

# BUILDING BLOCKS FOR NEWCOMERS:

## A GUIDE ON VOLUNTEERING



VOLUNTEER  
BÉNÉVOLES  
CANADA

 **Manulife Financial**

For your future



# Acknowledgements

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**THIS RESEARCH AND RELATED RESOURCES CAN BE ACCESSED BY VISITING**  
[www.getvolunteering.ca](http://www.getvolunteering.ca)

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# Volunteering

Every day, thousands of Canadians give their time and talent to organizations throughout the country. **Volunteers strengthen many areas of community life** including health and social services, sports and recreation, arts and culture, literacy, the environment, human rights and international development. Whether you volunteer every week or once a year, as part of an ongoing program, on a short-term project, or for a special event, **your time will make a difference**. While you do not get paid, you can be part of building a better society and also benefit from the experience yourself.





## Why volunteer?

By volunteering, you can give your time and skills to the causes and issues that matter to you. Volunteering is a way to get connected to the people and places where you live and can really help you get settled into your new life.

“*Volunteering brings benefits to both society at large and the individual volunteer. It makes important contributions, economically as well as socially.*” — (UNDP)

As a newcomer to Canada, volunteering provides many practical benefits when you are adjusting to new surroundings, trying to make friends, preparing for school or work, practicing new languages, or learning the transportation system. At the same time, organizations are benefiting from the time you give to them, the experience and talents that you bring, and your knowledge of the language and culture to your homeland.

### THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING TO YOU

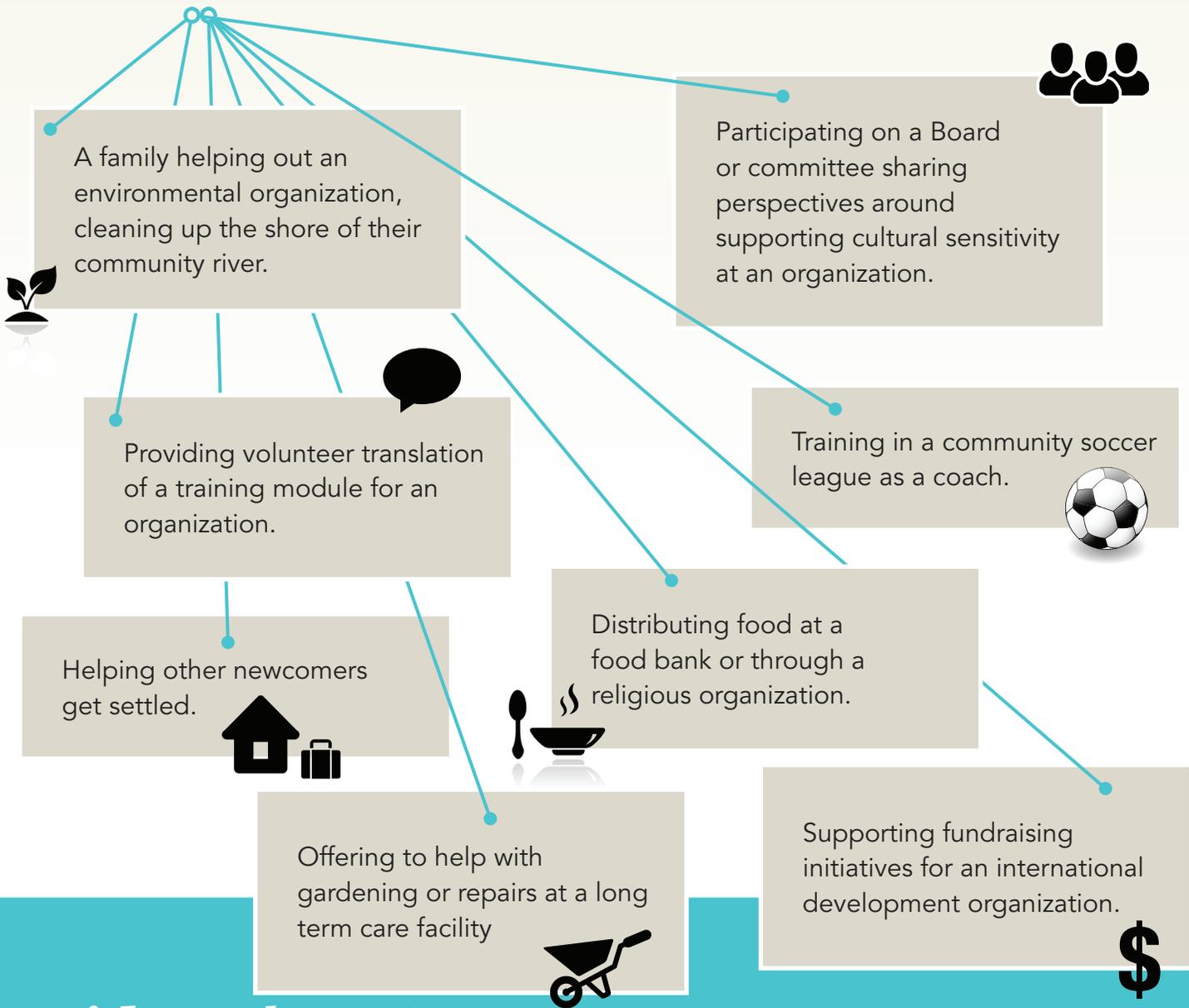
- Develop new skills
- Participate in training opportunities
- Meet new people and make new friends
- Find out about community services
- Gain practical knowledge of Canadian workplaces
- Add Canadian experience to your resumé
- Improve your English or French
- Increase your understanding of Canadian culture
- Feel good about the difference you are making

### THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING FOR YOUR NEW COMMUNITY

- Your community can benefit from your talents, skills and perspectives
- You can improve the lives of your neighbours and community members
- You can improve the environment in which you live
- You can share your experiences and culture with those around you
- You can address community issues or needs
- You can join neighbours in creating a more inclusive community through engagement and participation



# Examples of volunteer opportunities...



## Did you know?

Almost one in five Canadians are immigrants.

In 2010, 39% of immigrants volunteered and they contributed about 162 annual volunteer hours!

The top two reasons for volunteering are to "contribute to the community" and "use skills and experiences."

—Statistics Canada, 2012



# Frequently Asked Questions



## **We are concerned about our finances**

Sometimes there can be some out of pocket expenses that come with volunteering: purchasing bus tickets to get to an organization, or a meal for when you are there. You can address these concerns with an organization, as many organizations are happy to reimburse you for these expenses.

If you are concerned about missing a shift at work due to time spent volunteering, organizations understand that paid work is a priority. Ask for a volunteering schedule that will not interfere with your work.

Volunteering can lead to new skills, training, and could even serve as a stepping-stone to an improved financial situation.

Volunteering can be an excellent way to engage in a community and get settled into a new location. Volunteering can help you gain practical knowledge of your surroundings.

Whether it's learning about what community services are available to newcomers or where the best fruit market is located, a lot can be gained by being active in your community. Making new friends in your community through volunteering is also a great way to get settled.



## **We haven't really been settled in the community for very long**



## **I don't speak English or French very well**

Organizations may have a range of opportunities in which advanced language skills in English or French is not necessary. Volunteering can be an excellent way to practice a second or third language.



There are over 200 volunteer centres across Canada that you can contact to find a volunteer opportunity that is right for you. You can visit Volunteer Canada's volunteer centre [map](#) to find a centre in your community. You can also check out online opportunities at

<http://getvolunteering.ca/get-matched/>

## **I don't know where to find opportunities**



# Getting started *volunteering*...

## 01

EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS AND ABILITIES

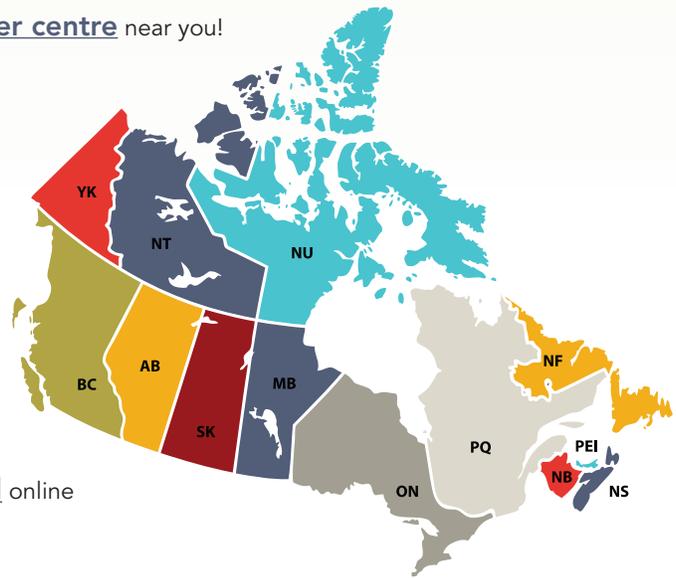
### ASK YOURSELF:

- What am I good at?
- What skills, qualifications, or talents do I have?
- What do I care about?
- What would make the community better?
- What kind of experience am I looking for?

## 02

LOOK FOR A VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Locate a [volunteer centre](#) near you!



or [Get matched](#) online

## 03

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE ORGANIZATION...

**Volunteer Assignment** – Does the organization have a volunteer assignment that describes the volunteer role and responsibilities? Is a Police Records Check required? What kind of scheduling options are available and what kind of time commitment is essential?

**Orientation and Training** – How will I get the information I need about the organization? Who will give me instructions for the task I will be doing?

**Supervision** – Who do I go to for direction, help and support?

**Safety and Rules** – How does the organization manage safety concerns?

**Evaluation** – How will I know if things are going well? How can I share my ideas to improve the program?

**Diversity and Inclusivity** – Is this a welcoming organization? Do they have policies to make sure diverse cultures are respected?



# 04

## DECIDE WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

- Is the organization welcoming?
- Is the volunteer opportunity interesting?
- Will I be making a difference in an area that matters to me?
- Does the schedule work for me?
- Is the location safe?
- Is the transportation convenient?
- Will this give me the experience I am hoping for?

**Two-way Relationship** – Volunteering is about participating in the community, helping others, and meeting your personal goals. Organizations can benefit from the skills, background and talents that you bring to the table, and you as a volunteer can also benefit from your personal goals and objectives being achieved. Make sure that you share what your goals and motivations are for volunteering. What would make the experience fulfilling for you.

**FAQ's** – Do any of the frequently asked questions speak to your situation? If so, bring them up with an organization and make sure that any concerns or challenges are addressed.

# 05

## RESPONSIBILITIES THAT COME WITH VOLUNTEERING...

**Punctual and committed** – Once your volunteering is underway, it is important to arrive on time and remain committed to the schedule that you have agreed to. Organizations are depending on you.

**Professional** – Share your skills and background where possible, as it will only help improve the tasks in which you engage. Respect confidentiality and organizational rules.

**Willing to learn** – Be ready to learn new things through training and when you are unsure, don't be afraid to ask your supervisor questions.



## Interested in learning more?

### What kind of volunteer are you?



The **VQ** is a volunteer quiz that helps people discover their volunteer type and matches them to volunteer opportunities and organizations that suit their personalities, interests, skills and talents.

### Are you interested in building citizenship and welcoming other newcomers?

**Building Citizenship** is a national network of volunteers who organize citizenship ceremonies in their communities, in partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada. How about joining a building citizenship committee through the Institute of Canadian Citizenship?

### Do you have a special skill, talent or qualification that you would like to apply in a Canadian context?

**Skills Plus** identifies hard skills required for certain occupations. The tool matches the experience gained from a variety of volunteer opportunities with key competencies required in a range of occupations. This can help you transfer your volunteer experience to paid employment in the future.

### Are you thinking about retirement soon? Have you considered volunteering?

#### Retirement Planning & Volunteering

This **module** is designed to highlight the benefits of volunteering as a retirement planning option, and to present opportunities that will help people find a satisfying volunteer opportunity.

### How about volunteering with your family?

#### Building Blocks for Family Volunteering: Key Resources for Families

This **tool** directs families to information and ideas on family volunteering. The tool introduces the concept of family volunteering and provides families with various options for volunteer activities.

### Building Blocks for Youth Volunteer Engagement

This **interactive document** geared towards parents, teachers, and youth identifies how adults can support young Canadians in their search for volunteer opportunities. It includes a self-assessment tool, which youth can use to identify their skills and interests, as well as how they may apply while volunteering.



## Would you like to learn more about volunteering in Canada?

### **Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities**

New **research** shares practical information for use by volunteer organizations to attract and retain skilled, dedicated volunteers among four specific demographic groups: youth, families, boomers and employer-supported volunteers.

## You can also check out these websites



Get Volunteering  
[www.getvolunteering.ca](http://www.getvolunteering.ca)

Volunteer Canada  
[www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca)

Institute for Canadian Citizenship  
<http://www.icc-icc.ca/en/>

## Building Blocks for Engaging Newcomers: A Guide for Organizations

This **interactive document**, geared towards organizations, highlights strategies for effective engagement of newcomer volunteers and showcases recent research on newcomer volunteering in Canada.

