



THINK TANK Conversations



2010- 47% of Canadians aged 15+ volunteer.

2013- 44% of Canadians aged 15+ volunteer.

What do these numbers mean?
Is volunteering going out of style?
Is this a trend or the new norm?

Volunteer Canada sought to answer the questions many people were asking the summary report: [‘Recognizing Volunteering in 2017’](#). This groundbreaking report isn’t about recognition but identification. Who is a volunteer? If you saw the myriad of ways people give back, would you recognize it as volunteering?

In this Think Tank we explored their findings. We explored what the new face of volunteering means for organizations and how you can support, promote and celebrate volunteers in this new age.

RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEERING IN 2017 VOLUNTEER CANADA

- ✓ People are finding other ways, other than formal volunteering, to advance social good.
- ✓ Individual Social Responsibility – the continuing commitment to behave ethically and contribute to people’s development while improving the quality of life of others as well as society at large.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS AT A GLANCE:

1. The definition of volunteering is expanding around the globe to include informal volunteering and organic movements.
2. Researchers are including informal volunteering in studies about volunteering (Statistics Canada plans to develop an informal volunteering module for the 2018 General Social Survey: Giving, volunteering and participating).
3. Informal volunteering appears to be increasing and may partly explain why formal volunteering rates have dropped.
4. Canadians identify a wide range of activities and decisions through which they express their values and contribute to community which include formal volunteering, informal volunteering, and ISR.
5. There may be opportunities to provide tools and other support to promote informal volunteering and ISR.
6. Volunteer recognition ought to include expressing appreciation and raising awareness about the contributions Canadians made through informal volunteering and ISR more broadly.



What are your first impressions of the survey?

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It's nice to have a definition for informal volunteering

It's exciting

It makes sense and it's understandable people are focusing on their skills and how they can use them to volunteer

It's reflective of the millennial generation

It's a little scary- organizations can be change resistant

How do we get to the next level?

Changing the language of how we speak about volunteering is really interesting and necessary

This model really gets the best out of volunteers by linking their values to their roles”

Informal volunteering makes it flexible

How do we train volunteers in the age of informal pop, in volunteering?

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How would your organization benefit from more informal/flexible structures?

1. We would be able to engage valuable group volunteers in our organization
2. We would engage volunteers on a deeper level by making space for independent work
3. We could allow volunteers to try out our program with no required commitment
4. We would be able to have much needed data and statistical analysis support



'Recognizing Volunteering in 2017' introduced the idea of deeper and more intentional volunteer engagement. The THINK TANK group were excited by the report's findings that Canadians are highly motivated to make a difference in their communities outside of formal structures. This meant that volunteerism is alive and well in communities. However, they realized an important part of their work was being adaptive to the changing needs of volunteers to ensure their organizations were providing meaningful opportunities and using volunteer's skills. **But what do organizations need to be able to get to place where they can better engage volunteers?** Here's what they said:

Leadership buy-in

Consistent messaging

Time

Culture shift

Consistent organizational value of volunteers

Increased board involvement

Volunteer needs assessment

Staff training

Better board and executive director relations

More storytelling to the board

Volunteer value impact statement

“We need to get out of the way of the kindness of community”