

How Are We Doing? The Essential Check-Ups!

Don't know where to start? Is your group trying to look forward and evolve but having trouble knowing where to start or what approach to take? Have you been working on a project for so long, you've lost

track of whether things are going as planned? An easy way to address these issues is by using evaluation as a starting point, a check-in or a final step.

ASSESSING OUR VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES

It is sometimes difficult to see where you need to go when you have yet to assess where you are and where you have been. Why not look at what is currently being done in your organization and what direction you would like to move towards in order to identify how you can expand your mission and involve others in your organization – evaluation can be a useful tool in pinpointing areas that would benefit from further attention. Some questions to consider are:

- Do we need to articulate that we value and rely on volunteers?
- Do we need to develop policies or procedures on how we want to involve people?

- Do we need to explore how others can help us achieve our mission? If so, how can we develop new positions for them?
- Is everyone clear about their specific tasks, their role and their work?
- Is there a clear, communicated vision or mission to the organization? Is every volunteer aware of this?
- Are people committed to the work that needs to be done?
- Are they reliable?
- Do they know what is expected of them?

One of the most helpful resources in looking at how volunteers are involved within your organization is the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement. (Please visit volunteer.ca and look under “Fast find”) The Code provides a list of minimum standards on effective

involvement of volunteers within organizations. These standards can be used as a guide as your group constructs an effective volunteer program. If ten standards seem like a lot, try starting with one or two that you could implement to lay a strong foundation for your program.

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS AND TEAM CHECK-INS

Another useful step in assessing where you are is by “checking in” with those who have been or are currently involved with the group. Providing volunteers with feedback on their performance, as well as the opportunity to give feedback, encourages them to feel part of the organization—it also illustrates that the work they do is worth being evaluated and that they are making meaningful contributions.

Some questions you may want to ask volunteers conducting performance appraisals or team check-ins include:

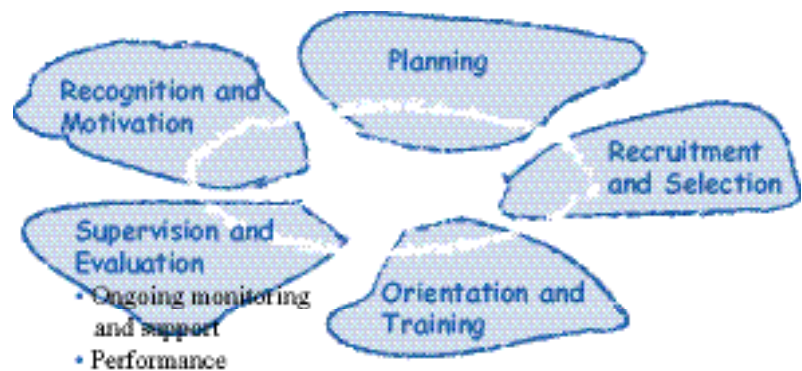
- Do you feel that you have successfully completed duties and tasks that were assigned to you?
- What additional training or support do you feel you require at this time?
- Do you feel like a member of the team?

- If questions arise while you are performing your tasks, do you feel comfortable approaching another team member for assistance? If there are problems regarding your volunteer work, do find that others are available?
- Do you feel you receive adequate recognition and support for the work you do?
- What do you like most about your volunteer work? What do you like least about your volunteer work?
- List your suggestions for changes that might improve the organization's volunteer program.
- What skills or talents do you have that we have never asked you to apply on our behalf? Are there other areas within our organization in which you would like to volunteer? ¹

There is an approach to finding, involving and keeping dedicated volunteers. It's called **Volunteer Development** and it is made up of five stages. This **Fact Sheet** (no. 10 of 14) addresses the importance of **volunteer supervision and evaluation**.

For more information on the Volunteer Development Cycle or Volunteer Involvement, contact your local Volunteer Centre (www.volunteer.ca/volunteercentres).

Volunteer Development Cycle



It is important that those who are involved with the organization are clear on what is expected of them and that they are contributing to the work that needs to be done. Although it is sometimes difficult to get people involved, having the right people involved in the right position can make all the difference to the success of an organization. Evaluations are a useful guide to assessing if there is a good match between what is

being done, who is doing it and how it could get done more efficiently.

There is a definite benefit to examining how volunteers are involved with an organization and whether the organization is achieving its goals. Evaluation is an extremely important tool in looking at where you are and where you want to go.

This series of Fact Sheets, **Involving Volunteers Effectively**, was designed to support citizen-based groups in the effective involvement of volunteers. The **Fact Sheets** were produced by the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network and Volunteer Canada,

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¹ Source: Volunteer Ottawa's Core Program *Annual Performance Review Self-Assessment Tool*.