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**“Building Stronger Organizations:”**  
**In-depth environmental scan of volunteer centre service  
providers in Ontario**

**Report to the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network**

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**Submitted by: Louise Chatterton Luchuk**

Research and resources for organizations  
that want to strategically move forward  
([info@luchuk.com](mailto:info@luchuk.com))

19 December 2008

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# Executive Summary

A quick look at the numbers tells us that Ontario relies on the contributions of many volunteers:

- 11.8 million Canadians (over the age of 15) volunteer and 40% of all these volunteers are involved with organizations in Ontario.
- In Ontario there are nearly 45,000 voluntary and non-profit organizations – and more than half of them (53%) have no paid staff and rely solely on volunteers.<sup>1</sup>

Volunteer centres work to promote and support volunteerism. Based on the above statistics, there is the potential for volunteer centres to make a huge difference in communities across Ontario. In addition, there is the potential to support a growing number of New Canadians as volunteers; some Ontario volunteer centres are finding more and more New Canadians coming to them looking for volunteer experience and also an increasing number of organizations wanting support to engage New Canadians as volunteers.

However, there is a dichotomy...while many volunteer centres are invisible in their communities (and some are closing their doors), other volunteer centres are finding ways to grow into effective hubs for community engagement. In order to fulfill their potential, the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network wants to leverage what is going well in order to build the capacity and visibility of volunteer centres in the province.

## About this report

To understand how to build stronger volunteer centres, as well as the role of volunteer centres in engaging New Canadians as volunteers, the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network went through an environmental scan process. This report is the culmination of 10 months of research and identifies strategic action for the growth of volunteer centres and the OVCN that is based on the research. This report also provides the research findings from each stage of the research as well as a “highlights” section to provide a snapshot of key information. Copies of all survey tools as well as spreadsheets with the data can be found in the Appendix section.

## About the project

This report on the in-depth environmental scan of volunteer centre service providers in Ontario fits in as part of the larger project entitled “Building Stronger Organizations (in Ontario’s small to medium sized volunteer organizations) through volunteer centre services and engaging newcomers as volunteers.”

The Building Stronger Organizations project is a two year project funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Strategic Partnership Initiative. The aim of the project is to enable the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network to strengthen and support volunteer center services in Ontario. In addition, this project positions volunteer centre services to be a hub of information and volunteer opportunities for engaging new Canadians in our communities.

The overall project is composed of four distinct but inter-related components (the in-depth environmental scan process falls under part 4 of the following list):

### 1. **Inventory: Resources related to engaging new Canadians as volunteers**

This project builds on current resources and services that are available from other sources through the development of a research inventory. Sources include current Strategic Partnership Initiative projects, national and provincial volunteerism resources and local organizations that have developed their own regional solutions to the issues this project will address.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: 2004 National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations.

**2. Toolkit: Expanding the base of trained volunteers**

A resource kit has been created, based on the inventory materials noted above, for small- to medium-sized organizations that summarize best practices and key resources in the field of engaging diverse ethno-cultural populations as volunteers.

**3. Volunteer Engagement: Using the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement**

A new tool has been produced which is a variation of the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement. The tool includes training materials that can be used to educate and orient individuals to the culture of volunteering in Canada, the benefits and expectations of volunteering.

**4. Strengthening Ontario Volunteer Centres**

This project enhances the current services provided by Volunteer Centres and organizations that provide volunteer centre like services through an exploration of current issues, trends, challenges and successes within the volunteer centre network in Ontario. Specific models for ‘working differently to work better’, recommendations and tools have been developed and compiled in an interactive catalogue that will support volunteer centre services in all areas of the province as the local community resource for engaging new volunteers.

### Approach and methodology

The environmental scan process integrated elements of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is an approach to organizational development and change that involves identifying and building on existing strengths and profitable opportunities rather than dwelling on problems, deficiencies, weaknesses and threats. The assumption is that building on success is the quickest way to achieve goals. The AI approach was chosen for this particular project because it instills value in the respondent and their volunteer centre – regardless of size or capacity. AI is a positive, solution-focused approach to formulating survey and interview questions about a topic that is plagued with funding cuts, volunteer centre closures (or threat of closure) and capacity challenges.

There were several phases to the research:

1. Key informant interviews
2. Online survey of internal stakeholders
3. Telephone follow-up
4. Online survey of external stakeholders
5. Online survey of Regional Services Branch Advisors

The following chart explains the response rate for each of the research phases:

<u>Research tool</u>	<u>Response rate</u>
<b>1. Key informant interviews</b>	
Members of the OVCN Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Telephone interviews completed with seven members of the Advisory Committee</li></ul>
Members of the Environmental Scan Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Telephone interviews completed with four members of the Working Group</li></ul>

<b>2. Online survey of internal stakeholders</b>	
Volunteer centre senior staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 volunteer centres contacted based on current contact information (plus 1 for informational purposes to an emerging volunteer centre)</li> <li>• 19 completed (76% response rate)</li> </ul>
Volunteer centre board chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 volunteer centres contacted based on current contact information</li> <li>• (plus 1 for informational purposes to an emerging volunteer centre)</li> <li>• 11 completed (44% response rate)</li> </ul>
<b>3. Telephone follow up with all survey respondents</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19 interviews completed with volunteer centre senior staff</li> <li>• 5 interviews completed with volunteer centre board chairs</li> </ul>
<b>4. Online survey of external stakeholders (voluntary/non-profit organizations, corporate sector, public sector)</b>	
Communities where there is a volunteer centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 422 responses</li> <li>• 93.6% were from the voluntary/non-profit sector</li> <li>• 10.2% were from the public sector</li> <li>• 1.9% from the corporate sector</li> <li>• 4.3% were other</li> </ul>
Communities where there isn't a volunteer centre (or unsure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 122 responses</li> <li>• 82.8% from the voluntary/non-profit sector</li> <li>• 12.3% from the public sector</li> <li>• .8% from the corporate sector</li> <li>• 4.1% were other</li> </ul>
<b>5. Online survey of Regional Services Branch Advisors (staff who deliver Ontario government programs and services at the community level)</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26 completed (87% response rate)</li> </ul>

## Research highlights

### **Online survey of internal stakeholders (volunteer centre senior staff and board chairs)**

Of the 19 volunteer centres that responded to the online survey:

- 53% of volunteer centres have budgets in the \$50,000-\$249,999 range.
- There was an almost equal response from the various structural models: seven respondents were from a volunteer centre that was exclusively a volunteer centre; six exist in combination with another service (i.e. an information and referral service); and, five were part of a larger organization that offers volunteer centre services (i.e. Social Planning Council or United Way).
- 58% of volunteer centres have existed for 21+ years.
- Average number of staff employed is 2.6 full-time equivalents.
- Volunteer centres with the smallest budgets almost exclusively only offer recruitment and referral services; as budget size increases, the programs/services broaden to include consultation services, specialized programs to connect people to volunteer opportunities, more training opportunities and an increased level of community leadership on issues relating to volunteerism.
- All volunteer centres have a website and all have a searchable online database.
- There is almost an equal split between those who require a membership to access programs/services (53%) and those that don't (47%).
- United Way funding is the most common source of income for volunteer centres (as well as the largest percentage of total income).

### **Telephone follow up**

- Having an online presence is a key way to attract people to volunteer.
- Most commonly cited need was for dedicated, professional and knowledgeable staff – particularly to act in a consulting role for community organizations.
- Volunteer centres that are part of a United Way organization have much stronger ties to the corporate community and therefore greater corporate support opportunities.
- Some volunteer centres are successfully acting as “brokers” to coordinate employer supported volunteerism and create meaningful opportunities while also generating revenue for their volunteer centre.
- Successful corporate sector relationships are based on a value exchange and not a handout; having a clear case of support is important.
- Training in entrepreneurship would be beneficial.
- Partnering with immigrant-serving organizations is a beneficial way to engage New Canadians as volunteers.
- Engaging New Canadians as volunteers requires a three-pronged approach: (1) info sessions with New Canadians (2) one to one support to find a volunteer position and (3) working with organizations to incorporate New Canadians as volunteers.
- The exchange of knowledge through face to face meetings of volunteer centre staff is valued highly.

- No funding for the OVCN means there's no good way to communicate between volunteer centres – most volunteer centres are operating at burnout level and to add more to their plate to be involved provincially would be very difficult.
- Challenges include: copyright agreements when sharing resources between volunteer centres; the name “volunteer centre” is problematic; having an identity as a volunteer centre within a larger organization.
- Municipalities have a big role to play but volunteer centres find they don't generally don't fill it. Municipalities benefit when community organizations (e.g. sports, arts, etc.) have a strong volunteer base (e.g. when a large tournament comes into town, there is a financial influx.)

### **Online survey of external stakeholders (communities where there is a volunteer centre)**

- There was a much lower usage of volunteer centre services by voluntary and non-profit organizations that do not have a dedicated manager of volunteer services.
- 74% of organizations rated the usefulness of the programs/services offered by their local volunteer centre as either “useful” or “very useful.”
- Small-sized organizations and all-volunteer groups often cited membership fees as barriers to accessing volunteer centre services.
- The time spent fundraising and putting on events interferes with time spent by volunteer centres offering training workshops, helping non-profits with their core volunteer issues and promoting volunteerism.
- Without core operating funding, the volunteer centre functions mostly with projects which have relevance to some stakeholders and community groups but not others.
- 70% responded that it would be “noticeable” or “very noticeable” if their local volunteer centre closed down.
- A social marketing campaign was recommended as a way to promote both volunteerism and the role of volunteer centres.

### **Online survey of external stakeholders (communities without a volunteer centre – or unsure)**

- When you look at the geographic locations of respondents, some actually do have a volunteer centre in their community which points to a lack of visibility of some volunteer centres in Ontario.
- In terms of the most useful volunteer centre programs/services to their community, the highest rating (4.6/5) went to “Connect people with opportunities to serve.” The three other core programs/services each received a ranking of 3.8/5 for usefulness to the community.

### **Online survey of Regional Services Branch Advisors**

- “Volunteer Centres are hubs of community engagement.”
- Communities without volunteer centres lack a single, visible point of entry for information on volunteering.

- There is stronger collaboration between organizations in communities with a volunteer centre.
- Volunteer centres need to create a higher profile for themselves.
- Volunteer centres have a role to play in raising awareness about the value of volunteering and the voluntary sector – within communities and with government.
- Unfortunately many volunteer centres lack the resources, capacity and expertise to advocate more effectively.
- Staffing shortages make service delivery difficult.
- “I think that given enough funding volunteer centre potential to truly be a recruitment and training centre for communities could be met. As it is now, centres are struggling too much and focusing on fundraising instead of their programs and services.”
- The two most cited types of support that volunteer centres need were: (1) stable, core operating dollars from local municipalities and province and (2) full-time staff.
- Volunteer centres need training on business planning and funds to assist with implementing long-term plans for sustainability – volunteer centres are a strategic investment.
- In terms of how effectively the four core programs/services are offered, “promoting volunteerism” received the highest rating and “providing leadership on issues relating to volunteerism” received the lowest. This is understandable when you consider the findings of the internal stakeholders survey, where we learned that “providing leadership on issues relating to volunteerism” is a function that volunteer centres are not able to provide until they grow in size.

## **Recommendations for strategic action**

In today’s climate, many conversations in the voluntary/non-profit organizations focus on lack of funding and capacity challenges. Truly, these are dominant challenges; but focusing on the barriers stalls the conversation. Part of the benefit of taking an Appreciative Inquiry approach is the ability to move the conversation beyond barriers to identifying strengths and opportunities. Appreciative Inquiry frees organizations up to move forward by recognizing the strengths and opportunities, focusing on solutions and visioning strategic action.

In the spirit of moving the strategic conversation along, this report looks at seven areas of strategic action based on the research findings:

1. Raise the profile of volunteer centres
2. Equalize the capacity of volunteer centres
3. Successfully meet the needs of community agencies
4. Expand and solidify communication between volunteer centres
5. Address funding needs
6. Promote and support the engagement of the community including New Canadians as volunteers
7. Formalize and invest in the capacity of the OVCN

Listed under each area of strategic action (in the body of this report) are short-term and longer-term opportunities/activities. Many of these make sense as future funding proposals. While some of the strategic recommendations focus on actions of individual volunteer centres, the thrust of the recommendations is that collective action is the quickest way to move forward. Solutions exist already within individual volunteer centres and by sharing these solutions, volunteer centres move forward faster. It is also true that many, if not all, of these strategic actions are inter-connected and success in one, moves volunteer centres further another along in another.

# 1. Introduction

A quick look at the numbers tells us that Ontario relies on the contributions of many volunteers:

- 11.8 million Canadians (over the age of 15) volunteer and 40% of all these volunteers are involved with organizations in Ontario.
- In Ontario there are nearly 45,000 voluntary and non-profit organizations – and more than half of them (53%) have no paid staff and rely solely on volunteers.<sup>2</sup>

Volunteer centres work to promote and support volunteerism. Based on the above statistics, there is the potential for volunteer centres to make a huge difference in communities across Ontario. In addition, there is the potential to support a growing number of New Canadians as volunteers; some Ontario volunteer centres are finding more and more New Canadians coming to them looking for volunteer experience and also an increasing number of organizations wanting support to engage New Canadians as volunteers.

However, there is a dichotomy...while many volunteer centres are invisible in their communities (and some are closing their doors), other volunteer centres are finding ways to grow into effective hubs for community engagement. In order to fulfill their potential, the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network wants to leverage what is going well in order to build the capacity and visibility of volunteer centres in the province.

To understand how to build stronger volunteer centres as well as the role of volunteer centres in engaging New Canadians as volunteers, the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network went through an environmental scan process. This report is the culmination of 10 months of research and identifies strategic action for the growth of volunteer centres and the OVCN that is based on the research. The report also provides the research findings from each stage of the research as well as a “highlights” section to provide a snapshot of key information from each research stage. Funding for this project came from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Strategic Partnership Initiative.

The “Building Stronger Organizations” Working Group provided vital input to this project. Their hard work, dedication and connections led to a more detailed and useful final report to guide the strategic development of volunteer centres in the province. Thank you. It was a pleasure to work with you.

- Fabienne Prior (chair) – United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries – Volunteer Cambridge
- Barb Elias, Regional Advisor – Dufferin, Wellington and City of Guelph
- Vicki Nash-Moore – former board chair, Voluntary Action Kitchener-Waterloo
- Walter Knott – former board chair, Volunteer and Information Kingston
- Maria Ariganello – Team Leader, Voluntary Sector Relations Unit, Citizenship Branch, Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration
- Roswitha Soepenbergh -- “Building Stronger Organizations” Project Manager

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The overall project is composed of four distinct but inter-related components (the in-depth environmental

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scan process falls under part 4 of the following list):

**1. Inventory: Resources related to engaging new Canadians as volunteers**

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**2. Toolkit: Expanding the base of trained volunteers**

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**3. Volunteer Engagement: Using the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement**

A new tool has been produced which is a variation of the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement. The tool includes training materials that can be used to educate and orient individuals to the culture of volunteering in Canada, the benefits and expectations of volunteering.

**4. Strengthening Ontario Volunteer Centres**

This project enhances the current services provided by Volunteer Centres and organizations that provide volunteer centre like services through an exploration of current issues, trends, challenges and successes within the volunteer centre network in Ontario. Specific models for 'working differently to work better', recommendations and tools have been developed and compiled in an interactive catalogue that will support volunteer centre services in all areas of the province as the local community resource for engaging new volunteers.

## 2. Approach and Methodology

### Overall approach

This report is intended to give a snapshot of where volunteer centres in the province find themselves currently, what they look like, what they do, what their vision of future growth looks like and what they need to get there. It includes an investigation of collective actions to build a provincial network as well as strategic options for individual volunteer centres.

The environmental scan process integrated elements of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is an approach to organizational development and change that involves identifying and building on existing strengths and profitable opportunities rather than dwelling on problems, deficiencies, weaknesses and threats. The assumption is that building on success is the quickest way to achieve goals. The AI approach was chosen for this particular project because it instills value in the respondent and their volunteer centre – regardless of size or capacity. AI is a positive, solution-focused approach to formulating survey and interview questions about a topic that is plagued with funding cuts, volunteer centre closures (or threat of closure) and capacity challenges.

### Methodology

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<b>5. Online survey of Regional Services Branch Advisors (staff who deliver Ontario government programs and services at the community level)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26 completed (87% response rate)</li> </ul>

For more detail about the research (including the audience for each research phase and timelines) please see Appendix 13.

### 3. Recommendations for Strategic Action

In today's climate, many conversations in the voluntary/non-profit organizations focus on lack of funding and capacity challenges. Truly, these are dominant challenges; but focusing on the barriers stalls the conversation. Part of the benefit of taking an Appreciative Inquiry approach is the ability to move the conversation beyond barriers to identifying strengths and opportunities. Appreciative Inquiry frees organizations up to move forward by recognizing the strengths and opportunities, focusing on solutions and visioning strategic action.

In the spirit of moving the strategic conversation along, this report looks at seven areas of strategic action:

1. Raise the profile of volunteer centres
2. Equalize the capacity of volunteer centres
3. Successfully meet the needs of community agencies
4. Expand and solidify communication between volunteer centres
5. Address funding needs
6. Promote and support the engagement of the community including New Canadians as volunteers
7. Formalize and invest in the capacity of the OVCN

Listed under each area of strategic action are short-term and longer-term opportunities/activities. Many, if not all, of these strategic actions are inter-connected and success in one moves volunteer centres further along in another. Many of these strategic actions make sense as future funding proposals.

#### 1. Raise the profile of volunteer centres

What we know is that:

- Volunteer centres are relatively unknown in some communities or by some segments within communities.
- Volunteer centres are not always invited to planning tables.
- There is confusion around what a "volunteer centre" is and does.
- That the profile of some volunteer centres is minimized by being a program/service of a larger organization (the larger organization is what is known in the community).

Therefore, strategic action to raise the profile of volunteer centres includes:

- Determining the unique value proposition that volunteer centres offer community organizations and volunteers and building consistent messaging that is commonly used by Ontario volunteer centres.
- Developing a province-wide social marketing campaign based on research (perhaps building on one of the annual campaigns like International Day of the Volunteer or National Volunteer Week) that is promoted and used by all volunteer centres regardless of structural model.
- Working as a provincial network in order to be invited to important planning tables. (Some tables won't invite individual organizations, therefore there needs to be a provincial body (e.g. police records checks, 40 hours, etc.).)

## 2. Equalize the capacity of volunteer centres

What we know is that:

- All volunteer centres offer recruitment and referral services and most offer some level of capacity building (e.g. training and consulting for community agencies); however, the full range of programs/services are only offered by volunteer centres with larger budgets – at the same time, there is interest by community organizations for all programs/services.
- Some volunteer centres are eager to increase their capacity but are not sure of how to get there.
- Volunteer centres recognize that across the province, they operate at different levels and have experienced different levels of strategic growth and success.
- It is difficult to work on province-wide initiatives when volunteer centres are not at same level of capacity.
- There is mutual benefit in equalizing capacity. For struggling volunteer centres, there is the potential for stability and growth and the benefit of not having to create resources that already exist. For volunteer centres that are currently experience strategic success, the benefit is that the “volunteer centre brand” strengthens when volunteer centres are collectively known as strong and essential community organizations.
- There is wariness between volunteer centres about different types of structural models and that could interfere with collaboration.

Therefore, strategic action to equalize the capacity of volunteer centres includes:

- Creating a “learning organization” culture by identifying the expertise/specialists within Ontario volunteer centres and creating a structure to transfer the knowledge (e.g. one hour conference call model used by Tamarack was suggested by one volunteer centre).
- Being deliberate in transferring the knowledge in this report to all volunteer centre senior staff and board chairs. In other words, do more than just distribute the report but create active strategies to transfer the knowledge so that the information is explored, talked about and acted upon.
- Providing a copy of this report when new senior staff are hired and/or when new volunteer centres emerge.
- Making an inventory of resources that volunteer centres have to share and promote the completed inventory to all volunteer centres along with contact information for follow up purposes.
- Announcing funded projects to each other so that other volunteer centres know what programs/resources are being developed that they can access in the future.
- Coordinating funding proposals to leverage dollars and share final deliverables with all so that everyone benefits.
- Determining a process that will ensure that when documents/resources are shared with other volunteer centres that the original volunteer centre is credited and that the original document is not compromised.
- Focusing on similarities between volunteer centres by building on the strengths of each volunteer centre structural model (as identified in the senior staff survey).
- Establishing a mentor system for new Executive Directors matching them to another similar volunteer centre.

## 3. Successfully meet the needs of community agencies

What we know is that:

- Out of necessity, volunteer centres often focus on fundraising rather than programs/services.
- Due to insufficient staffing, volunteer centres can’t grow programs/services.
- Due to insufficient staffing, volunteer centres can’t meet stakeholders’ needs fully.

- Unmet needs heighten the invisibility of volunteer centres.
- The predominance of project funding means volunteer centres piece together projects in order to survive; yet, the projects may or may not address the needs of organizations or may only be useful to certain segments of organizations.
- There is an overwhelming need for staff with professional knowledge of current trends and best practices in volunteer management in order to provide consulting support to community organizations.
- Membership fees are a barrier for small and all-volunteer organizations – which represents a large number of organizations that would benefit immensely from volunteer centre services.

This is an example of the inter-connectedness of the strategic actions. As capacity is equalized, more volunteer centres will have the ability to successfully meet the needs of community agencies and as community needs get met, the profile of volunteer centres will increase.

So, in addition to the actions listed elsewhere, strategic action to successfully meet the needs of community agencies includes:

- If there is a membership fee, using a sliding scale so all volunteer and/or small organizations can still afford to access the services they need.
- Working out a deal with Volunteer Canada to pro-rate each other's memberships so organizations do not have to decide between the two and can be members of – and benefit from – both.
- Increasing the volunteer management expertise of existing staff and making this a required qualification for future staff hiring.
- Providing opportunities for program staff to connect with each other (e.g. meetings, online, teleconferences) rather than only focusing on Executive Directors.

#### **4. Expand and solidify communication between volunteer centres**

What we know is that:

- There is an incomplete listing of Ontario volunteer centres. Currently the OVCN has 25 volunteer centres on record but is aware that there could be more they are not in contact with and some of the volunteer centres on the list are not active.
- Without project funding, no face-to-face meetings of volunteer centres has been consistently possible; yet this is one of the top requests for support from volunteer centres.
- In some “regions” there are volunteer centres that have created closer connections to each other. In other areas of the province, volunteer centres work in isolation.
- Currently there is no technology platform in place to facilitate sharing of resources and information.
- There needs to be a formalized communication channel to ensure communication continues beyond the life of this project.

Therefore, strategic action to expand and solidify communication between volunteer centres includes:

- Including a request for funds in all volunteer centre and OVCN funding proposals to specifically enable knowledge transfer and mobilization between volunteer centres.
- Creating a complete distribution list that is regularly updated and provided to all volunteer centres. (Due to the different structural models of volunteer centres, any distribution list has to include both Executive Directors as well as the lead staff member for the volunteer centre and both need to be included in communication.)
- Creating a list of the type of information updates that would be useful and encourage volunteer centres to post information regularly (new funded projects, new resources developed, media exposure, new sources of revenue, fundraisers, etc.).

- Investigating a user-friendly list-serve option for the ovcn.ca site.
- Formalizing the regional structure of OVCN so there is a representative from each region on the OVCN with the responsibility for communication updates to and from all volunteer centres within that region.

## 5. Address funding needs

What we know is that:

- The unique value proposition of volunteer centres is that they offer a single, visible entry point for information on volunteering and volunteer management and provide a hub of community engagement.
- Funding for volunteer centres (like the voluntary/non-profit sector as a whole) is piecemeal and project-related.
- Funding often does not cover all costs associated with delivering the project/program.
- Organizations expressed frustration that volunteer centre projects don't meet the needs of all organizations (but it is this project funding that is keeping the doors open at many volunteer centres).
- Volunteer centre staff time focused on fundraising and that reduces the already limited time spent on much-needed programs/services to community organizations.
- There is a strong reliance on United Way funding.
- Not everyone is comfortable with taking an entrepreneurial approach; yet, many volunteer centres and other progressive voluntary/non-profit sector organizations have become successful by thinking with an entrepreneurial mindset as opposed to a charity mindset.
- Membership is a key source of revenue but is a major barrier identified by small organizations (particularly all-volunteer ones) to access much needed programs/services.
- There are limited local funding opportunities.

Therefore, strategic action to address funding needs includes:

- Researching values, goals and directions of provincial government ministries to build a case for support for funding that demonstrates the connection between ministry priorities and volunteer centre services.
- Write a case for support that demonstrates benefits to municipalities by building on the successes of volunteer centres (e.g. Volunteer Halton) to secure municipal funding.
- Leveraging success! When a volunteer centre receives funding or holds a successful fundraising event, etc., communicate this information and any documentation so that other volunteer centres can benefit from both the materials and the precedent.
- Use the data from this project to support funding proposals and create customized data by using the filter function in SurveyMonkey.
- Identifying which volunteer centres have developed business plans and distribute for all volunteer centres to use as examples for building their own.
- In the May 2008 OVCN conference, planning a workshop session on the topic of how to be entrepreneurial in the voluntary/non-profit sector.
- Developing projects with multi-volunteer centres in order to tap into new regional and provincial funding opportunities.
- Identifying the full costs of delivering programs/services (e.g. IT, human resources, utilities, etc.) and distributing to volunteer centres as a checklist to ensure funding proposals cover true costs.
- Leveraging national corporate sponsors at the local level (e.g. Investors Group sponsors National Volunteer Week activities at the national level).

## **6. Promote and support the engagement of the community including New Canadians as volunteers**

What we know is that:

- Involving New Canadians as volunteers is not relevant to all volunteer centres because some communities are not seeing an influx of New Canadians.
- However, all volunteer centres promote volunteerism and offer recruitment and referral services. The common need is for recruitment and referral services that are as inclusive as possible (however that looks in each community).
- Effectively involving New Canadians as volunteers requires a three-pronged approach: information sessions for New Canadians about what it means to volunteer in Canada; one to one support to find a volunteer position in the community; working with organizations to engage New Canadians as volunteers.

Therefore, strategic action to promote and support the engagement of the community including New Canadians as volunteers includes:

- Leveraging successful models (e.g. Volunteer Ottawa, Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo, Volunteer Toronto).
- Reviewing promotional material to make sure (a) they visually represent a diversity of people and (b) are written in clear language.
- Distributing the summary of learnings from the literature written as part of the MCI funded project “Advancing Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management (in the 905 and 519 areas).”
- Including a session in the May 2009 conference on diversity and volunteerism.
- Being mindful of hiring practices of staff and new board members to create a diversified organization for welcoming and understanding volunteers from diverse backgrounds.
- Establishing partnerships with multicultural centres and immigrant-serving organizations to benefit from the expertise of both.

## **7. Formalize and invest in the capacity of the OVCN**

What we know is that:

- While some of the strategic recommendations focus on actions of individual volunteer centres, the thrust of the recommendations is that collective action is the quickest way to move forward. Solutions exist already within individual volunteer centres and by sharing these solutions, volunteer centres move forward faster.
- Collective action requires time and resources to coordinate. Managing the range of activities of the OVCN (administrative, communication, funding, leadership at planning tables, etc. as listed in the six preceding strategic actions) is too much to add on to existing volunteer centre staff and requires its own staff and budget in order to be effective.

Therefore, strategic action to formalize and invest in the capacity of the OVCN:

- Developing the case for support for a provincial organization to coordinate Ontario volunteer centres.
- Identifying funders to underwrite the start-up costs of the OVCN and ideally ongoing core funding.

## 4. Findings from the Online Survey of Volunteer Centres (Senior Staff and Board Chairs)

### H ighlights

Of the 19 volunteer centres that responded to the online survey:

- 53% have budgets in the \$50,000-\$249,999 range.
  - There was an almost equal response from the various structural models: seven respondents were from a volunteer centre that was exclusively a volunteer centre; six exist in combination with another service (i.e. an information and referral service); and, five were part of a larger organization that offers volunteer centre services (i.e. Social Planning Council or United Way).
  - 58% of volunteer centres have existed for 21+ years.
  - Average number of staff employed is 2.6 full-time equivalents.
  - Volunteer centres with the smallest budgets almost exclusively only offer recruitment and referral services; as budget size increases, the programs/services broaden to include consultation services, specialized programs to connect people to volunteer opportunities, more training opportunities and an increased level of community leadership on issues relating to volunteerism.
  - All volunteer centres have a website and all have a searchable online database.
  - There is almost an equal split between those who require a membership to access programs/services (53%) and those that don't (47%).
  - United Way funding is the most common source of income for volunteer centres (as well as the largest percentage of total income).
- 

### 4.1 Introduction

The board and senior staff surveys provided a wealth of information about volunteer centres in the province of Ontario. The following section provides an overview in the following areas:

- Budget
- Structural models
- Years in existence
- Human resources
- Financial situation
- Programs and services
- Office location and hours
- Partnerships
- Board/governance
- Provincial network
- Support to New Canadians

See Appendix 1 and 2 for copies of the online surveys. See Appendix 8 and 9 for survey data (with identifying information removed for confidentiality).

**Please Note: 19 volunteer centres responded to the online survey of senior staff. Therefore, percentages are based on responses provided by these 19 volunteer centres.**

## 4.2 Budget

- 53% of volunteer centres have budgets in the \$50,000-\$249,999 range.
- An equal number have less than \$49,999 or \$250,000-\$499,999 (four of 19 respectively).
- One responding volunteer centre had a budget of over \$500,000.
- Of volunteer centres that are exclusively volunteer centres, five have budgets that are in the \$50,000-\$249,999 range (one has a budget in the \$250,000-\$499,999 range and one in the \$500K+ range)
- Of the six volunteer centres that exist in conjunction with another service (e.g. Information Centre) the budget breakdown is as follows:
  - three have budgets of less than \$49,999
  - two have budgets in the \$50,000 to \$249,999 range
  - one has a budget in the \$250,000-\$499,999
- 80% of the volunteer centres that are part of a larger organization (e.g. United Way or Social Planning Council) have budgets in the \$50,000 to \$249,999 range while one has a budget in the \$250,000-\$499,999 range.

## 4.3 Structural model

- One of the challenges in describing volunteer centres is the variety of structural models that exist (both within the province and across Canada). For the purposes of the OVCN research, we defined three categories (plus an “other” category). See Figure 1 for a breakdown of structural models.
- The one volunteer centre that identified itself as “other” could arguably also be classified under category #2 (i.e. exist in combination with another service); however, the mission of this volunteer centre is still distinct enough to warrant its own category.

Answer Options	Number of Responses
We are exclusively a volunteer centre with our own board of directors.	7
We exist as a volunteer centre in combination with another service (e.g. information and referral service).	6
We are a part of a larger organization (e.g. United Way, Social Planning Council) that offers volunteer centre services.	5
Other	1

Figure 1: Survey Question – “Which best describes the structural model of your volunteer centre?”

- The “pros and cons” of each structural model (as identified by survey respondents) can be found in appendix 8, question 7.

## 4.4 Years in existence

- Overall, 58% of volunteer centres have existed for 21+ years
- 32% have been around for 31+ years.
- When you look at the “years in existence” by budget size, the organizations that have been around 21+ years fall into the larger budget size categories. Of the four volunteer centres with budgets less than \$49,999, three have been in existence for 3-10 years.
- The exclusive volunteer centres with their own board of directors, represented six of the 11 volunteer centres that had been in existence for 21+ years.

## 4.5 Human Resources

### General observations

- Of the 19 responses, the average number of staff employed by a volunteer centre is 2.6 FTE and median is 2.5 FTE.

### By budget size

- Less than \$49,999 – (n=4 volunteer centres) – mean of .55 full-time equivalents (FTE)
- \$50K - \$249,999 – (n=10) – mean of 2.0 FTE
- \$250K - \$499,999 (n=4) – mean of 3.4 FTE
- \$500,000+ (n=1) – 11.3 FTE

### By organizational structure

- We are exclusively a volunteer centre with our own board of directors (n=7) – mean of 4.2 FTE \*
- We exist as a volunteer centre in combination with another service (e.g. information and referral service) (n=6) – mean of 1.4 FTE
- We are a part of a larger organization (e.g. United Way, Social Planning Council) that offers volunteer centre services (n=5) – mean of 1.3 FTE
- Other (n=1) – .5 FTE

\* Note: The largest volunteer centre with 11.3 FTE is exclusively a volunteer centre, if this volunteer centre is not factored in, the mean FTE is 3.0.

### Job titles/functions

- The most common job titles/functions identified were:
  - Executive director
  - Volunteer coordinator
  - Administrator
- The three most common job titles/functions were more likely to be classified as core positions (vs. contract or combination):
  - Executive director – 12 out of 16 were core staff (three contract and one combination of core/contract)
  - Volunteer coordinator – nine out of 10 were core staff (one contract)
  - Administrator – seven out of eight were core staff (one combination)
- Two of the three contract Executive directors were employed at volunteer centres with budgets of less than \$49,999 and the other contract E.D. was employed at a volunteer centre with a budget of \$50K-\$249,999.

## 4.6 Financial Situation

### General observations

- Figure 2 shows that United Way is the most common source of income for volunteer centres (as well as the largest percentage of total income).
- Fundraising events and membership fees were the next most common sources of income for volunteer centres.

- Major gifts and legacy gifts are untapped sources of potential income but require specialized skills and knowledge to administer.
- “Other” includes: project administration fees, provincial funding, federal funding, bingo.

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b># of volunteer centres that responded to this question (out of 19)</b>	<b>Average % of income that came from this source</b>
We are a program/service of a larger organization and that organization supplies our main funding.	5	71%
United Way	14	40
Region or municipality	6	17
Ontario Trillium Foundation	6	13
Community Foundation	5	2
Other foundation	9	18
Fundraising events	13	19
Training and consulting fees	8	4
Membership fees	11	5
Rental income	2	17
Corporate support	6	4
General donations	6	4
Direct mail	1	1
Major gifts	0	0
Legacy gifts	1	27
Other	11	22

**Figure 2: Survey Question – “What percentage of your volunteer centre's income came from each of these sources of funding in the last fiscal year?”**

Shaded area = most common response(s)

### **By budget size**

- When broken down by budget size, the major sources of income vary depending on income size. The exceptions are United Way funding and fundraising events – these two sources of income are consistently significant sources of income regardless of budget size.

### **Major sources of funding (core and contract)**

- Of the 14 that receive United Way funding, seven of these identified it as core funding (Please note: this is assumed separate from those volunteer centres that are part of a United Way because they answered that their main funding came from United Way).
- Of those that receive funding from a region/municipality, five identified project funding; one core funding.
- Of the eight that receive funding from Trillium, seven have project funding.
- Of the six that receive funding from Community Foundations, five have project funding and one a combination of project/core funding.

- Of the seven that receive funding from corporate support, three receive project funding while three have core funding (interesting finding!) and one a combination.

### **Assessment of financial health**

- Eight out of 19 volunteer centres assessed their current financial situation as being better off today than five years ago.
- 10 out of 19 stated they were worse off today or the same compared to five years ago.
- While some volunteer centres consider themselves better off today, or at least at the same level, this does not equal stability nor does it equal long-term financial viability. To fully understand these statistics, it is important to consider the following two comments from the online survey:
  - *“But “better off” doesn’t mean stable. It means we have worked hard and come a LOOOONG way in the past 3 years, but have at least another 3-5 years to go on this path to become stable.”*
  - *“Project related funding may have increased funding at times but it was project not core funding.”*

## **4.7 Programs and Services**

### **General observations**

- The Volunteer Canada national definition of volunteer centre programs/services (which is highlighted on the OVCN website) includes the following four programs and services:
  1. Promote volunteerism
  2. Build capacity for effective local volunteering
  3. Provide leadership on issues relating to volunteerism
  4. Connect people with opportunities to serve
- Figure 3 documents the types of local programs/services that fit into these four categories.

<b>Volunteer Canada identified</b>	<b>Manifestations at local level</b>
<b>Potential Programs/Services</b>	
<b>Promote volunteerism</b> (e.g. celebrating National Volunteer Week, Global Youth Service Day, media and community events)	Volunteer Fair Media promotion National Volunteer Week and other volunteer recognition events Community Presentations Youth challenge Intro to volunteerism workshops for volunteers IYD
<b>Build capacity for effective local volunteering</b> (e.g. training programs, one-on-one consultations, publications/resources/information about effective volunteer management and trends)	Training (including fee for service) Workshops Monthly newsletter Website Non-profit Library Network (Imagine Canada) Not for Profit Management Certificate Program Fundamentals of Volunteer Management Certificate Program Youth Leaders on Board Strategic Planning / Consulting Volunteer Coordinator Training and Networking Learning Through Service Program Strategic mentoring Transition to community Board workshops -- various AVA-type networking meetings How to use your volunteer centre services workshops
<b>Provide leadership on issues relating to volunteerism</b> (e.g. speaking on behalf of volunteers, convening or participating on committees and round-tables and monitoring community needs)	Community Support - provide the voice of the volunteer at planning tables Partnerships in coalitions
<b>Connect people with opportunities to serve</b> (e.g. matching people to volunteer opportunities, targeting programs for special populations wanting to volunteer (e.g. corporate volunteers, New Canadians, people with disabilities) and sometimes managing direct services involving volunteers)	Volunteer recruitment and referral Corporate Volunteer programs Online matching Special Events listserve Board orientation for ethnocultural communities Supported volunteering program New Canadians volunteer program  International Women! Volunteer Program
Other	CRA Training Income Tax Program for Low income families. Community Christmas for Children Volunteer Community Access Program

Figure 3: Programs/services identified by volunteer centres

### **By budget size**

- Volunteer centres with the smallest budgets almost exclusively offer only recruitment and referral services (including an online capability to do this). Capacity building work

is typically through “brown bag lunch” sessions. One of the four listed a number of speaking engagements and outreach activities as well.

- As budget size increases, the programs/services broadens to include consultation services, specialized programs to connect people to volunteer opportunities, more training opportunities and increased level of community leadership on issues relating to volunteerism.

**By organizational structure**

- When the survey data is analyzed according to the different organizational structures of volunteer centres, each of structural models (i.e. exclusively a volunteer centre, combined with another service or offered as a program of a larger organization) offers a mix of programs/services.

**Technology**

- Figure 4 lists different types of technology utilized by volunteer centres. All volunteer centres have a website and all have a searchable online database (however, as noted below, one volunteer centre simply listed the positions on their website).

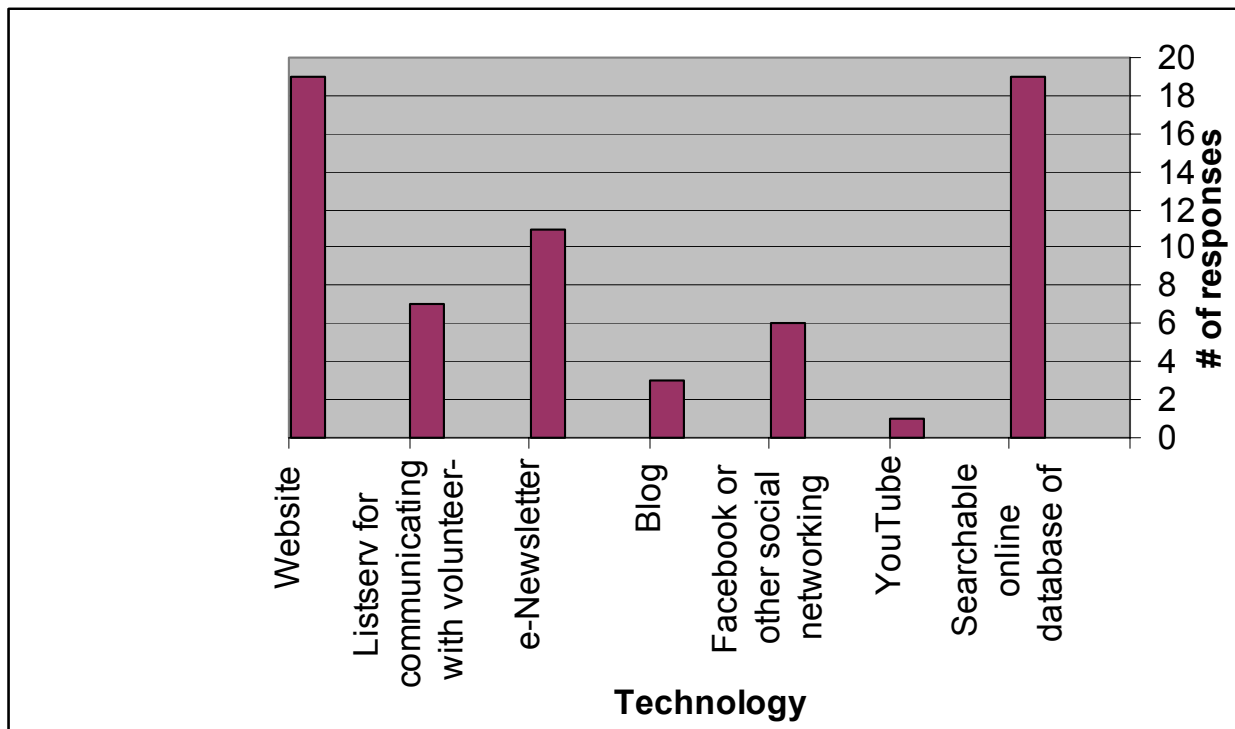


Figure 4: Forms of technology utilized by volunteer centres

- Software for online database:
  - Nine use CIOC (Community Information On-Line Consortium)
  - Four had customized software
  - Two used Community HUB
  - One used VICTA
  - One simply had an online listing on website
  - One used Open Source Web 2.0

- One did not specify

### **Membership scenarios**

- Almost equal split between those requiring a membership in order to access volunteer centre programs and services (53%) and those not requiring membership (47%).
- Membership fees ranged from a low of \$25 to a high of \$300 with varying degrees of service associated with various membership levels (see Appendix 8, question 30).
- Most focus on voluntary/non-profit organization memberships but some volunteer centres include individual memberships (priced lower than either organization or corporate memberships) and corporate memberships

### **Numbers served**

- Statistics gathered for this question were skewed by the fact that not all volunteer centres track the information that was asked of them and some volunteer centres exist in communities outside of major areas of settlement by New Canadians.

## **4.8 Office location and office hours**

### **Office location**

- Figure 5 describes the various types of locations where volunteer centres are housed.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Accessible to walk-in traffic	18
Accessible by bus	17
In downtown	13
In a mall	1
In an office building	12
Shared office space with another organization	10
Wheelchair accessible	15
Parking (paid)	8
Parking (free)	11
Visible outside signage	10

**Figure 5: Survey Question – “Please describe your office location.”**

- In terms of the pros and cons of office location, survey respondents offered the following considerations for choosing office space:
  - Sharing office space provides access to meeting rooms and sometimes shared administration costs

- Professional looking space is more welcoming
  - Being in an office building can mean lack of outdoor signage
  - Downtown location can equal no/limited staff parking
  - Higher traffic areas often cost more to rent
- 78% have on-site training room (however, many mentioned that the room is often not large enough).

### **Office hours**

- Of the 19 volunteer centres, office hours are spread out the week as shown in Figure 6.
- No weekend hours were reported.

Time of day	Responses for each day of the week				
	M	T	W	Th	F
Morning	19	18	18	18	17
Afternoon	18	18	19	18	16
Evening	2	1	1	1	1

Figure 6: Survey Question – “What are the typical weekly office hours for your volunteer centre?”

## **4.9 Partnerships**

### **General observations**

- The top four partnerships held by 74% of volunteer centres were with the local AVA, educational institutions, the media and the United Way.

### **State of partnerships**

- Figure 7 outlines the number of volunteer centres partnerships with certain community stakeholders as well as a rating of the general state of the relationship.

Answer Options	Number of volunteer centres that reported a partnership	General state of relationship					
		N/a	1 (functions poorly)	2	3	4	5 (functions extremely well)
Administrators of Volunteers (local professional association)	14	4	0	1	1	7	5
Chamber of Commerce	9	4	0	7	5	0	1
Corporate Sector	13	2	0	4	4	5	2
Educational Institutions	14	2	0	1	7	7	1
Local Government	13	1	0	3	4	5	5

Answer Options	Number of volunteer centres that reported a partnership	General state of relationship					
		N/a	1 (functions poorly)	2	3	4	5 (functions extremely well)
Local Health Integration Network	5	9	2	1	2	1	1
Media	14	2	0	0	5	7	4
Social Planning Council	10	6	0	0	0	4	5
United Way	14	1	1	1	2	7	4
Other	6						

Figure 7: Survey Question – “Please rate the general state of your relationship with each of the following partnerships.”

Shaded areas = most common response(s)

- In Figure 8, it is interesting to compare the average ratings to the above question provided by board chairs in comparison to senior staff:

Answer Options	Average Board Rating	Average Senior Staff Rating
Association of Volunteer Administrators (local professional association)	2.2	3.2
Chamber of Commerce	2.1	2.0
Corporate Sector	2.5	2.9
Educational Institutions	3.4	3.1
Local Government	3.5	3.5
Local Health Integration Network	1.4	1.5
Media	3.0	3.5
Social Planning Council	1.6	2.7
United Way	3.8	3.6

Figure 8: Survey Question – “Please rate the general state of your relationship with each of the following partnerships.”

### By budget size

- Less than \$49,999 – (n=4 volunteer centres)
  - AVA and United Way most commonly listed partners
  - did not report relationships with their Chamber of Commerce
  - one reported a relationship with their LHIN
- \$50K - \$249,999 – (n=10)
  - Educational institutions and media were the most commonly listed partners
- \$250K - \$499,999 (n=4)
  - Chamber of Commerce and United most commonly listed partners

- \$500,000+ (n=1)
  - Listed all but Chamber of Commerce as partners

### **By organizational structure**

- We are exclusively a volunteer centre with our own board of directors (n=7 volunteer centres)
  - Media and United Way most commonly listed partners
- We exist as a volunteer centre in combination with another service (e.g. information and referral service) (n=6)
  - United Way and AVA most commonly listed partners
- We are a part of a larger organization (e.g. United Way, Social Planning Council) that offers volunteer centre services (n=5)
  - Corporate sector most commonly listed partner
- Other (n=1)
  - Listed all but AVA, LHIN and Social Planning Council

### **Partnership wish list**

- The following is a list of organizations/groups that volunteer centres would like to partner with:
  - Local Health Integration Networks
  - Community Care Access Centres
  - Educational institutions (including post-secondary)
  - Local Community Foundation
  - Media
  - Corporate sector
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Local government
  - Provincial government (Ministry of Education)
  - Federal government
  - Social Planning Council
  - Immigrant services
  - Local AVA
- Board Chairs almost unanimously listed partnerships with the corporate sector on their wish list (80%) while 20% listed relationships with government and one listed relationships with other volunteer centres.

## **4.10 Board/Governance**

Please Note: The following section includes a mixture of responses from both the board chair and the senior staff surveys.

### **General overview**

- As Figure 9 shows, the response distribution was slightly different for the board chair survey and there was more representation from volunteer centres that are exclusively a volunteer centre with its own board of directors. Perhaps this is a result of the board of directors having a sole focus on volunteer centre services instead of a number of services.

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
We are exclusively a volunteer centre with our own board of directors.	8
We exist as a volunteer centre in combination with another service (e.g. information and referral service).	4
We are a part of a larger organization (e.g. United Way, Social Planning Council) that offers volunteer centre services.	5
Other	1

**Figure 9: Board Chair Survey Question – “Which best describes the structural model of your volunteer centre?”**

### **Type of board**

- Board chairs identified different types of board models:
  - Six are policy/governance boards
  - Five are a combination
  - Three are a working/administrative
  - Three stated “other”
  - Two did not answer question

### **Recruitment of board members**

- The top three methods of recruitment are:
  - Peer referral is the most common recruitment method (89%)
  - 40% have a formal application process
  - 40% advertise/post requests for board members

### **Current board priorities**

- For the most part, current board priorities are consistent (see Figure 10). One difference is that “Development/Fundraising” is listed as a higher priority for boards of exclusively volunteer centres. “Community and stakeholder relations and accountability is a lesser priority for volunteer centres that exist in combination with another service.

Answer Options	Average Rating (out of 5)				
	All volunteer centres (n=19)	We are exclusively a volunteer centre with our own board of directors. (n=8)	We exist as a volunteer centre in combination with another service. (n=4)	We are a part of a larger organization that offers volunteer centre services. (n=5)	Other (n=1)
Board Structure, development and management	3.2	2.9	3.0	3.5	4.0
Planning and evaluation	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.5	4.0
Financial stewardship	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.8	4.0
Development/Fundraising	3.4	3.7	3.3	3.0	3.0
Human resources management	2.9	2.8	3.0	2.8	4.0
Risk management	2.9	2.8	2.8	3.3	3.0
Community and stakeholder relations and accountability	3.3	3.7	2.5	3.0	4.0

Figure 10: Board Chair Survey Question – “For each of the following areas of Board responsibility, please indicate the priorities of your current Board.”

### **Supporting the board and board development**

- Figure 11 shows that a smaller number of boards have an inventory of needed skills or provide continuing education for board members while most have an orientation for new board members and have formal qualifications and an interview process for new board members.

Answer Options	No	Yes
Inventory of the skills needed to create a well-rounded board	10	8
Formal qualifications and interview process for new Board members	6	12
Orientation for new Board members	1	17
Continuing education for Board members	8	10

Figure 11: Board Chair Survey Question – “Does your Board have any of the following in place?”

### **Awareness of programs and services**

- Overall, 61% of board chairs report that their board is very aware of their volunteer centre’s programs and services and 39% report their board is aware.
- By organizational structure:
  - 62% of board chairs of exclusively volunteer centres rated their board as very aware.

- 75% of board chairs of volunteer centres combined with another service rated their board as very aware.
- 25% of board chairs of volunteer centres part of larger organizations rated their board as very aware.

### **Types of committees**

- Senior staff was asked to identify the committees connected to the volunteer centre. The top three responses (see Figure 12) were: Executive, Nominating and National Volunteer Week.

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>
Board Development	10.5%
Executive	52.6%
Nominating	36.8%
Finance	21.1%
Fundraising	42.1%
Human Resources	21.1%
Marketing/Public Relations	15.8%
National Volunteer Week	31.6%
Program Development	21.1%
Strategic Planning	15.8%

Figure 12: Senior Staff Survey Question – “Please identify which committees your volunteer centre has.”

### **Relationship between board chair and senior staff person**

- 9% of board chairs gave a neutral rating of three out of five to describe the health of their relationship with the senior staff person of the volunteer centre.
- 36% rated the relationship as four out of five.
- 55% rated the relationship as five out of five.
- 22% of senior staff gave a neutral rating of three out of five to describe the health of their relationship with the board chair of their volunteer centre.
- 33% rated the relationship as four out of five.
- 44% rated the relationship as five out of five.
- One volunteer centre senior staff person skipped this question.
- The average rating for exclusively a volunteer centre and volunteer centre as part of a larger organization both were 4.3.

## **4.11 Provincial Network**

### **Type of support volunteer centres would like**

- According to Figure 13, the top types of support identified by senior staff were: sharing volunteer centre news, opportunities for joint projects, conferences and professional development.
- Two of the top responses from board chairs were the same but their next choice was different (i.e. information updates of relevance).
- “Other” responses focused on a collective approach to advocacy.

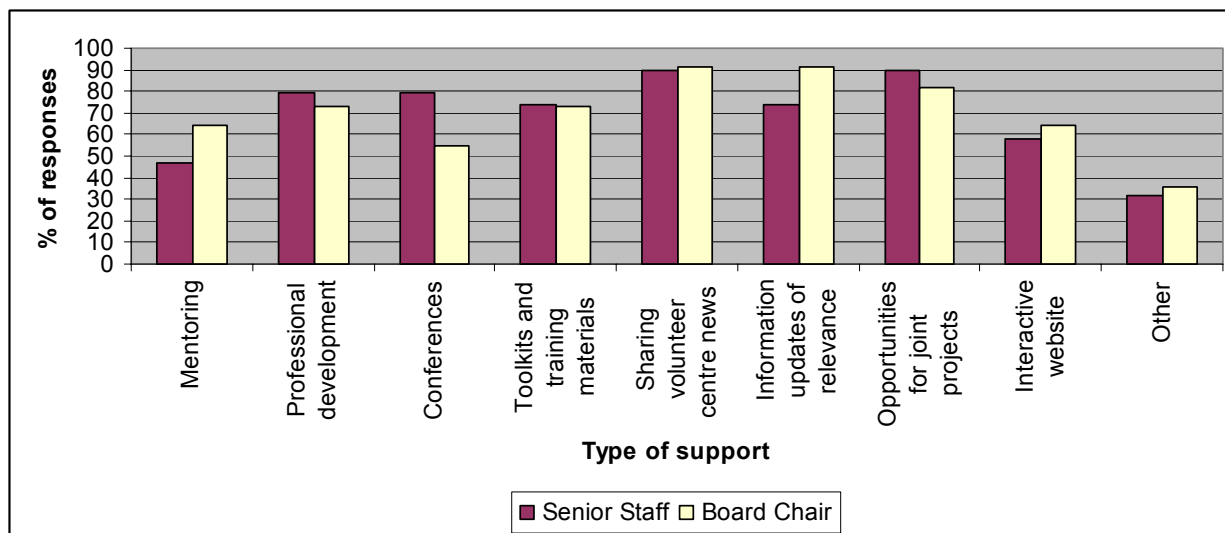


Figure 13: What supports would you like to see a provincial network of volunteer centres provide your volunteer centre?

#### **Type of support volunteer centres have to offer each other**

- Volunteer centres identified the following types of support that they could offer to other volunteer centres:
  - How to start a volunteer centre
  - Mentoring
  - Business planning and social enterprise
  - Building community partnerships
  - Attend meetings
  - Information sharing (project materials, updating news and activities, staff expertise, research)
  - Assistance with database training
  - Partnerships for joint projects

## **4.12 New Canadians**

### **General observations**

- 79% of respondents noticed an increase in the presence of immigrants and visible minorities in their communities.
- 61% identified an increase in the requests by New Canadians for help to find volunteer positions and only 22% identified an increase in the requests from community organizations for help to support New Canadians as volunteers.

### **Formal/informal programs offered by volunteer centres**

- While only 35% of volunteer centres offer formal programs/services, 94% report informally offering support to New Canadians by way of their core services.
- Informal programs/services include:

- Ensuring all programs are open to all (with more success after move to a more central and accessible location)
- Supporting the work of local Newcomer Centre
- Speaking to ESL classes as requested

## 5. Findings from the Telephone Follow-up (Volunteer Centre Senior Staff and Board Chairs)

### H ighlights

- Having an online presence is a key way to attract people to volunteer.
  - Most commonly cited need was for dedicated, professional and knowledgeable staff – particularly to act in a consulting role for community organizations.
  - Volunteer centres that are part of a United Way organization have much stronger ties to the corporate community and therefore greater corporate support opportunities.
  - Some volunteer centres are successfully acting as “brokers” to coordinate employer supported volunteerism and create meaningful opportunities while also generating revenue for their volunteer centre.
  - Successful corporate sector relationships are based on a value exchange and not a handout; having a clear case of support is important.
  - Training in entrepreneurship would be beneficial.
  - Partnering with immigrant-serving organizations is a beneficial way to engage New Canadians as volunteers.
  - Engaging New Canadians as volunteers requires a three-pronged approach: (1) info sessions with New Canadians (2) one to one support to find a volunteer position and (3) working with organizations to incorporate New Canadians as volunteers.
  - The exchange of knowledge through face to face meetings of volunteer centre staff is valued highly.
  - No funding for the OVCN means there’s no good way to communicate between volunteer centres – most volunteer centres are operating at burnout level and to add more to their plate to be involved provincially would be very difficult.
  - Challenges include: copyright agreements when sharing resources between volunteer centres; the name “volunteer centre” is problematic; having an identity as a volunteer centre within a larger organization.
  - Municipalities have a big role to play but volunteer centres find they don’t generally don’t fill it. Municipalities benefit when community organizations (e.g. sports, arts, etc.) have a strong volunteer base (e.g. when a large tournament comes into town, there is a financial influx.)
- 

### 5.1 Introduction

Telephone interviews were held with all Senior Staff online survey respondents and a small group of Board Chair respondents. The purpose of the telephone interview was to:

- clarify online survey responses (as needed)
- capture missing information from online survey (as needed)
- ask additional strategic questions (from an Appreciative Inquiry perspective)

(See Appendix 3 and 4 for copies of the follow up questions.)

## 5.2 What's working?

### **In attracting people to volunteer**

- Promotional activities:
  - bus ads
  - media postings of volunteer opportunities
  - volunteer fairs, community presentations
  - monthly workshops in library for general public re: what is volunteering, how to get involved "everything you wanted to know about volunteering"
  - speaking to all Gr. 10 Civics classes
  - Change the World youth event
  - Employer supported volunteerism
- Volunteer position design:
  - Meaningful, well-designed volunteer positions
  - One-time special events
  - looking at ways to engage the highly skilled volunteer
- Other:
  - online presence is key
  - taking a customer service approach

### **In helping organizations work with volunteers better**

- Professional development about volunteer management trends
- Awards gala includes Manager of Volunteers of the Year
- Helping organizations to incorporate knowledge-based volunteers
- High turnover of Managers of Volunteers so it is important to offer basic volunteer management course three to four times per year
- "How to Leverage your Volunteer Centre membership" workshop
- Meeting face to face to find out needs and drilling down to find out how volunteer centre could support them
- Promoting the Canadian Code
- Having tools on our website as well as an electronic newsletter
- Having a person on staff that agencies trust to call is of #1 importance – this has built more capacity than anything else we've done
- Partnership with community college to offer professional development

### **In promoting corporate and funder support of volunteerism and volunteer management**

- The United Way has strong connections to corporate sector which benefits us.
- Employer supported volunteerism has advantages and drawbacks:
  - When a large company wants to do a blitz of volunteer work altogether for their employees, it can be difficult to accommodate because only a small percentage of organizations are large enough to accommodate such a large group of volunteers.
  - One-day blitzes don't have long-term results. Why take someone who can charge \$500/hour and have them pick up garbage? We're looking at ways of utilizing their skills and engaging them better. You have to be innovative to engage them better.
  - We charge a project management fee for employer supported volunteering services.
- Leveraging national partnerships at the local level (e.g. Investors Group support of National Volunteer Week).

- Getting the board of directors involved because we do not have enough staff to leave the office to meet with corporations and/or funders.
- Communicating the administrative cost of volunteerism to funders.
- Meeting with current partners – not for a solicitation but an information session – helping them understand we are there in the background of other organizations (e.g. how we support the foodbank and other direct service organizations).
- Having a clear case for support with testimonials.
- Not using a charity mindset, looking for a handout. A stronger position is the exchange of values. Corporations are tired of organizations coming for a handout. We have a service to offer and here's how you can support that service.
- Being on United Way committees. They are a funder so we need to be engaged with them. I have an invested interest in making United Way strong and the side benefit is that I'm sitting beside powerful stakeholders. (response from a combined volunteer centre/information centre).
- Partnering with United Way is giving us visibility we didn't have before (response from a volunteer centre that is exclusively a volunteer centre).

### **In your relationships with other volunteer centres?**

- Working together on projects (like the MCI Strategic Partnership Initiative) creates connections.
- Meeting face to face is very important in developing relationships.
- It is important to respect different models that grow out of different communities.
- No funding for OVCN means there's no good way to communicate between volunteer centres – most volunteer centres are operating at burnout level and to add more to their plate to be involved provincially is hard to do.

## **5.3 Vision**

### **How volunteer centres could work together**

- Learning from other volunteer centres: what does a volunteer centre consist of? How can we offer more complete services? How did other volunteer centres get to where they are now? How do we grow our volunteer centre?
- Annual conferences
- Sharing of resources and tools
- Group funding; joint projects
- Sharing trainers
- Collective messaging and branding
- Having shared values so there is consistency across the province
- United advocacy is important
- Peer mentoring
  - Sharing can happen at ED to ED level as well as others (e.g. trainer shares a workshop that went well by delivering it to volunteer centre peers)
- Moving beyond just recruitment and referral and volunteer management training
- Minimizing duplication
- Province-wide group funding strategies (with a percentage based on postal codes returned to each volunteer centre)

### **Of a strong and healthy volunteer centre**

- Resources needed:
  - Require dedicated, professional, knowledgeable staff

- Need dedicated and aligned resources rather than bits and pieces of FTEs managing different functions
  - Executive directors with a program mind and an entrepreneurial mind so that there can be sustainability
  - Business model is needed
  - Strategic and diverse board
  - We would benefit from training in entrepreneurship
  - If a volunteer centre has funding behind it to pay operational costs and staffing, they are freed to focus on their mission. 30% of my time is spent fundraising which takes me away – you need money for staffing so you can do your job
  - Access to information and technology
- Suggested actions to create strong and healthy volunteer centres:
    - social marketing campaign
    - As we grew we moved from being viewed as only a volunteer recruitment organization to be invited to planning tables – the same thing will happen at the provincial level
    - Develop diverse partnerships and relationships
    - We need an identity in the midst of our host organization's identity
    - Develop a business model – we manufacture a service that provides the warm and fuzzy
    - Rethink the name “volunteer centre” because it is a struggle for people to understand
    - In order to attract and retain top talent we need to be prepared to think and operate like a business and bring a more modern approach to being an employer
    - Work to be recognized as a centre of excellence

### **Engaging New Canadians as volunteers**

- Partnering with immigrant-serving organizations
- Working with immigrant-serving organizations to explain volunteerism better
- Three components: (1) info sessions with New Canadians (2) one to one support to find a volunteer position and (3) working with organizations to incorporate New Canadians as volunteers.
- Having resources to take the time to support an organization as they re-design volunteer positions to fit New Canadians.
- We need to revamp the message that volunteerism is a route to employment so that we don't leave the impression that once a New Canadian has a job, that the role of volunteerism or the need to volunteer is done.

### **5.4 Who else in the community benefits from a strong and healthy volunteer centre?**

- The entire community benefits
- We're a link in the chain between people and organizations.
- When we do our job correctly, we enable other organizations to do their job.
- Take a volunteer with you when you ask for funding, adding their voice is powerful.
- Municipalities have a big role to play but generally don't fill it. They really benefit when organizations (e.g. sports, arts, etc.) have a strong volunteer base. E.g. when a large tournament comes into town, there is a financial influx.
- We need to get into employee recruitment kits so that employers/employees make the connection that a volunteer centre contributes to the elements of a community

that attracts potential employees to move to a new community for work (e.g. vibrant arts, healthy recreation, etc.).

- Need to work on these messages so they do not come from a charity mindset.
- We need to communicate the role volunteer centres play in supporting the voluntary sector it's easy for volunteer centres to be overshadowed by poverty or homelessness, for example.

## 6. Findings from the Online Survey of Regional Services Branch Advisors

### Highlights

- “Volunteer Centres are hubs of community engagement.”
  - Communities without volunteer centres lack a single, visible point of entry for information on volunteering.
- There is stronger collaboration between organizations in communities with a volunteer centre.
  - Volunteer centres need to create a higher profile for themselves.
  - Volunteer centres have a role to play in raising awareness about the value of volunteering and the voluntary sector – within communities and with government.
  - Unfortunately many volunteer centres lack the resources, capacity and expertise to advocate more effectively.
  - Staffing shortages make service delivery difficult.
  - “I think that given enough funding volunteer centre potential to truly be a recruitment and training centre for communities could be met. As it is now, centres are struggling too much and focusing on fundraising instead of their programs and services.”
  - The two most cited types of support that volunteer centres need were: (1) stable, core operating dollars from local municipalities and province and (2) full-time staff.
  - Volunteer centres need training on business planning and funds to assist with implementing long-term plans for sustainability – volunteer centres are a strategic investment.
  - In terms of how effectively the four core programs/services are offered, “promoting volunteerism” received the highest rating and “providing leadership on issues relating to volunteerism” received the lowest. This is understandable when you consider the findings of the internal stakeholders survey, where we learned that “providing leadership on issues relating to volunteerism” is a function that volunteer centres are not able to provide until they grow in size.
- 

### 6.1 Introduction

Located throughout the province, Regional Services Branch Advisors deliver Ontario government programs and services at the community level. They work closely with municipalities, not-for-profit organizations, Aboriginal groups and others to provide support, services and solutions that enhance communities. Regional Advisors represent the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health Promotion – Sport and Recreation Branch, Ontario Seniors' Secretariat and the Ontario Women's Directorate. The Regional Advisors offered a unique perspective to the research due to their extensive knowledge of communities across the province and their invested interest in community capacity building.

Overall the response rate was:

- 26 out of 30 Regional Advisors responded (some felt they were too new to the job to respond)
- 85% of respondents had at least one volunteer centre within their geographical region (19% had more than one).
- 15% had no volunteer centre within their geographical region.

- 15% stated that a volunteer centre had closed down within the last 10 years somewhere within their geographical region.

See Appendix 5 for a copy of the online survey. See Appendix 10 for survey data (with identifying information removed for confidentiality).

## **6.2 Community challenges re: promoting and supporting volunteerism?**

- The following challenges faced by communities with regards to promoting and supporting volunteers were identified:
  - Capacity issues (time and money) to develop and implement volunteer policies and good volunteer management systems and processes
  - Volunteer burn-out and the need to recruit more volunteers from new sources
  - Difficulty recruiting board members
  - Aging volunteer base makes it hard to maintain program delivery
  - Rural communities need training
  - Nature of volunteering is changing
  - Lack of time for people wanting to volunteer
  - Volunteer positions not interesting to younger volunteers – need to revamp
  - People aren't attached to their neighborhoods and communities as they once were
  - Legal liability
  - Lack of coordinated effort amongst organizations to “raise the alarm” about the declining number of volunteers and what this means to communities.

## **6.3 Volunteer centre capacity**

### **If volunteer centre didn't exist**

- 50% said “very noticeable” or “noticeable” while 50% said “somewhat noticeable.”
- In the comments section it was clear that the loss of a volunteer centre being “somewhat noticeable” was a reflection of capacity to offer services as opposed to volunteer centres not offering a worthwhile service.

### **Differences between communities with a volunteer centre and communities without a volunteer centre**

- The local AVA tries to cover some of the functions but they are doing it on top of regular jobs so they are limited in what they can achieve
- No single, visible point of entry for information on volunteering
- Little or no professional development opportunities
- More difficult to have a coordinated approach to issues (e.g. high school community service hours, Ontario Works)
- Stronger collaboration between organizations in communities with a volunteer centre

### **What volunteer centres could do differently or better**

- Provide (more) resources and training for volunteer-based organizations
- Create a higher profile for themselves in the community
- Increase the level of coordination between organizations
- Help remove obstacles to volunteering so that more people can get involved.
- Raise awareness about the value of volunteering and the voluntary sector – within communities and with government
- Encourage Employer Supported Volunteerism
- Promote youth participation

- Advocate – The message that volunteering is fulfilling or something nice to do is too "soft". Without volunteers, medical research would not be funded (fundraising volunteers), environmental cleanups would not be affected, some cancer patients might not get treatment (volunteer drivers), there would be no kids sports (volunteer coaches, trainers, administrators), many women's shelters would be underserved, etc. Unfortunately many volunteer centres lack the resources, capacity and expertise to advocate more effectively.
- Revenue diversification
- Position themselves as essential components of a healthy and vibrant community

### **Support volunteer centres need to most effectively promote and support volunteerism**

- Stable, core operating dollars from local municipalities and province
- Full-time staff
- A connection with the Volunteerism Unit within the Ministry for service/operational delivery
- A clear identity
- Networking opportunities between volunteer centres
- Standards/accreditation so that meaningful progress on the development of volunteering can be monitored and regulated
- Funding to support the modernization of the volunteering infrastructure at the local level
- Training on business planning and funds to assist with implementing long-term plans for sustainability – volunteer centres are a strategic investment

## **6.4 Programs/Services**

### **Usefulness**

- Overall, 68% of regional advisors who responded to the online survey rate volunteer centre programs/services as "very useful" or "useful".
- In terms of how effectively the four core programs/services are offered (see Figure 14), "promoting volunteerism" received the highest rating and "providing leadership on issues relating to volunteerism" received the lowest.
- This is understandable when you consider the findings of the internal stakeholders' survey; we learned that "providing leadership on issues relating to volunteerism" is a function that volunteer centres are not able to provide until they grow in size.

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>very well</b>	<b>well</b>	<b>somewhat well</b>	<b>not well</b>	<b>not offered</b>
Promote volunteerism	6	5	7	2	0
Build capacity for effective local volunteering	4	6	6	2	2
Provide leadership on issues relating to volunteerism	3	4	8	5	0
Connect people with opportunities to serve	4	7	7	1	1

**Figure 14: Survey Question – “The following is a list of potential programs/services offered by volunteer centres. How effectively do the volunteer centre(s) in your region deliver these programs/services?”**

- Where there isn't a volunteer centre, there was overwhelming response to the potential usefulness of volunteer centre programs/services to the communities:
  - 90% ranked “promote volunteerism” as “very useful” or “useful”
  - 100% ranked “build capacity for effective local volunteering” as “very useful” or “useful”
  - 95% ranked “provide leadership on issues relating to volunteerism” as “very useful” or “useful”
  - 90% ranked “connect people with opportunities to serve” as “very useful” or “useful”

#### **Other providers of these programs/services**

- In the absence of a volunteer centre, the following groups/organizations provide *some* of the above programs/services but not as a co-ordinated, single access point representing the entire community:
  - AVA
  - Sports councils
  - United Way
  - Municipal recreation and culture departments
  - YMCA
  - Big Brothers Big Sisters
  - Settlement services
  - Social Planning Council
  - School boards
  - Leadership organizations
  - Funders
  - School boards
  - Community Futures Development Corporation
  - Community Leadership programs

### **6.5 Volunteer centre role in supporting New Canadians as volunteers**

- Regional Advisors identified their vision for the role of volunteer centres in supporting New Canadians as volunteers:
  - Being part of projects funded by the province to promote diversity
  - Volunteer centres to be models of diverse staffing

- Ensure promotional materials and processes are culturally competent
- Work collaboratively with Multicultural Centres (perhaps shared space)
- Provide training for community organizations to build their cultural competence
- Partner with Newcomer service providers to explain the significance of volunteering in Ontario
- Focus first on their own education about new Canadians and not assume that their models will work for all cultures. They need to better understand issues around oppression, diversity and integration, intercultural communications, and cultural attitudes toward community and community engagement before they launch into a project or begin to position themselves as reaching out to new Canadians.

## **6.6 When a volunteer centre closes**

- 15% of respondents identified that a volunteer centre had closed in their region within the last 10 years. In all cases the reason identified was funding. The result in the community was:
  - Less communication and connection between organizations
  - Organizations scrambling to do the services on their own
  - No overall coordination
  - United Way fills the gap in some ways
  - Limited professional development training

## 7. Findings from the Online Survey of External Stakeholders (in communities where there is a volunteer centre)

### Highlights

- There was a much lower usage of volunteer centre services by voluntary and non-profit organizations that do not have a dedicated manager of volunteer services.
  - 74% of organizations rated the usefulness of the programs/services offered by their local volunteer centre as either “useful” or “very useful.”
  - Small-sized organizations and all-volunteer groups often cited membership fees as barriers to accessing volunteer centre services.
  - The time spent fundraising and putting on events interferes with time spent by volunteer centres offering training workshops, helping non-profits with their core volunteer issues and promoting volunteerism.
  - Without core operating funding, the volunteer centre functions mostly with projects which have relevance to some stakeholders and community groups but not others.
  - 70% responded that it would be “noticeable” or “very noticeable” if their local volunteer centre closed down.
  - A social marketing campaign was recommended as a way to promote both volunteerism and the role of volunteer centres.
- 

### 7.1 Introduction

There were two versions of the External Stakeholders Survey – both were accessible at [www.ovcn.ca](http://www.ovcn.ca). The first survey was directed at people from communities with a volunteer centre. There were specific questions for respondents representing the voluntary/non-profit sector. Respondents from the corporate and public sectors answered a different set of questions.

Overall, the response rate was:

- 422 responses
- 94% were from the voluntary/non-profit sector
- 10% were from the public sector
- 2% from the corporate sector
- 4% were other

See Appendix 6 for a copy of the online survey. See Appendix 11 for survey data (with identifying information removed for confidentiality).

### 7.2 Responses from voluntary & non-profit sector organizations

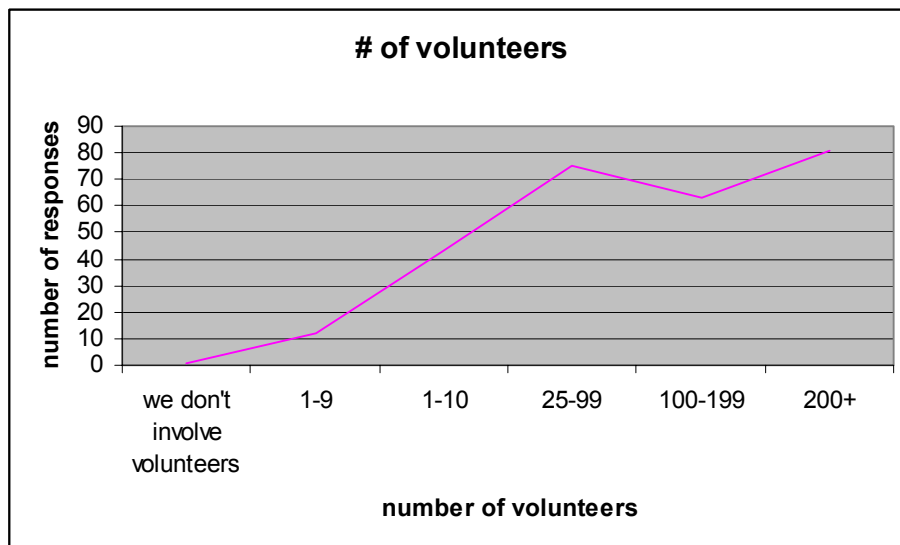
#### Sub-sector profile:

- 53% classified themselves as from the “Social Services” sector

- 32% from “Health”
- 14% from “Education & Research”
- 11% from “Arts & Culture”
- 11% from “Sports & Recreation”
- All other sub-sectors were less than 10% of total respondents

**Human resources (paid staff and volunteers)**

- The number of volunteers involved in respondents’ organizations in the last fiscal year (including board, committee, special event, program, administrative, etc.) skewed to the higher end as shown in Figure 15.



**Figure 15: Survey Question – “In the last fiscal year, how many volunteers were involved in your organization (including board, committee, special event, program, administrative, etc.)**

- The most common response when asked about the number of paid employees (see Figure 16) involved in the last fiscal year was one to 10 (40%). Almost 14% of respondents were part of organizations with no paid staff.



**Figure 16: Survey Question – “In the last fiscal year, what was the total number of employees involved in your organization?”**

- 62% of respondents had a dedicated staff person in their organization that was responsible for the coordination of volunteers. The survey did not ask respondents to specify if that was a full-, part-time or volunteer position.
- There was a much lower usage of volunteer centre services by organizations that do not have a dedicated manager of volunteer services (as shown in Figure 17).
- Where there was a dedicated staff position, the organization was more likely to say it would be “very noticeable” or “noticeable” if the volunteer centre did not exist. They also gave a higher rating with regards to the usefulness of the volunteer centre.

Survey responses	No dedicated staff person to coordinate volunteers	Dedicated staff person to coordinate volunteers
<b>Sector</b>	42% -- social services 24% -- health	59% -- social services 37% -- health
<b># of volunteers</b>	Most common response was 25-99 volunteers	Skewed to higher end (40% had 200+ volunteers)
<b>How useful a community service does your volunteer centre provide?</b>	68% said “very useful” or “useful”	78% said “very useful” or “useful”
<b>Accessing programs/services</b>	Promote volunteerism – 47% accessed this service Build Capacity – 50% accessed this service Provide Leadership – 36% accessed this service Connect People with Opportunities to serve – 63% accessed this service	Promote volunteerism – 70% accessed this service Build Capacity – 70% accessed this service Provide Leadership – 54% accessed this service Connect People with Opportunities to serve – 81% accessed this service
<b>How noticeable would it be if the volunteer centre did not exist?</b>	68% said “very noticeable” or “noticeable”	72% said “very noticeable” or “noticeable”

Figure 17: Differences in organizations with and without a staff person dedicated to coordinating volunteers

**Programs and services accessed**

- 74% rated the usefulness of the programs/services offered by their local volunteer centre as either “useful” or “very useful.”
- For those who responded “not useful,” the comments included:
  - very little offered for experienced Managers of Volunteers
  - need sliding membership fees based on organization’s budget
  - not fully aware of programs/services of local volunteer centre
  - volunteer centre needs more public visibility
- “Connecting People with Opportunities to Serve” is one of the core program/service offered by all volunteer centres; yet, 24% of respondents did not access (or were “unsure” if they accessed) this service (see Figure 18).

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Not offered by local Volunteer Centre</b>
Promote volunteerism	62%	30%	6%	2%
Build capacity for effective local volunteering	62	24	10	4
Provide leadership on issues relating to volunteerism	47	34	14	5
Connect people with opportunities to serve	74	19	6	2

Figure 18: “Survey Question – “The following is a list of the types of programs/services offered by volunteer centres. What programs/services do you access?”

- When broken down into the four program/service areas (see Figure 19), the average usefulness rating was between 3.6 (promote volunteerism) and 4.1 (connecting people with opportunities to serve)

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>1 (not very useful)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 (very useful)</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
Promote Volunteerism	9	10	48	54	38	3.6
Build Capacity for Effective Local Volunteering	7	7	46	57	41	3.7
Provide Leadership on Issues Relating to Volunteerism	7	8	32	46	31	4.1
Connect People with Opportunities to Serve	10	16	35	41	79	3.9

Figure 19: Survey Question – “How useful is each program/service to your organization’s work with volunteers?”

### **How could your volunteer centre be more useful?**

- Customer service:
  - More direct personal contact
  - More consultation with the stakeholders
  - Learn more about organizations and what they do
- Program/services:
  - More information on trends
  - Advanced volunteer management training
  - Advocating on a regional, provincial or federal level (particularly on the issue of police records checks)
  - Assist with screening and interviewing potential volunteers to ensure a better fit
  - Networking opportunities

- Coordinate more volunteer fairs
- Recruit more volunteers
- Promote corporate volunteerism
- One-to-one consultation for struggling organizations
- Other:
  - Different price points for small, medium and large agencies to encourage them to use services
  - Consistency of services throughout the province would be great.
- 70% responded that it would be “noticeable” or “very noticeable” if their local volunteer centre closed down. Respondents noted in particular:
  - *The advertising component alone would cost beyond what most individual organizations’ budgets would allow.*
  - *The energy needed to search for volunteers would put a great strain on small and struggling non-profit organizations.*
  - *Having lost the Volunteer Centre about three years ago, we have seen a big difference in the promotion of volunteerism, education and training about best practices growth, recruitment.*

### **Supporting organizations to involve New Canadians as volunteers**

- When asked the volunteer centre could support their organization’s efforts to involve New Canadians, the following ideas were identified:
  - Transportation solutions
  - Ensure that new Canadians understand the impact of volunteerism beyond being a tool to get Canadian experience and a job.
  - Be more involved with immigration services.
  - More education re: how to attract New Canadians and resources for the agencies to help support a New Canadian (i.e. where to go for translators, additional training for staff to work with New Canadians, etc).
  - Provide language classes for New Canadians so that they feel more comfortable in a volunteer position.
  - It would be helpful to liaise/partner with a multicultural centre to coordinate a registry of new Canadians who are available to volunteer and ensure that the list is kept up to date. There is a need for people who can speak languages other than English/French and/or come from diverse cultural groups within our community; however, it can be challenging to find these people in a timely/efficient manner.
  - Co-locate the offices with the immigration services.
  - Better position the volunteer centre as a resource for new immigrants and reiterate the value of volunteering in reducing isolation and enhancing community experience.

## **7.3 Responses from “other” respondents**

### **Importance of volunteerism**

- 83% rated volunteerism as “very important” to the health of a community
- 79% were “aware” or “very aware” of the programs/services offered by their local volunteer centre

- 57% currently have some type of partnership with their local volunteer centre (therefore, a more informed group of respondents.)

### **Programs/Services**

- When asked if volunteer centres could do more in each program area, respondents said “yes” between 40-45% of the time (see Figure 20 for additional ideas provided by respondents):

<b>Program/Service</b>	<b>Ideas</b>
Promote Volunteerism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social marketing campaign</li> <li>• Be more visible in the community</li> </ul>
Build Capacity For Effective Local Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More training</li> <li>• More focus on rural areas</li> <li>• Advocate for the profession of Management of Volunteers</li> </ul>
Provide Leadership On Issues Relating To Volunteerism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby for funding</li> <li>• Bring together community non-profits</li> </ul>
Connect People With Opportunities To Serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better follow-up once connection made between volunteer and organization</li> </ul>
Other ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Compare what’s going on between volunteer centres to gain more ideas</i></li> <li>• <i>I think they could do plenty more – if they had stable, sufficient funding and access to a pool of professional trainers to offer workshops for</i></li> <li>• <i>Offer networking events</i></li> <li>• <i>I have been organizing volunteers for 20 years and did not know "volunteer centres" existed, so obviously they need to do more to let us know they are out there and what they can help with.</i></li> <li>• <i>Continue to promote partnerships and sharing of resources and ideas.</i></li> <li>• <i>Work to change the mentality of 'these are my volunteers so stay away'. Perhaps promote more 'pooling' of volunteers as they are generally at more than one program anyway.</i></li> </ul>

**Figure 20: Survey Question -- “Is there more your volunteer centre could do to...”**

- 67% responded that it would be “noticeable” or “very noticeable” if their local volunteer centre closed down.

### **Partnerships with local volunteer centre**

- 57% said they currently had a partnership with their local volunteer centre while 43% said “no” or were “unsure.”
- The type of “partnerships” identified included:
  - Paid membership, annual grant, media sponsorship, participation in events, receiving e-communication from the volunteer centre

## 8 Findings from the External Stakeholders Survey (in communities where there isn't a volunteer centre or respondent unsure)

### H ighlights

- When you look at the geographic locations of respondents, some actually do have a volunteer centre in their community which points to a lack of visibility of some volunteer centres in Ontario.
  - In terms of the most useful volunteer centre programs/services to their community, the highest rating (4.6/5) went to “Connect people with opportunities to serve.” The three other core programs/services each received a ranking of 3.8/5 for usefulness to the community.
- 

### 8.1 Introduction

There were two versions of the External Stakeholders Survey – both were accessible at [www.ovcn.ca](http://www.ovcn.ca). The second survey was directed at people from communities where there was no volunteer centre (or the respondent was unsure if there was a volunteer centre). There were specific questions for respondents representing the voluntary/non-profit sector. Respondents from the corporate and public sectors answered a different set of questions.

Overall, the response rate was:

- 122 total responses (all in English)
- 83% from the voluntary/non-profit sector
- 12% from the public sector
- Less than one per cent were from the corporate sector
- 4% were other

See Appendix 7 for a copy of the online survey. See Appendix 12 for survey data (with identifying information removed for confidentiality).

### 8.2 Responses from non-profit & voluntary sector organizations

#### Sub-sector profile

- 48% of respondents were from “Social Services”
- 31% from “Arts and Culture”
- 30% from “Health”
- 24% from both “Sports & Recreation” and “Education and Research”

#### Human resources (paid staff and volunteer)

- When asked about the number of volunteers involved in the organization during the last fiscal year the most common response was 25-99 volunteers. This is in comparison to 200+ volunteers which was the most common answer in the External Stakeholders Survey for organizations with access to a volunteer centre.
- One to 10 employees was also the most common response (53%).

- Only 45% had a dedicated staff person coordinating volunteers (vs. 62% in aforementioned External stakeholders' survey).

### **Programs/Services**

- The volunteer centre program/service that organizations felt would be the most useful was connecting people with opportunities to serve as well as building capacity for effective local volunteering (see Figure 21).

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>1 (not very useful)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5 (very useful)</b>	<b>Average Rating</b>
Promote volunteerism	11	9	17	8	34	3.8
Build capacity for effective local volunteering	4	5	16	20	35	4.0
Provide leadership on issues relating to volunteerism	5	6	27	17	25	3.6
Connect people with opportunities to serve	1	2	16	14	46	4.3

**Figure 21: Survey Question – “The following is a list of possible volunteer centre programs/services. Please rate how useful each would be to your organization’s work with volunteers.”**

Shaded areas = most common response(s)

- In the absence of a volunteer centre, the following organizations currently provide some of the above programs/service (but not all and not as a co-ordinated, single access point representing the entire community):
  - Association of Volunteer Administrators
  - United Way
  - Other non-profits
  - Board of Trade
  - Each agency on its own
  - Municipality
  - YMCA
  - Schools
  - Churches
  - CORE (Community Organizations in Recreation and Education)
  - Red Cross
  - Altruvest
  - Leadership Canada programs in local communities
  - Information Centre/211
  - CharityVillage

### **New Canadians**

- The responses about how volunteer centres could support organizations to engage New Canadians as volunteers confirmed suggestions from all other survey tools.

### **8.3 Responses from “other” respondents**

- 94% rated volunteerism either “important” or “very important” to the health of a community (n=18)
- In terms of the most useful volunteer centre programs/services to their community, the highest rating (4.6/5) went to “Connect people with opportunities to serve.” The three other core programs/services each received a ranking of 3.8/5 for usefulness to the community.

# Appendices

## **Appendix 1-12 (see electronic attachments)**

1. Copy of online survey – senior staff (see Env Scan-appendix 1.pdf)
2. Copy of online survey – board chair (see Env Scan-appendix 2.pdf)
3. Copy of telephone follow up questions – senior staff (see Env Scan-appendix 3.doc)
4. Copy of telephone follow up questions – board chair (see Env Scan-appendix 4.doc)
5. Copy of Regional Advisors online survey (see Env Scan-appendix 5.pdf)
6. Copy of External Stakeholders online survey – volunteer centre (see Env Scan-appendix 6.pdf)
7. Copy of External Stakeholders online survey – no volunteer centre or unsure (see Env Scan-appendix 7.pdf)
8. Survey results – senior staff (see Env Scan-appendix 8.xls)
9. Survey results – board chair (see Env Scan-appendix 9.xls)
10. Survey results – Regional Advisors online survey (see Env Scan-appendix 10.xls)
11. Survey results – External Stakeholders online survey – volunteer centre (see Env Scan-appendix 11.xls)
12. Survey results – External Stakeholders online survey – no volunteer centre or unsure (see Env Scan-appendix 12.xls)
13. Additional details about research process (see following page)

### Appendix 13: Additional details about research process

Research Tool	Audience	Purpose	Timeline	Response Rate
<b>Key Informant Interviews</b>	Members of the Advisory Committee and members of the Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide input into the online survey question design</li> </ul>	April 2008	7 members of the Advisory Committee  4 members of the Working Group
<b>Online Survey of Internal Stakeholders</b>	Senior staff of Volunteer Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To capture information about: years in existence; mission/vision; structural model; committees and board governance; human resources; funding; office location/hours; programs and services; support to New Canadians; partnerships; role of a provincial network, etc.</li> </ul>	June 2008	25 volunteer centres contacted based on current contact information  (plus 1 for informational purposes to an emerging volunteer centre)  19 completed 76% response rate
	Board chairs		June 2008	25 volunteer centres contacted based on current contact information  (plus 1 for informational purposes to an emerging volunteer centre)  11 completed (44% response rate)
<b>Telephone Follow up</b>	Senior Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To capture any missing information or clarify information</li> </ul>	July-August 2008	19 interviews completed

Research Tool	Audience	Purpose	Timeline	Response Rate
	Board chairs	<p>from online survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ask additional questions</li> </ul>	July-August 2008	5 interviews completed
<p><b>Online Survey of External Stakeholders</b></p> <p>External stakeholders surveys were posted at <a href="http://www.ovcn.ca">www.ovcn.ca</a> and promoted through contacts with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ontario volunteer centres</li> <li>Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants</li> <li>Maytree Foundation</li> <li>Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network</li> <li>Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO)</li> <li>The Ontario Rural Council (TORC)</li> <li>Ontario Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>Festival and Events Ontario (FEO)</li> <li>Parks and Recreation Ontario (PROntario)</li> <li>Lifestyle Information Network (LIN)</li> <li>Social Planning</li> </ul>	<p>Communities with a volunteer centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary-non-profit sector organizations</li> <li>Corporate sector</li> <li>Public sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To find out the usefulness of volunteer centre services</li> <li>To capture ideas for improving programs/services</li> </ul>	Mid-Oct to mid-Nov 2008	<p>422 responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>93.6% were from the voluntary/non-profit sector</li> <li>10.2% were from the public sector</li> <li>1.9% from the corporate sector</li> <li>4.3% were other</li> </ul>
	<p>Communities without a volunteer centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary-non-profit sector organizations</li> <li>Corporate sector</li> <li>Public sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To find out what programs/services would be useful</li> <li>To find out who else currently offers similar services</li> </ul>	Mid-Oct to mid-Nov 2008	<p>122 responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>82.8% from the voluntary/non-profit sector</li> <li>12.3% from the public sector</li> <li>.8% from the corporate sector</li> <li>4.1% were other</li> </ul>

Research Tool	Audience	Purpose	Timeline	Response Rate
Network of Ontario <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform Ontario</li> <li>• CharityVillage.com</li> <li>• United Ways in Ontario</li> <li>• Parks and Recreation Ontario</li> <li>• Conservation Authorities in Ontario</li> </ul>				
<b>Online Survey of Regional Services Branch Advisors</b>	The staff who deliver Ontario government programs and services at the community level	To find out about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges that community organizations face re: promoting and supporting volunteerism</li> <li>• The differences in communities with and without volunteer centres</li> <li>• The usefulness of volunteer centre programs/services</li> <li>• What volunteer centres could do differently or better</li> <li>• The support that volunteer centres need</li> <li>• How best to engage New Canadians as volunteers</li> <li>• Reasons for volunteer centres closing down</li> </ul>	Oct 2008	26 completed (87% response rate)