

You've got a great road map now of where you need to go. You know how many volunteers you are looking for and what types of personalities and qualifications you need for your roles. It's time to start your recruitment strategy.

## *Website Review*

An excellent exercise to help start you on your way is to check out your organization's website. Nothing is more frustrating than to hear about how great it is to volunteer with an organization, find their website and then not be able to find a link to the volunteer page or application anywhere! When you're looking at the website, ask yourself the following:

***Can I CLEARLY see how to volunteer on the front page or am I looking around for tiny print at the bottom of the page?***

Even though it may not be possible to promote volunteer opportunities all the time on the site, it's imperative that your organization works with your recruitment timing and makes the link to the volunteer page clear and easy to find.

***Are there recent photos of volunteers in action online?***

While it may be fun as a "Throwback Thursday" photo on Facebook, outdated photos of your volunteers in action will make your organization seem just that, outdated. If you do not have any pictures to use, you just may have a new volunteer position on your hands: volunteer photographer! Your online and print publicity materials should show positive images of volunteers from the diverse communities you are hoping to attract.

***Is there a dedicated webpage for volunteer information?***

If there is no dedicated page, you may be sending the message to your volunteers that there aren't enough resources to give volunteers their own page. The page is a great tool to keep messaging current to the public who may be interested in volunteering one day, or who are looking to share the opportunity with friends and family.

***Is there any contact information listed on the site?***

Even though your initial response to potential volunteers may be "please go to our website and fill out an application form first," it's always nice to give people the feeling that they can reach out and ask any question they can about your program and opportunities available. That being said, if someone's email address or phone number is listed online, you better make sure that they are responding to email and phone calls in a timely manner; within 48 hours is the most accepted common courtesy.

***Is there a general description of some volunteer roles for potential volunteers to peruse?***

Don't feel as if you have to list every single position under the sun on your site. Some roles may only be available for your more experienced volunteers and there is no need to pitch these roles to your brand new applicants. Feel free to expand on any roles that brand new volunteers are likely to fill in their first year. Keep this part brief, though, and save all the details for your orientation sessions.

Anything to make your site easier for volunteers to navigate will go a long way to retaining those volunteers you try so hard to reach through all of your upcoming recruitment events, call outs and pitches.

## *Diversifying your Volunteer Base*

Taking some time to research organizations that you may not yet have connections with will help get the word out about your organization, and bring in a fresh perspective and potentially new ideas for your program. You must be cognizant of the use of wording and information that potential volunteers may look for and ensure that your message is clear to different groups or individuals regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Consider reaching out to newcomer organizations, high schools as well as colleges and universities, and organizations that serve different populations within your city. People who are new to your city, town or even Canada are looking to make connections in their new home and want to feel valued and part of a team. In a research paper published by the Laidlaw Foundation, participants were asked what an "inclusive community" means to them and the following set of characteristics were used to describe an inclusive community space:

- Integrative and cooperative
- Interactive
- Diverse
- Equitable
- Accessible and sensitive
- Participatory
- Safe

Ensuring that your organization provides all the above characteristics will open your doors to a new base of volunteers looking to make a difference in their community. Building relationships and partnerships with communities is the first key to getting the word out, recruiting volunteers and working together effectively. The second key is being willing to change. Get to know the leaders in the cultural communities you serve. Listening will provide you with a wealth of information that will allow your organization to do this work more effectively, if you are open to change.

## *Application Form*

First things first, volunteers need a way to become part of your organization. The easiest way to get them onboard is through a quick and simple application form (Appendix G). Most application forms include the following:

- Contact information
- Availability
- What roles the volunteer may be interested in
- Why the volunteer is interested in the organization
- Résumé
- References
- How the volunteer heard about volunteering
- Age restrictions to volunteering (if applicable)

While it's nice to list all of the above in your application form, take a moment to review it and keep it simple. It's important to ask why an applicant wants to dedicate their time to your organization as a volunteer. This will give you good insight as to whether that applicant truly knows about your organization's mission and aim, and whether they would be a good fit. By including the question about how your applicant heard about volunteering with your organization, you are well on your way to getting ready for the next time you need to recruit. This is an invaluable way of finding out what recruitment strategy worked best, especially if you are trying something new that year, like purchasing a membership with a large volunteer organization, attending recruitment events or forging collaborations with like-minded organizations.

Some organizations feel that the simpler the application form, the better. The easier it is for a volunteer to apply, the more likely they will follow through and come out to orientation and complete the volunteer process. If your organization must have a lengthy initial application process, it is very important that the applicant is aware of when they will hear back from you with a decision, either inviting them to orientation or not. Once again, you need to be cognizant of the fact that the volunteer needs to plan their schedule in order to make time to be available for your organization. The easiest way to communicate this information is in an automatically generated email that is launched once the application is received. The beauty of some of the volunteer management software mentioned in the previous section is that email responses are in fact quite simple to set up in an application form. If software is not in your foreseeable future, the Google Apps suite for nonprofits can really help you organize your applicants and your programs.

In some specialized volunteer roles, sometimes a background check is required; this needs to be taken into account when determining the start date for recruitment, allowing extra time for this to be completed. In regards to leadership roles that may exist in organization, it's important to keep in mind that additional screening processes should take place. In most cases, this is usually an interview, and interviews are lengthy processes. Make sure to plan adequate time for the interview process, usually by dedicating a week or two for interviews to take place. These are the roles you may want to start your recruitment campaign with, since you will more than likely be promoting these roles to your experienced volunteers instead of bringing on new volunteers to fulfill these roles.

Recruitment for new board of director members is quite different than recruiting volunteers to help with box office or event planning. You want to make sure that you are recruiting members who believe in your mission and can bring certain skill sets to the table. That is why it is crucial to understand the strategy and goals of your organization before starting to recruit new members. Think about where you lack support in the organization and where the organization will be in a few years. Remember, diversity planning starts at the top. Diversifying your volunteer leadership shows that diversity is a priority and can open up new avenues of recruitment.

Keeping in mind that board recruitment is a constant process, here are 10 ideas from the Dalhousie University College of Continuing Education for successful recruitment of board members:

1. Invest in making your organization more visible in the community
2. Make your board and its job more visible
3. Be clear about the role of the board, what you expect of board members and what they should expect of the organization
4. Know what you are looking for in new board members
5. Do not hide your current challenges
6. Look far and wide for your board candidates
7. Recruit with style; create a great-looking recruitment package
8. Make recruitment a team-building effort
9. Prepare new board members to participate
10. Focus on recruitment regularly

## Recruitment Material

Deciding whether your material is printed or not is one consideration, but having a recruitment piece to circulate is crucial for enticing future volunteers to apply. If you are printing promotional material, you want to make sure that it reaches out to the largest group of volunteers you are looking for and gets the “buzz” out about your organization. Some things to keep in mind while developing your promotional material:

- Keep your organization’s mission in mind: you want to attract volunteers who will support your organization and its goals
- Clearly outline the next step or call to action. Often this will be a website that has your application form ready for filling out, or a few orientation session dates that people can drop in for
- Entice potential volunteers with a few benefits you offer. If you aren’t sure what those are, chat with some current volunteers and ask them for three reasons why they continue to volunteer
- In your recruitment material, you could add a line to encourage dialogue with your community. For example, “We welcome inquiries from across the local community, regardless of background or experience.” Or if you are targeting a particular group, you could state, “We particularly welcome enquiries from [name of group]”

Don’t forget, your promo piece doesn’t need to be a large poster outlining every volunteer role available along with listed job descriptions, session dates and more; keep the message clean and simple. This is just the first glimpse into your organization. More information should be available for volunteers to check out on your organization’s website or social media platforms.

FIGURE 5: CURRENT HOT DOCS RECRUITMENT HANDBILL



When looking to recruit new board members, ensure that you have a recruitment package ready to hand out. This package should contain all of the necessary information on your organization, as well as your expectations of that board member. Dalhousie University suggests the following tips on what to include in the package intended for prospective board members:

- Personal invitation to join the board
- Organizational overview
- Mission statement and objectives
- Board member description
- Financial statement
- List of existing board members and staff
- Board application form (optional)
- By-laws and governing policies (optional)

- Fundraising campaign description (optional)
- Board member agreement (optional)
- Sample of a board meeting agenda (optional)
- Invitation to annual general meeting

Whether you are looking for volunteers to help out with a one-time event, volunteers to become leaders in your organization or volunteers to sit on the board of directors, the concepts of recruitment are generally the same. Get the word out about your organization and make sure your expectations are easy to find. The next step is identifying the best ways to get that word out.

## Recruitment Strategies

There are many strategies you can employ in your recruitment. Rick Lynch and Steve McCurley, authors of *Essential Volunteer Management*, suggest three basic ways:

### 1. Warm Body Recruitment

Also referred to as broad-based recruitment, this type of recruitment works well if you are looking for a large group of people to help out with tasks that don't require a vast array of skills. The promo material you develop needs to go somewhere, so why not start your promotion by looking into some ideas below?

- The public library system will often post flyers or promo material for free in all branches
- Free publications (e.g. *NOW*, *Exclaim*, *Metro*, etc) can also provide free event listings online
- Post a free ad on classified sites like Kijiji and Craigslist
- Online Job Boards: WorkInCulture, Charity Village
- Volunteer Opportunity Websites: Volunteer Toronto, GetInvolved.ca
- Distribute your promo material to local businesses and coffee shops
- Participate in recruitment events
- Word of mouth



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## 2. Targeted Recruitment

A very useful method when you are looking for people with specific skill sets. Highly recommended when you are looking for volunteer leaders or board of director members. Targeted recruitment takes a lot more planning and research to locate the best places to promote your opportunities.

## 3. Concentric Circles Recruitment

This type of recruitment leverages the networks you have already developed over time. It relies on your contacts being more familiar with your organization and having them make calls out to other interested friends. You often have direct or indirect contact with these people and they can include:

- Staff and co-workers
- Friends of current volunteers and staff
- Family and friends
- Stakeholders
- Board of directors

Sharing your recruitment strategy and goals with other staff, board members, volunteers and key stakeholders in your organization yields great results. These are the people who support and know your organization better than anyone, and can be your greatest asset. Leverage their networks to build your audience and continue to spread the word of volunteering with your organization.

Liaising with your marketing or communications department can also loop in one of the most effective ways of promoting your volunteer opportunities through various social media platforms. If your organization currently does not have a Facebook or Twitter account, it's time to invest some resources in establishing either account or both. Having at least one of these two social media platforms will deepen your engagement with your volunteer base, your organization's supporters and other like-minded community partners. Make it easy to become visible online by creating specific recruitment-related hashtags and by looping in other organizations by thanking them and directly linking to their Facebook page or Twitter handle. The online community has grown to be a very important key, not just for recruitment purposes, but also for marketing and engagement strategies. Regularly communicating the interesting new things your organization is doing or promoting opportunities that exist within your organization will increase your visibility online and will help build your community of supporters.

A holistic way to approach recruiting is the ABCD Technique taught through the workshop *Recruiting Volunteers: A Total Approach*, designed by Idealist on Campus. This technique includes all three methods listed above and breaks down into the following:

**A** = Approach

**B** = Belonging

**C** = Cast a wide net

**D** = Direct asks

**A**

**Approach:** Figuring out how to get started with recruitment can be slightly overwhelming. Once you have finished planning and preparing your volunteer requests, ask:

***How many people do you need to recruit?***

Knowing these numbers helps create a structure that utilizes your immediate resources or colleagues.

***What is the caliber of people you need to recruit?***

You should know what level of training and/or experience your volunteers need to truly be helpful in your work, and you need to know where/how to find and communicate with them.

Thank goodness your volunteer requests indicated the number of people you need and the specific skills and training needed for different roles. You are well on your way to figuring out an approach!

When you start looking into your targeted recruitment ask:

***Where can you find people with the specific skill sets you require?***

Start with educational institutions and professors who teach courses on particular subjects, organizations with similar goals as yours, newcomer centres (newcomers are always looking to build work experience), community centres and ethnic or cultural organizations. Connect with foreign-language publications and ask them to run stories about your organization. For some new arrivals to Canada, there will be a language barrier. If you have not already done so, consider outreach in different languages, led by volunteers from that particular community. Build yourself a mini database of these contacts and you can start targeting the same groups each year. Soon enough, they will expect your call out for volunteers and your work will be half done.

If you have worked with some organizations in the past, don't forget to include a quick thank you for their efforts in previous years. It's always nice to be acknowledged for helping out and this will also develop that relationship in the future.

**B**

**Belonging:** Think about the environment you want to share with your volunteers: a positive, learning environment where people can have fun and meet others. People volunteer for different reasons and the following are most common:

- A chance to give back to the community and support an organization I am passionate about
- Meeting new friends and experience new things without spending money
- Increasing my skill set by practicing newly acquired skills or trying something completely different
- Increasing my personal and/or professional network
- Creating a positive change in my life and community

Make sure to echo these benefits in your recruitment, as most volunteers like to get something out of it, whether that "it" is physical, like event admission or a T-shirt, or intangible, like skill development and being part of team. The greater the variety of benefits you offer, the larger the audience you can reach. You may need to tailor your pitch to the different communities you are targeting.

**C**

**Cast a wide net:** Get your message out there, far and wide. This is your warm-body recruitment method and is very important in creating a buzz for your organization, establishing your legitimacy in the community ("Oh, I've heard about this") and meeting requirements of inclusivity. Show that you are a place for everyone. One of the most important things you can do is include your current volunteers in the process. This will not only increase word-of-mouth marketing, but will also make your volunteers feel like they are part of the team and helping you out. Volunteers can get involved by handing out promo material around the city, or can suggest areas that should be contacted by follow up. Ask them to reach out to different people in their communities.

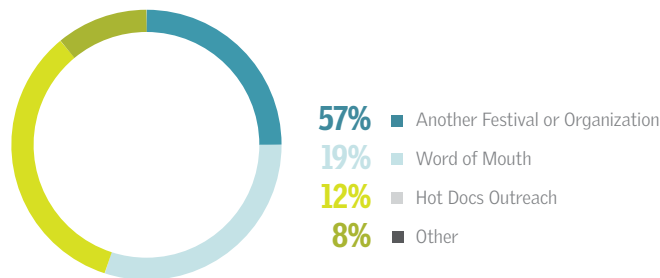
D

**Direct asks:** This method works especially well when you are looking for particular volunteers with specific skill sets like a new member for the board of directors or an educator to lead a professional development class. Think about the type of person you are looking for and create a list of your top choices. Following up with a personalized letter or phone call is imperative in this recruitment strategy, as you are often asking the party for a lengthier volunteer commitment.

### *Get Inspired: Program Ambassadors & Recruitment Events*

It's a well-known fact that over half of your volunteer base heard about volunteering with your organization through good old word-of-mouth marketing. Over the last few years at Hot Docs, 55.5 per cent of volunteers joined the organization by hearing about it through current Hot Docs volunteers, friends or family, other festivals they volunteer for or through their educational institutions (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6: CHART OF HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT HOT DOCS?



But how does anyone even begin to increase that effective word-of-mouth marketing? Utilizing your existing current volunteer base to help with promotion is key, and cross-promoting volunteer opportunities with other like-minded organizations can really make a difference. Partnering can increase your visibility as well as your potential volunteer pool. Develop your links with other organizations who are taking measures to address the same challenges. Ask them to give you guidance on how to reach a diverse volunteer base.

At Hot Docs, current volunteers are rewarded with benefits to help spread the word of volunteering in their communities. This is often done at mini orientations (Meet & Screens) that take place before recruitment for new volunteers begins. These orientations are not as lengthy as orientation sessions for new volunteers since returning volunteers come back to catch up on what's new for the year and see if there are new positions where they can apply their skills. These Program Ambassadors love helping out and also like the fact that they can start earning benefits early on. Benefits are acquired once the Ambassador returns a "Mission Log" detailing local businesses that accepted the material. Now you are starting to map out what areas and what businesses to approach the following year. An interesting concept to try would be to include these Program Ambassadors in sharing or tweeting some recruitment material online, instead of just hitting the streets with physical material. Now you are involving volunteers who love to go out and interact with the public, and volunteers who are tech savvy and using different social media platforms throughout the day.



## Recruiting Events

Make recruitment an event! This effort does take some planning and building relationships with other like-minded organizations in your community but the payback is very rewarding. By hosting an event that includes numerous participants pitching their volunteer opportunities to an audience, your organization looks well connected and shows that you are working together with other community members. The event can be as big or as small as you like, but keep in mind, the more organizations that participate, the bigger that network becomes and the greater the chances of attracting a rather large crowd. Often, because this is more of an event, media coverage will be easier to attract, so make sure to contact a few media outlets in your city.

At Hot Docs this event is called "Volunteer In Culture" and happens twice a year (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: VOLUNTEER IN CULTURE HANDBILL

The handbill features the title "VOLUNTEER IN CULTURE" in large, bold, black and green letters. To the right, it says "Join Toronto's cultural organizations and learn about volunteer opportunities." Below this, the date and time are listed: "Saturday, March 14, 2015 11:00 AM-12:30 PM" and "Bloor Hot Docs Cinema 506 Bloor St. W. Doors open: 10:30 AM". A green button-like box contains the text "Come for the event. Stay for a FREE film!". At the bottom, there are logos for hotdocs, THE FRINGE, WorkInCulture, and the Ontario government, along with the website "WWW.HOTDOCS.CA" for more information and RSVP.

The first event does take a lot of planning, but once the outline is there (Appendix H), it becomes easier to plan the next one, as you have developed an outline. An important aspect of working with numerous organizations is increasing the promotion of the event through their social media networks and newsletters. Creating a hashtag for the event and developing a quick social media tip page (Appendix I) will make it easier for organizations to help promote the event and will help you with that word-of-mouth marketing. Be sure in your marketing to indicate whether the event is accessible. The first Volunteer in Culture event, held in October 2014, featured eight cultural organizations based in Toronto and was hosted at the Bloor Hot Docs Cinema. The main idea was to fill the cinema with an audience and have each organization pitch their opportunities to the crowd in five-minute presentations. Following the presentations, attendees were then asked to stick around and mingle with each organization at their respective booths. The flow of the event is respectful of all participants' time; organizations do not have to be at their booth for hours on end and attendees can choose to either leave after the presentations are done or stay and ask one-on-one questions to organizers. Overall feedback from organizations that participated and attendees that came was positive. It can really show the vibrancy and variety of opportunities that exist within your community. More often than not, attendees discover festivals, events and organizations they hadn't heard about before attending. The second event wrapped up in March 2015 and featured nine different organizations (Appendix J), all recruiting for upcoming festival, events or year-round operations.