



5 VOLUNTEER TASKS WHEN YOU HAVE NO FRONTLINE POSITIONS

One of the challenges we hear a lot from organizations that work with vulnerable populations, is that they don't know what to do with all the volunteer requests they get.

Nice problem to have, isn't it?

While nearly all charities and nonprofits were started by volunteers, as charities grow, they often need to move toward hiring paid employees, supplementing the work with volunteer assistance. Some organizations rely on volunteers to deliver programs (like summer camps). But organizations like community health centres and counselling programs usually require paid employees for program delivery because of the populations they work with, or the particular service they provide.

And when those organizations get requests from would-be volunteers, it can be a real challenge to find the perfect roles for them.

The last thing we want to do is turn away people who support our work with the valuable gift of their time. So, if you can't accommodate a volunteer in a service delivery role, look at your existing non-frontline work, and get creative in putting together roles for your potential volunteers.

Here are five ideas to get you started.

1. Sourcing gift cards, auction items, and other business partnerships: If your charity gives gift cards to its clients, needs silent auction items, or gives clients care packages, why not ask a volunteer to source these products for you? Set your volunteers up with template letters and phone scripts, and get them started. They can research a list of prospective partners, and reach out and follow up on your behalf.

2. Writing web and social media content: Writing blog posts and updating content on your website can be a time suck, but they're important engagement strategies. If you're being approached by potential volunteers with great writing and communications skills, put them to work creating your web content and drafting social media posts for you. Plan ahead by creating an editorial calendar that can guide the topics your volunteers will be writing about.

3. Create an out-of-the-box fundraiser: Your volunteers might have great networks, and could make excellent fundraisers. Create an out-of-the-box event for people who approach you wanting to volunteer. Something as simple as pulling together a toolkit on how to host a garage sale fundraiser could convert some of your volunteer inquiries into community events. Even better: Get a volunteer to brainstorm turnkey events, and create the toolkit for you!

4. Get help with administration: Face it. Most nonprofits could use some help with general administration. We spend so much time focused on service delivery, that administration sometimes falls by the wayside. This is especially true for small- to mid-sized nonprofits. So why not create a volunteer role specifically to support your administrative functions. A volunteer who is able to work some regular office hours could



help with things like ordering supplies, setting up meetings, taking minutes, data entry, envelope stuffing, thank you letter printing, and so much more.

5. Get help with program research and planning: Volunteers can help with service delivery even at organizations that work with vulnerable populations by supporting the behind-the-scenes work. They can help with activities like researching and planning outreach activities, compiling lists of potential partner agencies, and creating and updating program manuals. They can also assist with developing some program activities. For example, if you're looking for new activities for a children's program, a volunteer can help research and create them.

Bonus tip: Resume submission should always be part of your volunteer application process. For one, this ensures volunteers are qualified for the positions you have available. It also gives you the opportunity to look at an applicant's skill set and figure out whether it could fit a gap in your organization.