

SHARING VOLUNTEERS: A CONVERSATION GUIDE

During times of emergency, the need to deploy volunteers far and wide can be incredibly important to the resiliency of local communities and causes. This conversation guide has been curated to help organizations & volunteer coordinators begin to consider the task, start conversations & ask the right questions about sharing volunteers between different nonprofit organizations.



YOUR OWN ORGANIZATION

- Do you have the capacity within your staff, board, and/or volunteer coordinators to work collaboratively on sharing volunteers with other organizations?
- Have you proposed this to your Board of Directors?
- How do you currently screen and deploy volunteers?
- Do you have a standard volunteer screening process that you expect organizations to adhere to as well?
- Is there a need in your own organization for extra help from other volunteer groups?
- How would sharing volunteers change your policies and procedures?



OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- Are there any volunteers in your community working with organizations that would be willing to also volunteer with you?
- Are you similar enough organizations where sharing volunteers makes sense?
- Do your screening practices and procedures align? If they don't, do they need to?
- How will you keep track of the volunteers? Who do they report to? Who/what tracks the hours?
- How many organizations will participate in sharing volunteers?
- What does each organization looking to participate have the capacity to do (e.g. screening, file storage/security, policy development)?



YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY

- Ask your insurance agent if there would be changes to your volunteer program that may impact the risk and liability your organization carries.
- What does your insurance policy cover? Do you have to make any changes?
- What is the ideal coverage for your organization if it is now sharing volunteers?
- Is the other organization you are sharing volunteers with having the same conversations with their insurance agent?

YOUR VOLUNTEERS

- Do you have volunteers interested in spending their time volunteering with other organizations?
- How would your volunteers like to be informed about volunteer opportunities inside and outside your organization?
- What does scheduling ideally look like for them?
- Do they have any suggestions on how to make this an easy process for them?
- Do you have their written permission to share information about their volunteer activity and personal information between organizations?



OTHER CONVERSATIONS

- Have you talked to other organizations that have shared volunteers? Do they have tips and advice for an effective program?
- Are there currently any additional precautions that should be taken such as health guidelines or public safety?
- Will there be additional costs you need to take on?
- Should you consult a lawyer to ensure you're not interfering with labour laws, your own contracts, human rights, or other related legal matters?
- Talking to a lawyer can also be helpful when entering into agreements with other organizations.
- Do the policies of your organization, and the organization you are sharing volunteers with, align with appropriate privacy legislation (e.g. PIPA, PIPEDA, FOIP) to keep volunteer's personal data secure and safe?"



PLEASE NOTE:

None of the information in this document should be considered legal advice or licensed insurance advice. Volunteer Alberta encourages you to reach out to a licensed legal and/or insurance professional for any concerns specific to your organization.

SHARING VOLUNTEERS: CONVERSATION EXAMPLES

We've given you some helpful conversations to consider if your organization is looking to share volunteers. Here are some examples of circumstances that may arise where a conversation around sharing volunteers may be intriguing or necessary.

LOW VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Your organization may be experiencing low volunteer engagement. In conversation with another organization that does similar work, they also note that they are experiencing low engagement. This lack of engagement can get in the way of achieving your organization's mission and vision. This could be a good place to consider a conversation around sharing volunteers amongst your organizations. By exploring sharing volunteers, you open both volunteer cores up to new work and opportunities, which could benefit both organizations.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events are known to attract hundreds and even thousands of volunteers across the province. Your organization may be hosting an annual festival, but, you know within your network that there are numerous organizations also hosting festivals and utilize volunteers for similar roles. This may be a good opportunity to explore sharing volunteers. This could cut down on your screening time and put suitable volunteers in positions they will thrive in quicker. This is also a great way to support your network in creating strong volunteer cores.

SURGE SUPPORT

Sometimes things come up and we're not ready to handle the influx ahead. COVID-19 proved that this reality could strike at any moment, leaving many unable to support themselves. Sharing volunteers between organizations can help absorb some of the impacts. Whether it's preparing or delivering food, to shopping for those who can't, sharing volunteers can ensure those you serve are taken care of when they need it the most. By sharing volunteers, organizations can cut down their screening time by sharing trusted volunteers and deploy them to where they're needed.