

# Volunteer Fair Guide & Tips:

**The Number 1 reason that people DON'T volunteer is because they weren't asked. - SO GO AHEAD & ASK!**

**Recruiting new volunteers through a Volunteer Fair (or similar type of event) is one approach to the ongoing challenge of recruitment. Are volunteer fairs part of your recruitment strategy? They should be!**

**Fairs offer the opportunity to easily connect with many prospective volunteers. They also give you the opportunity to raise awareness about your organization's work and connect with other like-minded organizations who might want to partner.**

**...But only if you're prepared to make the most of them! Here are some pointers on to prepare & engage at the Fair.**

**Before signing up for a fair, you'll want to ask yourself a few questions:**

- Is your organization currently recruiting for volunteers?
- Does the fair's location and audience (e.g., a local Secondary School, or community event) line up with your recruitment needs?
- Are you or your colleagues willing to attend the entirety of the fair?
- Do you have sufficient promotional materials? (or a budget for)

If you answered yes to all the questions above, attending a volunteer fair sounds like a good fit for your organization!



## BEFORE THE FAIR

### Decide Who and What you are Recruiting for

Many people like to start out by volunteering for a special event. If the timing is right, recruit for that event.

Offer specific information about the range of volunteer opportunities in your organization. Know who will be attending the fair so you can target your recruitment messages accordingly.

#### WHO ARE YOU LOOKING TO RECRUIT?


### Prepare your Materials

While your primary focus is recruiting new volunteers, remember that you are engaging in out-reach, education & public relations for your organization as a whole. You are also networking, promoting goodwill & possibly forging alliances with other community organizations. Have materials on hand that will help you respond to questions or comments & a notebook or digital means where can write messages & questions can be recorded & taken back.

#### MATERIALS CHECKLIST

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## Plan your Display



Your exhibit should include:

- A Headline or title
- Your group name, slogan, color and logo
- Eye-catching useful imagery & graphics
- Call to action - "eg. sign-up, join us,
- Share the benefits of joining your organization
- Use lots of photos of volunteers & events
- Consider using inexpensive items or candy for giveaways
- Think small when it comes to hand-outs & giveaways – attendees do not want to carry a lot of bulky materials – the smaller brochures are more likely to be taken away – think postcards or bookmarks
- Always have a sign-up sheet
- Think vertically if your display is inside and prepare to go horizontally if it is outside, (in case of wind)

### PLAN YOUR DISPLAY


### Best Practices for Exhibiting at Events

1. Stand out from the crowd
2. Realistic expectations
3. Take advantage of the networking opportunities at the fair
4. Have a sign-up sheet
5. Arrive on time and stay to the end of the show
6. Think small when it comes to hand-outs and brochures
7. Look as if you want to interact
8. Follow up with your leads

## Your Promo Materials



Key elements to include on your takeaway materials:

- A Popping Headline or title
- Organization name & identity - slogan, logo, use your group's colours
- Call to action - whether it's to promote a specific event, or simply creating awareness:
  - Volunteers/members needed!
  - Visit our website/contact us to get involved
- Your organization's contact information - links to website &/or Social media (maybe use QR code to make the link), phone number
- Directions if appropriate
- Eye-catching useful imagery, graphics or photos



## Prepare a Sign-up Sheet

Always have a sign-up sheet ready:

- to collect names and contact information
- for those wanting additional information
- for those wanting to register for a particular event.



You may choose to use :

- traditional sign-up sheet, or
- embrace technology with on-line tools; have a laptop or tablet on hand linked to your data collection tool, or have a "QR" code that people can use with their own device to link them to your data collection tool

## Who Should Work at the Volunteer Fair Display?



First, find out the fair's target audience.

- Consider any/some of the following to make up your team
  - people who fit the demographic profile of that group;
  - board/executive members,
  - volunteers or
  - member(s) of your client population.
- You want people who will be enthusiastic and interested in maximizing this opportunity for your organization.

Try to have two people, at least for part of the time, so both will have the opportunity to visit the other booths, network with other volunteer groups and take breaks.

## Prepare your team



Familiarize the team with:

- your materials, what information they should share & questions to ask
- your organization's volunteer needs
- the general profile of the people who are attending the volunteer fair (e.g., high school students, people that live/shop in the community)
- encourage them to interact and to count the number of people with whom they interact and any additional information as well that you want to collect
- what time to be there
- what to wear (if applicable)
- where to park
- provide them with a nametag to wear with their names and your organization's name,
- remind them of extras they might want (sun-screen, umbrella, jacket, bottled water, snacks)

# AT THE FAIR



## Engage with Fair Attendees

- Make sure to arrive on time! A lot of attendees will arrive at the start – don't miss your chance to interact with them.
- Stay for the duration.
- Look interested and interesting. Smile. Be polite and friendly. Initiate a conversation. Don't let your body language say that you are bored or tired.
- Ask if they are familiar with your organization and its volunteer/member opportunities or if they have questions. Share any requested information.
- Be ready to answer questions about your organization's work and volunteer program. Have a 30-second elevator pitch prepared!
- **Be ready if someone wants to volunteer! That's why you're there!**
- Ask them if they would like more information or to sign up to volunteer/help at an event.
- Make eye contact, even if you're talking with someone else. Bring the new person into the conversation.
- **Be out in front of your booth, drawing people in.** Avoid sitting down unless traffic is slow or you need to.
- Unless capturing content for social media, avoid using your phone in front of attendees.
- **Attract attendees with a game and prizes or an interactive activity related to your volunteer program.**
- If there's a lull in attendee traffic, take some time to mingle with fellow exhibitors – you might make a connection with whom you can explore partnerships.
- If you'll be sharing a video or audio, make sure to keep the volume low or provide attendees with headphones.
- **Follow up with your new contacts and leads.**
- Meet the organizers. Thank them. Make sure to complete a feedback form, if offered one! This will help event organizers continually improve the fair-going experience.

## What to Pack for the Fair

- Tablecloth (ideally branded)
- Décor (could be related to your programming – e.g., an art gallery could bring prints)
- Pop-up banner (table-top or full size)
- Flyers, pamphlets, posters, business cards, and/or postcards which include your organization's contact information
- Volunteer needs/Position descriptions (printed out or digital)
- Sign-up sheets (printed out or digital) and pens, if needed
- Notebook or digital means to collect information (to record number of interactions, questions, comments)
- Branded giveaways (e.g., pens, buttons, magnets, fans, bookmarks, etc.)
- Candy (or other nut-free snacks) and bowls
- Instruction signs (i.e., "Sign Up Here" or "Win a Prize" or "Play this Game")
- Laptops/tablets, charging cables, and an extension cord if needed
- Portable Wi-Fi hotspot (if needed & no Wi-Fi is provided at the fair)
- If outdoors - Tent/canopy and weights/sandbags, clear plastic sheeting, heavy tape & tie-downs to hold your display in-place.
- Portable folding chairs and table (if not provided)
- Nametags for Team members
- Water and snacks for your representatives
- Incidentals (sunscreen, umbrella, jacket, bottled water, snack)
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## PLANNING FOR THE EVENT



### VOLUNTEER FAIR OPPORTUNITY:

#### DATE/TIME OF EVENT:

#### WHO/WHAT EVENT ARE YOU RECRUITING FOR?

#### PLANS FOR DISPLAY:

#### WHO WILL WORK AT THE EVENT?

#### WHAT DO THEY NEED TO KNOW FOR THE EVENT?

#### MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES NEEDED:

#### OTHER NOTES:



Community Services  
Recovery Fund



Canadian  
Red Cross



Funded by the  
Government of Canada's  
Community Services Recovery Fund

Canada