

Discussion Paper:

Themes, Issues and Ideas

from the first four Community Dialogues

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Overview

Purpose of Community Dialogues

- Involve local organizational leaders in the nonprofit sector in discussions of strategies and resources for reaching out to and engaging volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Promote partnerships and relationships that can be later used for the implementation of these strategies and development of resource materials
- Identify existing resources and/or work being done on diversity issues in each of the seven communities
- Elicit issues and needs related to the engagement and support of a more diverse volunteer base and indicate what additional tools, resources and strategies would prove helpful

Dates and Local Hosts

| | Durham | Halton | Kitchener-Waterloo | Cambridge |
|-------------|---|---|--|--|
| Date | Nov 1 st , 2007 | Nov 13 th , 2007 | Nov 27 th , 2007 | Nov 30 th , 2007 |
| Host | 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 |

Participants

Community Dialogue Participants included: coordinators of volunteers, executive directors, program staff, board chairs, volunteers, student interns

| | Durham | Halton | Kitchener-Waterloo | Cambridge |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------------------|-----------|
| # of Community Participants* | 25 | 25 | 33 | 13 |
| # of Survey Respondents** | 27 | 38 | 46 | |

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

** Note 1: number of respondents as of date of proceedings report and Note 2: not all survey respondents provided responses to the open-ended questions

Evolution of Agenda

The agenda used in the first two Community Dialogues (Durham and Halton) was based on feedback provided by the Reference Group to an agenda template presented at the September 13th, 2007 meeting. The project team (Paula DeCoito, Peter Clutterbuck, Anna Przychodzki and Louise Chatterton Luchuk) informally debriefed after each Community Dialogue and then formally met for a review after the first two Community Dialogues.

As a result, the following adjustments were made to the agenda:

- The order of the agenda was changed to create a more logical flow of information, to provide the project context earlier and to provide more uninterrupted time for participant discussion.
- To make the agenda less crowded, the introductory small group discussion (re: what do you wish to accomplish during the morning) was dropped.
- A small group exercise and worksheet were developed to document resources (both information and infrastructure) for the Inventory. These worksheets were collected at the end of the Community Dialogues for future follow-up.
- After listening to participant discussions, the volunteer management cycle was grouped into two categories: recruitment and support. The simplified terminology was understandable by all participants regardless of their formal understanding of volunteer management theory.
- Each project team member spoke to the areas of the agenda that fit with their area of expertise and Louise Chatterton Luchuk took a more active role in the third and fourth Community Dialogues (re: Volunteer Management Cycle and the Inventory of Resources).
- Survey results were reported at various points in the agenda rather than presented all at once. This meant that survey results were more relevant to the discussion and also cut down on the amount of time the project team was talking (vs. participants discussing).

In general, the agenda now moves from providing an overview of the changing demographics in the local community through a description of the Project to a review of the state of knowledge about cultural diversity, in general, and, specifically, as it is applied to volunteer management. Participants were then guided through group and plenary discussion about the issues in their local community. The dialogues wrap up with discussions/small group exercises about local resources (re: the Inventory) and Possible and Positive Future Actions.

Dialogue Themes

These are the issues and needs raised by Community Dialogue participants in the first four dialogues:

- Recruitment
- Cultural Understandings of “Volunteerism” (or lack of)
- Creating Meaningful Volunteer Roles
- Partnering/Networking
- Important Role of Volunteer Centres, Professional Associations and Volunteer Management Professional Staff
- Internal Capacity
- Creating a Welcoming Environment
- Working Differently
- Screening New Canadians
- Language and Communications Barriers
- Widening Dimensions of Diversity

Recruitment

- How do we access culturally diverse volunteers?
- We need to “sell” volunteerism in a new way – using strategic, targeted approach
- The importance of adapting and marketing volunteerism as a vehicle to employment
- Failure to connect – “volunteers don’t know where we are and we don’t know how to say we’re here”
- Groups that are new to anti-oppression, diversity and inclusion are often afraid of inadvertently being offensive or doing something illegal, and they become hesitant to act
- Some organizations still asking if they want to recruit diverse volunteers

Cultural Understandings of “Volunteerism” (or lack of)

- Volunteerism is not a concept that is well understood
- New Canadians may be unfamiliar with philosophies and perspectives of Canadian organizations (e.g. feminist oriented organizations)
- Misunderstandings that even though work is unpaid, there are still important expectations of volunteers

Creating Meaningful Volunteer Roles

- Make volunteer opportunities 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 – match roles to their capabilities

Partnering/Networking

- The need for partnering/networking between organizations *and* with organizations that support New Canadians

Important Role of Volunteer Centres, Professional Associations for Managers of Volunteers, Paid Position Dedicated to the Professional Management of Volunteers

Internal Capacity

- Training needed for working with diverse populations
- Financial limits (and resulting capacity limits) to support advancing cultural diversity in volunteer management
- Non-diverse staffing

Creating a Welcoming Environment Within an Organization

- Confronting cultural and systemic prejudice
- Resistance to training by staff and volunteers (“I don’t need it. I’m not a racist.”)
- Formal processes can be intimidating and discouraging
- Hesitancies by New Canadians re: co-ed programs, culturally mixed groups or events with Canadian food
- 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
- It’s important to assess whether an agency’s service is actually needed by diverse communities

Working Differently

- Adapting traditional ways of doing things
- 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.
- Learning from New Canadians rather than assuming a teaching role
- Organizational openness to change

Screening New Canadians

- Reference checks can be difficult
- Police checks can be intimidating

Language and Communications Barriers to Volunteer Recruitment and Support

Other Dimensions of Diversity

- What about other aspects of diversity (e.g. LGBT, disability)? Will the project include these?

Survey Themes

In advance of each Community Dialogue, local hosts asked participants to complete an online survey (Thank you to Trudy Beaulne of the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo for coordinating the development of the online survey).

| Survey Question | 905 Region (Durham & Halton) | | 519 Region (Kitchener & Cambridge) | |
|---|--|-----|--|-----|
| Issues/Challenges in Supporting More Culturally Diverse Volunteers | Language and communications | 41% | Language and communications | 53% |
| | Lack of resources | 20% | Cultural differences | 11% |
| Overcoming Issues/Challenges | More resources (funding and staff) | 27% | Interpretation, translation and ESL training | 36% |
| | By training and understanding | 20% | By training and understanding | 21% |
| Organizational Benefits | Better able to serve a multicultural client base | 41% | Better able to serve a multicultural client base | 36% |
| | Improve org'l inclusiveness and understanding | 29% | Improve org'l inclusiveness and understanding | 27% |
| | | | Bring new ideas and perspectives | 18% |
| Formal Policies and Practices* | No specific policies and procedures | 38% | No specific policies and procedures | 19% |
| | Formal policies | 30% | Diversity orientation and training | 30% |
| | Diversity orientation and training | 20% | Staff support | 19% |
| Community Resources | Multicultural Centre | 31% | Multicultural Centre | 21% |
| | Diversity Training | 16% | Diversity Training | 21% |
| | Volunteer Centre | 20% | Volunteer Centre | 21% |
| Recruitment | No specific promotion or recruitment measures | 63% | No specific promotion or recruitment measures | 39% |
| | Targeted recruitment/special outreach | 22% | Targeted recruitment/special outreach | 23% |
| | Word of Mouth | 5% | | |

* Even though language and communications was listed as the top challenge, only 11% of 519 respondents listed “translation and interpretation” support and 0% reported this in 905 region.

Top Positive and Possible Actions

At the end of each of the four Community Dialogues, 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 | Kitchener-Waterloo | Cambridge |
|--|---|---|--|
| Fund volunteer resource centre (with a diversity manager) | Make volunteer opportunities must be meaningful – matching skills and needs | Collaborate with community organizations re: best practices. | Reach out to faith communities, service clubs where people are and make connection to recruit volunteers. |
| Increase knowledge in the community from diverse groups regarding volunteer opportunities | Advertisement and promotion – be inclusive and show diversity in promotional outreach | Build collaborative partnerships between organizations. Recruit volunteers from agencies that serve new Canadians. | Volunteer Cambridge could increase its visibility in the community; act as a broker and referral system; offer diversity training for non-profit staff. |
| 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 | Create one central organization that handles everything related to newcomers. House all ESL, settlement services, supports and volunteer opportunities under one roof. All the little organizations continue to exist, but now there’s only one number to call – it would reduce confusion and overlap. | Mutual education. Meet and cooperate with cultural groups. Discuss the benefits of volunteering, the opportunities available; learn their needs and goals in turn. |
| 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 | Hold a Volunteer Recruitment Fair at the Multicultural Centre. Go where the people are. X who works there is swamped with volunteer applications from newcomers – she has nowhere to place them. | Education that links populations to resources and services (e.g. Religious leaders are educated about volunteerism) |
| Forums include representatives from diverse communities to identify not just needs but capacities | Advocate for a volunteer management position in your organization. | Engage newcomers who have benefited from volunteering to explain and promote the value and advantages of volunteering to other newcomers. They are the experts. | Cultural sensitivity training for our staff and volunteers |
| | | | Network with service providers who can help |

| Durham | Halton | Kitchener-Waterloo | Cambridge |
|--------|--------|--------------------|--|
| | | | us connect with diverse groups (e.g. YMCA offers oral interpretation; K-W Multicultural Centre translates documents) |

Discussion Questions for Reference Group

At this juncture in the Community Dialogues process, the Project team has identified the following questions where we'd value the Reference Group's feedback:

- How do we address or accommodate cultural differences in understanding about "volunteering"?
- How do we help "legitimize" strategic targeting of volunteers from certain cultural communities where there is concern about being offensive (or possibly discriminatory)?
- If a legitimate strategy, what are innovative approaches to targeted outreach?
- How do we treat the matter of "screening" as an ethical management function?