

## Supporting Volunteer Involvement in Events

Few events can operate without volunteers and people working with volunteers need to have some guidelines about how to manage groups of volunteers. Every event will be different so the information and recommendations in this document will need to be adapted by each organizing committee (henceforth referred to as the “committee”). This document addresses the key components of what is needed to plan for and support volunteers.

### Why involve volunteers?

There are reasons that you will want volunteers to be involved in your event, including:

- It provides your committee with additional skills, talents, perspectives and helping hands;
- It builds the capacity of the committee to accomplish the goal(s) of the event;
- It allows you to actively involve people who represent the diversity of the community.

### Why will volunteers want to be involved?

There are reasons that people will volunteer to be involved in planning and producing your event including:

- It allows people to give back to their community;
- It promotes a sense of belonging ;
- It provides the opportunity for individuals to engage according to their personal interests and talents;
- It allows volunteers to learn new skills;
- It allows for meaningful social interaction.

### Key to the involvement of volunteers in your event plan are two factors:

1. **Volunteers have rights** - you need to plan for volunteer involvement so as to provide each volunteer with a safe and supportive environment
2. **Volunteers have responsibilities** - volunteers are accountable to the business or organization hosting the event and they must act with respect for the host, the stakeholders, and the community.

### Volunteer Overview

There are two ways in which volunteers become connected with a committee. The first we refer to as “warm body” connections and the second as “matchmaking” connections.

There are times in your event planning that you will need a large number of people to accomplish something in a short time, these might include activities like setting up a venue or painting a hall. In these cases, one does not have to be as specific about recruiting and you may resort to “warm body” connections - taking anyone with an interest and a pulse.

Other times you will need to use the skills of a matchmaker. You will look at the requirements of the committee and the desires of the volunteer and attempt to make the best possible match. For example,

if you are looking for someone to design a poster, you will want someone who has graphic design skills and is looking to share these as a volunteer.

In both cases (warm body and matchmaking connections) it is helpful to have a short position description, so the volunteer understands what they are committing to (see Appendix for a sample position description).

### **Volunteer Policies and Procedures Guidelines**

If you got a new game and you wanted to know how to play it, you would look up the rules. The rules of the game explain its goals, what one can and cannot do, the way in which one proceeds through the game and the ways in which other players can be expected to behave.

Having these rules ensures that everyone's expectations are the same and every time you play the game there is consistency in how it is played. These "Rules of the Game" are not unlike Policies and Procedures which state rules, establish continuity, and communicate expectations.

**Policies** are broad statements that indicate the responsibilities and boundaries in which one performs their work. They can be seen as the rules related to the committee's goals and they tell people **what** to do.

**Procedures** are the steps that one takes to do their work. They indicate **how** to do things.

### **Volunteer Recruitment**

If your event requires a number of volunteers, it may be helpful to have one person on the committee designated as the Volunteer Coordinator. This person's responsibilities might include:

- defining the role of volunteers in the event;
- creating position descriptions;
- recruiting and screening the volunteers;
- scheduling volunteers;
- providing ongoing supervision and support;
- creating policies and procedures as required.

You may want to think about the barriers to volunteering and how your organization can make itself more accessible. Questions you may want to ask yourself when you are recruiting volunteers include:

- Is there evening work for those who work full-time?
- Are there tasks that can be done from home?
- Are there non-verbal tasks that volunteers can do as their English improves?
- Can you mitigate transportation barriers, such as offering ride shares or bus passes?
- Can you offer simple tasks that will build skills, both on the job and through training?

Where you recruit your volunteers depends on what you are looking to have the volunteers do.

- Start by asking people you know
- Ask them if they know people who might be interested
- Put your volunteer requirements on your event Facebook page
- Ask your networks, such as committee members and event partners to share volunteer information
- Approach downtown businesses about supplying volunteers for a component of the event
- Ask a service club or church group to help out
- Advertise your requirements on Volunteer Nova Scotia (volunteers.ca) and in community papers (The Grapevine, The Harvester)

When you create your request for volunteers, focus on what is in it for them. For example, would you be more attracted by a post that says “We need help” or one that says “We’re building community spirit in Kentville - want to help?”

### **Volunteer Screening**

The first thing you will need is a basic volunteer application form that includes:

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

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.

**Criminal Record Check** - recommended for anyone who will be handling cash or expensive equipment.

This background check is done by Police or RCMP in the area where the volunteer lives. Completed application forms are picked up by the individual who is applying. Discard the form after reviewing it for red flags.

At the bottom of the form you will find a Vulnerable Sector section, which you can make a requirement if the event involves working with vulnerable persons.

Note- This can take up to three weeks to complete (especially in the fall when new activities start up).

**Child Abuse Registry Check**- recommended for anyone who will be involved with children without their parents or guardians present.

This background check is done by the Department of Community Services. Information can be faxed and will be returned to the organization submitting it. Discard the form after reviewing it for red flags.

Note- this process can take up to one month depending on the time of year the application is made.

### **Volunteer Orientation and Training**

It is helpful for the volunteer to know what they will be doing but also how it fits into the bigger picture. Plan an orientation if there are a number of volunteers who will be working the same job, or a training session for volunteers that have specific roles.

If the volunteer needs to be aware of any equipment, policies, or procedures these should be covered in the training or orientation.

Sometimes it is helpful to pair up volunteers or create volunteer teams- this provides volunteers with a back up. If volunteers have someone they want to work with, that is great. If not, this may be a good time to introduce volunteers to the people on their team.

### **Volunteer Recognition**

Consider the best way to recognize the volunteers after the event.

The first thing you will want to do is to thank the volunteers on the day of the event and provide them with an evaluation form to assess their role and offer suggestions for future events.

Following the initial thank you, you may want to acknowledge their contribution to the event in other ways:

- A Thank You card
- A celebration with the Planning Committee following the event
- A note of thanks in an organizational newsletter or website

### **So, let's review-**

- Determine what jobs and duties you need to have filled (don't forget to include set up and clean up of the event)
- Determine how many volunteers are required
- Create job descriptions
- Ensure one person is available to coordinate the volunteers both leading up to the event and on the day of the event
- Put the call out and match the volunteer skills with the job/duties that are required
- For a long event, have manageable shifts for people to work/volunteer
- Two to three days before the event, call the volunteers to remind them of their role, the time that they are required and provide them with a point person for the days events

## **Appendix A - Position Description**

### **SAMPLE Volunteer Position Description**

#### **Event Volunteer**

**DESCRIPTION OF EVENT / PURPOSE OF ASSIGNMENT:** KBC holds events throughout the year. Events can range from movie nights to Multicultural Festivals. In offering these events, KBC needs assistance with all aspects of event planning and execution.

**OUTLINE OF VOLUNTEER'S RESPONSIBILITIES:** Event volunteers assist on the event day for set-up, guest assistance and/or or clean up. Volunteers may also choose to be involved in event planning.

**SUPPORT PLAN:** Event volunteers work under the direction of an assigned member of the event committee, staff, or other volunteers, who will provide task-specific training and support.

**TIME COMMITMENT:** Event day volunteers will typically be asked to commit at least 3 hours. Participation on an event planning committee typically requires larger time commitments over several months.

**QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED:** Depends on tasks.

**BENEFITS:** Event volunteers have the opportunity to learn new skills from professionals and meet others while helping the business community to build a welcoming and vibrant downtown in Kentville. Volunteers may also ask for a letter indicating their role and what they learned. This can be helpful in applying for scholarships or job seeking.



**Appendix B - Application Form**

SAMPLE Special Events Volunteer Application Form

Last name: \_\_\_\_\_ First name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship of contact to volunteer \_\_\_\_\_

Completion of Criminal Record Check Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Not required \_\_\_

Signature of person reviewing the CRC form \_\_\_\_\_

Completion of Child Abuse registry form Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Not required \_\_\_

Signature of person reviewing the Child Abuse Registry form \_\_\_\_\_

Previous experience as a volunteer-

References:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

How did you learn of this volunteer opportunity?

Do you want to serve on the event planning committee? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Do you want to serve on the day of the event? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The event you have volunteered for is the \_\_\_\_\_ to be held on \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_ - \_\_\_

You will be contacted for a brief orientation to your volunteer role before \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks, for your interest in helping out as an event volunteer!

## Appendix C - Volunteer Agreement

### Volunteer Commitment Agreement

I agree to volunteer for the \_\_\_\_\_ for a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, inclusive.

If, for any reason, I am unable to fulfill any of my commitments, I will contact \_\_\_\_\_ a minimum of 48 hours before my volunteer commitment.

I agree to complete any necessary training before I start my volunteer position.

I understand that I am a representative of \_\_\_\_\_, and as such agree to abide by the organization's policies and procedures. If I am approached by a member of the media I agree to direct them to the Event Coordinator.

If I prove to be incompatible with my position, I understand that the Event Coordinator reserves the right to reassign or cancel my volunteer hours. I understand that I must act in a professional manner when volunteering.

I understand that \_\_\_\_\_ is not liable for any damages or injuries I incur while volunteering for the event.

I give my permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to use any photos or video recordings captured of myself by staff or other volunteers for internal and/or promotional uses within the organization without compensation to me. I recognize that they are the property of \_\_\_\_\_, however I reserve the right to request that these images be removed from public view through written communication.

Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_