

Your organization is likely already experiencing disruptions to your normal way of doing business and will, undoubtedly, experience far more in the weeks/months to come with the on-going pandemic.

The volunteers who are already engaged with your organization remain a vital resource as you navigate these unusual circumstances and, as such, deserve some thoughtful strategizing around how to leverage their skills while also protecting them physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Start, stop, continue

Postpone training or leverage online and other virtual training options

- Reach out to your online community to learn how to use Zoom, skype or other conferencing technology.
- Think about converting face to face training – can you use your technology platform with smaller groups to make sure that people don't miss out on professional development or valuable training while they are social distancing

Pare back operations to allow volunteers to stay home

- This should be individuals choice in line with state and health authorities.
- Can you put projects on hold? Are there other projects that you've been dying to undertake but haven't had a chance to start?
- IF you have stood down your volunteer operations have you encouraged your volunteers to think about what they can do locally?

- Do you have a current volunteer recruitment ad on Go Volunteer that you should take down if you are pausing volunteer operations?

Support volunteers in working remotely

- This may need you and your organisation to consider volunteer and client privacy, as well as occupational health and safety (desk quality etc)
- Assess your ability to support remote working on an ongoing basis

Survey volunteers to determine their availability to continue volunteering

- Be sure to remind individuals that this is their choice and they are supported by your organisation for taking the steps they feel necessary
- they are able to change their mind in future if they reassess what they would like to do

Determine where volunteer workforce should be focused if there is a significant decrease in availability

- Link in with any emergency volunteer supports if available and appropriate to deliver mission critical services to assist with a decrease in volunteer availability

Communicate strategically

Communicate with volunteers to keep them up to date, ensure they understand their options, and allay any rumors, while also providing guidance for their safety and that of others.

Include volunteers in decision-making around policies affecting them

- This means getting volunteers involved in decisions about whether it's appropriate to allow them to work from home etc
- Use inclusive language to prevent individualistic behaviours

Ensure that volunteer engagement is part of your organization's overall response plan

- This means continuing to reach out to your volunteers even if they have paused their volunteering – they are part of your workforce community and keeping them engaged is important.
- You can do this by sharing organisational updates, continuing to celebrate team milestones or birthdays remotely

Volunteer leaders are ideally placed to assist in this situation. We are leaders who are used to accommodating shifting resources, motivating individuals and working towards a shared vision

As a volunteer leader you can:

- Act with integrity: model behaviour that you are asking of others
- Act with compassion: make sure you are checking in on those in your community, particularly the most vulnerable
- Act with imagination: know what the needs of your organisation clients and volunteers are and be creative about trying new strategies to meet everyone's needs.

Local volunteerism is a fundamental resilience strategy and a property of resilient communities. (SOVR 18)
Your work to ensure this can happen in a safe, and creative way is vital.

Consider these principles when leading your volunteer team

Consistency: Message consistent with organisation values

Transparency: Maintain a clear message

Predictability: Keep volunteers updated on what happens next