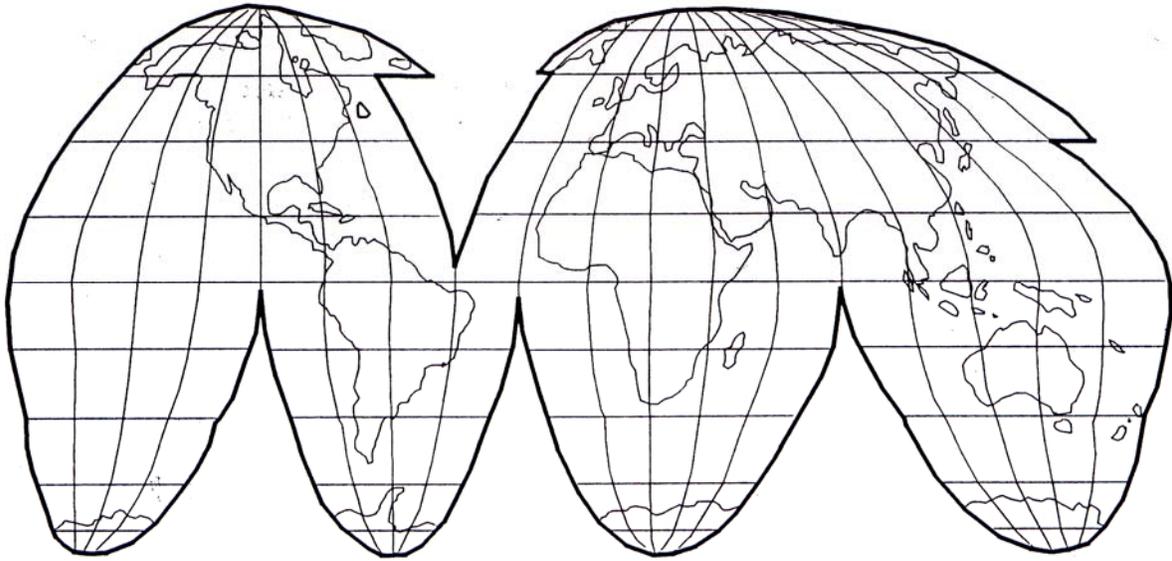


The Changing World of Volunteer Management



A Practical Guide to Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management

by

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Purpose

'Managing diversity' is a popular phrase of the '90s. Underlying the many reasons for promoting diversity, is the reality that in an increasingly competitive environment, organizations need to look at all the available talent when recruiting workers, be they staff or volunteers.

This resource guide examines the management of **cultural diversity** and is written to promote and facilitate the successful management of a culturally diverse volunteer team. Issues such as concerns about human rights legislation and the legality of utilizing new immigrants as volunteers are thoroughly discussed.

The format is designed to be simple and easy to read. However, a basic knowledge of the management of volunteers is presumed as a background for implementing the suggestions contained in this guide. Helpful questions orient the reader to the main management functions: recruitment, training, supervision, and recognition of a multicultural volunteer team. Practical tips are given in point form and case studies taken from the experiences of nonprofit organizations in Calgary illustrate each section. Additional information (on can be found in a comprehensive set of Appendices.

During the research for this guide, some excellent material on cultural diversity was uncovered. It is hoped that the resource section will serve to further enhance the reader's interest in effective, culturally diversified organizations.

Introduction

The Association of Directors of Volunteer Resources (ADVR) is a professional organization whose mission is to promote high standards of competence in the management of volunteer resources. It encourages its members to anticipate and respond to trends, to question issues, to share resources, and above all to strive for excellence as managers of volunteers.

A major trend impacting the profession today is that more than ever before. Canadian communities represent a mosaic of distinct cultures, providing us with the opportunity to learn and benefit from each other.

Consequently, ADVR has addressed the complexities of effectively managing a multicultural volunteer program through extensive research, resulting in this document. It is our hope that all who read it will be better equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of managing a program enriched by the diversity of the many cultures that make up our communities.

Sue Wood. President

Association of Directors of Volunteer Resources

1992-1994

Section 1 Background Information

1.1 Volunteerism - A Global Perspective

Volunteerism is a function of the way in which a society organizes itself and of how that society defines the needs of its population. Society can meet their needs through the creation of government bodies, through the institution of the family, through the establishment of social obligations between people, through the donation of labour by some members of that society, or through any combination of these. It is also true that some societies recognize and attempt to fulfill needs that other societies do not. Individual liberty, emotional fulfillment, freedom from poverty, or intercultural education, for example, are not uniformly recognized as important needs to fulfill.

Community consultations as part of Project Kaleidoscope (Volunteer Centre of Calgary, 1992) revealed how different cultures generally understand volunteering.

- Older Chinese see volunteering as a courtesy and an obligation to the community. The motivation to volunteer derives from a need to maintain a link with Culture. The older Chinese prefer the term, "giving a helping hand" to "volunteering" because volunteering is associated with social work. Younger Chinese volunteer to gain vital work experience and to have fun.
- Filipinos interpret the word volunteer to mean community spirit or community involvement. Volunteering is an informal activity but on trust and friendship.
- Ismaili Muslims experience volunteering as a religious requirement and therefore it is a part of daily living. As a community, every Ismaili Muslim is involved in volunteering.
- Latin American people see volunteering as something that privileged persons do. Volunteering is perceived, especially by recent immigrants, as an indication of class. In Chile or Argentina, volunteerism is linked with socialist politics. Volunteering is generally seen as a private value and not to be advertised on a resume.
- The Aboriginal community "lends a helping hand" when asked. Volunteering is very acceptable when it means learning new skills or the promotion of Aboriginal culture.
- Polish immigrants come from a country where many people were forced to volunteer as a way of promoting government ideology. Therefore, there may be a negative attitude towards volunteering, particularly among recent immigrants. Many older established community members volunteer within the Polish community.
- The Sikh community translates volunteering to mean "service." their third religious commandment. In India, Sikhs engage in community volunteer work as a part of the daily life.

In addition, the A.F.S. Center for Intercultural Learning tells us that:

- In Japan the concept of volunteering is not well known. Identity is most often group rather than individual identity. Group membership is very demanding both in time and energy and further expects homogeneity. Volunteer activities must be congruent with the needs of the group. Motivation to volunteer is often connected to a sense of obligation: people who received help feel obliged to exchange this help with their labour and time (Naka & Hansel. 1989);
- The word 'voluntario' was introduced to Latin America by the Spanish. It often refers to foreign volunteers. Ecuadorians today prefer "companero." meaning someone to break bread with. A long tradition of Christian charity and the desire to serve God motivates Ecuadorians to volunteer today (Rivera. Hansel & Howard. 1989);
- In Australia the term "volunteering" has certain historical, sociological and class connotations and is an overt or implicit disparagement. By contrast expressions such as "community involvement," and "lending a hand," are positive statements. Australians do not typically proclaim that they are involved in the community (Walsh. Helman & Hansel. 1989); and.
- In Germany. "Ehrenamtliche" is the term most often used to refer to volunteers. The word, which means "honorary position." carries connotations of duty and formally held "offices." The word conjures images of self importance, politicking and fussy formality, especially for young people. Many volunteers prefer to describe their "work" than to identify themselves as Ehrenamtliche (Zeuschel & Hansel)



(Diane Fisher. 1990)

1.2 Volunteerism in Canada

Volunteering, as seen by Western society, goes back to the Greek and Roman philosophy of Caritas:

**giving for the greater good. working for social reform
and goodwill to fellow men.**

The Judeo-Christian components of volunteering rest in the values of love, justice and mercy.

Throughout Western history the values of mercy and charity, the foundations of today's volunteerism and philanthropy, have undergone changes. These changes are reflected in the redefinition of social structure, and practical opportunities. Such changes were always connected with the roles of the church and government, and their relationship with the community (or public sector).

When European settlers came to Canada, the need to survive encouraged cooperation and support, building the foundation of Canadian volunteerism. Over the past 100 years, Eastern religions and philosophies have joined the Canadian culture and contributed the idea that service beyond the self is both an obligation and a joy. What we value today involved the participation and the commitment of all the people. As a nation we value:

freedom, equality, democracy, and mutual respect

This respect is reflected in Canada's commitment to multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is an ideal state.

In reality, Canadians are affected by ethnocentricity. They are surrounded by their own culture, and are often oblivious to the dynamics of diverse cultures, values and attitudes. This can lead to stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. (Please refer to Appendix: A for additional information.)

Volunteerism offers an opportunity to practice multiculturalism: to continue to shape Canada as a nation and to strengthen social consciousness.