

Advancing Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management (519 and 905 Areas)



519 Regional Forum – held in Kitchener, ON on November 20, 2008.

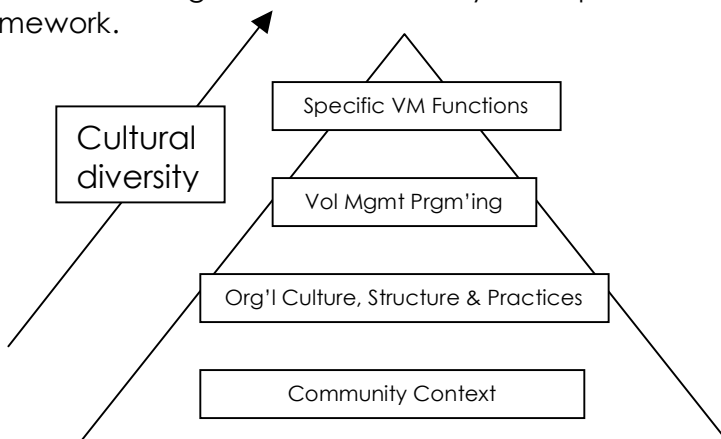
February 2009
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Learning from the Literature (continued from January 2009 eNews)

When you scan the literature, you soon realize that many others – including others from countries outside of Canada – are working to figure out how to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management. So, what can be learned from their research and experiences to advance our own efforts? In this month's issue, we begin our look at the learnings from five specific resources (see January 2009 issue for more information on the five resources).

The majority of the resources on the topic of cultural diversity and volunteer management address only the top half of our pyramid framework.



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Learning from the Literature cont'd

Organizational Culture, Structure and Practices

One of the resources that delves deeper – and addresses the bottom of the pyramid framework – is Volunteering Australia's *Training Manual – Recruiting and Supporting Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds* (2007).

Securing Management Support:

Volunteering Australia firmly believes that management support is essential if an organization is going to make the internal changes needed to successfully involve greater numbers of volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds. The way to gain this support is by building a business case to be presented to senior management or the board:

Senior managers need to be convinced that a recruitment strategy that targets a particular demographic or focuses on increasing the organization's cultural diversity will have economic benefits for the organization. The business case needs to make a link between increased organizational diversity and the organization's strategic direction and show how increasing diversity will help the organization. (p 17)

Volunteering Australia recommends that a business case show:

- Revenue or cost savings (e.g. increased local support base or tapping into a larger pool of volunteers)
- The cost of NOT becoming more culturally diverse (e.g. loss of public support because the organization is seen as out of touch, smaller volunteer and/or client base)
- Future costs that may be reduced or avoided
- Costs of implementing the diversity strategy (e.g. training, language-related costs, advertising, etc.)
- Any non-financial benefits (e.g. improved public profile, better client relations, development of staff skills)

Implementing Diversity Management Strategies:

You cannot move on to this next key step of implementing diversity management strategies without first securing management support. But once you have that support, you can develop other aspects of creating an inclusive organizational culture and culturally sensitive practices. Volunteering Australia defines "diversity management" as "the process of gaining the

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Learning from the Literature cont'd

maximum contribution from all staff. This involves [minimizing] any barriers that prevent full participation and allowing for differences so that economic benefits can be [realized]." (p 19)

The strategies discussed in this resource include:

- Developing inclusive policies and procedures
- Increasing staff knowledge and understanding of cultural sensitivities and how to work together effectively
- Creating an internal environment that is welcoming to all cultures

Volunteering Australia is quick to point out that these strategies can't happen in isolation and they don't happen quickly. The important thing is to start the process and keep working at it.

Developing Inclusive Policies and Procedures:

Policies and procedures shape what happens day-to-day in the organization and also reflect the organization's values. It is, therefore, very important that policies and procedures are written so they do not exclude, marginalize or disadvantage people. To help with this, organizations can ask members of cultural communities to review the policies and procedures. Volunteering Australia encourages organizations to take a look at the language and jargon in their policies to make sure they can be understood by someone who speaks English as a second language. Along with having clearly written policies and procedures, it is important to communicate to staff the details of the inclusive policies and procedures.

(Cont'd in March 2009 issue...)

Advancing Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management is an Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) funded project. The Social Planning Council of Peel is coordinating this project in selected communities in the 519 and 905 areas.

Advancing Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management is a three-year initiative developing the organizational and community capacity of local partners in the 519 and 905 areas to engage and support a more culturally diverse volunteer base.
