
What are Volunteers Interested in Doing?



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This report is provided by VolunteerConnector.org and is based on data provided by 130,000 unique users checking out 2,578 volunteer positions across Alberta a whopping 884,000 times!

Intro

Trends in volunteering tend to mirror the thoughts and actions of our beliefs and values as a society. The single biggest change in volunteerism that has occurred in the last 50 years can be seen in the barriers to greater volunteerism. This change can be summed up in two statements:

OLD BARRIER: “I don’t have enough time to volunteer!”

NEW BARRIER: “I can’t find anything interesting to do!”

A perceived lack of interesting opportunities has surpassed a perceived lack of time for why people aren’t volunteering more in urban Alberta. Additionally, the two most important elements that attract volunteers to roles are the causes they support and the skills they can use. This means we need to continue to show volunteers how they will make a difference in our cause because an interesting role alone will not always attract a volunteer.

This report has been designed to help you understand two simple but important things about potential volunteers. The first is to show you what type of volunteer activities are most interesting to people. The second is to show you what type of volunteer activities are least interesting to people. It might go without saying, but we are big fans of making this point:

“It’s our job as volunteer engagers to keep volunteerism interesting!”

It’s time for volunteer engagers to get creative!

The Most Interesting Roles

So, what types of activities are volunteers interested in? The following are the top roles that volunteers want to see more of. This can help you shape your volunteer roles differently and recruit and retain volunteers more effectively.

Roles That Allow Volunteers to Use Skills (Advancement Roles)

Some of the most popular volunteer roles are for those that look for volunteers with a very particular set of skills. These roles can also help volunteers to build their resume and gain practical experience.

- Design
- Cooking
- Education
- Social Work
- Business Development
- Project Management
- Board Member

Roles That Allow Volunteers to Explore their Passion and Interest (Passion Roles)

Volunteering happens largely outside of paid work time, so it's no surprise that volunteers love to explore their passions, hobbies and interests in activities that allow them to explore what they love.

- Animal Care
- Arts and Crafts
- Environmental
- Performing in Music or Theatre
- Writing
- Fitness

Roles That Still Include Some of What is “Typical” (Commitment Roles)

Among the top roles of interest to volunteers are roles that have been around a while. They require regular and ongoing, commitment. The key to keeping the interest and commitment of these volunteers is to allow the role to be filled on the volunteer’s schedule. Keep it flexible and you’ll get more commitment!

- Mentoring
- Visiting
- Homework Helper
- ESL Support
- Outing Assistant

Roles Where the Interest Meets the Opportunities (Convergence Roles)

A lot of Volunteer Opportunities are “just right,” for the volunteer and the organization. This means both have almost the same amount of interest in the cause and the role.

- Committee Member
- Social Media
- Activity Coordination
- Training
- Docents
- Event help and planning
- Finance
- Website
- Fashion

What about the roles that volunteers are less interested in?

So, what types of activities are volunteers least interested in? The following are the roles that are least likely to be interesting to volunteers:

- Housekeeper
- Auditor
- Public Speaking
- Fundraising
- Exhibitor
- Traffic Control
- Security
- Social Enterprise
- Porter
- Casino.*

This doesn't mean you can't recruit any volunteers in these roles. You just need to be creative and rethink how you are doing it. Here are our tips to help you out when you rely on volunteers in these roles:

1. Carefully craft volunteer postings to attract volunteers to these roles. Identify words and phrases that will communicate to people in a meaningful way. Get a fresh set of eyes to look at the posting before you make it public.
2. Be sure to highlight the benefits of this position. Is it flexible to the volunteer's schedule? Can they use this experience on their resumé?
3. Consider adapting or expanding roles. For example, could a porter also be a friendly visitor? Might this make the position more interesting to volunteers?
4. Recruit from a more specialized source. For example, partner with a course, workshop or training of security personnel to provide real life volunteer opportunities in security.
5. Don't forget your cause is still appealing to volunteers. It might be that volunteers are willing to support your work because you're a cool cause they care about, so make sure you help the volunteer understand the cause they are supporting in the volunteer posting. That will help make the role more attractive overall.

Conclusion and Questions

This is the first time we are able to identify these trends in urban Alberta. There are definite areas of interest and disinterest amongst potential volunteers which we all need to sit up and take notice of as we plan our programs and recruit for certain roles. Here are a few questions to consider as we go forward:

- What do these findings mean for us as volunteer engagers?
- How quickly will we be able to adapt?
- What happens when we do adapt?
- How can we share more findings with each other about what's working and not working?

We are here to keep you informed and help you work through these questions. We think this report will be helpful on an annual basis but we will also keep up with monitoring and analysis to let you know about new and interesting findings in this area.

And remember: **Keep volunteerism interesting!**

**A thought about casino roles: Volunteers aren't interested but so many organizations rely on the casino as a fundraiser. Is there be another way? We will continue to research and work with the Alberta Non-profit Network to suggest solutions for Alberta.*

To get started on your volunteer journey, visit:

www.volunteerconnector.org