

# **Advancing Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management: Discussion Paper**

**Prepared for: 905 Regional Forum**

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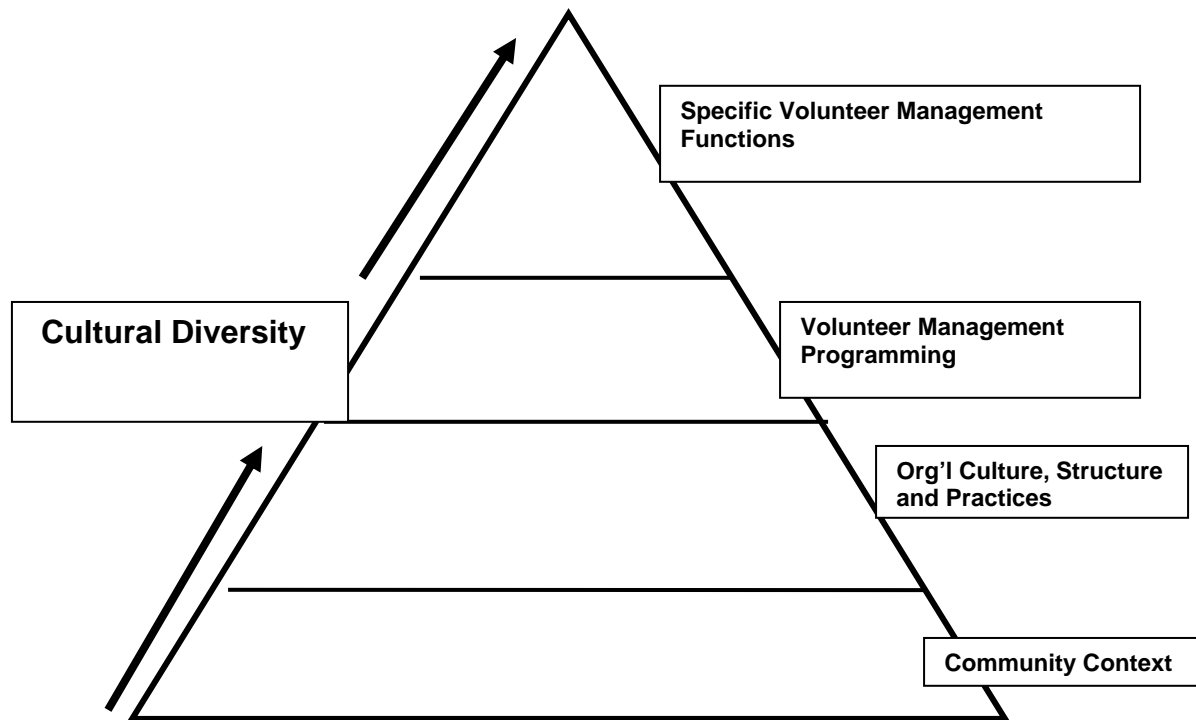
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## Executive Summary

After several decades of work on diversity, we have a solid public policy foundation in Ontario plus many, many resources to support cultural competency in organizations. Yet up to this point, there hasn't been much focus on applying what we know about cultural diversity to the management of volunteer resources – even though volunteers are integral to the voluntary and non-profit sector. The Advancing Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management Project is a three-year initiative funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. The goal is to develop the organizational and community capacity of non-profit organizations in the 519 and 905 area code regions in Ontario to recruit and support a more culturally diverse volunteer base. The following paper is written using information gathered in the eight Community Dialogues (Phase 1 of the Project). The intent of this paper is to provide information to support the discussions that will happen at the Regional Forum in December 2008.

### *Framing the Discussion about Diversity and Volunteer Management*

The following framework model helps us understand how diversity management and volunteer management fit together.



The framework for advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management

Cultural diversity principles need to be incorporated into each level of the pyramid starting with the broad base, the pyramid's foundation. Efforts to advance cultural diversity within the organization (and specifically within volunteer management) can only increase as the organization works through and moves up through each level of the pyramid.

Starting at the pyramid's base, all organizations exist within a community context including all the people they serve and/or engage in their work. At the broadest level of the pyramid, therefore, is the "**Community Context**" or the readiness of each community to reach out, involve and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. The next level ("**Organizational Culture, Structure and Practices**") has to do with the readiness of an organization – both in terms of valuing volunteer management and valuing cultural diversity. The "**Volunteer Management Programming**" level refers to issues that cross over multiple volunteer management functions whereas the top level ("**Specific Volunteer Management Functions**") captures the issues that relate entirely to one specific function on the Volunteer Management Cycle.

## ***Applying the Framework to the Major Themes and Issues Identified During the Community Dialogues***

### **Community Context**

Different communities may be more ready or less ready to actually start advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management. Patterns of settlement strongly predicted the readiness of communities to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management. Another aspect of the community context is the extent that partnerships have been developed between volunteer-involving organizations and cultural organizations and agencies that support New Canadians. Where these partnerships exist, the community is more ready and able to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management.

### **Organizational Culture, Structure and Practices**

The following themes emerged in the Community Dialogues:

- Need for organization-wide buy-in
- Challenge of internal capacity
- Importance of creating a welcoming environment

Some of the themes and issues identified by participants concern the organization in which they work and the need for organizational change. This organizational change is often beyond the control of the person in the position of Manager of Volunteers<sup>1</sup> and requires an organization-wide willingness to change.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many job titles for this type of position. "Manager of Volunteers" is only one but is used in this report to refer to any staff position responsible for the engagement and support of volunteers within an organization. The title of the position is much less important than the fact that there needs to be someone in this function.

It is very important to note that the major block to the effective integration of cultural diversity in volunteer management is the low status and significance within many (perhaps most) organizations to the volunteer management function. There is an undervaluing of the role of the Manager of Volunteers in organizations (by senior management, boards of directors and by funders). Managers of Volunteers are low in the management hierarchy so that even when an organization has strong cultural diversity policies and practices, Managers of Volunteers rarely have the authority or clear mandate or resources to implement cultural diversity practices.

## **Volunteer Management Programming**

In addition to themes and issues that directly connect to a specific volunteer management function (see below), some issues crossed over many volunteer management functions:

- Expense of volunteering
- Language and communication barriers
- Cultural understandings
- Transportation
- Negative process

## **Specific Volunteer Management Functions**

Community Dialogue participants also identified the following challenges and issues related to specific volunteer management functions:

- Planning
  - Need for meaningful volunteer assignments that match skill sets of New Canadians seeking volunteer role
  - Acknowledgement of job readiness needs of Newcomers during job design
  - Understanding the realities of New Canadians
- Recruitment
  - Access to information
  - Settlement process
  - Strategic recruitment
- Screening
  - Often challenging and intimidating
- Placement
  - Client expectations
- Evaluation
  - Success metrics

## ***Recommendations for Action***

Community Dialogue participants identified “Positive and Possible Actions” to address these major issues. In addition, information from five resources (Canadian and international) provided additional strategies for action for dealing with the top three sections of the pyramid: organizational culture, structure and practices; volunteer management programming; and, specific volunteer management functions.

## **Organizational Culture, Structure and Practices**

Developing an inclusive organizational culture and culturally sensitive practices includes:

- Securing management support
- Implementing diversity management strategies
- 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
- Valuing the Importance of a Staff Position Dedicated to Volunteer Management

## **Volunteer Management Programming**

During the Community Dialogues, participants identified several issues that affected more than just one aspect of the volunteer management cycle. Some – but not all – of these were addressed in the literature.

## **Specific Volunteer Management Functions**

- Planning
  - Think about what activities the organization needs volunteers for and what skills these positions require as well as what support the organization can realistically provide volunteers in order that they feel included and useful.
  - Start with a small group of volunteers from a similar cultural background.
- Recruitment
  - Understand what motivates New Canadians to volunteer.
  - Research the characteristics of the cultural group.
  - Partner with immigrant-serving agencies to encourage them to refer potential volunteers.
  - Develop successful immigrant volunteers at your agency into ambassadors to their cultural community.
- Screening
  - Provide support with filling in application forms.
  - Include the filling in of any forms as part of a relaxed interview.
  - Pace your interviews so that information is understood and both sides can ask questions.
  - Include intermediary organizations (like cultural organizations, settlement services, etc.) to help with the filling in of forms.
  - Utilize other forms of risk management.

## **Conclusion**

As a result of the Community Dialogues and the work done by the Project Team, Local Partners and Reference Group to understand the information from the Community Dialogues, we now have:

- a) a conceptual framework for applying diversity management principles and practices to volunteer management
- b) an understanding of the strengths and assets of organizations with regards to applying diversity management practices to volunteer management
- c) an understanding of the obstacles and challenges experienced by agencies with regards to diversity and volunteer management, and
- d) actions for addressing these obstacles and challenges

After discussion come decisions and then action. As a result, critical questions for moving forward can be found within Section 3 of the accompanying paper.

## Introduction and Project Overview

### ***Background***

After several decades of work on diversity, we have a solid public policy foundation in Ontario plus many, many resources to support cultural competency in organizations. Yet up to this point, there hasn't been much focus on applying what we know about cultural diversity to the management of volunteer resources – even though volunteers are integral to the voluntary and non-profit sector.

The 2006 census tells us that the number of the foreign-born in Canada has nearly tripled during the past 75 years and now almost one in five of the total Canadian population is foreign-born. In fact, between 2001 and 2006, Canada's foreign-born population grew by 13.6% -- four times faster than the Canadian-born population. Immigrants to Canada include many skilled and creative individuals wanting to contribute to the country they now call home; however, many organizations don't feel equipped to tap into this source of new volunteers.

### ***Project Overview***

The Advancing Cultural Diversity in Volunteer Management Project is a three-year initiative funded by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. The goal is to develop the organizational and community capacity of non-profit organizations in the 519 and 905 area code regions in Ontario to recruit and support a more culturally diverse volunteer base. The Project focuses on improving the capacity of small- and medium-sized nonprofit organizations to recruit and support the participation of a more culturally and racially diverse population in volunteer roles and activities in eight specific communities within the 519 and 905 area code regions.

There are three phases to this Project:

1. A series of eight Community Dialogues (four each in the 905 and 519 regional areas)
2. Two Intra-Regional Forums (one in the 519 and one in the 905 area)
3. An Inter-Regional Forum bringing together participants from both the 519 and 905 areas

### **Phase 1**

During Phase 1, we held eight Community Dialogues with local partners in the 519 and 905 areas along with knowledgeable and experienced professional and volunteer community leaders. The purpose was to generate information and ideas about their challenges and needs, resources that already exist as well as ideas for positive and possible future actions (completed between November 2007 and March 2008). You can find reports from each of the Community Dialogues (as well as any other Project reports) at [www.culturaldiversityandvolunteers.ca](http://www.culturaldiversityandvolunteers.ca).

## Phase 2

This report is prepared for the two Regional Forums -- one for the 519 area and one for the 905 area -- to discuss the learnings and recommendations from the Community Dialogues and to articulate a framework or strategy for advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management in the 905 and 519 areas. Both of the Regional Forums will happen in November-December 2008.

The four objectives for the Regional Forums are:

1. To share the learnings from all the Community Dialogues within the region
2. To confirm our understanding of the major themes and issues emerging from the research to date at both the community and regional level.
3. To explore possible strategies and models of integration of the fields of volunteer management and cultural diversity management
4. To review and refine proposed actions coming out of community dialogues at the local and regional levels

As well during Phase 2, we continue to research and develop an inventory of resources to support cultural diversity and volunteer management. While it is being built, the inventory can still be accessed and searched at [www.culturaldiversityandvolunteers.ca](http://www.culturaldiversityandvolunteers.ca).

## Phase 3

The final forum will bring together voluntary sector leaders from both the 519 and 905 regions in Spring 2009. The focus and content of the final forum will be determined by the recommendations and strategies put forward at the end of the two Regional Forums in Phase 2.

## *Purpose of this Paper*

This discussion paper is written using data gathered in the eight Community Dialogues and in preparation for the two Regional Forums. While the majority of the information in this discussion paper is common for both regions, there is also information specific to the four Community Dialogues held in the 905 region. The intent of this discussion paper is to provide information to support the discussions that will happen at the Regional Forum in December 2008. Therefore, you will find in this report:

- Project description
- Major themes and issues from the four 905 Community Dialogues and a framework for understanding how they fit together
- Possible strategies for advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management based on:
  - What we heard during the Community Dialogues
  - What we learned from the research and experiences of others
- Critical questions that need to be asked and worked through as part of the goal of advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management

This discussion paper is provided for participants to read in preparation for the Regional Forum and to refer to during the day's agenda.

## Section 1: Community Dialogues – Major Themes and Issues

### *Framing the Discussion about Diversity and Volunteer Management*

In listening to discussions at the Community Dialogues, we realized that for the purposes of this Project, the various volunteer management functions break out into two main areas of focus: Recruitment and Support (as shown in the following diagram).

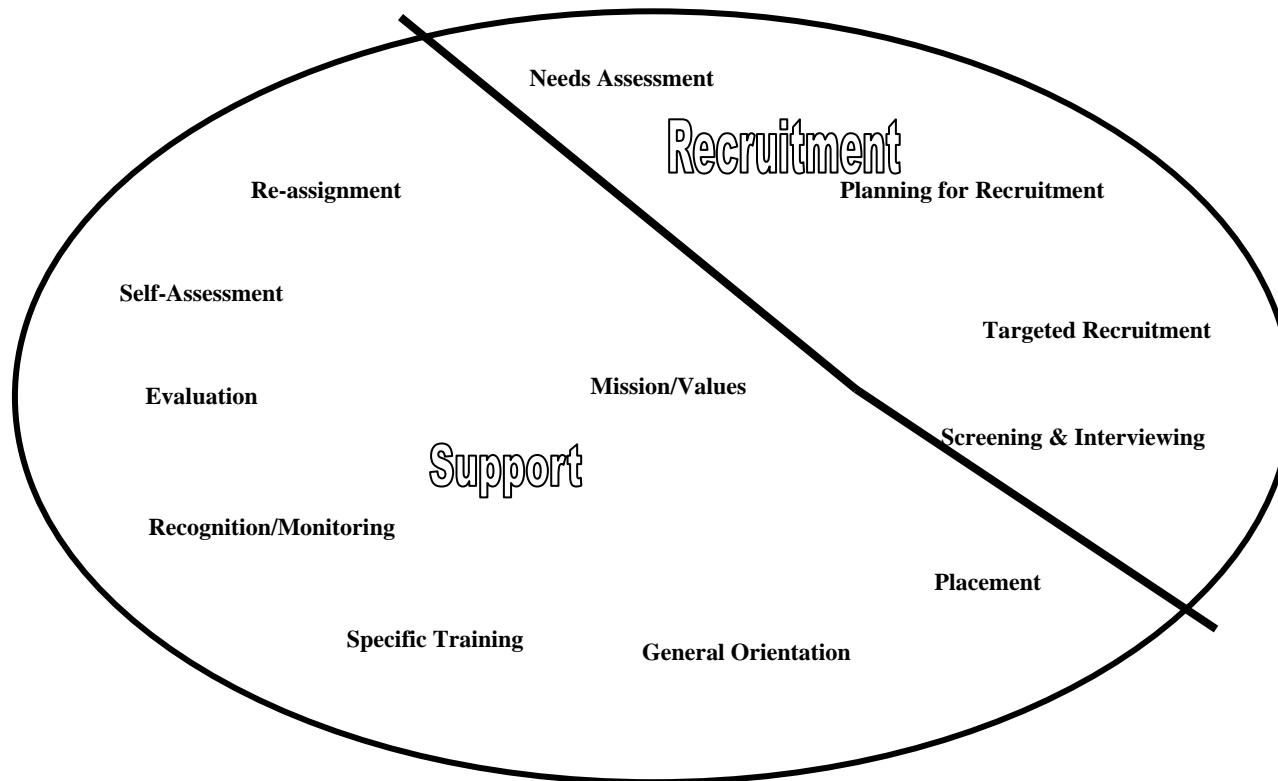


Figure 1: Volunteer Management Cycle (Source: Ontario Volunteer Centre Network and Volunteer Canada)

During the Community Dialogues, participants brainstormed the volunteer management challenges and issues they faced when involving a culturally diverse base of volunteers. The Project Team and the Local Partners (the organizers of the Community Dialogues) reviewed all the information generated during the Community Dialogues and created the following model to help understand the various themes and issues. In other words, it is a model to help us understand how diversity management and volunteer management fit together.

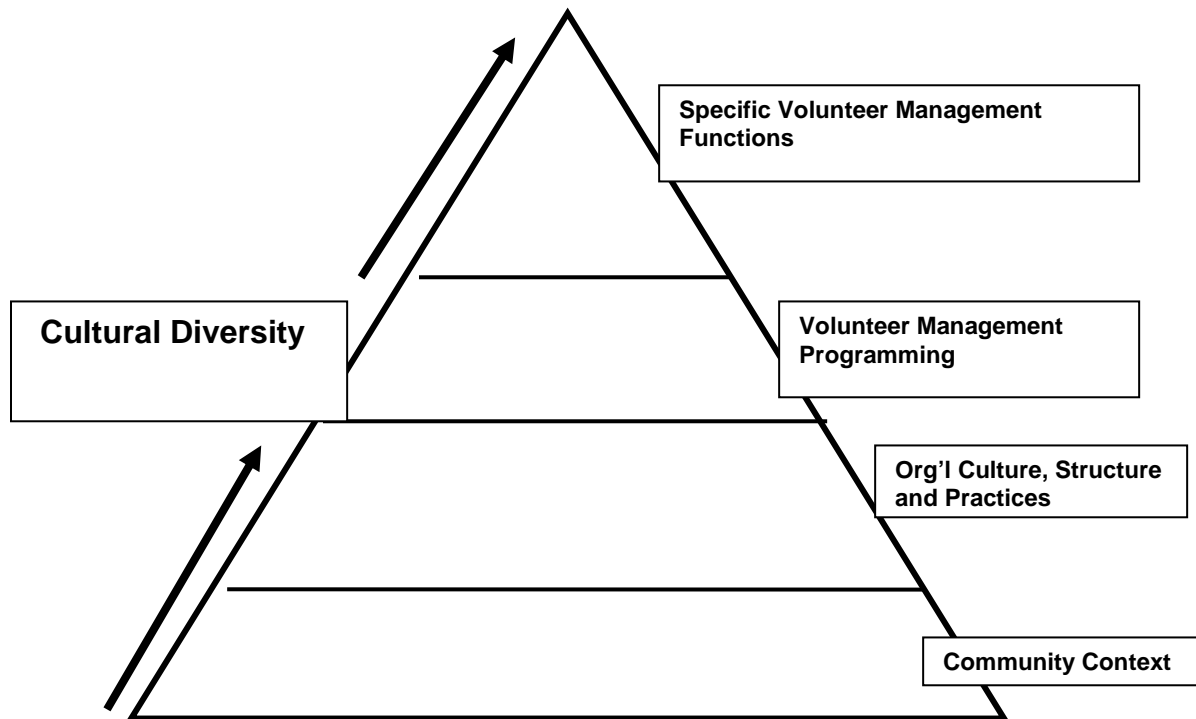


Figure 2: The framework for advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management

Organizations are made up of many dimensions (e.g. program/service, human resources, finance, volunteer management, etc.). A culturally competent organization has clearly defined cultural diversity policies and practices that they have put in operation across all these dimensions including volunteer management – the focus of this Project. When an organization wants to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management, the process it goes through looks like the pyramid in Figure 2. Cultural diversity principles need to be incorporated into each level of the pyramid starting with the broad base, the pyramid’s foundation. Efforts to advance cultural diversity within the organization (and specifically within volunteer management) can only increase as the organization works through and moves up through each level of the pyramid.

Starting at the pyramid’s base, all organizations exist within a community context including all the people they serve and/or engage in their work. At the broadest level of the pyramid, therefore, is the “**Community Context**” or the readiness of each community to reach out, involve and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. The next level (“**Organizational Culture, Structure and Practices**”) has to do with the readiness of an organization – both in terms of valuing volunteer management and valuing cultural diversity. The “**Volunteer Management Programming**” level refers to issues that cross over multiple volunteer management functions whereas the top level (“**Specific Volunteer Management Functions**”) captures the issues that relate entirely to one specific function on the Volunteer Management Cycle.

## ***Applying the Framework to the Major Themes and Issues Identified During the Community Dialogues***

### **Community Context**

Different communities may be more ready or less ready to actually start advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management. Patterns of settlement strongly predicted the readiness of communities to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management. Within the Project, the communities self-described as most ready were the ones that experienced the earliest influx of immigrants. In other words, those communities closest to the City of Toronto with a longer history of involving and interacting with immigrants were more ready and able to involve volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

Another aspect of the community context is the extent that partnerships have been developed between volunteer-involving organizations and cultural organizations and agencies that support New Canadians. Where these partnerships exist, the community is more ready and able to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management. Partnerships between organizations are important because good work is being done and we need to identify, communicate and build on what’s already happening in a community.

### **Organizational Culture, Structure and Practices**

Some of the themes and issues identified by participants concern the organization in which they work and the need for organizational change. This organizational change is often beyond the control of the person in the position of Manager of Volunteers<sup>2</sup> and requires an organization-wide willingness to change.

Theme/Issue	Considerations Raised by Community Dialogue Participants
Organization-wide buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusivity work is seen as peripheral rather than central to the organization.</li> <li>• Organizations don’t want to look at how to change their internal mechanisms to</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> There are many job titles for this type of position. “Manager of Volunteers” is only one but is used in this report to refer to any staff position responsible for the engagement and support of volunteers within an organization. The title of the position is much less important than the fact that there needs to be someone in this function.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support long term change.</li> <li>• The whole organization from the top down needs to believe in the importance of advancing cultural diversity.</li> <li>• Improving communication between senior-level staff and Managers of Volunteers</li> </ul>
Internal capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some organizations don't realize how much they don't know.</li> <li>• Lack of expertise within the organization for working with diverse populations.</li> <li>• Financial limits (and resulting capacity limits) to support advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management.</li> <li>• Existing staff are overwhelmed and agencies cannot respond to sudden spikes in newcomer volunteer interest.</li> <li>• The need to adapt traditional ways of doing things and an organizational openness to change.</li> <li>• Managers of Volunteers don't have up-to-date demographic statistics.</li> </ul>
Creating a welcoming environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confronting cultural and systemic prejudice.</li> <li>• Resistance to training by staff and volunteers ("I don't need it. I'm not a racist.").</li> <li>• Formal volunteer management processes can be intimidating and discouraging.</li> <li>• Hesitancies by New Canadians re: co-ed programs, culturally mixed groups or events with Canadian food.</li> <li>• No reciprocation – do we attend the functions of culturally diverse groups? We want them to be part of our community, but we have to be part of their community as well</li> <li>• It's important to assess whether an agency's service is actually needed by diverse communities.</li> <li>• Need to diversity staff and leadership at the governance level so that people from culturally diverse backgrounds can "see" themselves in that organization.</li> <li>• Develop volunteer positions that follow a mentorship model.</li> <li>• Creating support strategies for non-English speaking volunteers doing direct service work in the community as volunteers are recruited in their mother tongue but all day-to-day supports are in English.</li> <li>• Learning from New Canadians rather than assuming a teaching role.</li> <li>• Need to recognize the diversity within diversity – some immigrants do have language issues while others are fluent in English and some have lived in Canada for decades and are fully integrated.</li> </ul>

It is very important to note that the major block to the effective integration of cultural diversity in volunteer management is the low status and significance within many (perhaps most) organizations to the volunteer management function. There is an undervaluing of the role of the Manager of Volunteers in organizations (by senior management, boards of directors and by funders). Managers of Volunteers are low in the management hierarchy so that even when an organization has strong cultural diversity policies and practices, Managers of Volunteers rarely have the authority or clear mandate or resources to implement cultural diversity practices.

## Volunteer Management Programming

In addition to themes and issues that directly connect to a specific volunteer management function (see below), some issues crossed over many volunteer management functions:

Theme/Issue	Considerations Raised by Community Dialogue Participants
Expense of volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation, childcare expenses are barriers.</li> </ul>
Language and communication barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When people do not speak the English language very well makes it difficult to recruit, communicate volunteer expectations, have them complete necessary forms, provide orientation/training or provide ongoing support or meaningful recognition.</li> <li>• Agencies do not have access to, don't know how to access and/or cannot afford interpreter services.</li> </ul>
Cultural understandings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteerism is not a concept that is well understood and has different meanings in different cultures.</li> <li>• New Canadians may be unfamiliar with philosophies and perspectives of Canadian organizations (e.g. feminist oriented organizations).</li> <li>• Misunderstandings that even though work is unpaid, there are still important expectations of volunteers.</li> <li>• New Canadians tend to volunteer in their own communities.</li> <li>• There is a cultural stigma associated with some types of volunteer work in certain communities e.g. volunteering for an AIDS organizations, the criminal justice system, etc.</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor or no public transportation available to get to the volunteer site.</li> </ul>
Negative Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process to become a volunteer is a negative experience for some people.</li> </ul>

## Specific Volunteer Management Functions

Volunteer Management Function	Theme/Issue	Considerations Raised by Community Dialogue Participants
<b>Recruitment</b>		

Planning	Need for meaningful volunteer assignments that match skill sets of New Canadians seeking volunteer role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer opportunities need to be meaningful and match skills and needs. Newcomers arrive with education and skills. A volunteer opportunity to make photocopies is not meaningful nor will it help a newcomer move forward.</li> </ul>
	Acknowledge job readiness needs of newcomers during job design <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to develop legitimate short-term volunteer roles that meet the needs of volunteers.</li> <li>• Some volunteer placements are too short for managers to build a good relationship with a volunteer who speaks English as a second language; the time to build relationships is important in order to meet expectations and help develop skills.</li> <li>• Need to develop volunteer positions that advance employment readiness.</li> <li>• Cater to the motivations and needs of Newcomers seeking Canadian work experience, references and documentation (e.g. volunteer hours logged).</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Volunteerism is often promoted to New Canadians, for example by settlement services, as a tool for finding a job in Canada. This is a legitimate motivation for why many people volunteer – New Canadians as well as others. However, as a Project that focuses on advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management, it is important to advocate that volunteerism is more than just a route to employment. An important distinction needs to be made between volunteering for employment readiness and volunteering for community involvement. Sometimes the distinction is a faint, grey line; however it is an important distinction so that volunteerism doesn't get reduced to being a job readiness program. It is important that the work we do to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management does not replace effective employment counseling. It is also important that we do not raise false expectations with New Canadians who volunteer anticipating a paid job will be the end result or that they need not volunteer anymore once they find paid employment.

	Understanding the realities of New Canadians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior to recruiting, must consider Newcomers' economic position and stage of settlement.</li> </ul>
Recruitment	Access to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Canadians need information about where they can volunteer and at the same time organizations are asking where and how they can access culturally diverse volunteers (“volunteers don’t know where we are and we don’t know how to say we’re here”).</li> <li>• 90% of volunteers have a connection to the organization they choose to volunteer with – how do you foster newcomers' sense of connection to an organization?</li> </ul>
	Settlement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to understand where someone is in the settlement process and when they might be most interested and available to volunteer.</li> </ul>
	Strategic recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There’s a hesitancy to do targeted outreach for fear of being perceived as politically incorrect.</li> <li>• We need to “sell” volunteerism in a new way – using strategic, targeted approach.</li> <li>• The importance of adapting and marketing volunteerism as a vehicle to employment.</li> <li>• Need to change approach and recruit Newcomers directly as opposed to making broad call-outs.</li> <li>• Loss of volunteer centre in Durham makes recruitment of volunteers even more challenging.</li> </ul>
Screening	Screening is often challenging and intimidating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference checks can be difficult.</li> <li>• Police checks can be intimidating.</li> <li>• Upfront cost of Police check is a significant barrier.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immunization records may have been left behind in home country.</li> <li>• Diversity policies contradict volunteer management practices e.g. some Newcomers may be unable to meet requirements of strict screening practices such as completing a police check and providing immunization records.</li> </ul>
<b>Support</b>		
Placement	Client expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matching diverse volunteers in helping roles to white, older clients is a problem and issues come up re: language barriers, religious beliefs and sometimes clients are not tolerant.</li> </ul>
Evaluation	Success metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success metrics (e.g. volunteer retention equals success). For example: The idea that volunteer retention equals success. But if we want to meet the needs of diverse populations, we may have to reconsider our notions of success. Case in point: one volunteer wanted to improve her English and job shadow. Once she was able to find employment, she moved on. Statistically, it looked like a failure, because the organization didn't retain her. From another perspective, we met her needs, so it was a success.</li> </ul>

### ***Other Themes***

In addition to the above themes, the Project Team and Local Partners observed and discussed other themes noted from the Community Dialogues that do not fit neatly into a pyramid category.

### **Approaching the Topic from Different Perspectives**

Participants at Community Dialogues (and members of the Reference Group) tended to be either volunteer management professionals or cultural diversity professionals. This is understandable considering the Project topic; however, it did, mean that the perspective of how to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management was different.

*“We should name the tension between the different approaches. One piece is: How do we reach out to culturally diverse communities so that they will volunteer, participate in our agencies? How do we engage with them, how can they engage with us? What are some of the barriers within our agencies to participation? And then there’s this other dialogue, with other questions: How*



## Section 2: Recommendations for Action

### *Recommended Strategies and Actions from the Community Dialogues*

During the Community Dialogue process, participants identified many possible actions to address the issues and challenges that they face in recruiting and supporting a culturally diverse base of volunteers. At the end of each Community Dialogue, participants were asked to discuss in small groups “positive and possible” actions that could be taken over the next several years to build capacity in advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management. Each group briefly presented their action items. Participants then used “dotmocracy” to vote for their priority actions. The following chart lists the top tier responses as voted by participants:

Durham	Halton	York Region	Peel
Fund volunteer resource centre (with a diversity manager)	Make volunteer opportunities must be meaningful – matching skills and needs	Provincial Secretariat on Volunteerism. Professional Administrators of Volunteer Resources of Ontario has been pushing for it to be established.	Volunteer Centre for Peel Region mandated to support cultural diversity in volunteer management. Envision a progressive centre that “thinks outside the box”, recognizes all forms of diversity including gender, ability, age, etc., and works within a framework of social inclusion. It would perform many functions specific to this issue. Through it, a regional strategy could be implemented. It would be a centralized clearinghouse for volunteers: provide information, attract, recruit, screen, train, and certify, match volunteer needs to available positions, be a referral service, etc. Have a dedicated staff person to be “go-to” person for cultural competency information – this resource badly needed by agencies working with diverse populations. e.g., If planning a volunteer appreciation dinner, one phone call is all it takes to obtain needed

Durham	Halton	York Region	Peel
			information. Want tip-sheets on ethno-specific customs and practices, diversity toolkits, etc
Increase knowledge in the community from diverse groups regarding volunteer opportunities	Advertisement and promotion – be inclusive and show diversity in promotional outreach	Create cultural ambassadors. Assist in promoting agency/service to clients; volunteerism; board of director involvement. Hopefully at some point recruit FTE from these communities.	Toolkit on benchmarks and best practices of cultural diversity in volunteer management, with inventory component
Establish local network to access and discuss best practices	Pool resources and knowledge to tap into deep volunteer resource – stats are growing therefore agencies may see benefit of working together	Networking and partnering with other agencies. Gain access to recruitment opportunities by working with organizations that support diverse communities. Build capacity through joint funding proposals.	
A partnership between cultural services and DRAVA (Durham Region Association for Volunteer Administrators)	Print materials at outreach sessions must reflect diversity to encourage/attract newcomers/diverse populations	Centralized volunteer recruitment coordination. Renew Action 5: Volunteer and Leadership Development of the Inclusivity Action Plan. Collaborate with YRAVA	
Forums include representatives from diverse communities to identify not just needs but capacities	Advocate for a volunteer management position in your organization.	Centralized volunteer recruitment coordination. Resection funding; create master list of York Region agencies	
		Learning together - volunteers, board, and staff. First hold bias awareness training; then cultural competency training; then other training.	

## ***Recommended Strategies and Actions from the Literature***

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? This project, in collaboration with the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network, identified 130+ resources that specifically look at volunteer management through the lens of cultural diversity. These 130+ resources can be found as part of this Project's online inventory at [www.culturaldiversityandvolunteers.ca](http://www.culturaldiversityandvolunteers.ca).

Of these 130+ resources, the following five resources provide particularly helpful strategies and actions:

1. *A New Canadian's First Decade of Volunteering: Examining Ways to Involve New Canadians in Canadian Organizations* (2004) – <http://www.pillarnonprofit.ca/documents/FinalReportNewCanadians.pdf>

**Description:** Pillar Nonprofit Network surveyed organizations in London, ON to see how they have incorporated New Canadians into their volunteer base. At the same time, they surveyed New Canadians to find out what they need from organizations. From this information, the Pillar study presents strategies for recruiting new Canadian volunteers (meaning immigrants to Canada within the last ten years).

2. *A Part of Society: Refugees and Asylum Seekers Volunteering in the U.K.* (2006) -- <http://www.tandem-uk.com/APartofSociety.pdf>

**Description:** This project was funded by the Refugee Integration Section of the Home Office Immigration and Nationality Directorate. Based on case studies of ten organizations across the UK that are all outside the refugee sector, and that are all successfully involving refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers, this report is for policy makers, volunteer managers and others wanting to encourage and develop diversity in volunteering.

3. *Building Caring Communities: The Contributions of Immigrant Volunteers* (2006) – <http://www.volunteerconnections.net/buildingCaringCommunities.pdf>

**Description:** Community Volunteer Connections in Richmond, BC used Appreciative Inquiry to investigate successful experiences of pairs of immigrant volunteers and volunteer coordinators. Ten volunteers emigrating from nine countries and nine volunteer coordinators participated in two focus groups.

4. *Questioning Volunteer Management: A Position Paper* (2007) – [http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/atwork/Questioning\\_Volunteer\\_Management\\_Discussion\\_Paper\\_Nov07.pdf](http://atwork.settlement.org/downloads/atwork/Questioning_Volunteer_Management_Discussion_Paper_Nov07.pdf)

**Description:** This discussion paper is Jennifer Woodill's attempt at challenging traditional volunteer management practices and suggesting possible new and creative ways of working with volunteers from a social inclusion perspective.

5. *Training Manual – Recruiting and Supporting Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds* (2007) – [http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/files/362D8AEPOW/VA\\_CALD%20Training%20Manual\\_final.pdf](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/files/362D8AEPOW/VA_CALD%20Training%20Manual_final.pdf)

**Description:** Volunteering Australia designed this training manual to enable trainers to deliver customized training to managers and others within volunteer-involving organizations which will help them to:

- Lay the groundwork for recruiting new volunteers from diverse language and cultural backgrounds
- Develop an inclusive organizational culture and culturally sensitive practices
- Successfully recruit and retain volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds

The strategies and actions recommended in these five resources describe practical ways to increase cultural diversity through the various levels of the pyramid framework (see figure 2):

## **Organizational Culture, Structure and Practices**

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

### **Increasing Staff Knowledge and Understanding of Cultural Sensitivities and How to Work Together Effectively**

Volunteering Australia points out that it is difficult to introduce diversity training into organizations that are “hostile” towards diversity. For that reason, they recommend using “awareness-based diversity training” as a starting point. This type of training raises awareness of the challenges faced by different people as they try and get involved in the organization. Even in organizations where there isn’t “hostility” towards diversity initiatives, staff and volunteers may still feel some apprehension about how to practically engage and support culturally diverse volunteers. Therefore, ongoing cross-cultural training will be important.

### **Creating an Internal Environment that is Welcoming to All Cultures**

This strategy is particularly important for the Reception areas of organizations because they are the first contact people have with our organizations; however, creating a culturally sensitive environment where people from all cultural, religious and language backgrounds feel welcome is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers. Simple ways of doing this, according to Volunteering Australia, include:

- Posters and display material that reflect diversity
- ‘Welcome’ signs translated into different languages (or universally understood signs)
- Flexibility around religious days
- Sharing of different foods

Volunteer Australia believes there is an important role for Managers of Volunteers to lead by example and to confidently welcome and communicate with volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds. One way that Managers of Volunteers can lead by example is to show that names are important and to ask volunteers (or potential volunteers) to help them pronounce their name and to take the time to learn it properly.

### **Valuing the Importance of a Staff Position Dedicated to Volunteer Management**

One of the main themes identified during the eight Community Dialogues was the importance of a full-time paid position dedicated to the Professional Management of Volunteers. Manager of Volunteers are the agents of change within organizations if we are to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management, and yet, participants also pointed out how under-valued Managers of Volunteers are within organizations.

The 2006 report from the United Kingdom completely reinforces the importance of the Manager of Volunteers' role as well as reinforcing the need for senior management to acknowledge the importance. *A Part of Society: Refugees and Asylum Seekers Volunteering in the U.K.* presents case studies of 10 organizations that involve refugees and people seeking asylum as volunteers and included research with staff, managers and volunteers. According to the researchers:

*It was clear from the case studies that volunteer managers play a key role, either in implementing a whole-organization approach to equality and diversity, or in introducing new levels of diversity through volunteering. Volunteer co-ordinators were often fulfilling a variety of roles: volunteer management, awareness-raising within their organization, devising new volunteering opportunities and overcoming barriers...However, sometimes volunteering was perceived within organizations as an 'add-on', and its core role in promoting diversity and inclusion was not always understood....The importance of the role of the volunteer manager or co-ordinator in building diversity, and the range of responsibilities it carries, needs to be acknowledged by senior management within organizations, and by funders. (pp 7-8)*

*Building Caring Communities* found that a supportive Manager of Volunteers was key in retaining volunteers and maximizing volunteers' contributions. The report itemized the following contributions of a supportive Manager of Volunteers:

- Actively invited potential volunteers into volunteer roles.
- Marketed volunteer opportunities to appeal to a range of potential volunteer motivations.
- Assessed volunteers to ensure their specific skills and level of English fluency were used effectively in the volunteer placement.
- Welcomed immigrants into their agency by respecting the life experiences of immigrants to Canada, developing positive staff-volunteer relations, and hiring staff from diverse backgrounds where possible.
- Converted volunteers to the agency's mission and mandate by connecting the volunteer work to the larger good being achieved.
- Mentored new volunteers, especially where fluency in English was an issue, through partnerships with more experienced volunteers or staff

### **Volunteer Management Programming**

During the Community Dialogues, participants identified several issues that affected more than just one aspect of the volunteer management cycle. Some – but not all – of these were addressed in the literature.

## **Expenses**

Several publications stated that economic barriers to volunteering need to be dealt with in order to make it easier for New Canadians to volunteer; however, most didn't provide any solutions beyond a suggestion for organizations to start covering these expenses. The Pillar study suggests virtual volunteering<sup>4</sup> as a way to reduce some of the economic barriers.

## **Language**

In the *Building Caring Communities* report, the point is made that fluency in English increases with practice so there is a return for the investment when organizations help volunteers with their language skills. One of the ways of doing this, recommends the report, is to pair up volunteers learning the language with a more experienced and fluent volunteer or staff. Assessing the English fluency and skills of a volunteer over time (as well as at intake) is important as language skills improve and the volunteer may be ready to take on a new volunteer role within the organization.

The U.K. study lists the following strategies for involving volunteers with limited English:

- Help people to assess their language skills realistically
- Match language capacity to role
- Provide support with filling in application forms
- Have practical tasks that make use of non-verbal skills
- Use practical demonstrations when appropriate
- Have more fluent volunteers act as interpreters or "buddies"
- Translate basic information
- Train staff in use of plain English
- Develop lists of useful vocabulary
- Provide training in relevant technical or colloquial language
- Provide volunteer English tutors
- Encourage people to ask questions
- Offer patience, attention, energy and inspiration so people feel enthused and able to try new things

Volunteering Australia is very clear that limited English does not have to be a barrier. They provide several additional suggestions; however, they also re-emphasize that success will only happen if there is continuous support and dedication from the entire organization:

- Make good communication everyone's responsibility
- Use symbols
- Involve cultural leaders in the orientation process
- Focus on explaining the essentials and introduce new information as needed so there isn't information overload
- Identify key organizational information and procedures that need to be explained
- Provide take home material so volunteers can review at their own pace

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<sup>4</sup> Virtual volunteering is a term to describe a volunteer position where the tasks happen completely, or partially, offsite from the organization through the use of Internet.

- Use activity-based training or modeling

### **Cultural Understanding**

It is important to consider that the concept of “volunteerism” means different things in different countries and New Canadians may not share or, at first, understand what it means to be a volunteer in Canada. Volunteering Australia grappled with this same situation and recommends that organizations consult with local cultural leaders and hold focus groups to better understand the range of understandings of volunteering. As a result of the information organizations find out, they may have to use different terminology to attract initial interest of various cultural communities.

### **Negative Process**

Community Dialogue participants identified that the process of being a volunteer in this country can be a negative process. This is a primary theme in the *Questioning Volunteer Management* position paper written by Jennifer Woodill. In the process of formalizing and professionalizing volunteer management best practices, are we creating a negative process that *excludes* rather than *includes*? Woodill challenges us to consider the possibility:

*While volunteerism has been recognized as a powerful tool for civic engagement and community development in the big picture theoretical discussions, this discussion has not been translated into how volunteer management is practiced on the ground. There is a serious disconnect. Under the increasing pressure to professionalize volunteer management, there has been very little to no critical reflection on practice, and how the endorsed “best practices”...play a role in limiting opportunities for citizen engagement and social inclusion. I believe that the main underlying principles behind the endorsed volunteer management ‘best practices’ are the principles of efficiency, resource development and control. I believe that social exclusion is an inevitable result of doing volunteer management from these principles. (p 2)*

In Appendix A of Woodill’s document she compares traditional volunteer management against volunteer management from a social inclusion perspective to provide specific examples of how the volunteer management process can be approached differently and, therefore, remove the negativity. For instance, traditional volunteer recruitment is based on the agency’s need for volunteers. In contrast, a social inclusion approach would mean meeting with community members, finding out their strengths and creating space for them to volunteer within the agency. According to the traditional model, volunteers need to fit the needed qualifications in order to be accepted as a volunteer. That can mean that a New Canadian with poor English skills would not be appropriate as a children’s tutor. However, a social inclusion approach would encourage exploring options like “three-way volunteering” that partners a New Canadian with another volunteer to be the children’s tutor.

## **Specific Volunteer Management Functions**

The Volunteer Management Cycle (See figure 1) provides a picture of the various specific functions involved in engaging volunteers. In the five inventory resources, there are suggestions about how to approach some of these specific functions keeping cultural diversity in mind.

### **Planning**

Before jumping to the recruitment stage, Volunteering Australia encourages organizations to ask some important planning questions. It is important to think about what activities the organization needs volunteers for and what skills these positions require. Then, it is important to ask

about what support the organization can realistically provide volunteers in order that they feel included and useful. Volunteering Australia makes the point that “it is generally more effective to start with just a few volunteers, maybe from a similar cultural background, so they can be supported adequately and will have a better chance of remaining with the organization for the long term.” (p 16)

### **Recruitment**

There is a planning element to recruitment as well. It is important to understand what motivates New Canadians to volunteer. Interestingly, the research from Richmond, British Columbia found that while Managers of Volunteers were more likely to think new Canadians volunteered for language and skills development, the volunteers overwhelmingly stated that they volunteered because they believed in the cause they supported. Language and skills development, to the volunteer, were bonuses rather than motivations. This is a perfect example of why Volunteering Australia highlights the importance of researching the characteristics of a cultural group. It is important to spend the time to figure out if a particular cultural group is a suitable target for a volunteer recruitment campaign and how they can best be reached.

The following are some additional suggestions from the research about recruiting culturally diverse volunteers:

From *Building Caring Communities*:

- Partner with immigrant-serving agencies to encourage them to refer potential volunteers.
- Develop successful immigrant volunteers at your agency into ambassadors to their cultural community to promote volunteerism and recruit new volunteers.
- Make connections across organizations to tap into a pool of volunteers (service recipients at one organization may become volunteers at another organization).
- Be visible at “high traffic” locations such as shopping centres, community centres, libraries, coffee shops and other gathering places.

From *A New Canadian’s First Decade of Volunteering: Examining Ways to Involve New Canadians*:

- Ask New Canadians who access your services if they would like to volunteer or ask your staff and volunteers to connect you to people from their cultural community who might be interested in volunteering.

From *Training Manual – Recruiting and Supporting Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds*:

- Research your local demographics to identify target cultural groups.
- Identify other key stakeholders to partner with (e.g., cultural groups or immigrant-serving organizations).
- Apply for funding to work on a joint project with a cultural group.

### **Screening**

Community Dialogue participants often raised the challenges having to do with the screening process when a New Canadian wants to volunteer. The U.K. resource (*A Part of Society: Refugees and Asylum Seekers Volunteering in the U.K.*) identified the following good practices from the 10 organizations they studied:

- Provide support with filling in application forms.
- Include the filling in of any forms as part of a relaxed interview.
- Pace your interviews so that information is understood and both sides can ask questions.

- Include intermediary organizations (like cultural organizations, settlement services, etc.) to help with the filling in of forms.
- Utilize other forms of risk management.

## Section 3: Critical Questions for Moving Forward

As a result of the Community Dialogues and the work done by the Project Team, Local Partners and Reference Group to understand the information from the Community Dialogues, we now have:

- a) a conceptual framework for applying diversity management principles and practices to volunteer management
- b) an understanding of the strengths and assets of organizations with regards to applying diversity management practices to volunteer management
- c) an understanding of the obstacles and challenges experienced by agencies with regards to diversity and volunteer management, and
- d) actions for addressing these obstacles and challenges

After discussion come decisions and then action:

- What assets can you draw on to advance cultural diversity in volunteer management?
  - At the organization level?
  - At the community level?
  - At the regional level?
- What are the basic decisions your organization must make if it is to apply diversity management best practices to its volunteer program?
  - At the Board level
  - At the staff level
  - At the volunteer level
- What are the top three actions your organization should take in order to apply diversity management practices to its volunteer program?
  - At the Board level
  - At the staff level
  - At the volunteer level
- What resources and supports does your organization need in order to apply diversity management practices to volunteer management?
  - Internal support: from the Board, staff, volunteers
  - External support: from clients, funders, policy-makers
- How can your organization collaborate with others in order to maximize its efforts to recruit and retain a culturally diverse volunteer workforce?
  - With whom?
  - For what?
  - When? (at which point in your process for applying diversity management practices to your volunteer management functions)

## Appendix 1: Community Dialogues Background Information (Phase 1)

### Community Dialogues: Dates and Local Hosts

	<b>Durham</b>	<b>Halton</b>	<b>Kitchener-Waterloo</b>	<b>Cambridge</b>
<b>Date</b>	Nov 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2007	Nov 13 <sup>th</sup> , 2007	Nov 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2007	Nov 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2007
<b>Host</b>	Community Development Council of Durham	Community Development Halton/Volunteer Halton/Halton Multi-cultural Council	Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and the Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo and Area	Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries and United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries

	<b>York Region</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>Guelph-Wellington</b>	<b>Peel</b>
<b>Date</b>	February 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	February 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2008	March 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2008	March 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2008
<b>Host</b>	Human Services Planning Coalition, York Region Planning Department	Pillar Nonprofit Network	Volunteer Centre of Guelph-Wellington	United Way of Peel Region and Peel Regional Diversity Roundtable

### Participants

In total about 250 people participated in the eight Community Dialogues. Participants included: coordinators of volunteers, executive directors, program staff, board chairs, volunteers and student interns. A survey was also issued to invitees to the Community Dialogues in advance of the events. The results were tabulated and presented for discussion as part of the Community Dialogue agenda.

	<b>Durham</b>	<b>Halton</b>	<b>Kitchener-Waterloo</b>	<b>Cambridge</b>
<b># of Community Participants*</b>	25	25	33	13
<b># of Survey Respondents</b>	27	38	46	

	<b>York Region</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>Guelph-Wellington</b>	<b>Peel</b>
<b># of Community Participants*</b>	40	40	20	50
<b># of Survey Respondents</b>	35	27	35	40

\* does not include staff from host organizations or guests from other regions

## Appendix 2: Regional Reference Group and Local Partners

The Project Team (Paula DeCoito, Peter Clutterbuck, Anna Przychodzki and Louise Chatterton Luchuk) works closely with local partners from the 519 and 905 Areas plus a Regional Reference Group that advises the project development.

- United Ways in Ontario
- Ontario Volunteer Centre Network
- Social Planning Network of Ontario
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
- Community Development Council of Durham
- Community Development Council of Halton
- Volunteer Halton
- Halton Multicultural Council
- York Region Human Services Planning Coalition, York Region Planning Dept.
- Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo
- Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo
- Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries
- United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries, Voluntary Sector Resources
- Pillar Nonprofit Network (London)
- Volunteer Centre of Guelph and Wellington County
- United Way of Peel Region
- Peel Regional Diversity Roundtable

## Appendix 3: Organizing and Facilitating Community Dialogues

Throughout the planning and delivery of the eight Community Dialogues, we also learned about the process of hosting community dialogues, including:

- The challenge of engaging small organizations that are often all-volunteer and therefore can't make daytime meetings.
- The importance of focusing on smaller and medium-sized organizations that made them feel like they had a voice in this process.
- The challenge of only having a half-day to engage people in a community dialogue.
- The fact that organizations often think from an organizational perspective, not an overall sector perspective and organizations need support to think beyond the bounds of their organization.
- Opportunities for relationship building on the day of the Dialogue were limited by the tightly packed agenda; however, some participants have contacted local partners to express interest in continuing the relationship building and learning that was started.
- The challenge of whom to invite: frontline staff or policy makers and because not everyone could be invited, assumptions were made in developing an invitation list; how does that influence the information gathered during a community dialogue? (i.e. did who got invited then define the issues?).