

Volunteer Recruitment, Retention, and Replacement

Communities in Bloom, September 18, 2026



Housekeeping and welcome!



Land Affirmation



Volunteer Alberta

We are a diverse and inclusive member association strengthening and creating pathways for volunteerism and civic engagement in Alberta.

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Resident big-haired nonprofit and co-op dork.

Works as VA's Manager of Learning and Inquiry



Agenda for today

1. 10 Steps to Screening
2. Traditional Volunteer Recruitment
3. Emergent Volunteer Recruitment
4. Discussing Background and Reference Checks
5. Volunteer Onboarding
6. Volunteer Recognition
7. Volunteer Retention
8. Volunteer Succession Planning

Big Ideas for Today

1. Screening is relationship building, and relationship building is screening
2. Explain yourself! Volunteers want to know the “why”
3. Match people with meaningful opportunities
4. Create experiences people want to return to
5. Learn, adapt, and continuously improve
6. Design volunteer experiences from the volunteer's perspective, not your perspective



10 Steps to Screening

- Risk Assessment
- Position Assignment
- Recruitment
- Application Forms
- Interview
- Reference Checks
- Background Checks (if needed)
- Orientation and Training
- Support and Supervision
- Follow-up and Feedback

Volunteer Recruitment

- Plan, plan, plan!
- Get clear on your organization's goals and mandate
- Identify the risks associated with the role and include them in a fully developed volunteer position description.
- Make a good first impression.



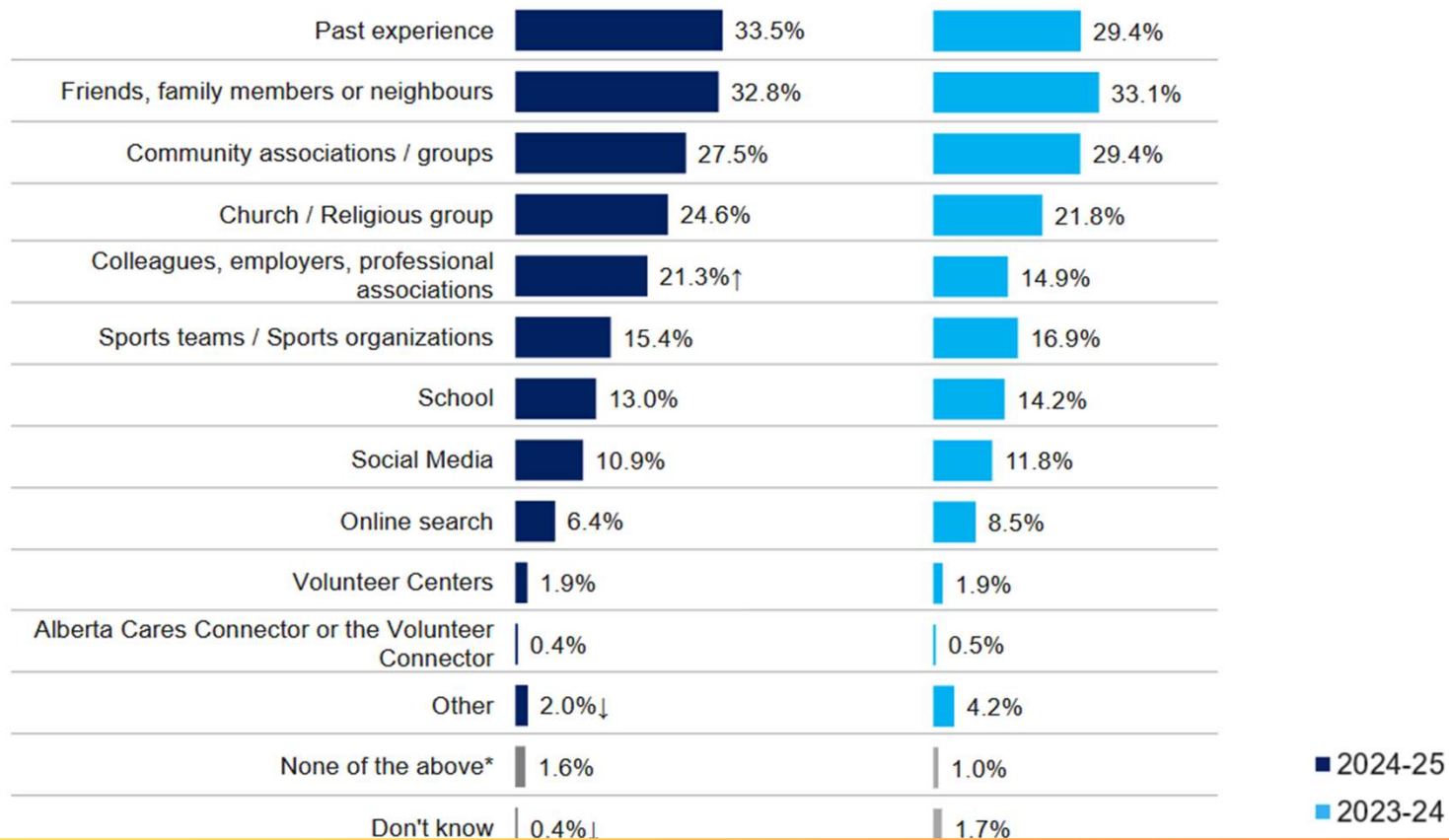
Traditional Recruitment Tactics

1. Mass Appeals

2. Targeted Recruitment

3. Networking

Sources of formal volunteering opportunities



Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Status of Women 2024-2025 Survey of Albertans

Where do I get more volunteers?

And why is that the wrong question?

Recruitment Messaging

- Who are you talking to?
- Where do you find them?
- What are you asking them to do?
- What's your call to action?



Slide 12

MS1 Folks won't necessarily know what a persona is so pls explain a bit more clearly eg think about your ideal volunteer. Create a simple persona that includes motivations, interests, availability, and what they hope to gain from volunteering

Miki Stricker-Talbot, 2026-09-18T20:04:05.848

MS1 0 Need a new slide after this one with "Emerging Recruitment Practices". Explain that once they've figured out their key messaging they can certainly try to implement some of the traditional recruitment methods, but also encourage them to experiment with new ideas (eg leaning into local relationships; overcoming some barriers like social anxiety, etc per my original comment on slide 6

Miki Stricker-Talbot, 2026-09-18T20:12:27.205

Emergent Recruitment Tactics

- 1. Mobilizing community members**
- 2. Low-commitment roles**

Don't do this.
Really.
Don't.

- Volunteers needed?
- Desperation reeks of desperation.
- Generic messages don't work.



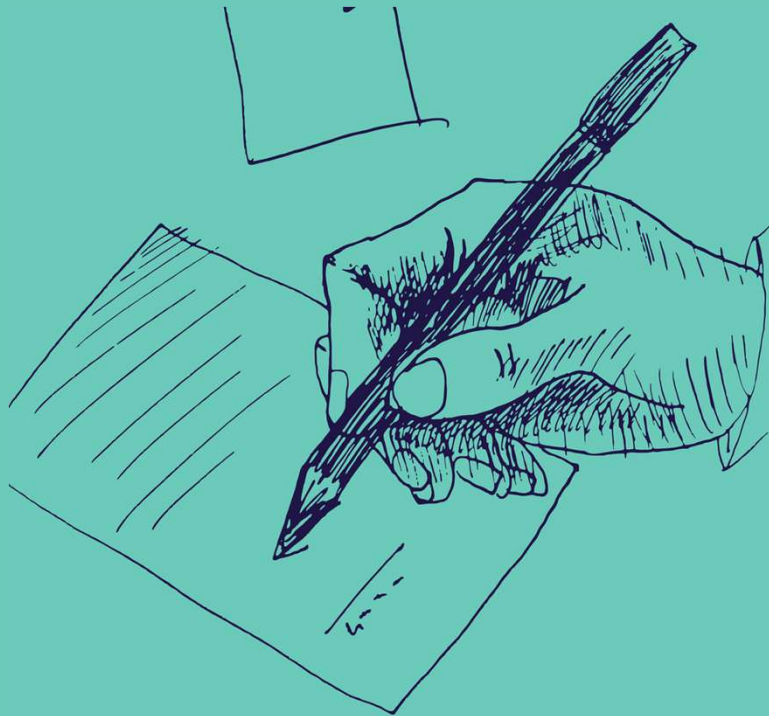
**Volunteers
Needed!**

How do YOU do hiring?

- If you have tons of people who want to volunteer with you, how do you handle the interest? Do you have HR processes to help you handle the influx of applications?
- If you don't have much interest in your volunteer position, do you still use HR processes to screen folks?

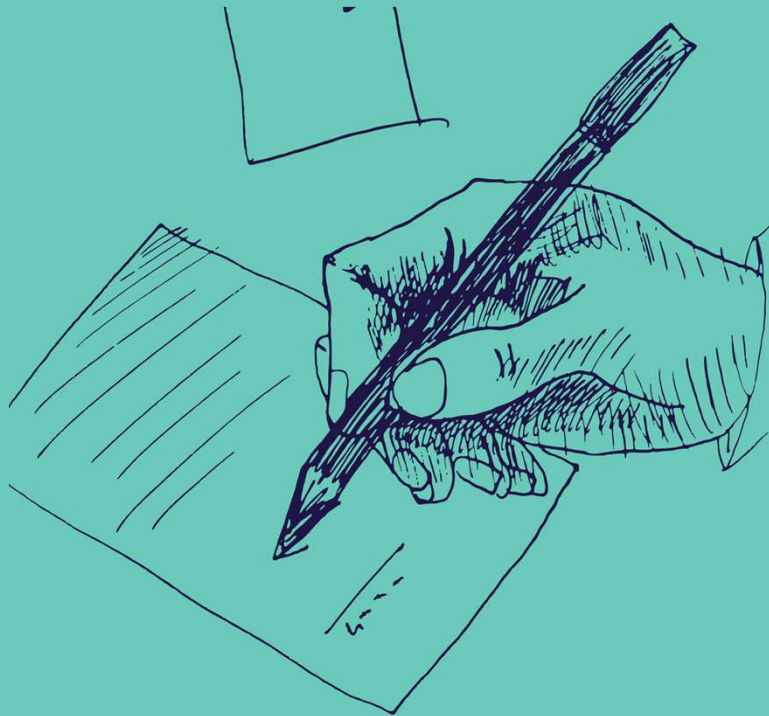


**Background
Checks Are Not
Always Needed!**



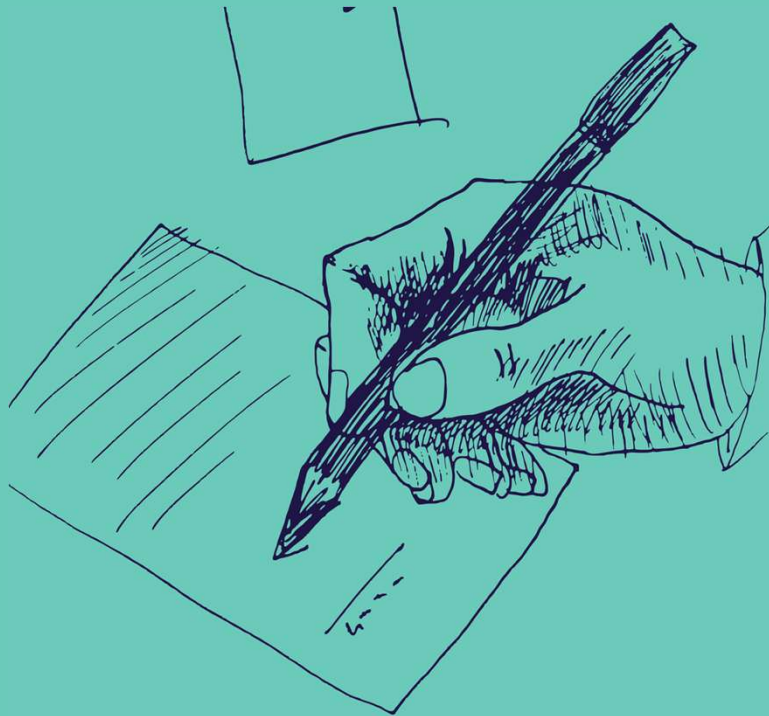
Background Checks

- While we would never tell you to simply not do background checks, it's important to know who actually requires them
- There's very little legislation that mandates background check usage for volunteer organizations.
- While some insurance companies will require them, they are trending away from blanket rules about background check usage



Background Checks

- Background checks can deter volunteers due to their price, invasiveness, and possibility of re-traumatizing folks who have had negative interactions with police/RCMP.
- However, some volunteers see the use of background checks as a sign of legitimacy for some volunteer organizations.
- It's important to weigh the pros and cons of getting checks done and make a decision that fits your screening process



Background Checks

- Some good general rules for when to do a regular background check:
 - Volunteer is dealing with money
 - Volunteer is dealing with expensive equipment
 - Volunteer is in a high-risk position (e.g. emergency response)
- Requirements for a vulnerable sector check:
 - Volunteer must be in a position of trust and authority over a vulnerable person or persons

Reference Check Tips

- Reference checks can be a useful tool for confirming a volunteer is able to do the work they say they can. However, they are also not necessary for every role.
- Like interviews and background checks, some volunteers will not want to do a reference check. Make it clear why you do them so the volunteer knows they're not being singled out.
- Try to find reference checks that can attest to the kind of work the volunteer wants to do.





Volunteer Onboarding

- Individual or group?
- General or role-specific?
- Recorded or live?
- Chance for volunteers to meet staff/other volunteers



Volunteer Onboarding

- Helps further define the relationship between volunteer and organization
- A good onboarding process helps retain volunteers
- Fosters the kind of dialogue that helps volunteer managers determine best fit for a volunteer position
- Helps ensure the volunteer knows what is expected of them.

Volunteer Recognition

- Recognition is a year-round thing
- Handwritten thank-you cards
- Thank yous after their shift
- Provide food! Especially for shifts longer than three hours!
- Volunteers want to know how their hours impacted your organization and what your organization can do



Volunteer Retention

Relationships really matter

Volunteer needs change over time

Feedback drives continuous improvement

Volunteer Retention:

Anticipating Needs

- Preventative work
- Informed by past feedback
- User experience



Volunteer Retention:

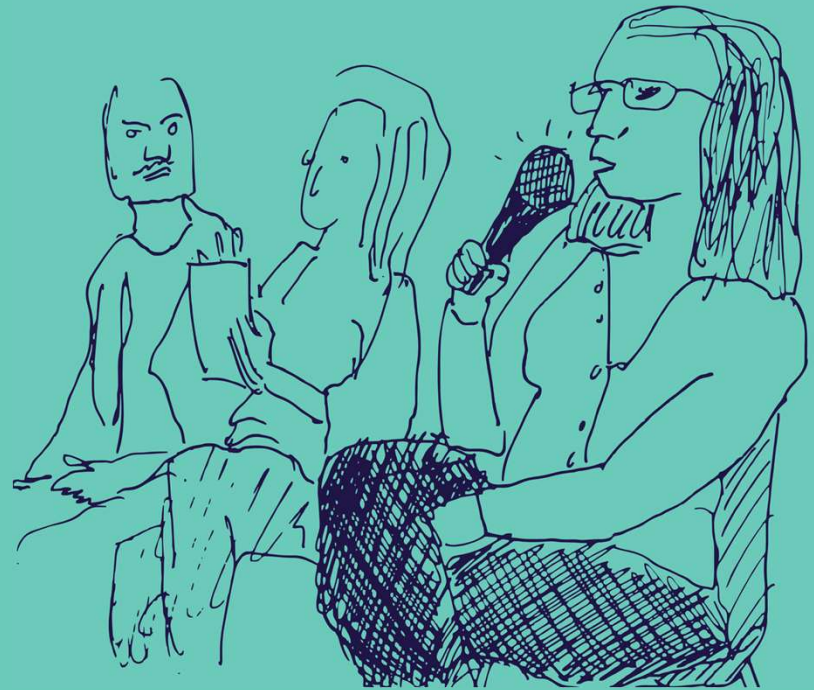
Feedback

- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Individual discussions
- Check-ins
- Anonymous feedback



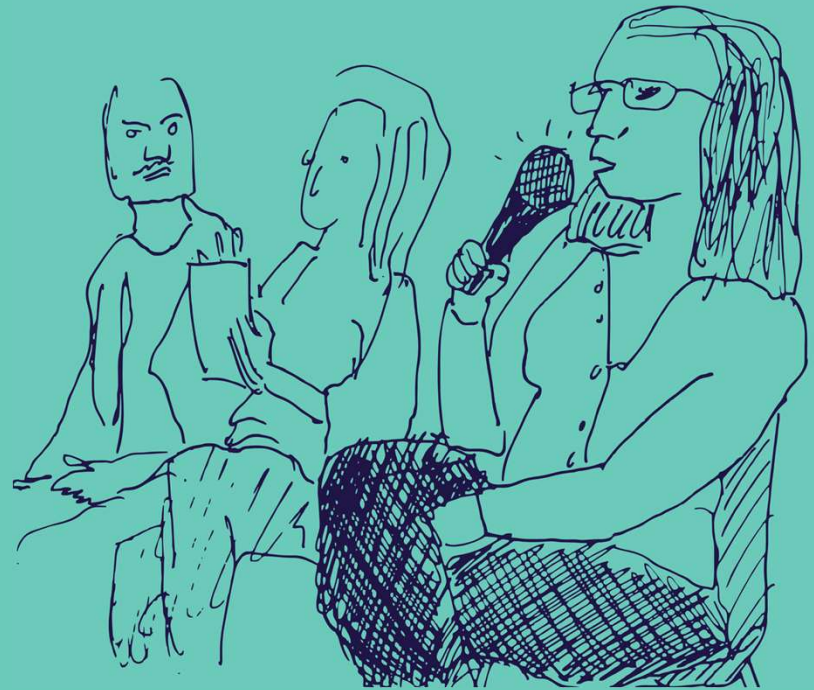
Volunteer Succession Planning

- Document everything you've done up until this point!
- In case someone is hit by a lottery, you want it to be clear how to engage volunteers from start to finish.
- This starts with policies and procedures



Volunteer Succession Planning

- Put the files you've made somewhere easy to find that a new volunteer might be looking
- Make sure volunteers know where to find policies and such from the onboarding process onward. This will train them to train other volunteers



5 Questions to Ask Yourself

- 1. Do our roles have a clear purpose?**
- 2. Are we recruiting the right people?**
- 3. Does our onboarding build confidence?**
- 4. How do we recognize volunteers year-round?**
- 5. What feedback are we using to improve?**

Thanks so much!!!

Volunteer Alberta also offer other training, coaching, and consultation services.

**For more information or for any questions about today's content, please contact
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**Thanks very much to Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, who developed
some of the content for this presentation alongside Volunteer Alberta.**