

City of Richmond

# Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021

Engaging and Supporting Volunteers for a Vibrant, Connected City



# Acknowledgements

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# 1. Executive Summary

Volunteering can be a life changing experience, as many people involved in it find a sense of community connectedness, accomplishment, and pride. Volunteers contribute to community development, vibrancy, and legacy building, while often gaining numerous personal benefits themselves. The spirit of volunteerism can be found throughout Richmond as various community groups, faith communities, non-profits, educational institutions, charitable organizations along with Richmond Cares, Richmond Gives, all provide a wide variety of volunteer opportunities.

In 2007, the City of Richmond adopted its first Volunteer Management Strategy. The Strategy was developed to guide the actions for creating a centralized volunteer management system in preparation for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and as a legacy intended to serve the City and its partners well into the future. The Strategy helped increase the capacity of the City and partner organizations in their delivery of programs, services, and events with volunteers' involvement.

The *Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021: Engaging and Supporting Volunteers for a Vibrant, Connected City* is an update to the original 2007 Strategy and focuses on supporting volunteers in their development and achievement of their personal goals as well as further supporting City, partner, and affiliate staff who work closely with volunteers.

Developing the updated Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021 first involved conducting an analysis of the City's accomplishments of the actions and goals set out in the original Strategy followed by a review of best practices in volunteer management. The next steps comprised of collecting data on the experiences of those involved in volunteerism, both as volunteers and staff who support volunteers. An online survey was administered to volunteers within the City's volunteer management system database and to partner boards of directors. Several focus groups were conducted with volunteers and staff.

The key findings are listed below:

- 83 per cent of survey respondents indicate there are sufficient opportunities to volunteer through the City or its partners, yet 56 per cent say there are other skills they would like to utilise during their volunteer experience or other types of volunteering that they would like to participate in;
- Volunteers indicate they would like more leadership opportunities, as well as those of a cultural or linguistic nature;
- Youth tend to receive less training, support, and recognition compared to adults;
- Volunteers from the focus groups report that it is important for staff coordinating volunteer events and programs to be organized and considerate of their needs, as it contributes to a positive experience and is a sign of respect;



- Staff who work with volunteers would like additional support resources to help them with technical troubleshooting of the software system, recruiting and training volunteers, and supporting volunteers' needs;
- There were a number of suggestions made for improvements to the online volunteer management system, *I Can Help*. Some of the suggestions reflect staff training issues while others indicate issues with the software system itself both in the presentation of the site and with the programmed functions of the software;
- In order to provide consistency and excellence in volunteer management, staff working with volunteers need further supports to increase their capacity whether that be in the form of online resources, further support from the City's Volunteer Development Coordinator, or mentorship from their colleagues.

The analysis of the data resulted in the development of three objectives and five strategic initiatives with actions to achieve desired outcomes. The objectives of this updated Strategy are to ensure that 1) *Richmond is a connected, vibrant city*, 2) *volunteers are engaged in their community through a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities*, and that 3) *the City and partner organizations deliver a variety of programs, services, and events with the involvement of volunteers*. The five strategic initiatives identified as priorities are:

1. eCoordinator (staff) capacity building;
2. Volunteer capacity building;
3. Volunteer appreciation;
4. Promotion, awareness, and communications;
5. Software system improvements.

Within these strategic initiatives are a total of 18 actions to achieve the desired outcomes. The Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021 specifies these actions and incorporates a logic model, implementation and evaluation plans to ensure the outcomes are met. The logic model and the implementation and outcomes evaluation plans are frameworks to monitor and assess the effectiveness of actions and to ensure progress is made towards achieving the desired outcomes and objectives.

Volunteers play a vital role in generating community connectedness and vibrancy in the City of Richmond. The City of Richmond and its partners rely heavily on volunteers to support the delivery of many events, services, and programs to the community. This updated Volunteer Management Strategy recognizes the important contributions that volunteers make and in return, this Strategy prioritizes volunteers and promotes positive, meaningful volunteer experiences. The strategic initiatives and actions outlined in this document support volunteers by developing opportunities for them as well as building capacity in the staff that work with volunteers. This Strategy supports volunteer participation in events and programs across the City and through partner organizations to ensure volunteerism thrives in Richmond well into the future.

## 2. Introduction

Volunteering is a form of citizenship and an essential part of community building. Volunteers donate their time as an investment in their community<sup>1</sup> and in return, report gaining many benefits. There are numerous reasons for volunteering; many individuals who volunteer cite feeling a need to give back to their community as well as it being a fun and rewarding experience.

While volunteerism provides numerous benefits to the volunteer, volunteers also play a vital role in supporting the delivery of many programs, services, and events offered by the City of Richmond and its partners. There are over 10,000 volunteers currently registered through the City of Richmond’s volunteer management system. On average, volunteers provide approximately 92,000 hours of service annually.

The *Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021: Engaging and Supporting Volunteers for a Vibrant, Connected City* (VMS 2018–2021) is an update to the *2007–2012 Volunteer Management Strategy: Building the Volunteer Spirit!* (2007–2012 VMS) and focuses on engaging volunteers and enabling them to reach their goals. The Strategy also focuses on providing the supports for City, partner, and affiliate<sup>2</sup> staff who work closely with volunteers.



<sup>1</sup> CNIB. (2017). *Strengthening Communities Through Volunteer Program Development: Culture of Volunteerism – Manual*, 1–33.

<sup>2</sup> The City of Richmond’s Community Services supports a variety of different organizations and groups through its volunteer management systems and processes. The Community Associations operating out of the City’s community centres are examples of City partners; the Sharing Farm Society and Gulf of Georgia Cannery Society are examples of affiliated organizations. From here onward, for simplicity in language, this document will refer to both partner and affiliate organizations as partners or partner staff.



## 3. Background



Richmond's population continues to grow with a high influx of new residents born outside of Canada. Richmond is known for its rich ethnic diversity. A majority of Richmond residents (70%) self-identify as a visible minority. This is the highest proportion of any municipality in BC and the second highest in Canada. Many languages are spoken in Richmond.

In 2007, the City of Richmond adopted its first Volunteer Management Strategy (VMS). The Strategy was developed to guide the creation of a centralized volunteer management system and hiring of a Volunteer Development Coordinator in preparation for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. This Strategy has been successful as a legacy for the City of Richmond and its partners in guiding volunteer management into the future. A number of actions were identified that led to the implementation of a centralized online volunteer management system. There were also actions that supported capacity building for volunteers and developing various accompanying resources for those working with volunteers. Numerous actions were identified that aimed to address partner synergies, training of City and partner staff on best practices in working with volunteers, providing technical support, and providing support for and recognition of volunteers.

Thirty actions emanated from five strategic directions set forth in the 2007–2012 VMS with over 100 expected outcomes as a result of those actions. The City has accomplished most of these actions and achieved many of the desired outcomes. The City has modernized its volunteer management system with the number of opportunities for volunteers doubling and the number of volunteer hours contributed to the community tripling since 2011.

The 2007–2012 VMS is largely a success. Although the original Strategy recognizes the importance of volunteer and staff capacity building, the updated VMS 2018–2021 continues to prioritize this area with the primary objective of engaging and further developing supports for volunteers within the City and its partner organizations.

## 4. Volunteerism

Volunteerism is defined as an act of willingly providing a service without pay usually within one's community, yet volunteering goes much deeper than this definition, as many who are involved in it report life changing experiences. The top three reasons for volunteering as reported by the City's volunteers are giving back to the community, meeting new people, and connecting to the community. However, volunteers report many reasons for volunteering and gain many benefits from doing so. Volunteering provides opportunities to connect with neighbours and people they would not otherwise encounter, de-stress and engage in activities unrelated to work, and be part of community and legacy building through the many City events. For some, volunteering allows them to provide their skills to the community while for others, it allows them to develop new skills such as technical, leadership, management, and planning skills. Volunteering is an opportunity to set examples for the younger generation as well as get to know them. Overall, volunteers experience a deeper feeling of connection to the community, ownership over community development, and a certain pride in their accomplishments.

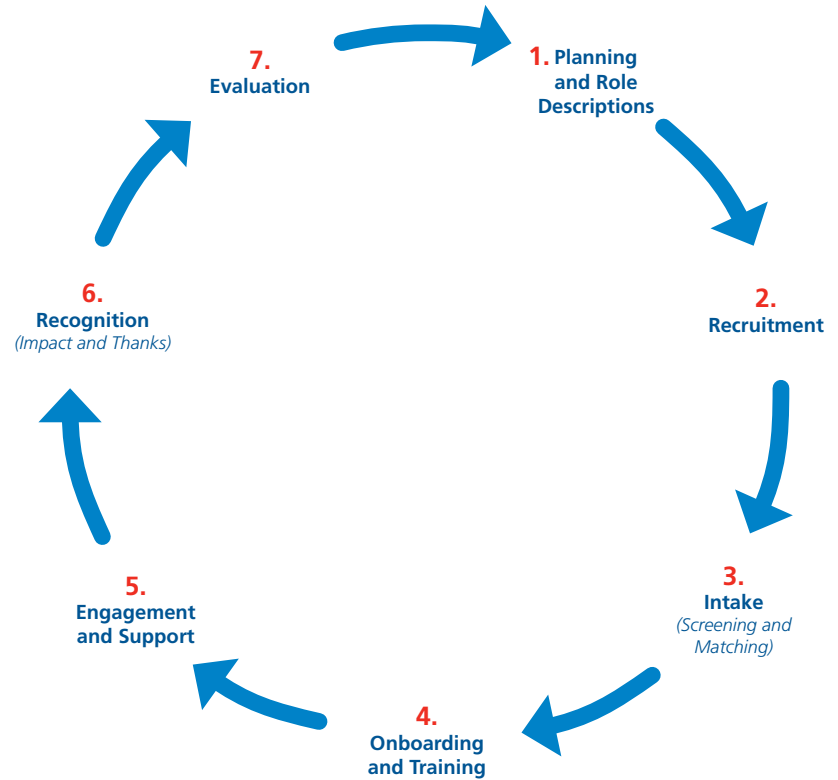
### 4.1 Trends and Shifts in Volunteer Practices

Until recently, much of the literature regarding best practices in volunteer management was focused on how to recruit and retain volunteers. The emphasis on volunteer management was centred upon the organization itself and how volunteers could support the organization in achieving its mission. There has been a shift away from an organization-focused, recruiting-centred approach to a much more volunteer-centred approach whereby volunteers are considered partners and supported in reaching their goals.



Figure 1 below, illustrates the critical stages involved in volunteer management. It is a continuous cycle requiring planning, investment, and monitoring to ensure volunteers remain engaged. Weakness or failure of any of the stages breaks the cycle and risks volunteers resigning or finding opportunities elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1: Cycle of Volunteer Management**



The critical elements within the Cycle of Volunteer Management are already integrated into the City’s volunteer management practices, as the model was adopted as part of the original Strategy. The model continues to serve as a platform from which the updated Strategy’s initiatives and actions emanate.

While all the components of the cycle are critical to volunteer management success, succession planning is essential to maintaining a healthy force of volunteers to aid in the delivery of City and partner events and programs. Most of the volunteer hours for the City of Richmond are contributed by a few individuals, youth and older adults. Youth tend to stop volunteering once in postsecondary education or once they have entered the workforce. Older adults sometimes face health challenges or physical barriers to continuing volunteering. Ensuring that all elements of the cycle are incorporated into volunteer management practices, will help recruit and engage younger volunteers and retain them well into the future.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> CNIB. (2017). Strengthening Communities Through Volunteer Program Development: Culture of Volunteerism – Manual, 1–33.

<sup>4</sup> CNIB. (2017). Strengthening Communities Through Volunteer Program Development: Culture of Volunteerism – Manual, 1–33.

## Today's Volunteers

Developing the Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021 (VMS 2018–2021) involved conducting an extensive literature review and identifying best practices in volunteer management. This section identifies the best practices in volunteer management, which formed the basis of the Strategy's research questions as well as informed the strategic initiatives within this Strategy.

The research conducted on volunteerism can be synthesized to describe volunteers and their needs. Three themes emerge: volunteers can be described as goal oriented; wanting to make a difference; and needing to feel appreciated. The established best practices in volunteer management can be categorized under these three themes to support volunteers and address their needs. These best practices are categorized and listed below.

## Best Practices in Volunteer Management

### 1. Volunteers are goal oriented.

- Support volunteers in reaching their personal goals – get to know them.
- Offer skills development/training opportunities.
- Offer opportunities to utilise different skill sets.
- Offer short-term and long-term opportunities.
- Offer non-traditional opportunities – e.g. online/tech-based.
- Support volunteers in creating their own experience.
- Incorporate volunteers into planning processes.

### 2. Volunteers want to make a difference.

- Offer meaningful volunteer opportunities.
- Create a two-way relationship/partnership.
- Communicate the impact of their contributions.
- Provide clearly written job descriptions so the goals, vision, potential impact, and expectations are understood.
- Give and receive feedback.

### 3. Volunteers want to be appreciated.

- Recognize/thank volunteers.
- Recognize individual social responsibility (informal volunteering).
- Provide opportunities for personal or professional development.
- Ask volunteers to contribute to program planning.
- Communicate the impact of their contributions.

Looking forward, the updated VMS 2018–2021 aims to take volunteer management practices to the next level by focusing on the volunteers' needs and experiences and using these best practices as foundational building blocks of the Strategy. The updated Strategy also prioritizes staff capacity building to ensure consistency and excellence across the board in volunteer management.





## 4.2 Volunteerism in Richmond

### Volunteering through the City and Partner Organizations

The City of Richmond has long been engaging with volunteers in a variety of ways. The City offers various programs, services, and events to its residents often including volunteers in the delivery of them. These opportunities span all departments within the City. Volunteer opportunities range from participating in a single event, to involvement with regularly occurring programs, to volunteering on a board of directors.

The majority of the City's volunteer opportunities are provided through the Community Services Division, as there are numerous programs and events through sports, recreation, parks, arts, culture, heritage, and community social development that are enhanced with the involvement of volunteers.

Many of the volunteer opportunities within the Community Services Division are offered through partner organizations/associations. These organizations/associations are comprised of volunteer boards of directors that are also largely responsible for developing the opportunities in which volunteers are involved. These organizations often rely on volunteers to support the delivery of certain programs and events. These organizations/associations are the main users of the City's volunteer management system and rely on the system to recruit volunteers. Partner organization staff working with volunteers receive training and support from the City's Volunteer Development Coordinator (VDC).

The City's Emergency Social Services and Environmental Programs are departments that also heavily involve volunteers in their services. Emergency Social Services provides opportunities for and relies on volunteers to help educate the public on emergency preparedness and deliver services during emergency response situations.

Environmental Programs offers several volunteer program opportunities such as the Green Ambassadors program; volunteers act as environmental stewards and engage the community at events about waste diversion and other relevant environmental issues. Other City departments involve volunteers in events and service delivery from time to time as required.

The City's Volunteer Development Coordinator (VDC) is responsible for supporting all the different departments involved with volunteers by ensuring efforts are coordinated throughout the City. The City also provides these volunteer management services to a number of partner and affiliated organizations within the community.

Both the Richmond Public Library and Richmond RCMP utilise the City of Richmond’s volunteer management services. The Richmond Public Library provides a variety of volunteer opportunities, which are often utilized by new immigrants seeking Canadian volunteer experiences and developing language skills. The Richmond RCMP has a community policing volunteer program as well as volunteer opportunities through the Block Watch program.

The Richmond Olympic Oval and Richmond Olympic Experience interactive museum provide a number of events- and sports-related opportunities for volunteering. The City also supports the recruitment of volunteers for certain special events held at the Oval.

Periodically, other community groups request that the City help recruit volunteers for specific events.

### Other Volunteer Opportunities within Richmond

Volunteer opportunities are available through many other organizations across the City. Sports associations tend to recruit their own volunteers, as many volunteers are family members of the athletes. Religious institutions also utilise volunteers by drawing upon their membership. Volunteering through a child’s school or activities as well as with professional associations are very common. Informal volunteering such as helping a neighbour and micro volunteering (e.g. signing a petition) are now recognized forms of volunteerism as well.

Richmond Cares Richmond Gives (RCRG) is a non-profit organization that ensures Richmond’s charitable sector has the resources it needs to make a meaningful impact in the community. It connects individuals interested in volunteering with organizations of a social service nature for longer term volunteer experiences. Many of the City’s partner and affiliated organizations promote volunteer opportunities through RCRG as well as through the City’s volunteer website.

RCRG offers training to volunteers and staff who work closely with volunteers. Their training involves courses on best practices as well as on specific areas of volunteer management. The City of Richmond and RCRG have had a good working relationship for many years and support each other in the promotion of volunteerism in Richmond. An example is RCRG’s Youth Leadership program that the City and the VDC support on an annual basis. The City and partner organizations also utilise RCRG’s training and resources as appropriate.



For both RCRG and City of Richmond partners, approximately 70 per cent of volunteer hours/opportunities recorded are in community programs and services whereas about 30 per cent are events-based. However, volunteer opportunities are not duplicated, as the opportunities through the City and partners tend to be in recreation, parks, arts, heritage, culture, and community development, whereas the opportunities through RCRG tend to be in the social services sector. This percentage breakdown has evolved over the past five years, as volunteers have taken on a larger role in supporting community programs.

Among the City, RCRG, and the many organizations within Richmond that offer volunteer opportunities, there is a great variety of opportunities in which residents can be involved. Opportunities and services complement one another by providing a range of options for volunteers. All these organizations that work with volunteers play a critical role generating community connectedness among Richmond residents as well as developing Richmond's legacy.



# 5. The Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021 and City Objectives

The Volunteer Management Strategies development has been led by the Community Services Division. The Strategies aim to support volunteerism across all City divisions and the broader community.

## The Vision

The City of Richmond's vision is *to be the most appealing, livable, and well-managed community in Canada.*

A vision statement for the 2007–2012 VMS was developed to guide the objectives and actions emanating from the Strategy.

### 2007–2012 VMS Vision

*Richmond's Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services, connects people with volunteer opportunities, leads and sustains a strong volunteer spirit.*

The objectives and actions set forth in the updated Strategy aim to continue to foster a strong volunteer spirit within the community. However, the updated Strategy prioritizes its focus on the support and capacity building of volunteers to increase a sense of community connectedness.







Considering the City's vision, the vision of the 2007–2012 VMS, and the re-direction of priorities for the updated Strategy, the vision for the VMS 2018–2021 is that:

*Richmond engages, supports, and connects people through volunteer opportunities, which contribute to Richmond being a livable, appealing, and vibrant city.*

## City Strategies

The VMS 2018–2021 supports goals as well as responds to specific actions identified within a number of City strategies. The City of Richmond has an Official Community Plan (OCP). The OCP is a legally required City bylaw that enables City Council to plan, co-ordinate and manage the City's sustainability, social, economic and land use interests, over the long term (e.g. 2041). The OCP reflects the overall values of the community by establishing a City vision, goals and objectives for future sustainability, development and servicing, and policies and urban design guidelines to achieve the vision.

The OCP recognizes the importance of developing a vibrant community, including providing opportunities to connect with neighbours, feel a sense of belonging, and engage in lifelong learning. Maximizing volunteer involvement in the delivery of parks, recreation, and wellness programs and services is specifically acknowledged in the OCP. The VMS 2018–2021 contributes to developing a vibrant City, as it supports volunteers' involvement in many avenues of community development and legacy building.

The VMS 2018–2021 also supports the objectives within the *Community Wellness Strategy 2017–2022* and the *Building Our Social Future – A Social Development Strategy for Richmond 2013–2022*. The Community Wellness Strategy 2017–2022 is currently being developed to guide the actions across the Community Services Division. Volunteerism supports the Community Wellness Strategy's Focus Area 2: *Enhance physical and social connectedness within and among neighbourhoods and communities*. Volunteers report gaining a deeper sense of connectedness to their community through volunteer activities. They find that volunteering allows them to meet people they would not otherwise get to meet, understand their community and neighbourhood needs better, and become invested in and gain a sense of pride in being a part of developing their community. The VMS 2018–2021 aims to further promote and enable these outcomes as well as provide capacity building support to volunteers to reach their goals. In turn, these actions will support the Community Wellness Strategy's objectives of a healthy, connected, and engaged community.

Strategic Direction 6 from the Social Development Strategy (SDS) supports community engagement and volunteerism. The SDS recognizes that volunteering is one of the most fundamental acts of citizenship and philanthropy in society and is a primary contributor to building a strong community. Through working with volunteers,

the City is able to provide an increased scope and variety of activities, and maximize service provision across the community where financial resources may otherwise be limited. The SDS and the VMS 2018–2021 complement each other as the SDS is committed to implementing and monitoring the VMS 2018–2021, collaborating and establishing partnerships and engaging and empowering the community, while the VMS 2018–2021 contributes to developing an inclusive, engaged, and caring community.

Other City strategies to which the VMS 2018–2021 relates include:

- 2017–2022 Intercultural Strategic Plan;
- Arts Strategy (under development);
- Emergency Social Services Plan (under development);
- 2007 Museum & Heritage Strategy;
- Recreation and Sport Strategy (under development);
- Richmond Library Strategic and Long Range Plan 2014–2018;
- Richmond Sport Hosting Strategy 2016–2020;
- Seniors Service Plan 2015–2019;
- Youth Service Plan 2015– 2020;
- Britannia Shipyards National Historic Site Strategic Plan 2014–2018.

The VMS 2018–2021 prioritizes volunteer capacity building and providing meaningful volunteer opportunities for volunteers to connect to their community. The initiatives and actions set forth in the Strategy all aim to improve the experiences of volunteers and help them reach their goals. This Strategy supports the objectives within the various City strategies and lays the foundation for continuous volunteerism and community development well into the future.

## 6. Developing the Updated Strategy (2018–2021)

The 2007–2012 Volunteer Management Strategy (2007–2012 VMS) guided the actions surrounding volunteerism for the City and its partners. Much was accomplished as a result of the Strategy and many of the objectives remain relevant today in guiding volunteer management practices for the City and partner organizations.

As a first step in developing the Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021 (VMS 2018–2021), a current state analysis was conducted. The 30 actions and 100 outcomes set forth in the 2007–2012 VMS were assessed for completion, success, and relevancy to current issues facing volunteer management.

The next steps comprised of researching best practices in volunteer management and collecting data on the experiences of those involved in volunteerism, both as volunteers and the staff who support volunteers. An online survey was administered to all volunteers within the City's volunteer management system database as well as to partner boards of directors. Focus groups were conducted with volunteers and staff who work with volunteers (termed eCoordinators<sup>5</sup>).

The analysis of the data contributed to the development of five strategic initiatives with 18 actions to achieve specific outcomes. The objectives, strategic initiatives and actions are discussed in Sections 8 and 9. Although the strategic initiatives differ from the original Strategy, the actions and desired outcomes in the update complement and support the original Strategy's goals and major objectives.



<sup>5</sup> eCoordinators are trained City and partner staff who use their own facility/program staff portal of the City volunteer management system.

# 7. Data Analysis Highlights

This section briefly describes the major themes that emerged from the survey and focus groups with volunteers and eCoordinators. For an in depth analysis of the data and detailed methodologies, please refer to Appendix A, B, and C.

## 7.1 Survey Highlights

The survey data suggest that the City's volunteers are a dedicated group that have many skills and significant knowledge to contribute to the community. The survey results indicate a high level of satisfaction with the overall volunteer experience; however, there are key themes that stand out.

Eighty-three per cent of respondents indicate there are sufficient opportunities to volunteer through the City or its partners, yet 56 per cent say there are other skills they would like to utilise during their volunteer experience or other types of volunteering that they would like to be doing. Forty-six per cent of volunteers indicate they would like to use their fluency in another language in their volunteer opportunities and 31 per cent would like to use their cultural knowledge. Respondents indicate they have a wide variety of other skills and knowledge to offer while volunteering. These findings suggest there needs to be a greater variety of volunteer opportunities developed, including those of a cultural and linguistic nature.





Experiences and volunteer goals differ slightly among age groups. Preliminary discussions with eCoordinators suggested that youth only want to acquire hours to graduate. The youth survey and focus group data suggest otherwise. Many youth value skills development and gain feelings of community connectedness from volunteer opportunities. Youth also indicate that they have other skills to offer while volunteering and would like to be involved in other types of volunteering opportunities. Seventy-six per cent of youth feel they have leadership skills and that they would like more leadership opportunities. Many also have language skills, technology skills, and art skills that they would like to utilise. These findings suggest that youth want a greater variety of opportunities and more meaningful experiences.

Additionally, the survey indicates that youth feel they receive a lesser amount of support, training, and recognition for their volunteer activities compared to adults. Youth were the least likely group to report being recognized or thanked for their work; 74 per cent of youth report being thanked whereas over 83 per cent of adults report being thanked for volunteering. There are also fewer youth compared to adults who report that staff makes them feel like a valued partner to the organization.

The data from the survey indicate that volunteers desire a greater variety of volunteer opportunities, especially of a leadership nature and that greater investment into youth volunteers is needed. Youth also require further support, training, and recognition for their volunteer activities.

## 7.2 Volunteer Focus Group Highlights

Three focus groups were held to explore opportunities and issues that were highlighted through the online survey. A major theme that emerged through the volunteer focus groups is that volunteers want their needs to be considered and taken care of. As they donate their time and efforts to the community, they feel there needs to be reciprocity from staff. Volunteers' requests while volunteering are relatively simple. Below is a list of suggested ways staff can ensure positive experiences when planning and organizing volunteer events or other opportunities:

- Clear communication;
- Clearly defined roles and expectations;
- Well organized events/programs;
- Physical needs considered (bathroom breaks, food, clothing);
- Consistency of treatment among different events/organizations;
- Feedback provided regarding impact made;
- Respected as partners by staff yet differentiated from staff roles
- Feel as if a part of the event;
- Actively involved (not standing around);
- Appreciation for time donated.

In summary, volunteers want to feel appreciated and respected. Being organized and considerate of their needs contributes to a positive experience and demonstrates respect.

Youth had a few unique experiences that differed from adults. Some of the youth report not feeling adequately prepared for their assigned duties. They said that they would like more training and mentorship. Some youth report that they had been assigned leadership roles yet not truly granted authority when in these roles, which they found frustrating. Other youth cited that they felt underappreciated at times.

The focus group participants also had some suggestions for the online volunteer management system (*I Can Help*) to make it more intuitive and user-friendly:

- Post all opportunities at once (e.g. dates for annual and large events are known by City staff well in advance – volunteers would like to plan in advance);
- Filter opportunities based on requirements (e.g. age or experience);
- Remove past volunteer opportunities promptly;
- Provide better key word search ability;
- Create different sections based on type of opportunity (e.g. events, short-term, long-term);
- Ensure the *I Can Help* calendar of opportunities and individual profiles are up to date;
- Ensure consistency in hours recording;
- Have only one contact person.

Some of the issues presented above are a result of the software's program structure and others are due to staff training. There are opportunities to work with the software provider to streamline the software system as well as further the training and understanding of the system for the eCoordinators.

The main theme that emerged from both the youth and adult focus groups is that the little things matter. The way a volunteer is treated impacts their experience and determines whether they will return to volunteer at future programs or events.

### 7.3 eCoordinator Focus Group Highlights

Three focus groups involving 20 eCoordinators were held to gain their perspectives on the volunteer management system. Most of the eCoordinators report that they see great value in the City's volunteer management system. They like that the system is centralized, which makes the ability to recruit multiple volunteers and communicate with them en masse simple. eCoordinators appreciate that they can easily direct interested volunteer candidates to the *I Can Help* website to initiate the recruitment process. The system allows for systematic





procedures and screening across departments/organizations such as for the police information check, which eCoordinators find helpful. eCoordinators also appreciate that volunteer hours can be tracked and approved easily. The shared system is also recognized as being cost effective.

The analysis of the focus group discussions suggests that eCoordinators need support in the following areas:

1. Volunteer support/capacity building and retention;
2. Volunteer recognition;
3. Software system training/understanding.

There is inconsistency in the level of awareness and integration of best practices in volunteer management among eCoordinators. The eCoordinators that invest in volunteers and prioritize volunteer management best practices report good volunteer retention. However, not all organizations have the capacity to develop a volunteer program and are largely reactive in their volunteer management practices. Some organizations have difficulty recruiting and retaining appropriate volunteer candidates. In contrast, a few organizations struggle with having too many keen volunteers and would like support in developing additional appropriate opportunities.

Volunteer recognition can also be challenging. There are varying budgets among the partner organizations and thus some organizations are limited financially on how volunteer appreciation can be shown. Being responsive to volunteers' suggestions and supporting their goals are other ways that volunteers feel appreciated. However, staff capacity is a limiting factor once again.

Most of the eCoordinators report that the software system is slow and not user friendly. The eCoordinators have managed to navigate the system with the Volunteer Development Coordinator's (VDC) help, yet often lack understanding about certain functions or procedures. Part of the confusion over procedures is that different organizations have different needs. To address this issue, the VDC trains each eCoordinator individually. However, the individualized training sometimes results in a lack of understanding of the system as a whole. Additionally, more experienced eCoordinators expressed the need for further advanced training on the software system so that they can analyze their own data related to volunteer management. Ongoing and advanced training is provided to eCoordinators to increase their knowledge and capacity but due to the turnover of eCoordinator staff, the eCoordinators have differing levels of proficiency with the system.

In summary, eCoordinators need extra support, training, and resources to excel in volunteer management and provide volunteers with consistent, positive experiences. The challenges and obstacles faced by eCoordinators range from recruiting and training volunteers, to understanding legal liabilities, to supporting volunteers' needs, to technical troubleshooting of the software system. eCoordinators suggest having access to a number of support resources would give them independence, especially at times when the VDC is unavailable.

The following is a list of support resources suggested by the eCoordinators:

- Software manual with frequent troubleshooting tips;
- Manual of policies and protocols to guide decision making (e.g. legal requirements, liabilities, how to manage disruptive volunteers, guidelines with suggested practices such as providing food to volunteers);
- A resource on etiquette, customer service, and shared expectations;
- A checklist for organizing events or programs considering volunteers' needs (e.g. bathroom breaks, snacks, clothing);
- Resources for orienting and training volunteers;
- Resources on how to develop leadership opportunities and enhance volunteers' opportunities.

eCoordinators request that this information be accessible in a centralized online system. They suggest that the above items be presented in a variety of formats such as formal manuals with visuals (e.g. screenshots), checklists, toolkits, video tutorials, an online bulletin board where questions can be asked and answered, and a FAQs page, as appropriate to the material being presented.

eCoordinators also stated that meetings led by the VDC are valuable, as these are great forums to learn best practices and learn from each other. Some eCoordinators would like these meetings more often or for longer, to allow more learning from and sharing with each other, and help them evolve as leaders.

The analysis of the focus group discussions suggests that supporting eCoordinators and building their capacity will in turn help promote positive, engaging experiences for volunteers.





## 8. Objectives

The analysis of the research from the best practices, survey, and focus groups leads to the development of three objectives, which are the major long-term goals of the Strategy.

**Objective 1:** Richmond is a connected, vibrant city.

**Objective 2:** Volunteers are engaged in their community through a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities.

**Objective 3:** The City and partner organizations deliver a variety of programs, services, and events with the involvement of volunteers.

These objectives drive the development of the strategic initiatives and actions (detailed in Section 9). At the end of the Strategy's intended life, the objectives should be achieved through the effective implementation of the strategic initiatives and actions.

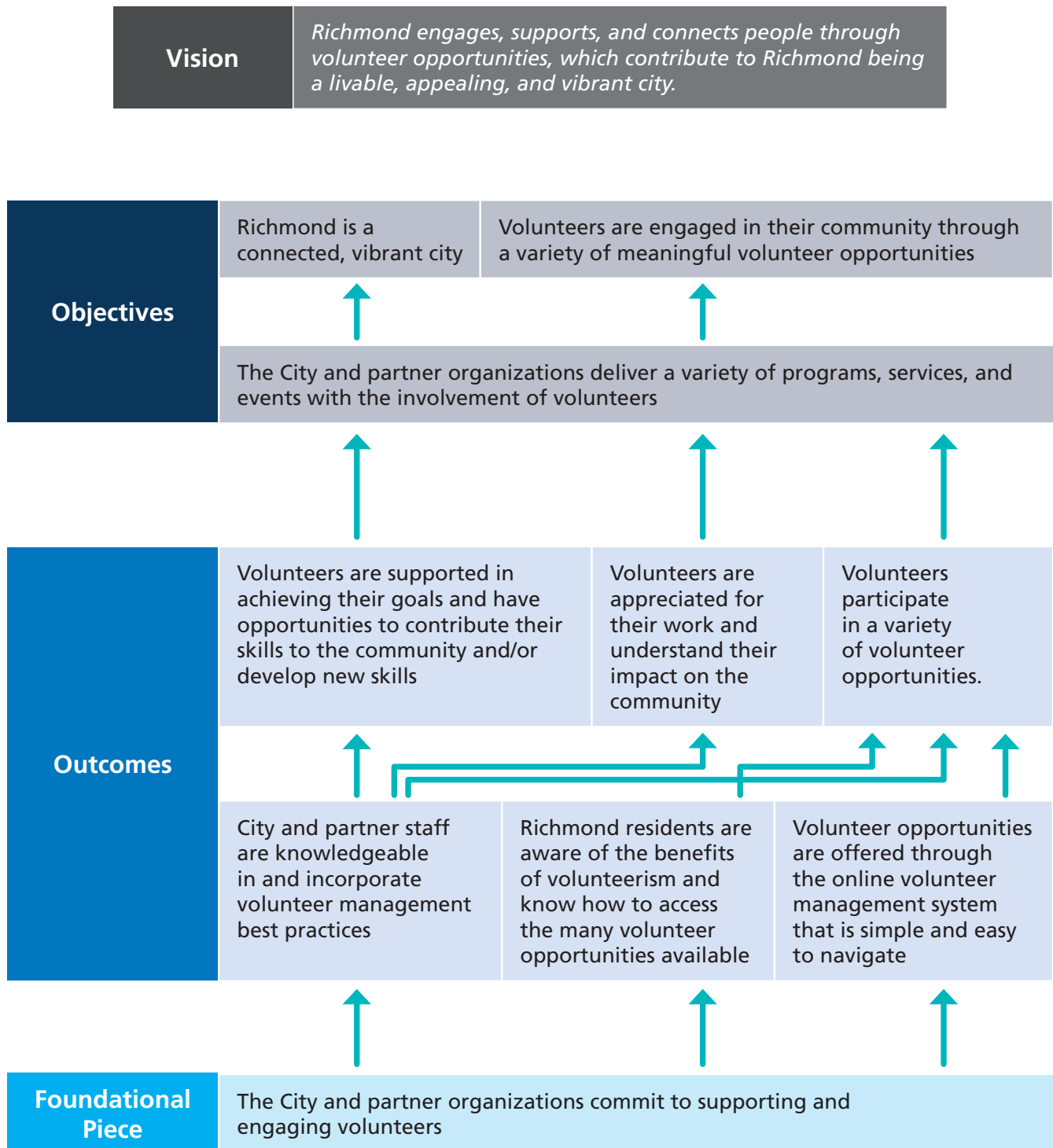
Objectives 1, 2, and 3 are interrelated and dependent upon each other. Figure 2 below, is a high level diagram that illustrates the relationships and the key components required to achieve the objectives. The diagram also depicts the foundational piece upon which the objectives rely, as well as anticipated outcomes at a high level. Outcomes are the incremental changes or benefits that contribute to the achievement of the objectives.

Objectives 1 and 2 are placed at the top of the diagram, as they prioritize the volunteer and the community. Objective 3 addresses the needs of the City and partner organizations in their program and event delivery and is considered a secondary priority and thus, placed below Objective 1 and 2. Objective 3 is also a precondition for achieving Objectives 1 and 2; when the City and its partners are able to deliver a variety of programs, services, and events, volunteers' involvement in them promote further community engagement, connectivity, and vibrancy.

Section 9 details the strategic initiatives, actions, and outcomes that support the achievement of the three objectives.



Figure 2: Objectives and Key Components



## 9. Strategic Initiatives

Five strategic initiatives have been identified as priorities for the VMS 2018–2021:

1. eCoordinator capacity building;
2. Volunteer capacity building;
3. Volunteer appreciation;
4. Promotion, awareness, and communications;
5. Software system improvements.

These strategic initiatives were developed based on the themes emanating from the survey and focus group research and established best practices in volunteer management. Each of these initiatives complement and build upon the goals and objectives defined in the original Strategy.

This Strategy prioritizes Strategic Initiatives 1 and 2, which aim to build capacity and develop opportunities that support and engage volunteers. However, all five strategic initiatives are necessary to improve the volunteer experience and take volunteer management practices to the next level.

### 9.1 Strategic Initiatives, Actions, and Outcomes

This section describes each strategic initiative in detail. Actions to attain each strategic initiative are outlined and the desired outcomes emanating from the actions are identified.



## Strategic Initiative 1: eCoordinator Capacity Building

eCoordinators are the first point of contact with volunteers and largely impact the volunteer's experience. Building capacity in eCoordinators will foster leaders in volunteer management who effectively support volunteers in having meaningful, positive experiences. This involves providing training and support resources for eCoordinators as well as developing eCoordinators as leaders.

Online resources will be developed that provide information and guidance to eCoordinators as well as set standards and support the development of volunteers. Resources will be designed for beginner to advanced eCoordinators and will include policies, recommended procedures, etiquette/customer service, standards, volunteer training, expectations of volunteers, software troubleshooting, and other volunteer management resources. The resources will consider the unique needs of City staff and partner staff and will be relevant to all eCoordinators in their various roles and specific relationships with volunteers. These materials will be presented in online documents that will be accessible through the eCoordinators' account. Resource materials will include a manual with screen shots of technical procedures, eCoordinator orientation and expectations, a FAQs page, and an event toolkit/checklist. These resources are not meant to be an exhaustive list but simply a place to start, with the intention that they will evolve over time with updated versions and additional resources added as required.

eCoordinator workshops will be held bi-monthly. These workshops are to provide updates and a forum to share knowledge and resources as well as provide leadership development opportunities for eCoordinators.

### eCoordinator Capacity Building

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Objective(s)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a centralized online resource centre for eCoordinators. To include (but not limited to):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies;</li> <li>• Procedures;</li> <li>• Event toolkit/checklist;</li> <li>• Expectations;</li> <li>• Etiquette/customer service;</li> <li>• Software troubleshooting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Implement bi-monthly eCoordinator workshops.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings to provide updates and a forum to share knowledge, resources, discuss common issues, and mentor one-another.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Develop leadership opportunities for eCoordinators.</li> </ol>	<p>Resources are available to support eCoordinators' in their work with volunteers.</p> <p>eCoordinators share ideas and resources, and mentor each other.</p> <p>eCoordinators develop as leaders and become champions for volunteerism.</p>	<p>Volunteers are engaged in their community through a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities.</p> <p>Richmond is a connected, vibrant city.</p>

## Strategic Initiative 2: Volunteer Capacity Building

Strategic Initiative 2 aims to build volunteer capacity by developing a continuum of volunteer leadership development opportunities through mentorships and connecting individuals to appropriate opportunities in an area of their interest. These opportunities will help develop volunteers' potential and provide quality opportunities to utilize their skills and foster growth.

Initiative 1 and 2 are closely linked to one another, as building capacity in eCoordinators affects volunteer capacity building. As eCoordinators are enabled to integrate best practices in volunteer management and become leaders, they will be able to provide the support for volunteers and engage them through a variety of mentorship and leadership opportunities.

The Volunteer Development Coordinator will work with eCoordinators to develop volunteer mentorship opportunities and opportunities of a leadership nature. eCoordinators and their respective organizations will also support volunteers in creating their own volunteer experience (considering whether a proposed volunteer initiative is in alignment with the organization's goals). The City will work with partners to offer training or skills development workshops for volunteers. This includes working with its partner boards of directors to deliver board development and information sessions.

Within this initiative, is also ensuring there is an array of volunteer opportunities including training and mentoring that meet the needs of different groups of people in Richmond. This involves developing more opportunities for families with children, corporate or group volunteer opportunities, older adults, and opportunities for persons with physical or developmental disabilities. Training staff on how to best connect volunteers who have additional needs to appropriate volunteer opportunities will need to be addressed.

It should be acknowledged that organizations may have limited capacity to implement all components of Strategic Initiative 2. The intention behind this initiative is that organizations work to expand and enhance their volunteer programs where possible and as appropriate to build volunteer capacity.

## Volunteer Capacity Building

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Objective(s)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop volunteer leadership opportunities and support volunteers in creating their own volunteer experiences.</li> <li>2. Offer volunteer development opportunities for a wide range of ages, skill levels, and interest areas.</li> <li>3. Create inclusive volunteer opportunities especially for students, families with children, corporations and groups, and people with special needs.</li> <li>4. Connect individuals to appropriate opportunities in an area of interest.</li> </ol>	<p>eCoordinators have the support, capacity, and tools to initiate, develop, and offer a continuum of volunteer leadership development opportunities.</p> <p>Volunteers feel their needs are considered and met.</p> <p>Volunteer development workshops and training courses are offered.</p> <p>There are a variety of inclusive volunteer opportunities.</p> <p>Volunteers are able to provide their skills and leadership to the community through these opportunities.</p> <p>Volunteers have positive experiences.</p>	<p>Volunteers are engaged in their community through a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities.</p> <p>Richmond is a connected, vibrant city.</p>



### Strategic Initiative 3: Volunteer Appreciation

It is essential that all volunteers are thanked for their volunteer efforts. Volunteers who feel appreciated are more likely to continue to donate their time to the community. There are a variety of ways to make volunteers feel appreciated that range from a simple ‘thank you’ from staff to large scale recognition events. Strategic Initiative 3 aims to develop the processes to recognize the contributions that volunteers make and ensure recognition is appropriate to the different volunteer demographics.

The City will work with partner organizations to develop recognition protocol and generate a variety of recognition ideas for varying budgets. A budget request will be submitted to support City recognition initiatives and activities. Because investing in individuals is considered a form of appreciation, funds should also be considered for specialized volunteer training and development opportunities such as first aid training or leadership development courses.

The City will continue to celebrate volunteers during National Volunteer Recognition Week as well as organize recognition events for volunteers. While the City will take the lead on major recognition events, such events are to be coordinated with partner organizations. One major event will be an annual recognition event hosted by the City and its partners to officially recognize and celebrate the contributions that volunteers made in the preceding year. The City will also incorporate volunteer recognition at other City events and feature exceptional and unique volunteers on the *I Can Help* website.

#### Volunteer Appreciation

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Objective(s)
1. Develop recognition protocol with partners that identifies recognition activities and roles of the City and partner organizations.	The City and partner organizations recognize volunteers in a variety of ways.	Volunteers are engaged in their community through a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities.
2. Plan and execute an annual volunteer recognition event(s) in conjunction with partner organizations.	Volunteers feel their efforts are appreciated and understand their impact.	The City and partner organizations deliver a variety of programs, services, and events with the involvement of volunteers.
3. Recognize volunteers throughout the year.	There is good volunteer retention/ volunteers continue to invest in their community.	
4. Develop and submit a budget request with funding rationale to support volunteer development and recognition events and activities.	Resources and capacity are available to provide recognition to volunteers.	

## Strategic Initiative 4: Promotion, Awareness, and Communications

Ensuring there are sufficient volunteers who are able and appropriately skilled to be a part of the various programs and events is paramount to the sustainability of Richmond’s volunteer management system. Research conducted to inform the Richmond Community Wellness Strategy indicates that there are many Richmond residents who are interested in volunteering but do not know how to find opportunities. Additionally, the volunteer survey data found that recent immigrants were underrepresented in volunteer activities. Strategic Initiative 4 will contribute to more effective promotion of the benefits of volunteering and increased awareness of how to access the opportunities available.

The City will develop a plan to guide the further promotion of volunteering benefits, promotion of the *I Can Help* website, and outreach to Richmond residents. Awareness and communications on how, where, and what the process is to become a volunteer will be conveyed during the promotion, outreach, and engagement initiatives. Target markets comprise of newcomers, students, families with children, and corporations. This plan will include promotions via the City website, social media, volunteer fairs, and outreach through other community organizations. Promotion, awareness, and communication of volunteer opportunities via local schools are essential as well, as many programs rely on student volunteers.

The City will work with Richmond Cares Richmond Gives (RCRG) to further promote volunteerism in Richmond and share volunteer resources as appropriate. The City will also explore further synergies with other Richmond-based organizations to promote additional volunteer opportunities and resource sharing.

In order for eCoordinators to become true leaders and champions of volunteerism, they require the support from their managers and colleagues. As part of Strategic Initiative 4, the VDC will engage with City management and partner boards of directors to create better awareness and understanding of the existing volunteer programs and management system. This increased internal awareness aims to promote further support for and enhancement of the volunteer programs.



## Promotion, Awareness, and Communications

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Objective(s)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a volunteer promotion, awareness, and communications plan for internal and external audiences.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actions to include in the plan:                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting the <i>I Can Help</i> website and opportunities;</li> <li>Creating awareness of benefits of volunteering;</li> <li>Communicating the process of becoming a volunteer and services available.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Work with RCRG to promote volunteerism and share volunteer resources as appropriate.</li> <li>Explore further synergies with other Richmond-based organizations to promote additional volunteer opportunities and resource sharing.</li> </ol>	<p>Greater awareness of volunteer opportunities in Richmond.</p> <p>Greater internal awareness of and support for volunteer programs and the volunteer management system.</p> <p>An array of volunteer opportunities are promoted and offered throughout Richmond.</p> <p>The number of volunteers registered in the database increases.</p> <p>There is an increased number of volunteers available and participating in various opportunities throughout Richmond.</p>	<p>Volunteers are engaged in their community through a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities.</p> <p>The City and partner organizations deliver a variety of programs, services, and events with the involvement of volunteers.</p> <p>Richmond is a connected, vibrant city.</p>



## Strategic Initiative 5: Software System Improvements

Browsing and navigating the *I Can Help* website is often the first experience in the process of becoming a volunteer for the City of Richmond or one of its partner organizations; this experience sets the impression for future interactions. A well-designed, well-laid out website with up-to-date opportunities and information will help volunteers easily find and apply for opportunities, which contribute to the overall volunteer experience. An effective system will also better enable eCoordinators to recruit, screen, train, and communicate with volunteers as well as expand their volunteer program.

The Volunteer Development Coordinator (VDC) is responsible for the volunteer management system and the training of eCoordinators on it. The VDC will work with the software provider to make processes more intuitive and user friendly. There will also be a re-development of the website layout.

Areas of the software system to be addressed include:

- The ability of filtration and search options for volunteer opportunities;
- Potential future technological advancements – e.g. app development, new ways of tracking and inputting volunteer hours, communication methods between volunteers and eCoordinators;
- Organizing the site by opportunity type – e.g. short-term, long-term;
- Re-developing how the opportunities are posted – e.g. by date versus title.

Further discussions with eCoordinators and the VDC are required to identify improvement areas related to the software. Implementing the suggestions is dependent upon the feasibility of the software program and will require conversations with the software provider. As enhancements are made to the system, this initiative assumes there will be continuous dialogue among its users to find other opportunities for improvements and to be continuously striving to update this service.

As part of ensuring a well-functioning website, the VDC will continue to develop and implement a streamlined training program for eCoordinators. eCoordinators are currently provided one-on-one tailored training on how to use the system for their volunteer management needs. While this approach is effective for beginner eCoordinators, experienced eCoordinators indicate they want to take advantage of the full analytical functions the system offers.

The VDC will develop a two-tiered training system. The first level training is largely in place and includes partner-specific training and support considering the unique needs of the organization. It will also include a standardized orientation to the software system and user expectations, with regularly scheduled refreshers. The first level training

standards will incorporate such items as defining who is responsible for updating and removing opportunities, protocol around updating volunteers’ schedules, and inputting volunteer hours. The aim of these actions is to ensure that the system is up to date and easy for volunteers to navigate. The goal of the second level training is to include training on the broader applications and capabilities of the system. Some of the software training is to occur in a classroom setting where eCoordinators can practice procedures and benefit from broader discussions.

### Software System Improvements

Actions	Desired Outcomes	Objective(s)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with the software provider to re-develop the <i>I Can Help</i> website to make processes more intuitive and user friendly:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase ability of filtration and search options for volunteer opportunities;</li> <li>• Increase speed of software processing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Re-organize the <i>I Can Help</i> website layout to make the user experience more intuitive:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize the site by opportunity type – e.g. short-term, long-term;</li> <li>• Re-develop how the opportunities are posted – e.g. by date vs. title.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Leverage technology innovation to deliver exceptional service – e.g. app development, new ways of tracking and inputting volunteer hours, communication methods between volunteers and eCoordinators.</li> <li>4. Develop and implement expectations and standards for system users:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define who is responsible for updating and removing opportunities;</li> <li>• Define protocol around updating volunteers’ schedule;</li> <li>• Define protocol for scheduling and hours tracking;</li> <li>• Provide clear explanations of recruitment processes for volunteers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Develop 2-tiered training for eCoordinators on the software system:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First level training to include standard orientation, user expectations, and partner-specific training;</li> <li>• Second level training to include broader applications and capabilities of the system.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>The volunteer management software interface is updated and modernized.</p> <p>eCoordinators are aware of and abide by the expectations of them when using the system.</p> <p>eCoordinators receive additional training on the system.</p> <p>The system is simpler and easier to navigate for volunteers.</p> <p>eCoordinators have increased capacity and ability to navigate and understand the system as a whole.</p> <p>eCoordinators are able to analyze their own data and use the information to expand their volunteer program.</p>	<p>The City and partner organizations deliver a variety of programs, services, and events with the involvement of volunteers.</p>

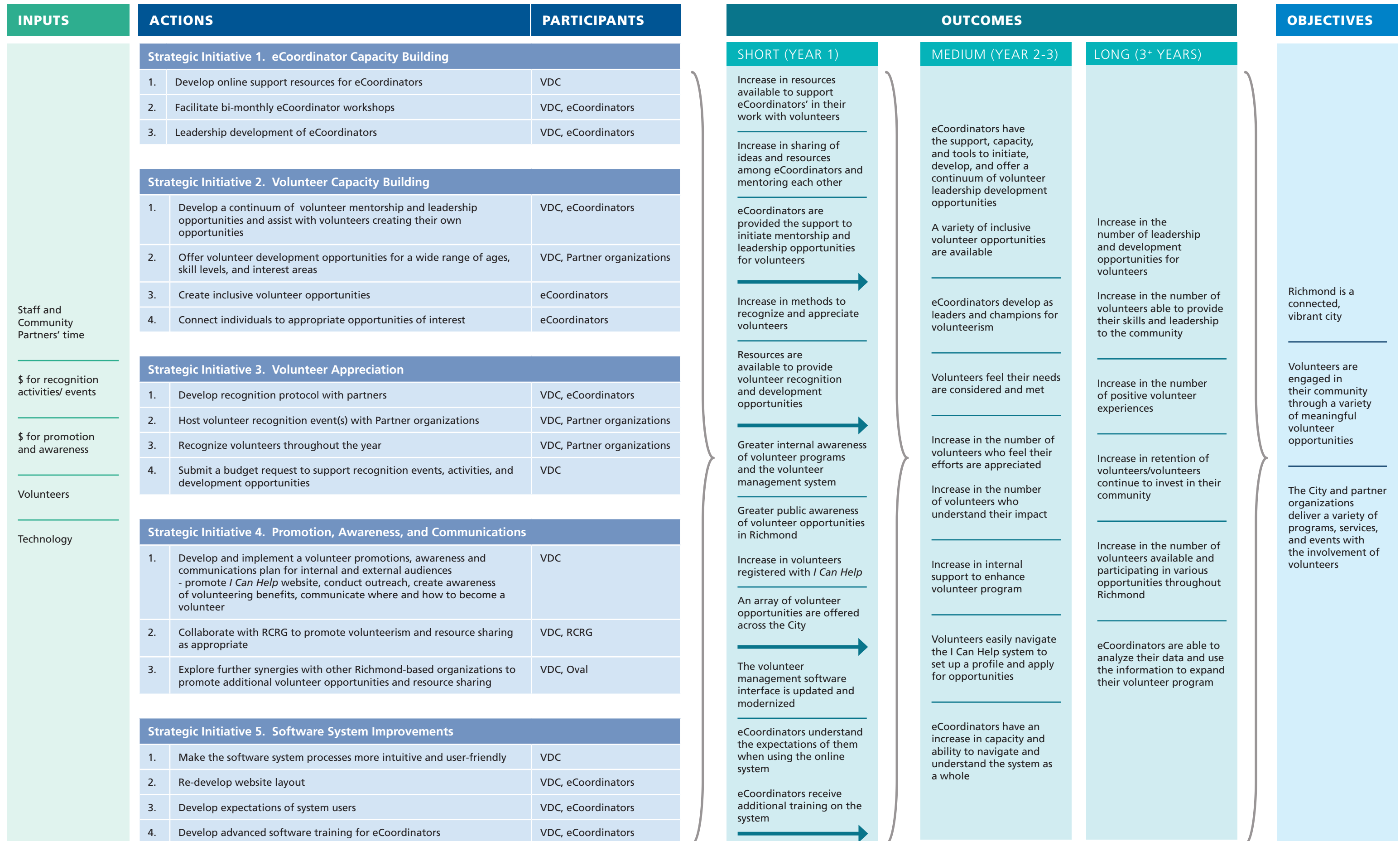
## 9.2 Evaluation Logic Model

Logic models identify the inputs and actions required to achieve desired outcomes and objectives. The logic model on the following page presents the information in Section 9.1 in a different way from the Table of Outcomes and Actions, displaying participant involvement, timelines, and relationships. Outcomes are divided into short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes and illustrate relationships and pre-conditions among them.

The logic model illustrates the actions and outcomes at a very high level. Indicators of success for each of the strategic initiatives are described in Section 9.3 and provide further detail on how and when the initiatives will be evaluated for completion and success.



# Evaluation Logic Model



Short term outcomes relate to the early changes intended as a result of the Strategy's actions. Medium term outcomes depict the next level of change as a result of the Strategy's actions as well as the achievements of the short term outcomes. Longer term outcomes are the ultimate changes/benefits the Strategy is intending to impact.

## 9.3 Implementation and Outcomes Evaluation Plan

The success of any strategy is founded upon implementing the initiatives and actions as described in the strategy. An Implementation and Outcomes Evaluation Plan, in table format provided below, tracks the progress and evaluates the success of strategic initiatives and the strategy as a whole. The implementation evaluation plan provides the framework to monitor and assess whether initiatives and actions are implemented as intended. The outcomes evaluation plan provides a framework to assess the effectiveness of the actions and determines if objectives have been met.

Key indicators are developed as measurements of success. The key indicators measure the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes either directly or indirectly through proxy measures. Evaluation questions aim to collect information regarding the key indicators and are administered via survey or interviews to the appropriate participants at specific points in time. The feedback identifies successes and gaps. Identification of gaps will then aid in the re-development of inputs and actions so that the desired outcomes can be achieved. There is an assumption that multiple iterations and continuous evolution of actions will be required.



## Strategic Initiative 1: eCoordinator Capacity Building

OUTCOMES: support resources available; sharing of ideas and resources; mentorship; leaders developed.

Evaluation	Evaluation Questions	Key Indicators	Data Sources/ Methods	Timing of Evaluation
Implementation Evaluation	<p>To what degree is the variety of resources adequate?</p> <p>To what degree is the frequency of workshops adequate?</p>	<p>The number of new resources available.</p> <p>Important topics are addressed at the workshops throughout the year.</p> <p>The number of eCoordinators that have received training on best practices.</p>	<p>VDC reporting</p> <p>Survey eCoordinators</p> <p>VDC reporting</p>	Evaluate annually
Outcomes Evaluation	<p>How well do the resources address the identified concerns of the eCoordinators?</p> <p>How effective/helpful are the resources?</p> <p>How beneficial or informative are the eCoordinator meetings?</p> <p>How adequate are the training and supports for eCoordinators on best practices in volunteer management?</p> <p>How well are eCoordinators' leadership skills being developed?</p>	<p>The degree to which eCoordinators report that many of their problems can be answered within a resource document.</p> <p>VDC is contacted less for problem solving issues.</p> <p>The degree to which eCoordinators report their level of knowledge increased after meetings.</p> <p>The degree to which volunteers feel adequately trained and supported.</p> <p>The degree to which volunteers feel like a partner.</p> <p>The degree to which volunteers feel their needs are considered and met while volunteering.</p> <p>The degree to which volunteers report that volunteer events and programs are well organized and managed.</p>	<p>Survey eCoordinators</p> <p>VDC reporting</p> <p>Survey eCoordinators</p> <p>Survey volunteers</p> <p>Survey volunteers</p> <p>Survey volunteers</p>	<p>Evaluate after first year of implementation then every year thereafter</p> <p>Pre/post surveys for eCoordinator meetings</p> <p>Conduct evaluation with volunteers after major events/ programs and training</p> <p>Evaluate after the three year period</p>



## Strategic Initiative 2: Volunteer Capacity Building

**OUTCOMES:** eCoordinators have support, capacity, and tools to initiate, develop, and offer a continuum of volunteer leadership programs and development opportunities; volunteer development workshops and training courses are offered, a variety of inclusive opportunities are available; volunteers provide leadership and skills through opportunities.

Evaluation	Evaluation Questions	Key Indicators	Data Sources/ Methods	Timing of Evaluation	
Implementation Evaluation	To what degree is there interest in developing volunteer leadership opportunities within the various City departments and partner organizations?	The number of eCoordinators the VDC worked with to develop leadership/mentorship opportunities.	VDC reporting	Evaluate after first year of implementation then every year thereafter	
	To what degree are there volunteer opportunities for different demographics and abilities?	The number of opportunities available to a broad spectrum of the population.	Demographic analysis of opportunities – VDC/eCoordinator reporting		
	To what degree are volunteers provided mentorship or development opportunities to advance their skills?	The number of new leadership/mentorship opportunities available to volunteers.	Survey eCoordinators		
		The percentage of eCoordinators’ time devoted to mentorship and leadership development for volunteers.	Survey eCoordinators		
		The number of volunteers that are progressing to more advanced roles.	Survey eCoordinators		
		The number of volunteers who participate in leadership opportunities.	VDC reporting		
		The number of volunteer training/development opportunities offered.	VDC reporting		
		The number of volunteers that participate in skills development training.	VDC reporting/ eCoordinator reporting		
		To what degree are volunteers supported to create their own volunteer experiences.	The number of volunteers who propose and develop volunteer led opportunities.		VDC reporting/ eCoordinator reporting

Evaluation	Evaluation Questions	Key Indicators	Data Sources/ Methods	Timing of Evaluation
Outcomes Evaluation	<p>How adequate are the leadership and mentorship opportunities for volunteers?</p> <p>To what degree is there a variety of suitable opportunities available?</p>	<p>The degree to which eCoordinators feel they have the tools, capacity, and support to implement the leadership and mentorship programs.</p> <p>An increase in the number of volunteers who feel there are adequate mentorship and leadership opportunities available.</p> <p>The degree to which different groups and segments of the population feel there are suitable opportunities for their needs and interests.</p> <p>An increase in number of volunteers who feel their skills are being utilised.</p> <p>The degree to which volunteers feel supported to achieve their goals.</p> <p>An increase in the number of volunteers who feel like a valued partner.</p> <p>An increase in the number of volunteers who report having meaningful volunteer experiences.</p> <p>The number of volunteers who continue to volunteer year after year.</p> <p>The City and partners report having enough skilled volunteers to operate their programs and events.</p>	<p>Survey eCoordinators</p> <p>Survey volunteers</p> <p>Survey volunteers/ survey Richmond residents (e.g. needs assessment)/outreach through community groups</p> <p>Survey volunteers</p> <p>Survey volunteers</p> <p>Survey volunteers</p> <p>Survey volunteers</p> <p>VDC reporting</p> <p>Survey eCoordinators</p>	<p>Evaluate after first year of implementation then every year thereafter</p>

### Strategic Initiative 3: Volunteer Appreciation

**OUTCOMES:** volunteers recognized in a variety of ways; volunteers feel appreciated and understand impact; volunteers continue to invest in the community/good retention; funds and capacity available to recognize volunteers.

Evaluation	Evaluation Questions	Key Indicators	Data Sources/ Methods	Timing of Evaluation
Implementation Evaluation	To what degree are there adequate methods of volunteer appreciation?	The number of eCoordinators involved in developing recognition protocol.	VDC reporting	Evaluate after first year of implementation then every year thereafter
	To what degree are all volunteers being recognized?	A major recognition event is held annually.	VDC reporting	
		The number of smaller recognition actions/events held at multiple times throughout the year.	VDC reporting	
	To what degree do partner organizations have the capacity and resources to recognize volunteers in an appropriate and meaningful way?	The number of partner organizations formally recognizing volunteers.	VDC reporting	
		The amount of funding/ resources allotted to recognition activities.	VDC reporting	
Outcomes Evaluation	How appropriately are volunteers being recognized?	The degree to which volunteers report that they feel appreciated and formally recognized for their contributions.	Survey volunteers	Evaluate after major events/ programs  Evaluate annually
		Recognition events are well attended by volunteers.	Survey eCoordinators/ VDC reporting	
		Recognition events and actions are well received by volunteers.	Survey volunteers	
		eCoordinators and the VDC report the funds are adequate for recognition activities/ events.	VDC reporting/ interview/survey eCoordinators	

### Strategic Initiative 4: Promotions, Awareness, and Communications

**OUTCOMES:** Greater awareness of volunteer opportunities; variety of opportunities offered throughout Richmond; increased number of volunteers registered in the database; increased number of volunteers available and participating in opportunities; increased internal awareness of volunteer programs and management system.

Evaluation	Evaluation Questions	Key Indicators	Data Sources/ Methods	Timing of Evaluation
Implementation Evaluation	To what degree are Richmond residents aware of the volunteer opportunities available?  To what degree are Richmond residents aware of the benefits of volunteering?	The number of volunteer outreach events held (e.g. volunteer fairs, outreach to specific organizations).	VDC reporting	Evaluate after event held  Evaluate annually
		The number of people in attendance at outreach events.	VDC reporting/ eCoordinator reporting	
		The number of methods through which volunteerism is promoted.	VDC reporting	
		The number of ways <i>I Can Help</i> is promoted.	VDC reporting	
		The number of phone or email inquiries regarding volunteering.	VDC reporting/ eCoordinator reporting	
		The number of registered active volunteers reporting hours.	VDC reporting	
	To what degree are internal management and staff aware of volunteer programs and the volunteer management system?	The number of partner organizations/City departments who have received information regarding volunteer programs.	VDC reporting	
Outcomes Evaluation	To what degree have partner synergies generated additional volunteer opportunities?	The number of additional volunteer opportunities generated within each year.	VDC reporting	Evaluate after first year of implementation then every year thereafter
		The increase in variety of volunteer opportunities.	VDC reporting	

Evaluation	Evaluation Questions	Key Indicators	Data Sources/ Methods	Timing of Evaluation
	<p>Do City and partner staff have enough and qualified volunteers to help deliver programs/services/events?</p>	<p>The degree to which eCoordinators report they have adequate numbers of and qualified volunteers to deliver programs and events.</p> <p>The degree to which eCoordinators report feeling supported in their work to expand their volunteer program.</p>	<p>Survey/interview eCoordinators</p> <p>Survey eCoordinators</p>	



## Strategic Initiative 5: Improved Software System User Experience

**OUTCOMES:** software interface is updated and modernized; system is simpler and easier to navigate; eCoordinators receive additional training on the system; eCoordinators able to navigate and understand the system as a whole; eCoordinators able to manipulate data and expand their volunteer program; volunteers utilise the *I Can Help* system to find and participate in opportunities.

Evaluation	Evaluation Questions	Key Indicators	Data Sources/ Methods	Timing of Evaluation
Implementation Evaluation	To what degree have the suggested changes been made to the software processes?	The number of software changes made.	VDC reporting	Evaluate after initial changes made  Evaluate annually
	To what degree have the suggested changes been made to the website layout?	The number of website design changes.	VDC reporting	
	To what degree are eCoordinators familiar with the expectations of them while using the site?	The number of eCoordinators who have received training on expectations and protocols.	VDC reporting	
	To what degree is there participation in advanced training for experienced eCoordinators?	The number of eCoordinators who participated in advanced software training.	VDC reporting	
Outcomes Evaluation	How easy or complicated is navigating the website?	The degree to which eCoordinators report understanding how the software system works.	Survey eCoordinators	Evaluate after first year of implementation then every year thereafter
	To what degree has the website improved?	A decrease in number of technical support queries for the VDC.	VDC reporting	
		The website is kept up to date.	VDC reporting	

Evaluation	Evaluation Questions	Key Indicators	Data Sources/ Methods	Timing of Evaluation
		<p>The degree to which eCoordinators report the ability to maximize the software program capabilities and assess their data.</p> <p>The degree to which volunteers report easily being able to navigate the system, apply for opportunities, and understand the process involved in obtaining a volunteer opportunity.</p>	<p>VDC reporting eCoordinator survey/ interviews</p> <p>Volunteer surveys</p>	



## 10. Summary and Concluding Remarks

Volunteers play a vital role in generating community connectedness and vibrancy to the city of Richmond. The City of Richmond and its partners rely heavily on volunteers to support the delivery of programs, services, and events to the community. The important contributions that volunteers make to life in Richmond are recognized within this updated Volunteer Management Strategy.

The Volunteer Management Strategy 2018–2021 prioritizes the volunteer. The Strategy aims to provide the framework to support volunteers in reaching their goals and better engage them through a variety of opportunities so that they have positive, meaningful experiences, and an increased sense of community connectedness. The strategic initiatives and associated actions outlined in this document support volunteers by developing opportunities for them as well as building capacity in the staff that work with volunteers. This Strategy provides the framework to implement and monitor actions to ensure volunteerism thrives in Richmond well into the future.





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# APPENDIX A:

## An Analysis of the Volunteer Survey Results

The City's volunteers were surveyed to gain insight into their volunteer experience and to identify areas that could be better supported by City staff. The survey was administered to the volunteers registered through the *I Can Help* website and to partner organization boards of directors. Results indicate a high level of satisfaction with a few areas in need of further development.

### The Respondents: Our Volunteers

The survey was emailed to all volunteers registered in the City's database with the exception of a few groups. The users from the RCMP Community Police Offices and Block Watch Program were not included in the survey because they are newly registered to the system and therefore it was determined they not be included.

Eleven thousand seven hundred ninety volunteers received the email invitation to participate in the survey. Three hundred fifty-one volunteers responded to the survey with 78 per cent completing all the questions. Volunteers currently active in the system consist of approximately 2,200 to 2,300 individuals. Over 90 per cent of the respondents are part of this active group participating through the City or partner organizations within the past three years. Thus, if considering the active volunteer group, the response rate is approximately 12 per cent.

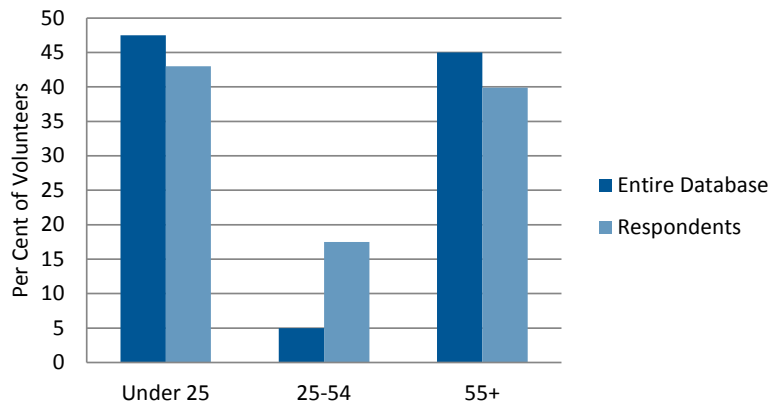
The respondent group has a similar demographic make-up to the volunteers in the entire database.<sup>6</sup> Youth under 25 years of age make up 43 per cent of the respondents; 18 per cent of respondents are between the ages of 25 and 54; and seniors, 55 years and over, represent 38 per cent.<sup>7</sup> Persons identifying as female over-represent the volunteers at 66 per cent of the respondents; 29 per cent are male; 0.4 per cent is gender non-conforming; 1.5 per cent is undecided on their gender identity.

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<sup>6</sup> Many seniors are sensitive about their age so do not provide this information in their profile. The data represented in the graph, assumes those who did not specify their age as older than 55 years. Thus, there may be a margin of error in this assumption.

<sup>7</sup> Some respondents preferred not to indicate their personal information.

## Age Profile of Volunteers



People who do not work represent the highest number of volunteers, which mostly consists of retirees and students without jobs. There are approximately the same number of volunteers who work part time as there are people who work full time.

Of the adult volunteer group, there is a wide variety of living arrangements. Some people live alone while others live with a spouse, with and without children, and some live with a parent. Single parents are least likely to volunteer.

Fifty-four per cent of volunteers are immigrants and 82 per cent were born outside of Richmond. The survey indicates that the likelihood of volunteering increases with time lived in Canada and in Richmond.

Richmond's volunteers speak many languages. Ninety-two per cent of volunteers speak English in the home. Cantonese and Mandarin are the second and third most often spoken languages of the volunteers, which is similar to Richmond's population as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

The City of Richmond offers a number of types of experiences in which people can volunteer. The City's Community Services support a variety of groups through its volunteer management systems and processes. Volunteers tend to volunteer at multiple locations and events – they do not volunteer with just one. The majority of volunteers volunteer with at least one of the eight community centres (65 per cent). City-wide events and 'other' City opportunities are also highly popular (29 per cent and 18 per cent respectively).<sup>9</sup> Minoru Place Activity Centre, Richmond Public Library, and the Richmond Olympic Oval are also some of the more popular places for volunteering according to the respondents. With the exception of Minoru Place Activity Centre being more popular for seniors, all sites/organizations appeal to volunteers of all ages.

<sup>8</sup> The 2016 Census indicates 44.8 per cent of Richmond residents' mother tongue is a Chinese language, which include Cantonese and Mandarin. Twenty-nine per cent of the respondents speak Cantonese and 24 per cent speak Mandarin but not necessarily as their mother tongue.

<sup>9</sup> Respondents could select multiple places where they volunteer.

Twenty-six per cent of the volunteers surveyed do all their volunteering through the City’s volunteer management system. Volunteering with a religious institution and sports groups are the most popular types of volunteering outside of the City’s opportunities. However, respondents indicate a wide range of other types of organizations with which they also volunteer.

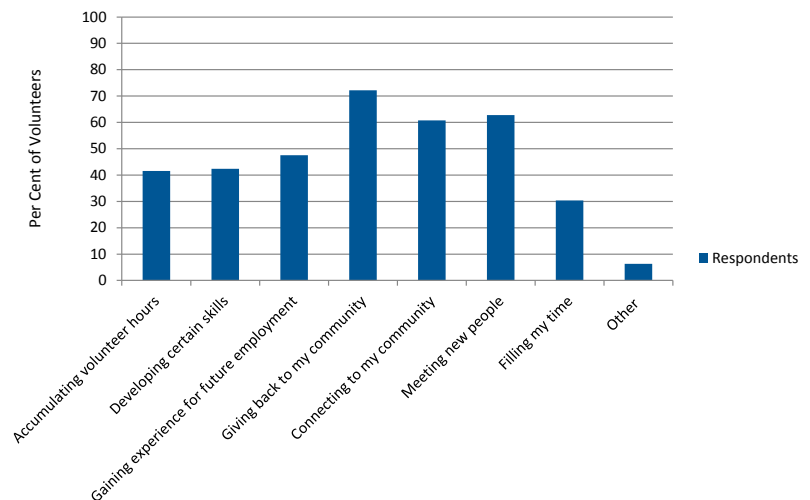
About a quarter of respondents volunteer a few times a year and another quarter volunteer about once a week. Seniors volunteer the most frequently; 28 per cent of seniors volunteer more than once a week. Youth also have a relatively high frequency of volunteering; 24 per cent volunteer about once a week. Forty-five per cent of respondents indicate that they would like to volunteer more often but do not have the time. Twenty-eight per cent indicated that there are not enough opportunities that suit their interest. Physical limitations are a barrier to volunteering more often for a few of the respondents.

The data indicate that Richmond’s volunteers are a diverse group with varying skills, abilities, and interests. Although the City and partners offer a wide variety of opportunities, it is important to provide a range of volunteer experiences to help meet everyone’s goals.

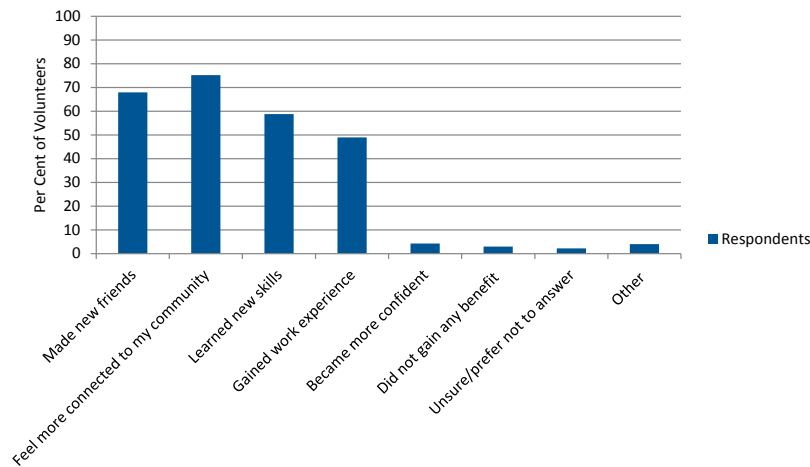
## An Analysis of the Volunteer Experience

The City’s and partner organizations’ volunteers are a largely satisfied group who enjoy volunteering and find many personal benefits from doing so. The top three reasons for volunteering are giving back to the community, meeting new people, and connecting to the community. Several respondents indicate they had been helped by volunteers in the past and feel it is their duty to pay it forward. Other respondents say volunteering is fun and rewarding.

### Reasons for Volunteering



## Benefits Experienced from Volunteering



Although 83 per cent of respondents indicate there are sufficient opportunities to volunteer through the City or its partners, 56 per cent say there are other skills they would like to utilise during their volunteer experience or other types of volunteering that they would like to be doing. Forty-six per cent of volunteers indicate they would like to utilise their fluency in another language in their volunteer opportunities and 31 per cent want to utilise their cultural knowledge. Respondents also indicate they have a wide variety of other skills and knowledge they have to offer while volunteering. These findings suggest there needs to be a greater variety of volunteer opportunities developed, including those of a cultural and linguistic nature.

A small percentage of volunteers did not like their volunteer experience or felt underappreciated. Some people indicate they have physical barriers to participating in certain volunteer activities and a few respondents feel their lack of English proficiency is a barrier to engaging in volunteer activities. A few people indicate that they would like to participate in volunteer activities that are on weekends and evenings but find there are limited opportunities that meet their schedules. There are also some young people who are eager to volunteer but cannot because most opportunities specify a minimum age of 15 years.

## Youth

Experiences and volunteer goals differ slightly among age groups. Many youth volunteer to accumulate a specific number of hours as mandated to graduate from high school. There is an assumption by some staff that youth only want to acquire hours to graduate and that they are not interested in gaining much more from volunteering. The data suggest otherwise.

Although youth need volunteer hours to graduate, many view volunteering as a way to gain valuable work experience and skills for future employment as well as giving back to the community and meeting new people. Eighty-seven per cent of youth (under 25 years) indicate that there are enough opportunities to volunteer. However, 68 per cent of youth indicate that there are other skills that they would like to be using while volunteering and 61 per cent indicate there are other types of volunteering that they would like to be doing. Seventy-six per cent of youth feel they have leadership skills and that they would like more leadership opportunities. Many also have fluency in another language, technology skills, and art skills that they would like to utilise. Some youth volunteers want more short-term opportunities while just as many want long term commitments. They want more opportunities to participate in events as well as helping others in the community.

These findings suggest that youth want meaningful volunteer experiences. They have unique skills that they want to utilise and are interested in participating in a variety of activities – some of which the City and partners do not currently offer. There is an opportunity for the City and partners to develop different types of opportunities for youth to enhance their skills, learn in an area of their interest, and help youth fulfil their personal goals.

## Adults

Adults (25 years and over) also want meaningful experiences while volunteering. They want to give back to their community, connect to their community, and meet new people. Ten per cent of those aged 25 to 54 indicate there are few volunteer opportunities whereas only five per cent of seniors (55 plus) find there are few volunteer opportunities.

Adults between the ages of 25 and 54 want to utilise their skills in different opportunities from what is currently being offered; 61 per cent would like to do other types of volunteering and 69 per cent want to utilise other skills. Fifty-seven per cent of seniors would like to do other types of volunteering and about half (49 per cent) want to use other skills. Adults, regardless of age, want volunteer experiences that help people and also want to be involved in events. There are about as many adults who want short-term opportunities as there are who want long-term commitments. Adult volunteers have diverse skillsets and interests and indicate a variety of areas in which they want to volunteer that are not currently being offered. One clear message from all age groups is that they want leadership opportunities in their volunteer experiences.

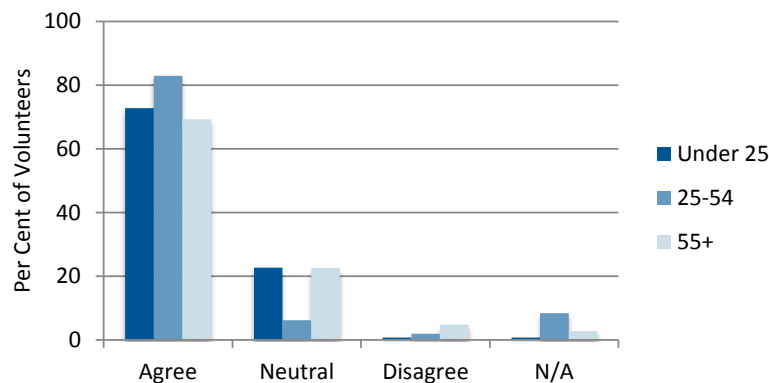
## Comparison of Experiences by Age

The different age groups have different experiences and satisfaction with volunteering. Across all age categories, volunteers understand the importance of the work they do and that the volunteer work gives them a sense of accomplishment. All age groups could potentially have more decision-making in their volunteer roles; less than 70 per cent of all respondents indicate they are involved in decisions regarding their volunteer experiences. Seniors report the least ability to make decisions (only 55 per cent). Volunteer opportunity role descriptions also appear to be lacking in detail. Only about 70 per cent of youth and seniors found that the opportunity descriptions provide most of the information they needed to know; 79 per cent of those aged 25 to 54 found the descriptions provide the needed information.

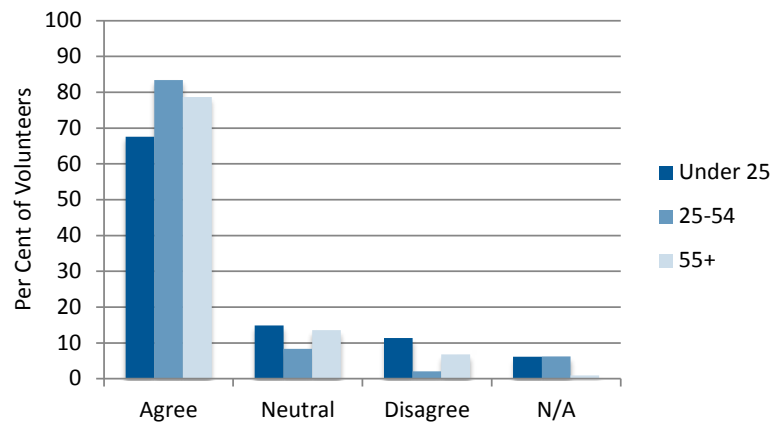
Overall, youth report having a lesser amount of support, training, and recognition for their volunteer activities compared to adults. Youth were least likely to report being recognized or thanked for their work; 74 per cent of youth report being thanked whereas over 83 per cent of adults report being thanked for volunteering. There are also fewer youth who report that staff makes them feel like a valued partner to the organization.

The graphs below show a comparison among age groups along several areas of satisfaction with volunteering.

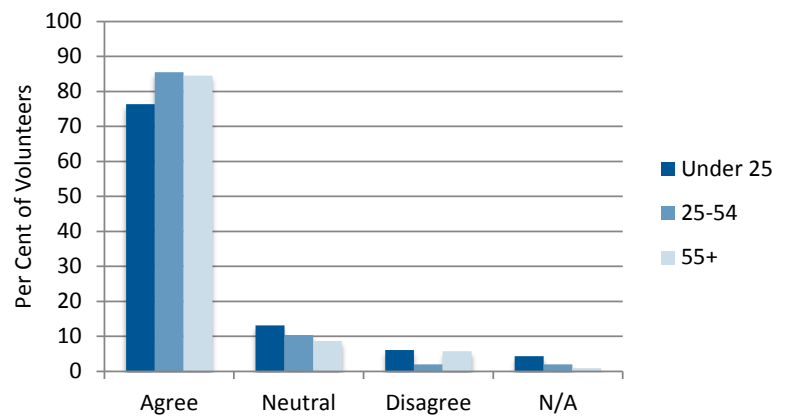
### Ability to Achieve Personal Goals Through the Volunteer Opportunities Available



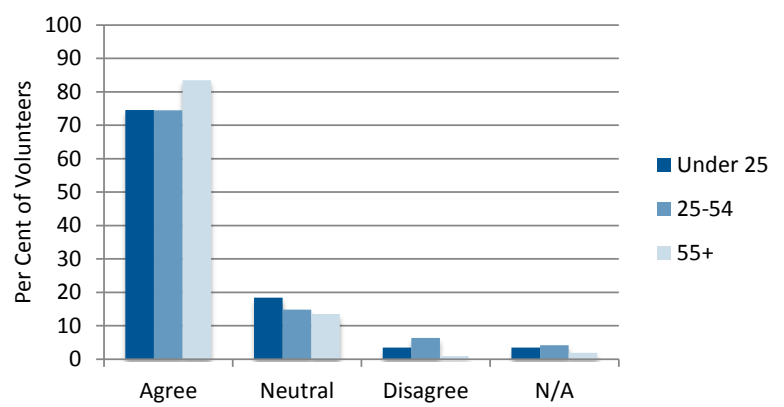
### Staff Communicate the Impact Made as a Volunteer



### Feel Like a Valued Partner to the Organization



### Have Support and Training





## The Volunteer Management System

Individuals who want to volunteer with the City or one of the partner organizations create an account through the City's volunteer management website, *I Can Help*. Volunteers set up a profile and indicate the type of volunteering in which they are interested. The site lists various opportunities and the City and partner staff can also directly email current opportunities to volunteer candidates who have expressed an interest in their area.

Police information checks, reference requests, and interviews for volunteer opportunities are often a requirement for many of the positions. However, this is not always the case, which qualitative feedback suggests causes confusion.

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree of simplicity or complication of setting up a profile, completing a Police Information Check, submitting references, and applying for positions. Over 80 per cent of respondents indicate that the process is simple. There are very little variations in responses to these questions among the different age groups. Despite there being a relatively low number of people who find the process complicated, the data suggests there are possible actions that could be taken to simplify the process and/or explain the process better.

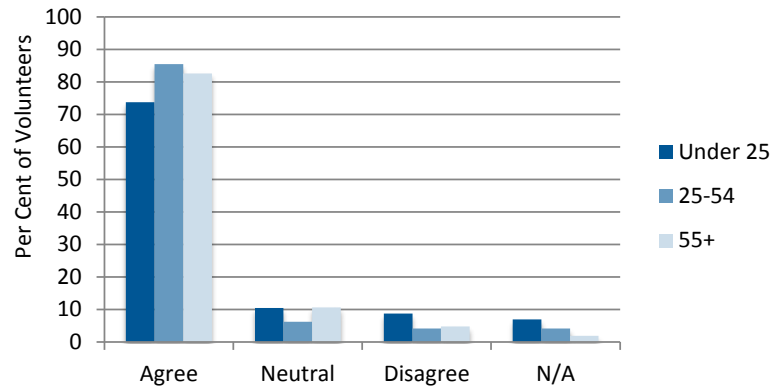
## Recognizing Volunteers

The City hangs a banner to recognize volunteers during National Volunteer Recognition Week. Other recognition activities are decided by the individual organization or event organizers, as a consensus on set actions has not been reached. Seventy-nine per cent of volunteers said they received recognition or thanks from someone at the organization.<sup>10</sup> Although this is a relatively high number, 100 per cent of the volunteers should be thanked for their service to the community.

Respondents indicate they want a simple 'thank you' from a staff person. In addition to being thanked in person, a few other recognition actions are identified and they vary slightly by age. In order of preference, youth prefer to receive a certificate, to be given swag such as t-shirts or lanyards, and to be thanked by staff in person. Adults aged 25 to 54 want to be invited to opportunities for personal or professional development and to be thanked in person (tied for number one); given a certificate (ranked second); and thanked in written form, given complementary food/refreshments, and asked to contribute to planning volunteer activities (tied for third spot). Seniors want to be thanked by staff in person, invited to a recognition event, and given complementary meals/refreshments. There are opportunities to provide customized and appropriate recognition to the volunteers who dedicate themselves to helping the community.

<sup>10</sup> Ten per cent of volunteers indicated they neither agree nor disagree with the statement that someone had thanked them or given them recognition for their volunteer services. Five per cent selected 'unsure.'

### Received Recognition or Thanks from Someone at the Organization



### Conclusion

The survey data suggest that the City’s volunteers are a dedicated group that have many skills and much knowledge to contribute to the community. While the survey results indicate a high level of satisfaction with the overall volunteer experience, there are opportunities for improvement. Many of the City and partner organizations’ programs, activities, and events heavily rely on volunteers’ service. In return, our volunteers deserve the best support available and there are actions that the City and its partners can take to further support volunteers in achieving their goals.

# APPENDIX B:

## An Analysis of the Volunteer Focus Groups

Focus groups provide nuanced information and insight into various issues. Further context and a fulsome story are revealed when used to supplement quantitative data. Several issues emerged from the volunteer survey data and served as basis for the questions asked and areas to be explored during the volunteer focus groups.

Three focus groups were conducted with volunteers: one with youth and two with adults. The survey data results indicate that youth have slightly different volunteer experiences and goals than adults and thus the two age groups were separated into different focus groups. Twenty adults participated between two focus groups. The ages of the adults ranged from 33 to 83 with the majority of participants being over 55.

The guiding questions for both the youth and adult focus groups included the following:

- What positive benefits have you experienced from volunteering with Richmond and/or its partners?
- What are your expectations while volunteering and are they being met?
- What opportunities are there for improvement to the system?
- How could the volunteer software system and communications processes be improved?

The groups provided much insight into the City's volunteer management system. Across all groups, volunteers report gaining valuable and unexpected benefits from their experiences. However, they also have suggestions of ways to improve the system and its processes.

### Benefits Gained from Volunteering

#### Youth

The youth reported gaining many positive benefits from volunteering. First and foremost they said volunteering is fun and the most important factor for volunteering. They value meeting new people, especially of different ages and backgrounds as it broadens their ideas about the world. Volunteering could also be challenging, especially when working with children, but also engaging and entertaining.

Although Richmond students are required to obtain a specific number of volunteer hours in order to graduate, the youth see many positives from volunteering beyond accumulating hours.

Teamwork skills are honed in the volunteer environment while working with people whom they have never met. The youth reported that leadership opportunities help them develop skills such as planning, execution, teambuilding, taking initiative, leadership, responsibility, and coordination. The unique experiences had while volunteering are also helpful when writing university applications. While there are many positive personal benefits received from volunteering, youth also take pleasure in helping the community.

## Adults/Seniors

There are many reasons why adults volunteer and many benefits they receive from doing so. Many participants indicate they enjoy giving back to their community. One participant expressed that his volunteering is a way to show his appreciation to Canada. As an immigrant, he reports hearing rhetoric regarding immigrants being a burden on society. His volunteering is a way he shows the country he is an asset and that he gives back.

Volunteers also report that volunteering provides them the opportunity to meet people they would not otherwise encounter, de-stress and engage in activities unrelated to work, and be part of legacy building through the many City events. Volunteering is an opportunity to set examples for the younger generation as well as get to know them. For some, volunteering allows them to provide their skills to the community while for others, it allows them to develop new skills such as technical, leadership, management, and planning skills. Overall, volunteers find that they receive a deeper feeling of connection to the community, ownership over community development, as well as gain a certain pride in their accomplishments.

## Expectations

A major theme that emerged through the volunteer focus groups is that volunteers want their needs to be considered and taken care of. As they donate their time and efforts to the community, they feel there needs to be some reciprocity from staff. Volunteers' requests while volunteering are relatively simple. Below is a list of expected actions from staff when organizing events or other opportunities:

- Clear communication;
- Clearly defined roles and expectations;
- Well organized events/programs;
- Physical needs considered (bathroom breaks, food, clothing);
- Consistency of treatment among different events/organizations;
- Feedback provided regarding impact made;
- Respected as partners by staff yet differentiated from staff roles;
- Feel as if a part of the event;
- Actively involved (not standing around);
- Appreciation for time donated.

Volunteers want respect and being organized and considerate of their needs contributes to a positive experience and demonstrates respect.

## Opportunities for Improvement

All volunteers in the focus groups were largely satisfied with their experiences. “You are pretty good,” as one volunteer phrased it. The volunteers who participated in the focus groups have donated thousands of hours collectively over the years, so had they been dissatisfied, they would not have continued to volunteer for the City or its partners. Some volunteers reported some disappointing or frustrating experiences in the past but had found other better organized and well-run opportunities and so volunteer within these areas.

### Youth

The youth had a few unique experiences that differed from the adults. Some of the youth reported not feeling adequately prepared for their assigned duties. They said that in some circumstances they would like more training and mentorship. Many youth volunteer opportunities involve working with young children, which can be challenging for a person of any age. The youth feel that mentorship on how to manage young children as well as for other unique situations would be helpful. Youth reported that they are sometimes not seen as authority figures yet given leadership roles in certain opportunities. They want to be backed up by staff in their decision making. Some volunteers suggest that always having two people for the same task would be beneficial so that they could have peer support and consult each other when needing to make decisions. Some other youth cite that they feel underappreciated at times.

### All Participants

The main theme that emerged from both the youth and adult focus groups is that the little things matter. The way a volunteer is treated impacts their experience and determines whether they will return or not to volunteer for that organization’s program or event.

The first point of contact is through the volunteer opportunity application itself. Many volunteers report these opportunities are vague and do not provide the needed specifics or expectations. Having clear expectations laid out in the opportunity description allows people to determine if the opportunity is a good fit. This information was cited as particularly important for youth in the preparation for their interviews.

Some of the City’s partners go through an extensive recruitment process before volunteers can volunteer with the organization. This is in place to protect vulnerable populations with which those organizations work. However, some volunteers expressed their frustration in this lengthy process – particularly youth. Volunteers would like to be able to sign up for an opportunity and volunteer relatively soon after; they find the delay frustrating. It was also suggested that reference requests be conducted at the end of the recruitment process, as this is cited to be discouraging in the initial phases.

Some of the participants expressed frustration over the orientation sessions prior to an event. Some orientations are conducted several days before the actual event to go over details and assignments. Volunteers get frustrated when the orientation session lasts less than the time it takes to commute to the meeting, as they feel it is a waste of their time.

The volunteers are a highly skilled group with much experience. They would like the coordinators of events to match their skills and goals to their assigned task and where appropriate, involve them in the planning process. They also want their roles to be clearly differentiated from paid staff.

Many of the volunteers told of experiences where there was a lack of communication over what was expected during the opportunity such as where to meet for the event and to whom they should be reporting, whether they would be inside or outside (as how to dress is important), whether or not they would be provided food, and often what the specifics are of the assigned task. Other volunteers reported that sometimes there is duplication in communication as there may be too many points of contact and repeated information in emails. Several volunteers reported that their assigned tasks turned out to be very different from what was indicated on the posted opportunity description. Other organizational items seem to get forgotten at times such as scheduling volunteers bathroom breaks and a conclusion of duties with a sign out process and an acknowledgement of service.

A few of the participants spoke of experiences where they felt the volunteer coordinator was disrespectful or lacked etiquette. Sometimes there appears to be a lack of communication as to why volunteers are asked to do something in a particular way, leading to frustration. The adults felt that any disorganization and oversight are largely due to inexperienced leaders leading the event or program.

Some volunteers were aware of training and development opportunities available to them while others were not. All participants expressed a desire to be informed of such opportunities.

Overall, the participants want respect for their time that they donate to the community. They indicate that clear, accurate communication, and thoughtfulness into their needs goes a long way to making their volunteer experience a positive one. These issues and expectations identified by volunteers are relatively simple to accommodate and are achievable with further training and capacity building of staff who work with volunteers.

## The Online System

The City uses the website *I Can Help* as the portal for volunteer activity. Potential volunteers create an account and can indicate their preferred type of volunteering. They can apply to the opportunities posted on the website. Depending on the opportunity, police information checks could be required as well as going through an interview process.

Both youth and adult focus group participants indicate that some changes could be made to the system to make it more user-friendly. There was a suggestion to require volunteers to have one extensive police information check conducted so that volunteers would be eligible for all the volunteer opportunities.

The following section lists the suggestions made by participants on how to make the system more user-friendly:

- Post all opportunities at once (e.g. annual and large events are known by City staff well in advance – volunteers would like to plan in advance);
- Be able to filter opportunities based on requirements (e.g. age or experience);
- Create a cancellation feature online;
- Remove past opportunities;
- Better key word search ability;
- Create different sections based on type of opportunity (e.g. events, short-term, long-term);
- Ensure volunteer profiles are up to date – remove past opportunities;
- Ensure the calendar is linked and reflects the registered opportunities;
- Ensure cancelled events are reflected in the calendar;
- Have confirmations of opportunities come from *I Can Help* (as opposed to the coordinator);
- Consistency in hours recording;
- Have only one contact person.

Some of the issues identified above may be due to the system's structure and others are due to the eCoordinators' actions. There are opportunities to discuss streamlining the software system with the provider and improving service through further training for eCoordinators.

## Summary

Richmond's volunteers cumulatively donate thousands of hours each year to the community, contributing to community vibrancy, and supporting the City and its partners in delivering high quality programs and events. There are some simple actions that can be taken by staff to ensure our volunteers feel valued and taken care of and so that volunteers will continue to donate their time and skills for years to come.

# APPENDIX C:

## An Analysis of the ECoordinator Focus Groups

The City of Richmond provides volunteer management services to City and partner staff as well as to staff from some affiliated organizations.<sup>11</sup> The services include training and supporting those staff (termed eCoordinators) who work closely with volunteers. There are approximately 43 individuals designated as eCoordinators representing 20 partner organizations and several departments within the City. Technical training and support on how to recruit volunteers, train and manage volunteers, and support volunteers' needs are provided by the Volunteer Development Coordinator (VDC).

All eCoordinators were invited to participate in one of three focus groups.<sup>12</sup> Eighteen eCoordinators attended and provided insight into the volunteer management system. Feedback was given on what works well in the current volunteer management system, what further supports would be useful, what challenges they face, and their experiences with the software system.

### Benefits of the Volunteer Management System

Most of the eCoordinators report that they find great value in the City's volunteer management system. They like that the system is centralized, which makes the ability to recruit multiple volunteers and communicate with them en masse simple. eCoordinators appreciate the ability to easily direct interested volunteer candidates to the *I Can Help* website to initiate the recruitment process. The system allows for systematic procedures and screening across departments/organizations, such as for the police information check, which eCoordinators find helpful. They also appreciate that volunteer hours can be tracked and approved easily. Furthermore, the shared system is recognized as being cost effective.

Some eCoordinators find the software system simple to learn. All report receiving excellent training and support from the VDC. As each organization has different needs and uses the software system slightly differently, the VDC tailors the training and support to the unique needs of that organization. eCoordinators also appreciate having one dedicated person, the VDC, to troubleshoot system issues.

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<sup>11</sup> From here on, for simplicity of language, partner organization staff and affiliate organization staff will be referred to as partner organizations or partner staff.

<sup>12</sup> The RCMP and Block Watch volunteer program eCoordinators were not invited to participate in the focus groups because they only recently started to use the City's volunteer management services.



A few of the eCoordinators reported that they do not use the City's volunteer management system very often. Some organizations utilise volunteers infrequently and call upon their small base of volunteers as needed. Seniors tend not to use the online system so the eCoordinators that work with senior volunteers do not always use the *I Can Help* system. This suggests that further promotion of the benefits of a centralized system to some eCoordinators as well as to the public could be conducted.

## Further Support for eCoordinators

eCoordinators indicate they could benefit from additional support related to the full spectrum of volunteer management. Current challenges range from technical troubleshooting of the software system, to recruiting and training volunteers, to understanding legal liabilities, and to supporting volunteers' needs. Currently, the VDC provides the eCoordinators with individualized support upon request but eCoordinators suggest having access to a number of support resources would give them independence, especially at times when the VDC is unavailable.

The following is a list of support resources as requested by the eCoordinators:

- Software manual with frequent troubleshooting tips;
- Manual of policies to affirm decision making (e.g. legal requirements, liabilities, how to manage disruptive volunteers, suggested practices/protocol such as providing food to volunteers);
- A resource on etiquette, customer service, and shared expectations;
- A checklist when organizing events or programs considering volunteers' needs (e.g. bathroom breaks, snacks, clothing);
- Resources for training volunteers and providing them introductory information;
- Resources on how to develop leadership opportunities and enhance volunteers' opportunities;

eCoordinators recommend that this information be accessible in a centralized online system. They suggest that the above items be presented in a variety of formats such as formal manuals, checklists, toolkits, screenshots, video tutorials, FAQs page, and an online bulletin board as appropriate to the material being presented.

eCoordinators value the regular eCoordinator meetings led by the VDC, as they are great forums to learn best practices and learn from each other. Some eCoordinators would like these meetings more often or for longer, where the focus could be learning from and sharing with each other. Finding the time for additional meetings can be a challenge for some eCoordinators.

Although there is training available to eCoordinators through Richmond Cares Richmond Gives, not all eCoordinators have participated in it and eCoordinators feel that training and resources developed for the City context would allow them to take their volunteer support to the next level.

Some of the more experienced eCoordinators would like advanced training on the software system so that they can analyze their own data related to volunteer management.

These requests of supports and resources are relatively easy to implement. Providing the eCoordinators with these additional resources and supports will greatly impact and improve the experiences of volunteers, making the volunteer experiences more organized and with volunteers' needs considered.

## Challenges

Many of the eCoordinators report having great success in recruiting the needed volunteers for their programs and events, while others have greater challenges. Finding enough volunteers with the right experience for a specific time of day (especially during normal working hours) can be difficult. eCoordinators have noticed that when unable to provide enough quality opportunities, volunteers become disengaged and find other organizations or opportunities with which to volunteer. Succession planning is an issue as eCoordinators report that youth volunteers tend to stop volunteering once in university, new immigrants tend to stop volunteering once employment is found, and older adults sometimes face health challenges that suddenly become barriers to volunteering, all factors affecting the pool of available candidates. While providing good customer service and quality opportunities is a foundational piece in volunteer retention, there is a need for further marketing of volunteer opportunities and outreach to increase the database of volunteers upon which to draw.

Some eCoordinators are more easily able to recruit appropriate volunteers than others. The survey data indicate a highly skilled population of volunteers exists within the City's database, but that some eCoordinators have difficulty tapping into the recourse. This factor suggests that the eCoordinators who are more proficient in volunteer management best practices reap the benefits of being able to recruit volunteers.

Some eCoordinators feel that they have to compete for volunteers during major events. For example, there are multiple events delivered by the City and partner organizations on Canada Day. Many eCoordinators often use incentives such as food or small gifts to recruit volunteers, but not all organizations have the funds to do this. Volunteer recruitment challenges can result in some organizations not being able to offer certain programs or reducing their programs.

Some organizations struggle with having too many keen volunteers and not enough opportunities. City Centre Community Centre and the Richmond Public Library– Brighthouse (RPL) cite this issue. RPL reported that many of their volunteers want to take on roles with responsibility and leadership, especially new immigrants. Many new immigrants use volunteering as a way to gain Canadian work experience. They need consistent, long-term opportunities with responsibility. Volunteering for events does not provide the right experience for resume-building for adults. RPL is struggling with developing these opportunities.

The organizations that invest into volunteers and prioritize volunteer management best practices, report good volunteer retention and see the benefits to volunteers as well as in their programs/events. Less exciting volunteer opportunities such as event set-up and take-down are easier to fill when volunteers are valued as a partner to staff. However, not all organizations are able to provide sufficient staff time to develop a volunteer program and are largely reactive to volunteer management, and thus have difficulty recruiting and retaining the appropriate volunteer candidates. This suggests that there could be further supports to aid those partners with few resources to develop a more robust volunteer management program.

Volunteer recognition can also be challenging. There are varying budgets among the partner organizations and thus some organizations are limited financially on how volunteer appreciation can be shown. For those organizations that work with hundreds of volunteers annually, writing thank you cards or printing certificates can be labour intensive and costly. Receiving volunteers' feedback and responding to it, as well as sitting down with volunteers to discuss their goals are other ways that volunteers feel appreciated. However, staff capacity is a limiting factor once again.

From the discussions emanating from the eCoordinator focus groups, it is clear that there are many eCoordinators who are aware of best practices in volunteer management and incorporate them into their work with volunteers. Those that do reap the benefits; they easily recruit and retain experienced volunteers and provide high quality programs and events to the public with volunteer involvement. Inexperienced eCoordinators need further supports to increase their capacity whether that be in the form of online resources, further support from the VDC, or mentorship from their colleagues. The City has a role in facilitating this needed capacity building.

## The Software System

Volunteers locate and apply for volunteer opportunities through a City-operated website called *I Can Help*, which is a software system provided by Samaritan. eCoordinators use this system to post opportunities, recruit volunteers, communicate with volunteers, and track volunteer hours.

The eCoordinators have managed to navigate the system with the VDC's help, yet often lack understanding about certain functions or procedures. Part of the confusion over procedures is that different organizations have different needs. The VDC trains each coordinator slightly differently to address their unique organizational needs. There is a lack of understanding of the system as a whole as some groups need to use certain parts of the system while others do not. While the VDC is a great support to overcome these challenges, online resources with common troubleshooting tips could help remedy confusion as well as further training on the system for eCoordinators once they are proficient with the basics. In addition, the eCoordinators report that the software system is slow at times and could be more user friendly.

Some eCoordinators are aware of other software systems being used by other jurisdictions and feel these systems are better. The City has selected Samaritan as the software provider due to privacy and liability reasons. However, there could be better communication to the users about why the current system is the preferred choice for the City's needs and individuals' privacy as well as further training on how to use the system.

Volunteer opportunities currently appear by alphabetical order. eCoordinators try to label their opportunity posting with letters at the front of the alphabet so that their opportunity will be seen first by volunteers, essentially competing with colleagues for visibility. Feedback from eCoordinators suggests that there needs to be a restructuring of the website and re-organization of opportunities by date or type of event/program.

Additional suggestions include having the website enabled for 'auto-translate' and provide a larger font option for enhanced readability for those with sight impairment.

Using *I Can Help* for purposes other than recruiting volunteers was suggested. The site could include some basic training resources for volunteers as well as a place to profile and appreciate them.

Some of the suggestions from the eCoordinators reflect training issues while others indicate issues with the software system itself both in the presentation of the site and with the programmed functions of the software. Further training and resources need to be offered to eCoordinators and discussions with Samaritan regarding site layout and functionality needs to occur.

## Summary

The eCoordinators provided much insight into the current volunteer management system. Many of their suggestions can be easily implemented and will likely have a positive impact on the way they manage and support volunteers. Having well supported and trained staff will ultimately enable volunteers to have more meaningful volunteer experiences and enable them to reach their goals.



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