

Community Dialogue on a Centralized Volunteer Hub for Nelson

Thursday, March 3, 2016

Meeting Summary

This meeting, organized by the Nelson and District Women's Centre and the Social Planning Action Network (SPAN) and funded by Columbia Basin Trust, brought together a group of approximately 20 representatives from 80 invited local non-profits plus individual volunteers to discuss the idea of the need for a centralized volunteer hub for Nelson. The representatives who attended engage over 600 volunteers to help support their organization's activities.

Accomplishments

Participants noted similar challenges, including recruiting and retaining volunteers, training and recognizing volunteers, training volunteer coordinators, as well as meeting the needs of volunteers. Participants also identified the needs they saw that a centralized volunteer hub could fill, including:

- Training Volunteers
 - o Diverse skills
 - o Training for volunteers (including anti-oppression)
 - o Facilitation of connections between organizations with similar needs
 - o Shared systems between organizations for volunteers
 - o Defined roles and responsibilities
 - o Clear understanding of regulations for volunteers
 - o General volunteer orientation
- Volunteer Engagement
 - o Facilitating engagement between organizations
 - o Coordinating volunteers
- Volunteer Recognition
 - o Database of all volunteers
 - o Systematized recognition
 - o Integration between groups to share information
- Volunteer Recruitment and Retention
 - o Scheduled time to come together
 - o Resources for organizations (best practices)
 - o Volunteer "job board"
 - o Promotion of volunteerism as civic/social responsibility
 - o Standardized application forms, screening, code of conduct, etc
 - o Administrative and media support
- For Volunteers
 - o Information and resources about where to volunteer
 - o Training and resources
 - o Mentor/peer to peer learning
 - o Recognition
- For Organizations
 - o Networking
 - o Learning about common trainings across organizations
 - o Volunteer management and coordination support
 - o Recruiting & educating Board Members
- Maintenance of Volunteer Hub
 - o Buy-In/membership
 - o Knowledge of community needs/avoidance of duplication of services
 - o Consistent, long term funding
 - o Physical space

- Easy to use/maintain website
- Standardized training
- Linkages to other services (Volunteer Canada)
- Coordination/administration

Benefits of a centralized volunteer hub were identified as the following:

- Organizational
 - Promotion of organizations
 - Recruitment
 - Engagement
 - Training opportunities
 - Recognition
 - Networking
- Volunteer
 - Community awareness
 - Training and development
 - Community connection
 - Easy to find opportunities
- Community
 - Healthier, stronger community and more opportunity for civic engagement
 - "Go to" for all things volunteer
 - Community education and engagement

Agreements

Participants were asked to rate (low to high) whether they thought a volunteer hub would benefit their organization and/or themselves as a volunteer. All indicated high to moderately high interest.

Action

The group agreed on the following next steps:

- Seek funding for Feasibility Study (SPAN to provide continued leadership)
- Conduct Feasibility Study that would include:
 - Determine geographic scope of potential hub
 - Engage the whole community (non-profit sector, festival committees, sports groups, community organizations). Suggestions included conducting a survey (maybe using Thought Exchange), examining existing resources to not duplicate or potentially leverage existing partnerships
 - Engage the City of Nelson and RDCK
 - Share results of Feasibility Study with relevant parties
- Depending on positive outcome of Feasibility Study:
 - Develop time lines and reporting structure for the initiative
 - Develop project work plan, roles and responsibilities
 - Develop a budget and seek funding resources