



## Interviewing for Potential

*Tips on how to interview potential volunteers for possible opportunities in your organization, rather than for a particular role.*

### **Tip 1. Be prepared for the interview.**

- Think about the purpose of the interview. Are you interviewing to weed out inappropriate people, or are you interviewing to fit people into positions?
- Have your list of questions ready. Think about what you are looking for in the answers to the questions you ask. Have your questions be open ended, as this encourages dialogue between you and the volunteer. If your person is shy or a bit unsure how to answer your question offer example answers.
- If you have been given a volunteer application in advance to the interview have a quick look over it. Think about what things you can ask this person to find out more about them, and the potential that they may bring to your organization.
- Also bring some materials on your organization. Although many people have read about your organization, some have not or have just done a little bit of research, and it is always nice to be given information to take home.
- It is a good idea to bring a list of available volunteer positions to show your potential volunteer the types of things they can do at your organization. They may have seen a posting for one thing and not have realised you offered other types of volunteering opportunities.

### **Tip2. Location, Location, Location!**

- Make sure you have a comfortable place to hold the interview where you will not be interrupted. Choose somewhere that is friendly, private and accessible (if possible). Remember that you are also making a first impression on this potential volunteer, and perhaps your office overtaken by your paperwork, craft materials, and a ringing phone is not the best space for an interview!

### **Tip 3. Volunteer interviews should not be like job interviews!**

- When interviewing for a job we are often looking to fill a specific role, but when interviewing for a volunteer position it is important to keep an open mind and think about **what else** this person could bring for your organization. Volunteers often come not knowing exactly what they might be going to do at your organization, or they have little expectations of their possible roles, so it is important for you to take time to find out what this person would be good for, and what else they may have to offer down the line.

For example: you get a volunteer who has come to you to sort food out at your food bank, but during the interview you discover that he/she is able to speak 2 different languages and does graphic design as their job/hobby. Although you may desperately need this person to work at the food bank, you can note to yourself that they may be able to help you with marketing campaigns or front line work with your clients, in order to utilize his/her other skills.

Your volunteer may even be able to bring new ideas and opportunities for your organization!

- It is also important to understand that although some volunteers may be skilled (like in the example above in graphic design) they may not want to do that outside of work and are looking for new skills and a break from their desk job. When interviewing you can find this out by asking the volunteer questions around **why** do they want to volunteer?

### **Tip 4. Screening**

- When interviewing potential volunteers this is also an opportunity to screen them. Please see the attached document "*Sport Safe – Volunteer Screening Model*" put out by Sport BC (<http://www.sport.bc.ca/>) as a great example of what to think about and look for when screening volunteers.

### **Tip 5. Things you can't ask.**

- Avoid asking questions based on the following issues/topics: religious affiliations, sexual orientation, political affiliation, income, and illnesses they may have (unless you need to know for a bona fide reason). The interview should be about learning and sharing not about interrogating!