

Youth: How Can We Get Them Involved?

Would you like to add creativity, energy and a fresh approach to your group? Then consider involving more youth!

Young people can bring an important mix of passion and enthusiasm to your group's activities. Yet many of them say they do not volunteer because they have never been asked!

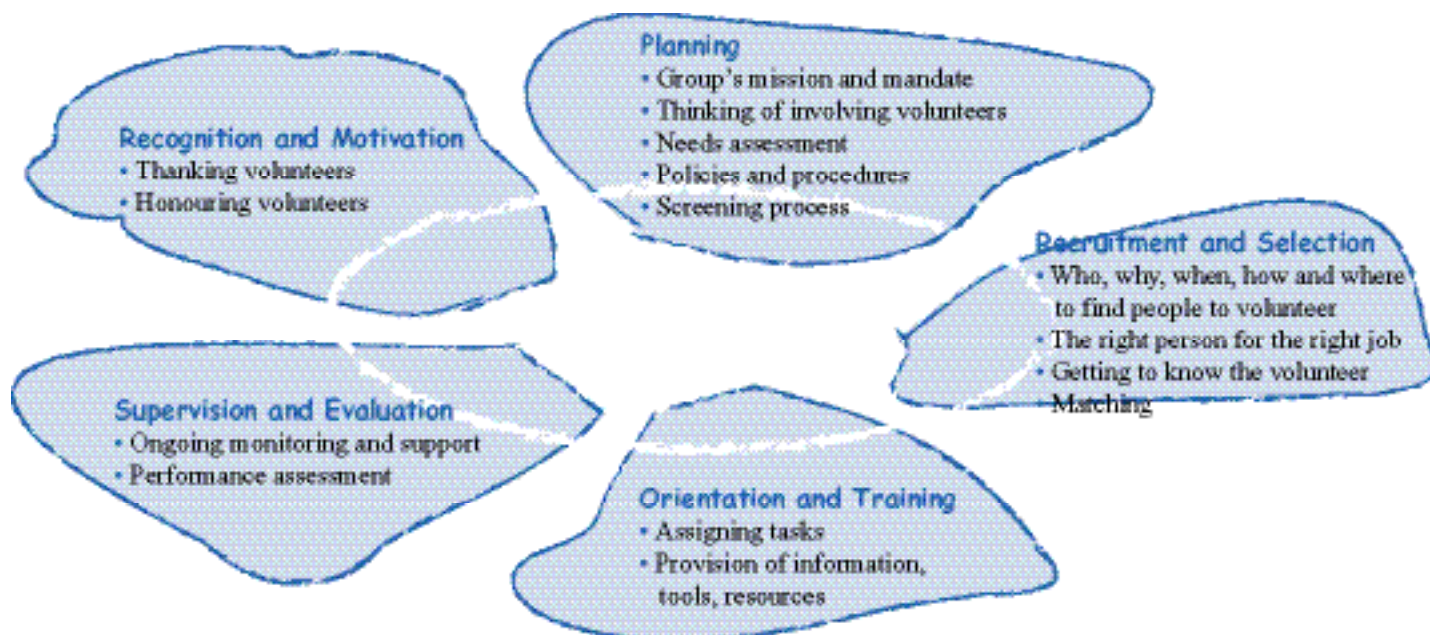
YOUTH INVOLVEMENT CHECKLIST

Use the following checklist to assess how successful your group is at involving youth as volunteers.

- We are flexible – we offer youth choices and options.**
Young people like variety, spontaneity and flexibility in volunteer assignments. Offer them tasks that can be carried out after school, on weekends or during school holidays. Keep in mind that they have busy schedules too, with homework, exams, social activities, part-time jobs, and extra-curricular activities.
- We ensure youth have a sense of purpose – we offer them an opportunity to contribute to a cause they believe in.** Youth want to know “why this particular task or work is important”. Provide them with information about your group's purpose and mission and how their involvement can make a difference in community. For example, an after-school basketball program not only provides a fun activity, but also offers a safe place for children until parents or caregivers come home.
- We offer youth information and training – we support them by offering them the tools they need to do the job.** Always be clear about the tasks and their role. Offer them tools they need to make things happen. And offer them opportunities to learn – training sessions, buddy systems, “job-shadowing”, etc...
- We offer youth benefits – we let them know “what's-in-it-for-them”.** Let youth volunteers know, up front, what skills they can develop by working with your groups, important community leaders they will have the opportunity to meet and work with, and any other rewards you may be able to offer them.
- We offer youth incentives – we present them with gifts, references, opportunities and rewards to recognize their efforts.** Adapt and tailor your recognition to ways that are appreciated by youth. Offer rewards such as job references or free passes to an upcoming community event. Youth are often looking to gain work experience – identify how their current involvement is contributing to building a stronger résumé and, if possible, help them connect with and meet potential employers.
- We offer youth a variety of opportunities to get involved – we break away from tradition and routine.** Create exciting positions geared to youth. Involve them in work that suits their interests and in areas where they can learn new things. Young people often prefer two or three tasks at a community event over stuffing envelopes for hours.
- We don't get too caught up in systems and structures – we try and minimize the “red tape”.** Youth can be turned off by too much formality. They are looking for an informal and productive approach. Let them know, for example, that check lists and telephone or e-mail check-ins are as valid as written reports.
- We add elements of fun to all that we do.** Youth volunteers want their volunteering experience to be enjoyable, satisfying and fun! Don't know what fun is for today's youth? Ask them, listen to them, and watch them. Add some music in the background and think outside of the box (the pizza box that is!) Their recommended ways of working could just be what you need – for them and for you!

Groups that make the effort to include youth are well rewarded. Youth bring a different perspective on current and future activities carried out by the organization, they bring a unique mix of passion and enthusiasm to their volunteer activities and they are eager to contribute to the community and the lives of others.

Volunteer Development Cycle



There is an approach to finding, involving and keeping dedicated volunteers. It's called **Volunteer Development** and it is made up of five stages. This **Fact Sheet** (no. 7 of 14) addresses the importance of **volunteer involvement, recruitment and supervision**.

For more information on the Volunteer Development Cycle or Volunteer Involvement, contact your local Volunteer Centre (www.volunteer.ca/volunteercentres).

This series of Fact Sheets, **Involving Volunteers Effectively**, was designed to support citizen-based groups in the effective involvement of volunteers. The **Fact Sheets** were produced by the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network and Volunteer Canada,

with significant financial support from the **Ontario Trillium Foundation**. The Fact Sheets are available to all with the support of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative.

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Canada Volunteerism Initiative
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