hand to accomplish your goals, and who will do the work well? Keep in mind, there isn't a right or wrong way to administer your foundation — staffed or unstaffed, paid or volunteer, consultant or employee.

Below, we review three factors that contribute to success in administering a foundation:

- choosing a model that works for you
- selecting a suitable work location, and
- creating written position descriptions — even for volunteers.

Choosing the Right Model for You

- **Volunteers.** Many small foundations are administered entirely by volunteers. Often, a founder or board member responds to calls, keeps records, and pays bills, just to name a few common tasks; in other cases, the entire board shares the work. Tasks tend to be especially manageable for volunteers when foundations have relatively small assets or simple grantmaking processes.



- **Paid staff.** Foundations with larger assets or complex grantmaking processes often hire full- or part-time staff to serve as the first point of contact for the foundation, build and manage grantmaking programs, and prepare materials for board meetings, among other tasks. If your foundation is thinking about hiring paid staff, be sure to consider the true cost. Refer to your provincial Employment Standards/Labour Standards Act. Community Foundations of Canada has recently developed a template for Human Resource Policies which will help your foundation develop good employer-employee relations. There are links in the template to the relevant employment legislation for each province and territory.
- **Consultants.** Foundations that find themselves wishing for another pair of hands or specific skill from time to time often hire consultants. You might hire a consultant to facilitate a retreat, facilitate a strategic planning session, or write an annual report. A consultant might also respond to granting inquiries or evaluate your grantmaking program.

To increase the chances that your work is done well, define the role of each person engaged in the work of the foundation – even if a volunteer. Detailed, written position descriptions go a long way toward outlining expectations, clarifying duties, establishing accountability, and avoiding misunderstandings.

It is important to decide whether a worker is an **employee** or a **self-employed** individual. Employment status directly affects a person's entitlement to employment insurance (EI) benefits under the Employment Insurance Act. It can also have an impact on how a worker is treated under other legislation such as the Canada Pension Plan and the Income Tax Act. The facts of the working relationship as a whole decide the employment status. To determine employment status, go to

https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/publications/rc4110/employee-self-employed.html#determining_employment_status

With the above models in mind, consider the following:

- Does one arrangement serve your mission best right now? While foundations are often cautious of spending money on administration rather than grants, your grantmaking may become even more effective, and efficient, with strategic use of paid staff or consultants.



- Will board members help with the work of the foundation? Are they available for the short- or long-term? With or without pay? If for pay, your bylaws may not permit them to still be members of your board.
- Do any tasks require expertise not currently available (e.g., building a grant program) that could be handled by a staff member or consultant?

If you decide to use paid staff, Community Foundations of Canada publishes a compensation survey every other year entitled Salary and Benefits Report. The report is only available for CFC members. Check with CFC to access the most current copy.

Select a Suitable Work Location

Foundations have a great deal of flexibility when choosing where to do their work. A kitchen table or home office fits the bill for some, and a separate location meets the needs of others. Consider the pros and cons of the options below when choosing a work location for your foundation:

- **Home office.** This situation only works for small and emerging foundations. Though convenient and economical, large and official meetings are difficult when working from home, and work-life boundaries are hard to maintain. A home office can also be isolating for those who enjoy regular interactions with others. If you choose a home office, be sure to secure a separate phone line and use a nearby P.O. Box for foundation matters.
- **Shared office.** Though cost-effective to share space (as well as utilities and equipment) this can lend itself easily to self-dealing. Before you go this route, clarify the details in writing and have legal counsel review the lease, especially if sharing space where there is not an arms-length relationship.
- **Leased space.** A leased, private office may be costly, but it also may accommodate meetings with your grantees and your board. Be sure to have legal counsel review the lease.
- **Owning your office space.** Some foundations have received donations of property, which they have converted to use for their own office space. When considering this type of donation, do not forget to factor in the on-going operating, repair and maintenance costs



and whether these can be mitigated by leasing excess space to other organizations. Should you decide to become a landlord, consider the risk of renting to organizations who may apply to the foundation for support or to individuals or businesses who potentially could not have an arms length relationship with your foundation. If you are considering becoming a landlord, make sure to read your provincial Landlord Tenant regulations. After reviewing risks, benefits, costs and regulations and you still want to go this route, engage a lawyer to draft a template for a lease.

Create Position Descriptions — Even for Volunteers

To increase the chances that your work is done well, define the role of each person engaged in the work of the foundation — even if a volunteer. Detailed, written position descriptions go a long way toward outlining expectations, clarifying duties, establishing accountability, and avoiding misunderstandings. Position descriptions are also helpful in recruiting, salary benchmarking, and career planning.

As a guide, position descriptions should be 1-2 pages in length and focus on roles and responsibilities of the position itself, not traits of the person currently in the position. If for paid positions, include the features necessary to price the position in the market.

Key components of a position description include:

- A position summary that concisely states the goals of the position
- Five to eight essential duties to be performed by the person in the role
- The skills and competencies required to perform the position well (e.g., project management, technical skills, business acumen)
- The qualifications that will help a person to succeed in the position (e.g., a degree or equivalent years of work experience)

Human Resource Policies

Community Foundations of Canada has recently developed a template for Human Resource Policies which will help your foundation develop good employer-employee relations. This



template also identifies which policies apply to volunteers and consultants. There are links in the template to the relevant employment legislation for each province and territory.

Are You Ready to Hire Staff?

- Identify specific tasks associated with the staff role and record them in a position description.
- Decide who will manage the hiring process, and who will orient and manage the new employee.
- Determine how non-managerial duties will be handled (e.g., paying employment-related taxes, administering benefits). Strategic use of consultants can be beneficial here.
- Consider where the work will be done. Familiarize yourself with the pros and cons of each option before you put out the welcome mat for employees.
- Settle on a pay range. It is essential that salaries be reasonable — that paid to similarly qualified people for similar work — and that you document your sources of comparable data. Again, refer to CFC's most recent Salary and Benefits Report
- Consider where to advertise, including online job banks as well as through the community foundation network

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