

Finding and Keeping Volunteers

A volunteer is anyone who without compensation or expectation or compensation (beyond reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses) performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the organization.

Volunteers are invaluable resources to our organization and, through CPF, to the future of FSL education in Canada. Whether supervised by other volunteers (e.g. a chapter Board of Directors) or by branch or national staff, volunteers have the right:

- To be given meaningful assignments
- To be treated as equal co-workers
- To effective supervision
- To full involvement and participation
- To recognition for work done

Recruiting volunteers

Before going out into the community to recruit volunteers, ensure you understand CPF's history of volunteer involvement.

Develop a volunteer recruitment policy based on the overall need for volunteerism, target groups for recruitment, and the motivational factors for volunteering. From this information it will be possible to identify an overall concept for what the volunteers will be doing, a strategy for covering the needs of volunteers, and plans for their recruitment and training.

Volunteers, as much as paid staff, require clear, complete, and current descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of the positions they are expected to fill. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a position description must be developed for each volunteer position. Position descriptions should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that the position keeps pace with changes in the chapter's needs.

Once you have clearly identified your chapter's volunteer needs and have created position descriptions you are ready to develop a recruitment plan. The process of developing a recruitment plan begins with close examination of the volunteer assignments to be filled.

For each assignment, ask:

- Who might be qualified for and interested in the position?
- Who would be able to meet the time requirements of the position?
- Where can we find these people?
- What is their motivation?
- What is the best way to approach them?

Concerned parents are a wonderful place to start but are by no means the only avenue to follow. Teachers, postsecondary students, grand parents, high school students, individuals seeking a career change or requiring work experience, and individuals concerned with second language education are other possible sources of volunteers.

What does the volunteer get out of it?

Volunteering should be a give-and-take proposition: the volunteer gives to the organization and its mission, but the volunteer should also receive something in return. Here are some examples.

Career enhancement

- Help volunteers acquire new skills and relate these skills to the marketplace
- Provide opportunities for advancement by building in “career” ladders
- Resume writing and job interview assistance.
- Letters of reference

Recognition

- Show your appreciation often, in many ways, and in ways that are specific and relevant to the particular individual
- Recognize their strengths

Meaningful work

- Provide periodic orientation that links volunteer assignments to the specific project as well as to the broader mission of the organization.
- Make the work meaningful and never waste a volunteer’s time
- Make good matches between the volunteers and the tasks from the start

Personal growth

- Let volunteers (and their families if appropriate) grow with the organization, moving to different tasks or greater challenges as they wish
- Give them opportunities that they wouldn’t get outside of volunteer positions

Respect

- Respect and encouragement are essential ingredients to developing and maintaining good relationships with volunteers. Accepting their recommendations and taking their advice are two ways of fostering respect

Socialization

- Volunteering can also be a social activity: an opportunity to interact with others and to make new friends. Establish a pleasant atmosphere and ensure that it’s not “all work and no play”

Managing your volunteers

Once volunteers are found, effective management can make the difference between a long and fruitful relationship and an unsatisfactory affiliation. Some tips for working with volunteers come from [101 Ways to Raise Resources](#) by Sue Vineyard and Steve McCurley:

- Learn their names, and use them. Nametags are always helpful
- Treat them as equal, vital members of your team
- Try to place them in jobs that best suit their interests, talents and/or experiences
- Give them clear job descriptions
- Tell them where they fit within the overall project
- Be open about problems and challenges – they'll find out anyway
- Don't make unrealistic demands on their time. If they said they can give you four hours, don't assume they can really give you eight
- Listen for lame excuses about why work isn't done. It may be a way of saying "get me out of this job". If that's the case, try assigning that person to a different task
- Give positive feedback whenever it's deserved
- Encourage humour
- Accept their different reasons for participating

Volunteer hours and donations

In reporting to granting agencies, to our members, and even to the public it can be very important to acknowledge the tremendous contribution made to the work of CPF by its volunteers.

In particular, it is often necessary to prove to granting agencies the size and value of the contribution of our volunteers. This is essential in allowing us to “match” the amounts of the various grants our organization receives.

In order to do so, this information must be collected. Two sets of information is collected, one is for use by your active volunteers, in which they can keep a log of their volunteer time and donations. The other is for projects that involve a number of individuals on a short-term basis. For it to be included in the national and provincial annual reports, CPF-SK must receive this information by the third week of April of each year. Include the totals on your report to the branch and send in the supporting forms for the branch archives.

The data to be collected

- All volunteers for CPF activities (not just members) can report
- It is not necessary to account separately for each ½ hour of work – just report in lump sums
- “Donations in kind” can include any out-of-pocket expenses which were not reimbursed: costs of long distance calls which a member placed but did not claim, gas for a trip conducted on CPF business for which payment was not required, loan of a computer, the value of a donated door prize, and so on

Tips on collecting this information:

- Many chapters pass around forms at the beginning of each meeting, collecting them at the end once everyone has reported his/her hours since the last meeting
- Of course, the most active volunteers will probably need to keep their own forms with their CPF files to fill in as they go
- Project leaders can use a “group” form to have everyone report at the end of an event

For each event co-sponsored with CPF-SK (Mini Rendez-vous, Fête du soleil) we ask that you submit a volunteer hours and donations form along with the required documentation for that event. In addition, volunteer hours for time donated outside those events should be tabulated at each chapter meeting and submitted to CPF-SK twice annually (in August and February).

Communicating effectively

Talking and communicating are not the same! There are three basic skills

Listening

- Does not have to be passive. It can be as active as talking, if you do it right.
- Pay attention – complete attention
- Don't think ahead to what you are going to say. Don't rehearse your own comments while the other is speaking
- Don't interrupt. Remain silent when the other person speaks
- Listen for feelings underneath words
- Keep an open mind – don't judge immediately
- Check out that you understand. Repeat back in similar words what you think you've heard, and ask what the volunteer actually said ("What I think I heard you say was...")
- Encourage the speaker to continue, clarifying what is being said if necessary

Looking

- People communicate with both verbal and body language. Pay attention to the whole person
- Take note of mannerisms, facial expression, and gestures as well as body movement. These are cues that will help you more fully understand what the person is saying.
- Maintain eye contact
- Show that you are listening by leaning forward in your chair and responding verbally

Being on the level

- Be honest about what you are feeling and thinking
- Be honest in what you say
- Speak for yourself. Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements
- Deal with the other person's feelings. Don't give unwanted advice or try to change someone's feelings
- Reflect feelings; "It sounds as if you're feeling" or "you sound..."