

# “BE PREPARED: SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS for SUCCESS”

for Arts Organizations with Professional Staff /Venues

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# Learning Objectives

- What does “support for volunteers” mean? And does it really make a difference to the volunteer and the organization?
- We will explore aspects of this support: How does orientation and training fit into this broader category of support?
- WHO “supports” volunteers in an arts organization that has professional staff? Do you have a paid manager of volunteers? Do several staff share this role? Do you have a volunteer who does this?
- How can we be creative, provide volunteers the support they need but not overtax the paid staff?
- Share some ideas for 2 key issues that came from focus group discussions

# Quick Poll

# SUPPORT implies...

- A process and methods that are used to get new volunteers up and running.
- Volunteers need the knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to become effective volunteers in your organization.
- Support includes common terms like orientation and training.
- Support also implies something more long term...do volunteers need continual support? And if so, what does that include?
- Volunteers come to you with a desire to do good work...they do not volunteer to fail or provide less than what you need.
- You have a responsibility to ensure they are successful, know your expectations and feel safe/comfortable ...
- Volunteers do not 'come pre-packaged and ready to go'

# Short Quiz

- How many of you have a staff designated manager/coordinator of volunteers?
- How many of you have several staff who share this responsibility?
- Do you use seasoned volunteers or peer to peer methods to orient new volunteers?
- Do you use technology, the web site, YouTube or online training methods?
- What is your biggest challenge in supporting, orientating and training of volunteers?

# Professional Arts Groups Advantages...

Although you depend on volunteers for much support, having the **consistency of staff** is key to your success.

Volunteers are not staff and they come and go; volunteers do not want full time jobs; they want to have fun, make a difference and share their skills and knowledge; be social and engaged. Those you recruit are usually passionate about the arts.

Staff develop the process, methods, policies built on experience and knowledge. You engage the community and have volunteers to help. **You need to make an INVESTMENT in the volunteer human resources.**

Professional arts groups often have better human and financial resources to use to support volunteers in their work.

Staff have training in the arts first. So working with volunteers is often a secondary function, untrained, untapped for many arts staff. Unless you have a trained Coordinator/Manager of Volunteers or another staff designated to support volunteers.

# Models for Volunteer Engagement

- A staff hired to coordinate/manage the volunteer resources. (recruitment, placement/screening, orientation, training, feedback, policy development, ongoing support, scheduling, exit, recognition)
- A staff hired to coordinate and manage initial marketing, recruitment etc....but then other staff/operations take over the orientation, training and other functions of support.
- A blend of the above: one staff coordinates major functions but hands off specific supervision/training/support and scheduling to other staff in operational areas.
- A volunteer who supports volunteers perhaps in specific groups/teams.
- Whatever model you develop be consistent and clear.

# Supporting Volunteers

- Support for volunteers starts from the moment a potential volunteer contacts you.
- Volunteers do not come to do bad work...their intentions are good.
- Volunteers do not come “pre-packaged and ready to go.”
- We need to invest in volunteer resources.
- Think about your first day “on the job”. What do we need to do to ensure successful experience and enhance the possibility that this volunteer might stay with us longer than anticipated? (remember volunteers are not long-term...they leave due to the very nature and definition of volunteering).



- Volunteers need short-term and long-term support.
- We often do a good job short-term ...but fail to consider what the volunteer needs after they have been with us for awhile.
- **Orientation** and **training** are areas of support.
- **Orientation to the organization** and **orientation to the specific job** description that the volunteer will be doing.
- **Training**: is more specific, skill or knowledge development required to do the work. E.g. fire safety/risk management; cash register training; computer training; training on multiple phone lines; marketing; or fundraising.

# 4 Areas of Support for Volunteers

1. Interpersonal Connection
2. Organizational Culture
3. Early Orientation and training support
4. Exposure to Strategy

# Interpersonal Connection

People commit to a cause due to the connection with people. We want to encourage this. Volunteer engagement = relationship building. We can do this in a few ways:

- **Mentor** – identify skilled volunteers who can mentor new volunteers; they keep the mentor relationship going and build on it.
- **Peer support** – identify skilled volunteers who can do peer to peer training and orientation both to the organization and role. This helps support limited staff resources.
- **Staff support** – Initial and ongoing staff support is important so volunteers know they are part of a bigger entity. Build a staff-volunteer team culture.

# Organizational Culture

Volunteers want clear expectations of how things are done. What values are represented; how are people treated.

- **Mission, Vision, Values:** Share these in small bites over first 6 months with volunteer; find new ways to demonstrate; walk the talk. Solve issues by involving volunteers in the solutions and they can help with orientation/training.
- **Roles:** have a professional, clear role description with volunteers. Make orientation/training mandatory. Volunteers need to know what to expect, consequences, responsibilities to take seriously. If you want volunteers to be professional, treat them professionally.

# Early orientation and training support

Start early and do small bits and build towards success.

- **Starts Day 1:** How a volunteer is treated on the phone, at interview, recruitment process, initial tour etc. Helps build confidence and trust in new situation.
- **Personal Development plans:** Work with volunteers to map out their journey with you. What skills can they share...what can you provide to them? Help them achieve their goals.
- **Bite size content:** we all learn differently. Don't overwhelm. Provide content in a variety of ways; online, manual, case examples; discussion groups; blogs; hands on; "teachable moments". Let volunteer be successful at one piece...before adding additional work.

# Exposure to Strategy

Transparency so that the volunteer can align their goals with those of the organization.

- **Share program goals:** Let the volunteer see/feel and acknowledge the impact they make by contributing time, skills and effort. Show impact in real numbers: increased entertainment to community; increased fundraising efforts; built better community relationships...
- **Disclose in layers:** start small and build...they don't need and can't absorb all at once. Use variety in methods. Online/on own; in groups/at open house etc.
- **Gather new insights:** Use skills and experiences of volunteers to build new policy; new protocols; use feedback and exit surveys to gain insight and make changes.

## 2 examples of key concerns/situations

**Diversity and Inclusivity:** increased awareness of all types of issues, cultural and physical for staff/volunteers/customers.

- Values/attitudes checked at recruitment
- Identify your key issues and provide sensitivity training done by partnering with specialists in community
- Invite volunteers to staff training and vice versa
- Case studies – use volunteers to discuss issue; write up and share online/manual
- Discussion groups using examples and solutions
- Teachable moments – when issue occurs immediately bring group together to discuss/find solution

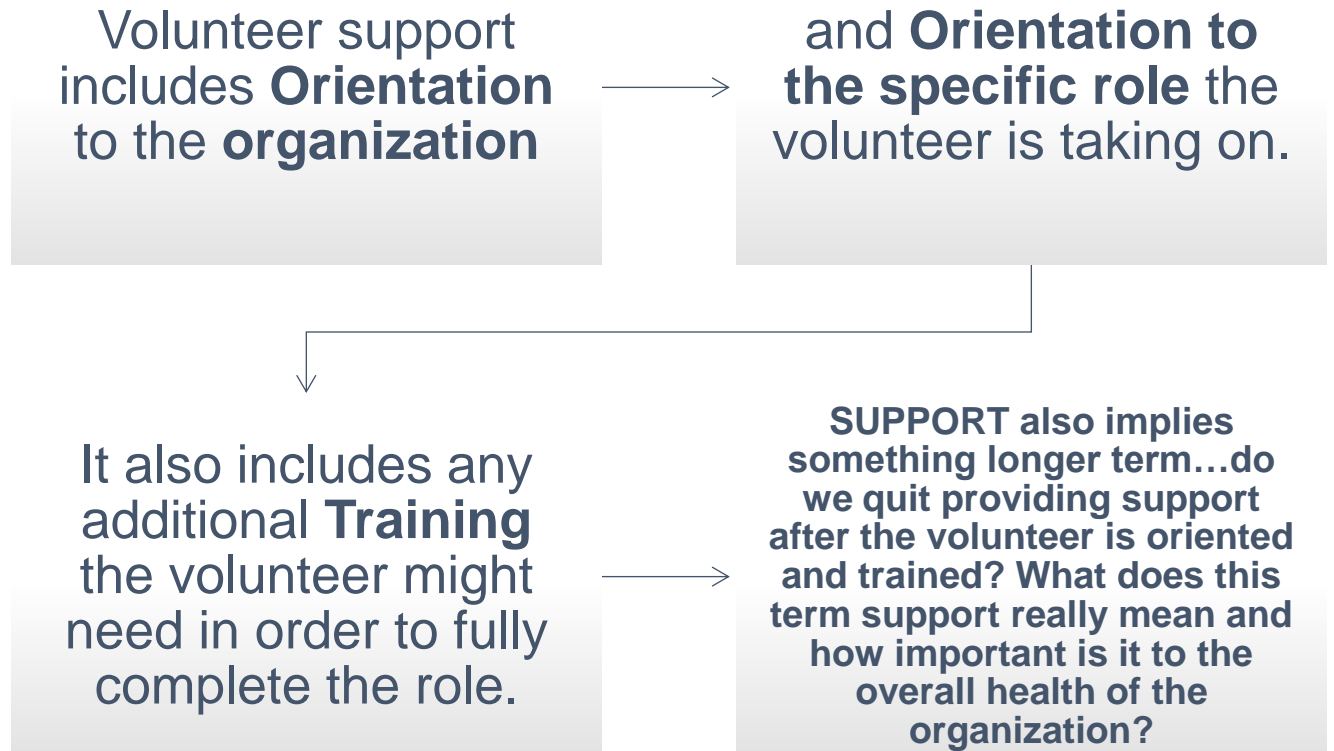
**Fire safety/risk management issue:** Volunteers not following training provided: e.g. volunteer not opening fire door despite taking training and volunteers without training in lockdown...did not stop people from leaving in lockdown situation. (2 issues: trained volunteers not following training and volunteers without training)

- Volunteer Position Description: clear expectations; required training; consequences; volunteers not engaged until training completed.
- Volunteers must be accountable to someone: Manager of Volunteers or whatever staff model you employ. Volunteer feedback sessions to address issues when they occur...regular sessions with volunteers.
- Policy and Procedures to address risk management issues and enforced with staff and volunteers. Policy on discipline and dismissal.
- Orientation and Specific Training can use case examples; issues identified; risk and solutions; get volunteers to define solutions.
- Practice sessions; Manual and online examples and ideas; Volunteer safety group



# Support ...4 aspects

1. Interpersonal communications
2. Organizational Culture
3. Early orientation and training
4. Exposure to Strategy



# SUPPORT

- **Short-term support:** getting the volunteer up and running and engaged in your work. Being available to follow up with volunteers – how are you doing? What can we do to help? Communicate continually especially within the first 3 months of engagement.
- **Long-term support:** Volunteers want to know they are doing good work; thank them; acknowledgement/recognition; feedback sessions; changing roles if they want; recognizing fatigue; giving time off; supporting their journey; invite to training sessions; ask seasoned volunteers to share learning or take on a new training role. When policy/protocol changes...volunteers need updates.
- **Staff Support:** if you want to engage and support volunteers successfully as a professional organization, you also need to give staff the support they need to work with volunteers.

# Recognizing the “impact of support”

Reasons why you need to support volunteers

1. Inspires a deeper **participation and commitment** (volunteers have high expectations and want to ‘fit’ and they want to get off to a good start).
2. Supporting volunteers is **WIN-WIN** (volunteers have skills, expectations and passion + organization has opportunities = a win when you balance volunteer expectations with organizational goals to create a positive experience).

3. A support process builds trust and can deepen the involvement of a volunteer. **Volunteer engagement = relationship building!** People commit to a cause due to their connection to other people. You want to encourage this.
4. Support helps new volunteers negotiate mixed emotions and gets them comfortable to new surroundings. E.g. a well defined schedule or calendar helps define certainty. Providing a handbook or regular meetings for discussion builds relationships.
5. Converts “**joiners**” to “**stayers**”. Orientation/training increases self confidence; processes help define safety; and discussion can show volunteers the impact they make.
6. Continued **long-term support** shows volunteers that the organization cares about them. Willing to help them do other vital roles in the organization. Support their personal growth and learning. Volunteers feel valued.

# Concept of Support

- **IS A PROCESS with METHODS...**starts before day 1. The process by which new volunteers are welcomed; they learn the ropes; understand their role in bigger picture; identifies work to be done and how to accomplish that work; they get help when needed; communication support; address issues; ask them to share their skills and gifts and recognize their efforts via recognition and additional training or new roles where they can thrive.
- Find a PROCESS that works for your organization. Map it out clearly and have someone responsible/accountable to ensure it works. That volunteers have someone/an anchor that grounds them.

Questions posted today...or email me...



# Resources

- Volunteer Canada web site: <https://volunteer.ca>
- Volunteer Scotland web site: [www.volunteerscotland.net](http://www.volunteerscotland.net) ( templates and resources for organizations)
- Charity Village: <https://charityvillage.com> ( resource section with lots of topics on volunteer engagement/management; articles on specific topics of orientation and training and support).
- Energize web site: [www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com) (Cultural and Performing arts resources)

If you still have questions please  
contact me and I will try to help  
you!

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