

FINAL REPORT
Volunteer Engagement Strategy
Township of Minden Hills

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The RETHINK GROUP

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Table of Contents

1. Background	Page 3
2. Recommendations Summary	Page 4
3. Introduction	Page 6
4. Population	Page 7
5. Volunteer Survey Highlights	Page 9-22
6. Recommendations	Page 23-42
a. Standard 1: Mission-based Approach	Page 23
b. Standard 2: Human Resources	Page 24
c. Standard 3: Policies & Procedures	Page 25
d. Standard 4: Volunteer Administration	Page 26
e. Standard 5: Risk Management & QA	Page 27
f. Standard 6: Volunteer Roles/Assignments ...	Page 28
g. Standard 7: Recruitment	Page 31
h. Standard 8: Screening	Page 33
i. Standard 9: Orientation & Training	Page 34
j. Standard 10: Support & Supervision	Page 36
k. Standard 11: Record Management	Page 37
l. Standard 12: Technology	Page 38
m. Standard 13: Recognition	Page 39
n. Standard 14: Evaluation	Page 41
7. Appendix Listing	Page 43

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Background

In the spring of 2016, the Township of Minden Hills was successful in receiving a grant for a project that would focus on developing a long-range strategy to support voluntary organizations and groups in the community who rely on volunteers to deliver a wide-range of services for the Township. The Township staff have witnessed a decline in numbers and a decrease in interest in volunteering for the many Council committees, project or task groups and for special events held throughout the year. This was the impetus behind this project and a keen desire to understand changes in voluntarism and how the Township could work towards increasing engagement of not only Township volunteers but help other voluntary organizations increase their success with volunteer engagement. In other words: “Why is volunteering decreasing in our community and what can we do in a positive way to improve our current work with volunteers to build a sustainable resource for the future?”

The Rethink Group and consultant Donna Lockhart was retained to assist the Township with this project. Four steps formed the primary aspects of the project which lead to the recommendations presented in this report. These steps include:

Step 1: An Assessment of the current state of volunteering. Discussion with staff and results of an online volunteer survey formed part of this assessment. The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement developed by Volunteer Canada provided information as well. When blended together, this information formed a picture of the present situation against best practices in the field of volunteer management.

Step 2: Development of an online Volunteer Survey to seek information from existing volunteers in the Township. The survey ran for approximately two weeks from late September into October. The information gathered would help create a volunteer profile, examine the experience and satisfaction of current volunteers and gather ideas that might be useful for future volunteer engagement. This information was blended with results of Step 1.

Step 3: Development of resources that could be used by voluntary organizations and posted on the Township website. Township staff wanted this project to have benefit for all voluntary organizations in the Township so the idea to post resources about volunteering and make these accessible on the Township website was proposed.

Step 4: Recommendations. Analysis of information gathered, draft report presented to staff (November 21, 2016) and final report submitted in December 2016. Appendix 1 includes information gathered from Township staff. Appendix 2: Results of the Canadian

Code for Volunteer Involvement as completed by staff and Appendix 10: Volunteer Survey Results. These three documents formed the basis for the recommendations in this report, along with the knowledge and experience of the consultant's 35 years in the volunteer engagement field. Additional supportive documents and resources are found in the Appendix attachments to this report to help staff implement the recommendations proposed.

Recommendations Summary

On Monday November 21st, draft recommendations were discussed with the Community Services staff. Results from the Volunteer Survey and the Standards Audit were sent prior to this meeting so that staff could review the findings. Since the report is quite extensive, it was decided that the top priorities from this study would be listed along with timing for completion over the next two-three years. When working through the priorities listed below, refer to the overall recommendations listed under the 14 Standards of Practice for additional ideas and specifics (pages 23-42).

Priority 1: Year 1

1. **Philosophy of Involvement Statement.** That Community Services staff engage a cross section of volunteers to help develop a statement about the value and use of volunteers for the Township. Since this is a critical step for long-term volunteer success, it should be started in the first year. Resources on how to do this have been provided. This statement will prove beneficial for marketing purposes as well as for positioning the Township to develop a supportive culture for volunteers.
2. **Coordination of common volunteer forms.** The study revealed that a wide range of forms have been developed between Community Services and the Clerk's Department as an initial package when volunteers are engaged. It is important that these be standardized and coordinated where possible.
3. **One Stop Process/Procedure.** Develop this area in concert with #2 above. Volunteers need to know and be clear about who to contact around anything involving volunteer engagement. Currently, a "one point of contact" for potential residents to volunteer in the Township does not exist. Given the range of Township volunteer opportunities from Council Committees to local events, to a more indirect relationship with sports and social service groups/organizations, building and managing volunteer resources has become more complex than it needs to be. The Community Services and Clerks Departments need to find a clear process that links the potential volunteer to the forms/administration required to volunteer; with the storage and maintenance of such information files; with the 'who' supports the volunteer once accepted or who works with or provides what support to any specific group.
4. **Software Research.** That Community Services determine what they want volunteer management software to achieve; and engage the services of a

student/volunteer, skilled or interested in the technology field to help them assess the software programs most suitable for the Township. A resource on this topic was provided to staff as part of this project.

5. **Staff Training.** That the Township support volunteer management training aligned to a staff position in Community Services (assuming this is where volunteer engagement management will be positioned). This training would be a Certificate in Volunteer Management. This will allow for immediate results in improving the relationship and support for volunteers in Township opportunities. This training can be completed within one year.
6. **Web Resources:** Part of this project was to provide a listing of resources that could be made accessible to all non-profits in the Township. These resources will help other organizations with volunteer engagement ideas and suggestions for improvement. Find a simple way to post these resources and communicate for access.

Priority 2: Year 2

1. **Position Descriptions for Volunteers.** The results of the volunteer survey indicate that volunteers want a better understanding of their roles, expectations and outcomes. It is suggested that these be updated well in advance of an event or committee launch. Determine the format that is useful for the Township roles and as the Terms of Reference for Committees and individual event roles come up again, they could be updated into a common, standardized format. A template will be shared as a resource to this project. Depending on the resources available, this work might be considered in year 1 with a start on the Canada Day Committee roles.
2. **Policies and Procedures.** A policy and procedures handbook should be created for all areas that impact volunteer engagement. A list of potential policy areas was made available for this project. These could be housed on the Township web site.
3. **Orientation for Volunteers.** The results of the volunteer survey also indicate that improvement in overall orientation to the Township, the role, event or committee could be improved. This might be done by a student or skilled volunteer who could take the elements of a Township orientation and put them into a u-tube video, accessible from the web site. Written materials such as role descriptions (updated in 2 above), any communications charts or committee structures as examples could also be housed on the web site with volunteer password access.
4. **Purchase Software for Volunteer Management.** Based on the assessment from year 1, purchase software to support volunteer management functions.
5. **Web Site.** Conduct a review and assessment of the Township Web Site from a 'volunteer navigator' perspective. Make volunteering more prominent and

determine the overall structure and content of a volunteer section of the web site. Make volunteering easy.

Priority 3: Year 3

1. **Staffing.** The most successful organizations engaging volunteers have dedicated staffing. If Community Services staff can improve many aspects of volunteer engagement in the first two years with this focused effort, the Township should consider designating a part-time position as Manager of Volunteers with the potential to grow into a full-time position. This position housed in the Community Services Department would support not only Township roles and Council Committees but provide continued support to other non-profit organizations throughout the Township. This effort will raise the profile of volunteering and ultimately the desire of residents to commit to engaging in community service. Volunteers will feel supported in their efforts.
2. **Recruitment.** Review the recommendations around recruitment (Standard 7) making sure that most of the fundamentals are in place before developing specific recruitment strategies for roles or age groups.

Introduction

For organizations to be successful in engaging volunteers today, everyone in the organization needs to embrace the value and benefits of volunteering. There exists not only incredible competition for volunteer resources, but the very nature of volunteers and what they desire to do in their free time has changed dramatically. Baby Boomers and youth bring skills and experiences to their volunteer roles that is unprecedented. They no longer want to do the mundane roles that organizations originally assigned to volunteers. Volunteers now want opportunities not tasks. The fact that many rural communities, like Minden Hills have an aging population and a decreasing population base, only exaggerates the challenges. Minden Hills may have potential to tap into the population that swells during in the summer months.

Many communities, like the Township of Minden Hills are facing the same issues and challenges with volunteer resources. Staff are to be commended for taking the initiative to investigate this issue now and find new and creative ways to engage and support community residents. This report and the findings are the first step to building the structure and resources necessary to support volunteer initiatives in the community. Without a leadership that is committed and passionate to make changes necessary for success, volunteer resources will continue to suffer. Many aging communities believe that retirement years will see a surge in volunteering. This may not be the case if the opportunities offered do not match the interests and needs of this age group. Canadian statistics have shown a slow decline in volunteering as we age. In a community that already has an aging and fixed/declining population, this may be a double hit.

Some Population Information:

The 2011 Statistics Canada Census, was used to provide the following information about demographics of the Township of Minden Hills. Information is provided simply as a backdrop to understanding the current age profile and to later illustrate how volunteering is both life-cycle and age related. This might also provide some foundation for suggestions for future community volunteers.

In 2011, the population of Minden Hills was 5, 655. This is a 1.8% overall decrease since 2006.

Age	2011	2006
0-14 years	630	710
15-64 years	3,470	3,465
65+ years	1, 555	1,380
Total	5,655	5,560

The median age in 2011 was 53.5 years. Ontario average median age is 40.4. Minden Hills has an older median age than the province. This might be considered a positive thing given this age group is either in retirement or headed in that direction. We assume that the retirement years bring lots of potential to volunteering and in fact, the past might have supported this. Research from Imagine Canada and Volunteer Canada has indicated that current baby boomers are showing slight decreases in volunteering for many reasons. Some have already been mentioned like wanting different volunteer opportunities (meaningful roles) than past older adults (who did any task that was asked of them); working longer; sandwiched with young adults at home and aging parents; less time and willingness to volunteer; different motivations to volunteer; personality of baby boomers to quit more easily from frustrating volunteer roles; and, the need to volunteer for fun and not have it be like ‘work.’

The population is made up of mostly couples either married or common-law. Those without children at home represent approximately 1, 035 and those with children at home, 560. In an article on “Patterns of Volunteering over the Life Cycle” by Kevin Selbee and Paul Reed, statistics show that marriage and children are key influences on volunteering. In general, married individuals tend to volunteer more that those who are single or divorced. An exception is the 15-24-year-old group, in which singles were more likely to volunteer that married individuals. In Minden Hills, this is likely a decreasing age group.

Married and formerly married people volunteer most between the ages of 35-44. Singles this age tend to volunteer the least. Having children appears to be more of an influencer and life changer for volunteering that marriage. The presence and age of children affects the likelihood to volunteer. Having older children over age 6 increases the probability of volunteering. Think about the support of volunteers in schools and

sports. With a decreasing youth population, this could be a significant factor in declining future volunteerism in Minden Hills especially for organizations with a recreation/sports focus.

Among people with no children at home, single 15-24-year-olds and married seniors were significantly more likely to volunteer than other marital groups. Among people with older children, married parents between 25 and 64 were consistently leaders in volunteering. Given the population focus on this age group in Minden Hills, the potential to tap this group with new and meaningful volunteer opportunities exists.

Employment is also a factor in volunteering. People employed full time and those who are unemployed, volunteer at similar rates (with some differences between the ages of 25 and 44). Religion and education have also been shown to impact on volunteering. The more educated and those affiliated with religious organizations, tend to volunteer more.

“Differences in the rate of volunteering are associated with marriage, children and employment, three of the defining components of the life cycle.”

The ‘Patterns of Volunteering over the Life Cycle’ also suggests that social connectivity is a factor in volunteering. Research indicated that the more varied a person’s involvement in their community, the greater the likelihood they will perform volunteer work. This ‘social connectivity’ (or community involvement) may be a positive characteristic for isolated or more rural communities. If people are strongly connected, they may be more willing to reach out to support others and they know more about the community due to this connectedness. In smaller communities, everyone seems to know everyone else so this makes causes/issues more visible. The study concluded that the 15-24-year-olds higher rate of volunteering is related to their more extensive involvement in activities in the community.

The other group of people without children at home who have significantly higher volunteer rates than others, was married seniors over 65 years. Religion is a factor in this, as well as, the element of connectivity. In the population of Minden Hills, this age group had a slight increase in population between 2006 and 2011. Are these the baby boomers who have had cottages in the region and are now retiring here? Finding them and enticing them to get connected to the community in meaningful ways, is the challenge.

Although actual figures and age ranges for the swelling summer population were not available for this report, this is an important group to consider. Ideas for engaging summer residents will be found in the recommendations of the report. A small consistent resident population that has shown declining volunteering, might be supplemented by other population groups at hand, willing to volunteer when residing in their summer or winter residence. Any volunteer engagement strategy cannot ignore this summer population or the newly retired to the region. Getting both these groups

engaged in community life may increase connectivity and therefore involvement and volunteering. The rising interest in group or family volunteering may be the connection to this summer population.

The Volunteer Survey Highlights

Like many organizations, the Township of Minden Hills does not have a great deal of documented information about current volunteers or how they feel about their current volunteer activities. The staff wanted to tap the potential of their current volunteers for ideas and solutions to the decreasing levels of volunteering in the Township. It was determined that an online survey would provide a good tool to gather both information and ideas. Staff assisted in the design and testing of the survey that was made available on September 26, 2016 and ran for two weeks, closing on October 19, 2016. A full copy of the results can be found in Appendix 10.

Highlights are presented here under the three primary categories of the survey.

Volunteer Profile

Q1: Primary volunteer role identified

Of the fifteen roles identified for the survey, Council/Committee represented 27.6%; working group/task force 27.6% and Festival of Trees represented 12.7% of the total respondents. Twenty-three others listed roles from the library to volunteer firefighting which were not identified in the primary listing. Since a primary concern for this study is recruitment for council/committee and working groups, it is good that most of the responses to the survey are from these groups.

Q2: Volunteering for more than one Township event/activity.

52.4% of respondents, volunteer for the Township in more than one event/activity. 48% do not. From research studies, we know that most people who volunteer, volunteer for more than one organization. Having people volunteer for more than one activity/event within the same organization such as the Township, may also not be surprising given the range of opportunities available. Let's look at the results of the next question to see if there are any surprises.

Q3: Volunteering for another organization in the community.

79% of respondents who volunteer with the Township, also volunteer for another organization, such as church, school, service club. We might infer a couple of things to consider:

- a) Those who volunteer for the Township in more than one activity/event may not volunteer for another organization. They have perhaps found the right roles within the offerings of the Township and are community-minded enough to focus on volunteering for the civic duty sense.

- b) Those who do not volunteer for more than one role for the Township, could be those who volunteer for other organizations in the community or see giving once to the Township role is enough.
- c) We know that most volunteers, give of their time in numerous organizations.
- d) Of the 48% who have one role with the Township...21% of those do not volunteer for any other organization. (is there some potential for these people if encouraged or satisfied to volunteer for additional Township roles?)

Q4: Length of time volunteering for the Township.

Most survey respondents have been volunteering for 3-5 years. This is 90% of those completing the survey. Of this group, 56% have volunteered for more than 5 years. This suggests a more seasoned group of volunteers who have stayed on and may be nearing the end of their volunteering.

However, new volunteers in the 1-3 months' length of time represent 8.5% of respondents. Although it is good to see new recruits involved, they are likely a very small component of the overall group of volunteers.

If we keep in mind that our aim might be to have new recruits continue and increase their length of volunteering time, then we need to find better balance between those in the new category and those more seasoned in the 3-5-year range.

It is also important to consider Q26: Likelihood to stay on volunteering over the next two years. 53% of respondents indicated they were likely to continue while 47% indicated not likely/perhaps/will be leaving. This is almost a 50% turnover rate which implies that there will be many volunteer roles to be filled in the coming years. Recruitment will be more continual and the Township may have to work harder at supporting new volunteers to encourage them to stay and to engage them for the next 3-5 years.

Q5: Resident status

89% of respondents are permanent residents of the Township. 12% are seasonal summer months/weekends and seasonal anytime. Information is currently not known about how many seasonal residents become permanent residents upon retirement or relocation for any number of reasons. Given the number of festivals/events hosted by the Township, there may be potential to recruit new volunteers from seasonal residents. It is more difficult to recruit seasonal residents for committee/task/project work unless the Township embraces technology to assist with distance (go to meetings/skype etc.). Finding out the interests and skills of seasonal residents would help to target potential volunteers for numerous roles.

Q6: Distance travelled to volunteer

82% of respondents travel 15 to 30 minutes to their volunteer commitment. Travel may be a barrier to volunteering, especially in winter months from those on the edges of the

Township. Is it possible to consider taking committee/task/project work to where potential volunteers live? If there are issues/concerns to be addressed by Council Committees in outlying areas, finding volunteers to help where they live rather than travel to the Town of Minden, might increase volunteerism.

Q7: What might be an appropriate amount of time to volunteer.

Respondents indicated that time is dictated by the situation and what is required to do the job well. Volunteers should not be restricted by the amount of time they want to give but that time commitment should be clearly communicated. 29% felt that 2-4 hours per week is sufficient to ask and 27% felt 5 or more hours per month. The range of hours that emerged from this question indicate a willingness of people to give what they can; what they are asked; what the project/task or event requires. However, clearly stating expectations around time commitment is important.

Q8: Primary reason for volunteering.

There are many reasons why people volunteer to help in their communities. Trying to find some primary motivators was important and aimed at finding ideas that might be helpful when crafting recruitment messages to potential future volunteers.

1. 57% indicated “volunteering is a way for me to give back to the community.”
2. 22% indicated “I had skills/experience to share and found a good match.”
3. 7% indicated “I had time when I retired and wanted to stay active.”

These three primary motivators also align with current research from Volunteer Canada. They can be used in marketing messages; in testimonials from satisfied volunteers and to target retirees in the Township of Minden. Baby boomers and youth, want to use skills and experience in their volunteer roles, while at the same time knowing they are having impact. The health benefits of volunteering also align to the third motivator in the list above.

Q9: Age of respondent

Not surprising is the fact that 53% of survey respondents were 65 years of age or older. This is followed by 30% in the 45 - 64-year category and 17% in the 31- 44 year of age category. This is also reflective of the age demographics of the Township.

Studies have shown that volunteerism decreases with age starting at age 65. If a partner or spouse gets ill, the commitment again drops. Those who do volunteer when older, tend to give more hours. However, this supports a theory that we should be aiming to recruit volunteers in all age categories so that as volunteers age, we do not experience a big drop in volunteerism all at once. Those younger volunteers if satisfied with roles will continue to volunteer as the older volunteers age out of volunteering. Those in the 31-44 age bracket often see volunteering (committee/project work) as skill development they can also apply to their employment.

Volunteer Experience

Q10: How volunteers were recruited

People respond to different messages and strategies but we do know that some methods are more successful than others. A face-to-face personal ask is still regarded as the number one way to recruit volunteers.

37% of the survey respondents indicated that “a friend or partner did a personal ask.”

24% indicated they had “attended an event and then asked how they might help next year.” This goes a long way to illustrate the impact that successful events have on motivation to volunteer and that we can be self-motivated to ask when conditions are right.

Written messages can also appeal to many. 20% “saw call for or application for council/advisory/project committee work” and 15% “saw local ad in the newspaper.”

There were also a couple of respondents who indicated they had an idea to get involved, created the opportunity, it was accepted and they got involved. People coming forth with ideas for involvement may be on the increase especially from the baby boomer age group. Their involvement may be dependent on how open and flexible to new ideas, the Township is.

Q11: Would having a written role description for volunteer positions be helpful to overall volunteer satisfaction and commitment.

54% of respondents indicated that having a written volunteer role description would be helpful.

Several comments imply that a better job in this area could be done; make roles clearer; communicate expectations and what the Township is going to provide. There may be some inconsistencies in this area between advisory committees and other projects.

Q12: Satisfaction with current volunteer role.

57% of volunteers indicated very satisfied (18%) to satisfied (39%)

43 % are unsatisfied/very discouraged and other. Comments included: too many bosses; unnecessary rules; meetings are cancelled; little feedback on our suggestions; volunteers not appreciated; not respected; not recognized for their contributions;

There are many factors that contribute to overall satisfaction and the comments from respondents listed above outline some of them. There appear to be some inconsistencies in treatment/roles for there to be almost as many dissatisfied as satisfied volunteers. There are many areas the Township can control which will be outlined in the recommendations for the final report which would support both successful retention of current volunteers and recruitment of new. Since volunteers are

not being paid in the financial sense but rather gain benefits from volunteering in other ways, being mistreated, disrespected etc. make it both extremely easy for volunteers to quit and to also tell others of their bad experience. Discouraged volunteers tell their story over and over.

Q13: Ideas to influence retention of current volunteers.

This question was an open ended one and from the list of 43 comments, ideas are presented below in theme areas.

1. **SUCCESS:** show success outcomes; targets or goals; clear objectives and goals; measure them; celebrate success; make changes to things not working; when expert advice is given use it; council take recommendations seriously and make decisions based on work done/input.
2. **EVENTS/TOWNSHIP:** change up volunteers; sponsor more events across the Township.
3. **RELATIONSHIP:** use me wisely; don't waste my time; don't treat me like 2nd tier staff; want positive experience; welcome all volunteers; no steam rolling or controlling volunteers; show respect; and appreciation; thank you goes a long way; don't pay lip service; recognize events; monthly profile volunteer in activities in local paper; positive feedback from council; listen; tell when volunteer does good job; treat all volunteer groups same; consistent; charge same rent.
4. **SUPPORT/COMMITTEES:** print our materials; provide coffee; increase numbers on committees to share load; larger, fewer individual responsibilities; more support; clear responsibilities; training and upgrading; be better organized; accommodating to meet after work; strong CAO who will protect volunteers; better defined roles; council listens and acts on recommendations; develop annual budget and committee of council approve for things to complete each year; better manage advisory committees; make municipal resources available.

Q14: Ranking support received as a volunteer in several specific areas.

Survey participants were asked to rank the support they received as volunteers from a list provided. Here are the top 3-4 areas in each category of ranking.

1. **Well Done:**
 - a. 25% indicated "knew who to talk to if issue came up."
 - b. 22% "understood the reasons for screening"
 - c. 20% "got invited to the Township formal recognition event"
2. **Good**
 - a. 52% "understood the reasons for screening"
 - b. 47% "got invited to the Township formal recognition event"
 - c. 39% "understood impact/value of my efforts in the community" and "support in working with other volunteers."

3. Could be better

- a. 43% “clarity in role description.”
- b. 40% “understood expectations of me as a volunteer” and “asked for evaluation/feedback on volunteer event/activity.”
- c. 38% “orientation to my volunteer role.”

4. Not Done

- a. 50% “got additional support when conflict or issue arose that needed to be addressed.”
- b. 42% “got feedback on the work I did” and “asked for evaluation/feedback on volunteer event/activity” and received personal invitation to return and help again.”
- c. 26% “got invited to the Township recognition event” and “understood the impact/value of my efforts to the community.”

Examine by topic:

Topic	Well done and good (combined scores)	Could be better and not done (combined scores)	Overall Comments
Orientation to the Township	48%	52%	Work to be done
Orientation to my volunteer role	50%	51%	Work to be done
Understanding the reasons for screening	74%	26%	Appears area is well done/keep doing
Clarity in role description	41%	59%	Work to be done
Understood expectations	42%	56%	Work to be done
Support in working with other volunteers	51%	50%	Work to be done
I got feedback	32%	69%	Work to be done
Felt appreciated	45%	55%	Work to be done
Invited to Township formal recognition event	67%	34%	Appears to be majority invited; but some missing
Got additional support if conflict arose	35%	65%	Work to be done
Understood value/impact of my efforts	53%	48%	Work to be done

Knew who to contact if issue	53%	47%	Work to be done
Received timely communications	45%	55%	Work to be done
Asked for evaluation/feedback on event/activity	19%	82%	Work to be done
Received personal invitation to return and help again	43%	57%	Work to be done

Q15: Overall rating of support received

48% ranked overall support as good (33%) or excellent (15%)
 36% indicated overall support was poor
 16% were undecided (which may imply a lower rather than a higher satisfaction level)

Q16: Rating overall volunteer experience.

64% of volunteers had a good/excellent experience (53% ranked overall volunteer experience as Good; 11% as Excellent)
 23% as Poor
 13% Undecided

Future of Volunteering

Q17: What could the Township do over the next 2-3 years to improve current volunteer relations.

42 replies are categorized into themes.

1. **Succession Planning:** continuous intake so volunteers would overlap with councils; share workload with more volunteers; change up committees; fresh new members and ideas.
2. **Volunteer Start-up and Support:** have something worthwhile to volunteer for; get staff more involved; more clarity on role; training for some volunteer positions; provide guidance and resources at front end of volunteer experience; get organized; clear expectations; track volunteers; data base; regular contact; more support; resolve issues quickly; training for coaches and relative policy appropriateness; more financial aid; clarify volunteer- staff/council role; clear statement of committee role; improve relationship between volunteer and public.
3. **Respectful:** volunteers bring life experiences; be respectful of community based knowledge and expertise people contribute; getting very expensive advice for pro bono; treat volunteers as valuable assets; protect volunteers; don't mistreat; no unlimited no charge use of municipal facilities; treat all volunteers equal.
4. **Appreciation:** be appreciative; more recognition; act on recommendations; ongoing recognition at every opportunity; say thanks; written thank you; events.
5. **Communicate/Share Results:** define goals; give feedback on work accepted and why not if not accepted; highlight volunteer contributions periodically; identify goals and report to community when reached; feedback from council; monthly reports.
6. **Marketing:** communicate with new retirees via social organizations; website; newspaper and flyers; advertise volunteer positions.
7. **Advisory Committees:** get more community members and less council and staff; eliminate Advisory Committees – promote smaller committees to get more volunteers involved; do not let Advisory control everything; all council needs to be at their community meetings and attend volunteer/club/community functions.

Q18: What one thing could the Township do in the next 2-3 years to increase the number of volunteers

41 comments are presented by theme areas:

1. **Age:** focus on recruiting younger.
2. **Time:** move to evening /weekend meetings to accommodate those still working (2)
3. **Volunteers:** improve volunteer relations with Township; training; resolve issue; “new” volunteers cause problems so take on those we want; accept every volunteer; where are volunteers needed? more choices to volunteer; give

feedback; specific roles; determine and design specific recruitment strategy; clearly define roles and expectations; market benefits and value of volunteering; people show up and not enough work to do; be organized; don't waste time; take list of people and call for the next event.

4. **Promotion:** use satisfied volunteers to spread the word; coffee time session on volunteering; promote the value; road trips to schools, organizations; host volunteer fair; use the media, CANOE FM; print and media; advertise; work with clubs and individual volunteers to let them host events; Website – list committees, needs, time in paper as well.
5. **Matching Service:** facilitate service to match volunteer with Township role; sign up volunteer one event at a time to get new volunteers and ideas; skills matrix – groups identify the skills they need and target those with those skills.
6. **Rewards:** for donating time and money; better recognition; make volunteers feel wanted; volunteers should not be out of pocket for materials to do volunteering.
7. **Township:** us acting responsible in requests; eliminate Advisory Committees (2); clearly define goals of committees and be transparent and report back of the community on results; open-up committee membership; rethink roles of committees.

Q19: Would you recommend the Township as an organization to volunteer for.

39% of survey respondents would recommend the Township as an organization to volunteer for.

16% would not recommend and

45% were unsure. 'Uncertainty' may be seen in a negative way as there must be enough dissatisfaction present for a person not to take a position. This may be tied back to Question 16 about overall satisfaction. 50% of respondents might feel good about their overall experience, but not good enough to recommend others volunteer as well.

Q20: Willingness to help recruit others to volunteer.

24% are willing to help recruit volunteers

20% are not willing and,

56% are unsure

Again, this question may be linked to Q16 and Q19 responses. However, it might also be tied to feeling not trained/or prepared to make the ask to volunteer. Many people given the right skills and training make great recruiters of other volunteers.

Q21: Suggestions for recruiting youth.

33 respondents provided some ideas for youth recruitment. Ideas have been themed:

1. **Social media;** improve social media presence and add policy; get on with it.

2. **Sponsor youth-specific events** and recruit from them; target youth one event at a time;
3. **Youth Groups:** youth already in youth programs should be approached and start the 'give-back' philosophy early; approach youth groups such as Lakeside Baptist Church Friday night youth group; Scouts;
4. **Make volunteering easy:** ASK youth to volunteer; provide work experience/recommendation: where appropriate make volunteering related to work experience; give them recommendation for work if appropriate; ask committees to make it happen for every single event, advertise at local high schools and sign off on volunteer hours; have them attend current volunteer sessions; create interesting roles that take advantage of their perspectives and skills; make roles fun and edgy.
5. **Schools:** develop a working relationship with High Schools; more contact with high schools; presentations at high schools; eliminate advisory committees and promote volunteering to local schools and youth groups; participate in the Volunteer Recruitment Fair at the high school.
6. **Incentives:** training for youth; completing volunteer hours; awards; recognition;
7. **YOUTH Champion: provide mentors to youth; have a youth champion/person with great communication skills and fund approach the high schools and promote volunteering to youth; have council and staff involved with talking with youth about involvement in their community.**

Q22: Suggestions for recruiting newly retired.

32 respondents provided some ideas for recruiting the newly retired. Ideas have been themed:

1. **Promotion:** develop welcome wagon kit that includes volunteer opportunities; put information into the tax bill; approach social clubs, lake associations and use their newsletter or web site to promote; word of mouth; ask present volunteers to help recruit peers; target volunteers from this age group; would tell them to stay away; use questionnaires to get new ideas; posters in curling club; service clubs; word of mouth; public meeting; let people know you need help; sponsor open house with service clubs and organizations in the community which promote the community: need a 'hook' to get people out; invite someone to attend committee meeting/event with idea of continuing on the committee; mentions on CBC or CANOE FM; advertise in three papers; .
2. **Volunteer roles:** clear roles/positions and expectations; convey importance of role/project/committee; make experience fun and educational; keep changing things up; give roles they can manage; treat as honest adults, not as potential criminals.
3. **Advisory committees:** eliminate these and have different smaller committees split up the work

4. **Ease of Volunteering:** make it easy for retirees to volunteers; get committees to make it happen; appreciate all volunteers; make it easy to volunteer in even small roles and/or limited capacity; create a variety of programming/events that meets the needs and differences of an aging population and if they are interested in them volunteers will offer to help.

Q23: Suggestions for recruiting families as volunteers

29 respondents provided some ideas for recruiting families as a volunteer group. Ideas have been themed:

1. **Promotion to families:** suggest parents as role models if they volunteer as a family as the way to promote; apply the 'give back' philosophy; send invitations to local children's groups, Scouts, after school programs, Point in Time, and agencies that help children and families; advertise on Canoe, attend groups and speak at schools;
2. **Family oriented events:** have more family oriented events or like TD Tree; allow families to get more involved one activity or event at a time;
3. **Time:** would have to be evening, after school or weekends;

Q24: Ideas for volunteer virtual roles

31 respondents provided some ideas for recruiting virtual volunteers. Ideas have been themed:

1. **Administration/Materials preparation:** virtual marketing materials, flyers, pamphlets, mailers, any advertising; data base management; book keeping; managing committee websites; advertising community events; managing sections of the municipal website;
2. **Research:** historian; track performance of committees; key performance indicators.
3. **Decorations:** off site for trees is done;
4. **Phone work:** calling sponsors; phone calls for volunteers; call to invite to event;
5. **Event Planning:** crafts; making posters;
6. **Reporting on Success:**

Q25: What could the Township do to be more attractive to potential volunteers.

30 respondents provided some ideas for making the Township more attractive to volunteers. Ideas have been themed:

1. **Promoting:** have a 'Volunteer Corner' - in local newspaper where volunteers write about volunteer experiences; current volunteers trained as 'champions' of volunteering and able to extoll the benefits; work hard to improve the Township's image for not treating volunteers well in the past; volunteers shirts, caps at reasonable price; list all volunteer opportunities in paper not only committees but

groups like Historical Society and Hike Haliburton; get message out what the need is and time commitment; be clear on the value of volunteers;

2. **Improve Volunteer Relations:** change it up: don't rely on the same volunteers all the time; remember you have an obligation to the volunteers they do not have obligation to you; investigate when volunteers have been mistreated and take corrective action; resolve conflict; more funding; better define roles and goals and support committees for them to be successful; one member of council on committee with more general public involved; ask seasonal residents to help; treat volunteers better; appreciate volunteers better and be more open to everyone; let volunteers help when, how and where they can; be friendly; respect volunteers; praise volunteers; appear more understanding and less rigid; ensure committee recommendations are made public and invite public to have input before council finalizes decision.
3. **New Events:** summer picnic - there are seasonal volunteers that are south and miss the Christmas party thank you; yearly volunteer fairs in Township; keep it simple one event at a time; create events/programs that everyone would like to get involved in; need to meet the needs and differences of the community;
4. **Needs Assessment:** do assessment of the community and post it in the newspaper and around the Township;

Q26: Likelihood of continuing volunteering over the next 2 years.

53% of volunteer respondents to the survey indicated they would likely continue to volunteer over the next 2 years.

22% are likely to leave (18% not likely to continue and 4% will be leaving/made up their mind)

24% are unsure.

This question is an example of the continued decrease in volunteering that the Township is already experiencing. There is likely a relationship between this question and several others e.g. Q4 - length of volunteering; Q9 - age; and, Q 12 - volunteer satisfaction. It is probable that those who have volunteered for more than 5 years might be the ones leaving and if they are the older adult volunteers, then as they continue to age they will also continue to leave or decrease their volunteer contribution. Because volunteers are in fact staying for shorter periods of time it will be important to develop not only an ongoing recruitment strategy, but strategies that target different groups/ages/diversity in the community.

Q27: Top three recommendations for volunteer recognition

45 respondents provided their top three (3) recognition ideas from a list of nine (9) items. They are listed here in order from most selected to least selected.

1. **First Choice:**
 - a. Listen to our ideas at evaluation time and make changes – 64%
 - b. A thank you card sent – 60%
 - c. A thank you when the job is well done/completed – 56%
2. **Second Choice:**
 - a. Formal event like dinner once per year – 41%
 - b. Acknowledge list of volunteers on website – 29%
 - c. Thank you when the job is well done – 28%
3. **Third Choice:**
 - a. Post profiles of volunteers on the Township website – 64%
 - b. Formal event like dinner once per year – 54%
 - c. Verbal thank you from another volunteer/staff – 32%

Most volunteers do not volunteer to be recognized either formally or informally. Some of the reasons people volunteer are to do good; give back to the community; build skills or social connections; share skills and expertise or to keep socially connected. The results of this informal survey are like the findings in 2013 from Volunteer Canada in a Recognition Study. There is a movement away from spending money or more formal events to informal ways to show appreciation to volunteer efforts.

A combination of a formal event (2nd and 3rd choice above) and informal ways to acknowledge volunteers may be best suited to this community and will be explored more fully in the Final Report on Recommendations.

Q28: Any additional final comments, ideas or suggestions from survey participants.

A list of 23 ideas was reviewed and any new ideas not mentioned in previous questions are posted here.

1. Have staff manage events and source different volunteers for each event.
2. Revamp how you manage volunteers.
3. Any formal event for volunteer recognition should be held during Volunteer Week in April (Volunteer Canada initiated coordination).
4. Develop exit interviews to learn about why volunteers leave.
5. Limited 'Terms of Office' would help with integrating new volunteers and keep long term volunteers from dominating.
6. Develop success measures for committees and report on results.
7. Volunteers should have some form of visual recognition when helping at Township events - be recognized by shirts, name tag or vest
8. Trying to bridge the gap between 2012 and now when many volunteers were devastated is huge. However, perhaps the 150th anniversary of Canada event might be a new beginning.

9. Find ways to make volunteering easier and provide training so volunteers continue to understand why certain red tape is necessary e.g. police checks, liability, release forms etc. Make sure volunteering has an element of education, accomplishment and fun to help keep people motivated.

Volunteering is a major economic and social engine in the community

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are listed under the 14 Standards developed by Volunteer Canada. These Standards outline the elements that make best practices for volunteer engagement.

Recommendations were developed by using information provided by staff (general questions and audit sheets), the results of the volunteer survey and ideas from the November 21st meeting with staff.

By assessing the status of volunteer engagement against these standards, the Township has a road map to the future. Improving each of the Standards through planning, training and education, will position the Township in an improved situation to recruit and retain the volunteers necessary to fulfill the mission and goals of the Township. The information gained from this study and the resources made available, will also help the other non-profit organizations in the Township understand and adjust their strategies for89 engaging volunteers.

Recommendations

Standard 1: Mission-based Approach

Organizational Standards and Philosophy of Involvement

Developing a Philosophy of Involvement Statement helps to both position and illustrate the commitment to supporting volunteers in an organization. We have learned that volunteer engagement is not free; time/labor might be free but dedicated resources (people, time and money) to market/recruit, train, recognize and support this resource are necessary ingredients to success. The Organizational Standards developed by Volunteer Canada give organizations a foundation upon which to build successful engagement of volunteers.

The Township has started this process in Policy #93 - Volunteer Policy under Guiding Principles. This is a good first step in understanding the value and benefits of civic engagement. However, we have all heard the phrase “walk the talk.” Everyone in the organization needs to embrace the value/benefits of volunteers so that volunteers not only see but feel that their efforts are impactful. The results of Audit Sheet 1 indicate that several aspects that act as a foundation to build volunteerism are missing. Some pieces are in place but may not have been formalized. Results from the online survey with volunteers also indicated that the relationship between volunteers and the

Township could be improved. Survey participants identified several aspects that could be improved - respect for volunteers; treating volunteers fairly/consistently; realizing the skills/potential of volunteers to make a difference in the community; and, creating positive meaningful experiences for volunteers.

Recommendations:

1. **That Township staff develop the cornerstones of the Philosophy of Involvement Statement (see Appendix 4) into statement form.** Use the key comments for improvement from volunteers to build value/benefits and treatment statements.
2. **That Community Services staff help Council to understand the changes that have occurred in voluntarism and why a new direction is critical to success.**
3. **That the Township of Minden Hills Council embrace the value of volunteers and adopt this Philosophy of Involvement Statement once completed.**
4. **That the Philosophy Statement be used in marketing materials on volunteerism such as position descriptions for volunteers, brochures, flyers, website and social media.**
5. **That Community Development staff and Township Council adopt the 14 Organizational Standards for Volunteer Engagement and work towards implementing where possible over the next 3-5 years.**

Standard 2: Human Resources

This standard relates to what might be termed the “Culture of Volunteerism” that exists within an organization or in this case the Township. This includes how volunteers are valued, respected, seen and felt to be part of a larger human resources team. Does the organization then plan and support volunteer involvement by providing necessary resources? This is also tied into Standard 1, so it is not surprising that without a foundation for volunteer engagement and a formal commitment to volunteers, challenges and issues arise. The Audit Sheet 2 demonstrates that many aspects of supporting volunteers are missing.

Recommendations:

1. **Training:** All Township staff and Council members take training on changes in volunteerism and the importance of working together as paid and unpaid human resources to accomplish the goals/mission of community engagement.
2. **That Community Services Staff help Council discuss and consider other options to the decreased interest in the volunteer roles on Committees, Advisory Committees, and special projects.** Several comments from the volunteer survey focused on elimination of ‘advisory groups’ and implementing new groups to support decision-making.

3. **Volunteer opportunity descriptions:** Be developed and enriched for all Township positions based on skills, abilities and talents desired for each position. Once completed, these descriptions will form the basis for a targeted marketing approach. A sample template will be provided. The online survey supported the need for clearer descriptions, written expectations and measurable outcomes for all committees along with reporting results to the community.
4. **Volunteer chairpersons:** (Council committees, advisory groups or project groups) who work most closely with volunteers need training on how to support and engage volunteers especially conflict resolution and role clarification.
5. **Community Services staff who work most closely with all volunteer groups in the community should be given training opportunities such as Certification in Volunteer Management. (a designated Manager of Volunteers would obtain this training).**
6. **Input from volunteers:** is encouraged and gathered yearly either by exit interviews (when volunteer departs) or solicited freely on the website via an online survey. The Manager of Volunteers shares this information to inform and improve volunteer services for the Township.
7. **Volunteer Support:** As part of the development of a Philosophy of Involvement Statement, volunteers are supported as part of the Township Team to meet the mission. Development opportunities such as training for leadership positions is provided to encourage and support sustainable volunteerism. Entry level volunteers given support and training, might be motivated to move to other levels of volunteering that require leadership, planning or project management skills (we used to call this succession planning).

Standard 3: Policies and Procedures

A policy framework that supports the work of volunteers is an important tool for both the organization and the volunteer. The Township has a good start on this area with Policy Document #93 for Advisory Boards/Committees and additional policies (#53, 56, 58, 72, and 79) that focus on health and safety. Additional supportive forms like the Consolidated Volunteer Acknowledgement Form are important. Recognition policies have also been recently updated.

There are many areas that could be developed that would form a more comprehensive policy and procedures document for volunteers. Appendix 3 has been provided for this project to show additional areas where policy could be developed to enhance and support this volunteer initiative.

Recommendations:

1. **That Appendix 3 be reviewed and specific policies that are most appropriate for Township Volunteers be selected and developed into a comprehensive Volunteer Policy Manual.**

2. **Develop policies and procedures as a priority before recruiting additional volunteers.**
3. **Determine which policies need to be shared with which volunteers.** For example: Episodic Volunteers or those used for one time specific events may not need all the policies but only those specific to their roles. Health and Safety policies may be ones that are shared with all volunteers regardless of their role.
4. **For policy developed by the Township (like police/vulnerable sector checks) find ways to enforce compliance with groups who administer or collect these on behalf of the Township. This could be part of a policy on risk management.**
5. **Volunteers indicated a strong satisfaction with information during orientation about understanding the need for screening policies. Continue to support this training and reinforcement through training or resources online.**
6. **Policies and procedures should be followed consistently.**
7. **The Volunteer Policy Manual should be accessible to all staff and volunteers and located in areas where volunteers frequent.**

Standard 4: Volunteer Administration

This standard speaks to the support that is provided to volunteers enabling them to complete their roles in the highest standard possible. Currently all 3 staff in Community Services support volunteers to different degrees. The Township currently has a position titled Community Development Coordinator whose responsibility is the coordination of events, programs and services within the recreation/culture mandate and as well supports the volunteers that enable those events to happen. Some of these volunteers would be considered direct Township volunteers and others are the volunteers from other organizations who partner with the Township (service clubs, horticultural group). Currently approximately 500 volunteers assist the Township. This also includes volunteers in the Cultural Centre who are supported by the Curator. Staff have some understanding in volunteer engagement but by default have ended up working with and supporting many volunteers.

It has also been identified that Council Committees, Advisory Groups and special projects are having challenges recruiting volunteers. People are not coming forward as they have done in the past. This is due to many reasons, some of which can be attributed to a fixed resident population where people have 'been there done that'; drawing on the same resources; a lack of interest in civic engagement; a recent history where volunteers may not have been treated well; personality conflicts; personal agenda setting; other barriers to volunteering such as time commitment or travel.

For most organizations who engage volunteers successfully, there is a two-pronged approach: a philosophy where everyone respects and contributes to volunteer support along with a designated person/point of contact for volunteers. The aim is to make

volunteering as easy as possible. No one is totally responsible or accountable for engaging volunteer resources. It is not one person's role but the role of all involved. When everyone contributes, resources can expand. Designating a person committed to volunteer engagement is ideal but it takes everyone in the community to make it happen. That is why having a Philosophy of Involvement Statement (Standard 1) that everyone endorses and lives by, helps to send the message that 'volunteers are welcomed and supported here.'

Recommendations:

- 1. That one point of contact for all things volunteer be determined.** Community Services appears to be the logical department to house any designated person who will work directly with volunteers.
- 2. That the Township create a position description for a paid staff person, using the title Manager of Volunteer Resources.** The title Manager of Volunteer Resources was the title supported in the 2014 HR Council for the Non-profit Sector Study on National Occupational Standards for this position (Appendix 7).
- 3. That the Township provide the opportunity for training (Certificate in Volunteer Management) for this position or hire person with this qualification.**
- 4. That this Manager of Volunteers coordinate and implement the recommendations from this report.**
- 5. That the Manager of Volunteers develop a 5-year Volunteer Plan that incorporates the areas of this report by establishing priorities based on time and resources.**

Standard 5: Risk Management and Quality Assurance

Determining risk associated with volunteer engagement and developing practices that assess, manage and/or mitigate potential risks is an important aspect of any organization that involves volunteers to deliver programs and services to the community. Volunteer roles themselves should be assessed in terms of level of risk. Volunteer Canada has provided excellent tools to conduct this assessment (Appendix 5: 10 Steps in Screening/Assessing Level of Risk).

Recommendations:

- 1. Risk Management is a responsibility of the Township:** a discussion about level of risk and potential solutions should be considered as step one in developing further volunteer resources. Risk management protocol developed for volunteer services should be endorsed by Council.
- 2. The Community Services Department should assign a level of risk to each volunteer opportunity description as it is developed.**

3. **As each potential volunteer examines a volunteer role, they should be advised as to what level of risk means. Policies on risk should be made available to volunteers.**
4. **Screening:** the level of risk assigned to a volunteer role should determine the initial screening protocol. For example: if a volunteer is going to be working alone with vulnerable clients (children and elderly or disabled) in an isolated location, all screening techniques from interview to vulnerable sector checks should be employed. Volunteer roles where handling money is considered, risk practices should be appropriate.
5. **Volunteers should be encouraged to give feedback about risk factors they encounter.**
6. **Risk management training and understanding the need for vulnerable sector screening should continue to be part of all volunteer orientation sessions.**
7. **Helping associated groups/organizations (such as sports leagues) understand the importance of screening and how to facilitate documentation requirements, should be a focused training session each season.**

Standard 6: Volunteer Roles/Assignments

Opportunities for Volunteers

The very profile of volunteers has changed. In short, the ‘veteran volunteer’ who founded many of our organizations and who would do any job assigned and stay forever, has significantly decreased. This has been witnessed first hand in communities like Minden Hills. For many reasons, organizations seeking volunteers for leadership positions both boards and committees have struggled in all communities. For many baby boomers, they served in leadership positions in their 40-50’s and have little desire to do this again. Risk management has increased and the ‘work’ to be done is more serious. Many in their pre-retirement and retirement years are seeking opportunities that are fun and less like work.

The ‘veteran volunteers’ (who we relied on for decades), are not being replaced easily and this is one reason many communities feel in crisis over volunteer recruitment. Youth and baby boomers have different expectations and needs in volunteering. Almost 20 years ago, we saw the implementation of ‘40hours community service’ for high school students as a mandatory requirement of graduation. This was the first time the term ‘mandatory volunteering’ was used. Youth are seeking opportunities that will help them with skill building for future employment; they embrace technology and have limited time. Finding new ways to engage youth is encouraged (see virtual volunteer idea below) because they are the future of volunteering. We have learned that engaging youth in successful experiences helps to maintain their volunteer involvement for the future.

Both youth and baby boomers bring skills and experience not seen before and many want to use these skills in a volunteer capacity. The challenge is that organizations have defined volunteer roles that do not capture the skills/experience desired by these other groups, creating a large gap. Many respondents from the volunteer survey indicated how valuable their work was but it was not being recognized or ideas implemented at the next level. Perhaps this is one reason for the suggestion to eliminate 'advisory groups.' Adults want to see impact and make a difference today. They want to see the results of their volunteer efforts. They want to make decisions or at minimum see the impact of their work. They also want measurements to be set and accountability for committee work.

Organizations still have work to be done or tasks that are not appealing to people in different age groups today. The Curator at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre recognizes this fact and is eager to find new opportunities that would appeal to new retirees/youth.

Baby boomers are used to formalizing jobs to be done in their work life...a position description is a tool to define work, expectations, benefits, supervision, evaluation and outcomes. Position descriptions provide clarity and focus. They also provide the link between a volunteer and opportunity/task/work to ensure a good 'match' occurs. When a good match occurs the chance of success for the volunteer and organization increases. Opportunity descriptions for volunteers is a tool to help guide everyone involved. Volunteers want to do good work but when they don't know what that entails, it can be a disaster for everyone. When people have less than positive experiences, they are less likely to return. To capitalize on skills, experience and new roles, well written opportunity descriptions are key to marketing and placement.

Recommendations:

1. **A list of all specific Township Volunteer Roles, be developed.** This would include Cultural Centre roles, Council Committees, Advisory/Task or Project Committees and Events. Some of these may be existing roles or ones that staff see as new to develop.
2. **Since the Cultural Centre already have developed written roles, examine their template and see if it is acceptable to use for all others. Either use it as the template or examine a sample provided for this project. (Appendix 6: Sample Template for as Volunteer Opportunity Description).**
3. **Volunteers currently doing the roles could certainly be consulted in the development and finalization of roles.** This would be a great opportunity to involve Committee Chairs and Members in the clarification and development of expectations, measurable outcomes and clearer role descriptions of the work they are expected to complete.
4. **Difficult Roles to recruit for:** examine the roles that are the most difficult to recruit for. We have learned that if you are having trouble recruiting for something, look at the work you are asking people to do. Once you do this -

consider if any role could be eliminated, combined or enhanced to make them more appealing to potential volunteers.

5. **That the Township facilitate a discussion on whether the use of volunteers on committees, advisory and project is still relevant.** Perhaps new ways of engaging the community should be considered. This might be input by citizens in community forums, focus groups or facilitated discussions, especially around specific topics/project development.
6. **Once all Volunteer Opportunity Descriptions are created these should form a section in the Volunteer Policy & Procedures Manual.**
7. **Regular updates on roles should be done.** Suggest sitting down with the volunteer doing the work, evaluate role if they leave or if you are recruiting a placement.
8. **Volunteer Opportunity Descriptions can be used to target market opportunities to potential volunteers in the community. But do not market for volunteers, until you clearly know what you want and need.**
9. **Examine the range/diversity of community events.** Survey responses indicated a direct link between increasing the diversity and variety of community events that would reach all age groups in the community and who might be attracted to volunteer. If there were more family events, families might be targeted to help as well as participate. A suggestion that celebrations for Canada's 150th Anniversary might target family involvement is worth consideration.
10. **Youth & Virtual Volunteering:** As volunteer opportunities are developed, consider any roles that might be done off-site. Youth who lack transportation to get to a site, may be interested in opportunities they can do from home. Computer, social media, project reviews, survey design, analysis of information, planning for an event are just some ideas that may appeal to youth. (Virtual and Youth Volunteering resource will be part of the Volunteer Resource section recommended for the website).
11. **Baby Boomers:** It is understood that many who have cottages in the Minden area, may retire here in the future. Making connections with Cottagers Associations is one way to seek and present information on how to get involved in volunteer activities. This may result in volunteers (Baby Boomer Volunteering resource will be part of the Volunteer Resource section recommended for the website). Other suggestions from the survey included presentations to Service Clubs, Church Groups, and Retirement Homes. Flyers or brochures outlining opportunities can also be strategically located wherever older adults gather e.g. doctor office, dentist, local coffee shops, older adult programs, senior's fairs.
12. **Family Volunteering:** Given the influx of many seasonal residents, developing opportunities where families can volunteer together especially at summer events seems appropriate for this community. A description of how families can get

involved is a tool for marketing. (Family Volunteering resource will be part of the Volunteer Resource section recommended for the web site). See 9 above.

- 13. Champions or Ambassadors for Volunteering:** examine the idea of a celebrity or key volunteer(s) from the community who are well respected and might act as ambassadors for volunteering. Get their testimonials, articles or videos that would help market the overall idea of the benefits and rewards of volunteering. Such a message may help others who are on the edge of volunteering to take that step.

Standard 7: Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers is a process, the outcome of which is retention of volunteers. Currently the Township has no clearly defined/designated person who is responsible for overall volunteer management nor is there a recruitment process in place to secure volunteers from the community on a consistent, regular basis. We have learned that 'recruitment', to have some commitment to seeking volunteers, is the job of everyone in the organization. Everyone has different networks and communities of influence. There also needs to be a point of contact for volunteers, someone often called the Manager of Volunteer Resources. When everyone is engaged, the success of finding volunteers increases. This makes for great community engagement.

Recruitment is also in part the link between a person's motivation and the opportunity being offered. Clear, written opportunity descriptions (Standard 6) are the first step in recruitment. You can't ask someone to help if you don't have a clear idea of what you are asking them to do. Volunteers today want to clearly know what is expected of them. This was reinforced in the volunteer survey. An opportunity description is also a marketing tool; a risk management tool; and, a tool to align the right match between role and person.

Recommendations:

- 1. Have clear, written opportunity descriptions in place before seeking volunteers, based on the listing of volunteer roles in Standard 6.**
- 2. Have a clear process and person in place who will support volunteers, before any recruitment process is implemented.** (E.g. includes opportunity descriptions; application process; interview and screening; policies).
- 3. Determine a one point of contact for all Township Volunteers. Dedicate a staff position that is aligned with volunteer engagement.**
- 4. Develop a detailed outline of the process for recruitment for each specific target group (see Appendix 8: Ideas for Youth). Suggest targeted recruitment for the following:**
 - a. Youth** - find teacher/class to make presentations; solicit feedback from youth about what they would like to do (have youth do the survey); find an

- event that youth could coordinate; conduct school presentations yearly; visit existing youth clubs/groups such as Scouts and Baptist Church Youth group. Make a direct “Ask” to youth to get involved. Provide mentors to youth. Sponsor a specific youth event with youth doing all the planning and implementation.
- b. **Baby Boomers** - open house to promote community; brochures in libraries; coffee shops; doctor offices; places where older adults gather; service clubs; retirement homes; churches. Place invite to volunteer in tax bill and ask satisfied volunteers to recruit. An overriding message from the survey was to make volunteering easy/try to eliminate barriers to getting involved. Develop specific programming for older adults and ask them to volunteer within that program.
 - c. **Families** - Cottage Association presentations; focus on events for families in the summer; how adult/child can volunteer together somewhere; presentations in schools where children can take requests home to the family; increase family events in the community and target families to help.
 - d. **Virtual Volunteers** – this crosses many age ranges; determine what opportunities exist for off-site volunteers and present ideas to any of the population groups above; areas involving computer work; surveys; project planning; research; data gathering/maintenance.
5. **Testimonials:** recommend soliciting testimonials from a wide-variety of volunteers about why they volunteer and the benefits to them. Could be a utube video and/or picture with written information posted on the website. This might be a role that youth or baby boomer could do and developed as a new volunteer opportunity.
 6. **Use the health benefits/social connectivity of volunteering to develop some recruitment/marketing messages aimed at baby boomers (Health Benefits resource as part of the Resource Listing for this project).**
 7. **Presentations/Open House/Volunteer Fair:** once volunteer roles are formalized, consider hosting one or more Open House or Volunteer Fair. Could be one at the High School when targeting youth; one in the Community for Information sharing; a presentation at the Cottager’s Association.
 8. **Brochure:** develop a brochure about volunteering in Minden Hills. Use the Philosophy Statement and messaging/testimonials and place in business and all community locations.
 9. **Volunteer Column.** Consider hosting a monthly column on the website or with the local newspapers. The focus could be on benefits or profiling volunteers at an event or a testimonial from a volunteer. To maintain consistency, develop guidelines around the column, develop a contact or teacher at the high school and focus on soliciting youth from that one teacher each year to continue the role. Students with journalism interest could be attracted. An adult from the

community might take the coordination of this if they had writing skills and interest in mentoring with youth (retired English teacher; journalist; author).

Standard 8: Screening

'Screening' is the term used to define the appropriateness of a person to volunteer or not. Organizations have the right and responsibility to select the best, most appropriate volunteers to help fulfill their mission. Volunteers are considered 'potential' until they pass the screening protocol developed by the organization. Many consider the vulnerable sector check the only screening tool. However, there are many ways to screen volunteers and some of these are recommended in this section. Appendix 5 contains a link to Volunteer Canada's 10 Steps of Screening.

Recommendations:

- 1. Screening protocols are related to Standard 5 on Risk Management. Once volunteer opportunities are designed and a risk assessment level assigned, screening protocols should also be assigned.**
- 2. It is recommended that general, consistent and diverse screening tools/protocol be established for all Township volunteer roles.** This would include: an application form to be completed to volunteer; a formal or informal interview; community reference checks; successful completion of police/vulnerable sector check; observation in orientation and training sessions; probation considered if necessary.
- 3. Screening must be maintained and updated if necessary throughout the volunteer's involvement with the Township.** A computerized volunteer software program could help identify alerts to upgrade for things like the police check.
- 4. Policies related to screening should be shared with all volunteers at time of reviewing a position description or at first interview.** Screening tools that would be used are outlined in the volunteer opportunity description. This is an opportunity to explain reasons and rationale for certain policies/procedures that many volunteers may not understand.
- 5. Screening protocol should be consistent for all volunteer roles and updated with changes in legislation.**
- 6. Screening practices should be used in training sessions in case examples to help volunteers understand that these practices are meant to protect them as well as the organization.** The Township can build on the learning success to date.

Standard 9: Orientation and Training

The importance and impact of these two elements of volunteer engagement are often under appreciated. There appears to be a common notion that "volunteers come pre-packaged and ready to go" with little or no preparation for their role within an

organization. Not sure how many staff would appreciate no orientation on their first day to the overall organization or no support for training in the details necessary for them to do great work. Volunteers want to do great work. We need to find the areas of support that will allow them to accomplish this.

Orientation is about both information on the organization and the specifics of the role the volunteer is taking on. What is the history/mission of the organization? What policies and procedures are there to follow? What are the specific details of my volunteer role that should be clear?

Training on the other hand, is more detailed learning. For example, if in my volunteer role I need to understand a computer program or how to handle a phone system or a handling money process...this is considered training. This often takes place after a volunteer has general overall orientation. Training may also be considered 'updates' when policy changes or that computer program gets a makeover.

The results of the Audit Sheets for Standard 9 as well as comments made on question 14 of the volunteer survey around satisfaction in areas of support, indicate a strong need to upgrade this area. One of the changes in the volunteer profiles today has been that volunteers who have been in the work force for long careers, expect good orientation, training and support. They are used to detailed position descriptions; details for work completion; good communications; social media connections' conflict resolution; and meaningful opportunities. Since orientation comes early in the engagement of volunteers, we need to ensure they get information/practices for what will enable them to do the best work possible. If not, they get discouraged and leave.

Recommendations:

1. **General Orientation to the Township:** recommend that a comprehensive package of information about the Township that would be relevant to volunteers be developed. Find ways to make this meaningful. Volunteers are busy people. Suggest making information available online in small documents; develop a U-tube video on elements; and/or space out over the first 6 months of a volunteer's commitment if appropriate.
2. **Episodic or one event volunteers:** find easy, fun ways to package orientation materials for easy consumption. U-tube videos are 15 minute clips that can have impact and can be viewed at the volunteer's leisure.
3. Once volunteers have been recruited and confirmed: Consider holding open house to welcome and start the orientation. Use this if you have groups of volunteers starting at the same time.
4. **Committee or Project Group Orientation.** Consider spreading orientation into small bites (teachable moments) and place on agendas during the first six months. This could be part of the training of Committee Chairman.

5. **Specific Orientation to Role:** Sometimes the best way to do this is on the job. Find a seasoned volunteer who will mentor the new volunteers and schedule common time for orientation on site. Orient more than one volunteer at a time. This also helps to build a team.
6. **Training:** when developing volunteer position descriptions, consider which roles are most likely the ones to need further detailed training. This training might be developed for online delivery; webinars can be created, recorded and used multiple times; these sessions could be posted on the website for easy access. Some areas are more generic for training like a 'chairperson skills' session. This could be developed once for ongoing relevance.
7. **Specific Training:** the online survey identified several areas where training for volunteers could be provided: conflict resolution; how to support other volunteers; continued understanding of reasons for screening; giving and getting feedback on work done; evaluation of event. It is also suggested that training be enhanced in committee/advisory and project roles with such topics as chairmanship skills; group dynamics; communications; conflict resolution; developing agendas; taking minutes; task vs. maintenance of meetings; developing project plans, goals and objectives and measurable outcomes; evaluation techniques; communications of results to the community.
8. **Volunteer Roles:** suggest that as you broaden the reach for volunteers into the community, you consider recruiting a volunteer who might help you develop orientation and training modules. This might be a volunteer who is a retired HR staff or college instructor, High school teacher or trainer. Since youth are great with online media, this might also be a great project for youth to design and develop an online series of videos on the Township.

Standard 10: Support and Supervision

Volunteers don't dedicate time, experience and skills to do bad work. Once they commit, volunteers are eager to help and make a difference. However, they need certain things to ensure ongoing satisfaction. Some of the standards already reviewed provide this support like orientation and training, or clear policies, clear communications and knowing who to go to when necessary.

On-going support gives volunteers that connection to the larger organization and hopefully helps to maintain their commitment to the longer term. You have invested a lot in volunteer relations this far, support and supervision can help to build retention in volunteers.

Recommendations:

1. **Staff need to ask the question: "what does this volunteer or group need to do a great job?"** Then asking the volunteer or group is also helpful and would

be recommended. Blending the two answers will create a clear path of what is needed.

2. **Recommend the development of a listing of what volunteers need:** E.g., orientation; a mentor to show the ropes; a phone call to thank them after the first shift; staff to be at their first shift; a welcome the first shift.
3. **Volunteers need different things:** This is the challenge for engaging large groups of individuals and groups for short-term events. Some volunteers will be very mature with lots of experience and need little guidance. Others, however, will want to test and try things out.
4. **What do Chairperson's need?** Recommend: pull all the chairpersons together from Committee/events and other non-profits in the Township and ask them what they need? If they all need leadership training or taking minutes or conflict resolution...then find ways to support this need. Do event volunteers need help in planning the details of the event? Would a meeting to facilitate the big picture be helpful and they can fill in the details?
5. **What best support?** Since three Community Service Staff currently deal with all volunteers from Committees to events to MHCC volunteers, review the structure and determine who/how to provide support to each volunteer group. A Manager of Volunteers may be able to design and post roles and develop policy and marketing strategies but they cannot provide support to all volunteers. Find the right mix to do this and define what support and supervision means. Make sure volunteers know who their 'contact or supervisor' is.
6. **Feedback:** All volunteers should be entitled to feedback when a job is well done. This is a long-range goal ...where every volunteer has a meeting with their supervisor every 6 months to review the role and performance. Performance indicators should form part of the opportunity description and used to measure success for the volunteer. Results of the online survey indicated that volunteers want measurements for their work and want feedback on the results. They also want to share results with the community.
7. **Exit Survey:** In the short term, develop an online exit survey of minimum 10 questions to ask volunteers about their level of satisfaction. Use the results to improve where necessary and celebrate success.
8. **Recommend the develop of policy on reprimand and dismissal.** These policies help volunteers clarify acceptable behavior and form part of risk management processes for the Township. These should follow HR guidelines.

Standard 11: Record Management

As noted in Standard 12 on Technology, many non-profits have embraced new technologies to reach out to volunteers. As issues and challenges become more complex, finding ways to track information needs to be improved. Screening for example, as a best practice in risk management, has become complex in the process, the wait period, and the expiry information especially if a volunteer moves from one role

to another that might be deemed of a different risk level. Simply tracking this manually has become unproductive for staff and/or volunteers who do it.

Recommendation:

1. **Software Volunteer Focus:** That the Township approve expenditures for the Community Services Department to investigate; recommend and then purchase software that will assist in the tracking of volunteer information. This software will need to be compatible and connected to the Township website (application and forms for example).
2. **Tracking of Volunteers/Data Base Management. There are many software programs available to support volunteer information.**
 - a. **Staff need to determine first what information and functions they want to track with the software before either selection or customization.**
 - b. **Conduct research on what platforms other townships use to support volunteers.**
 - c. **Select a software program that meets the needs you have determined.**
 - d. **At minimum consider: Basic information storage perhaps by event or committee function (name, age, event, role, next of kin, orientation completion, track screening documents, any contracts scanned and signed, address, recognition received, start and end dates etc.).**
 - e. **Other levels: Do you want the online application to be linked directly to a data base? Announcements, email and newsletter capability? The ability to set up a blog and link to Twitter or Facebook accounts? Do you want the volunteer system to be connected and compatible with the HR system you might have?**

Standard 12: Technology

The world of technology has had a great impact on volunteering. Social media has drawn those who have a connection to online communications into interest in virtual volunteering; micro-volunteering (small bits of time to volunteer) and voluntourism, as well as accessing regular volunteer opportunities posted online. Social media is a platform for recruitment and information sharing. It has also aided in increasing the competition among organizations all seeking the same resources – both funds and volunteers. Software development has enabled organizations to make access to volunteer opportunities easier; messaging quicker and the management of the information about volunteers trackable. Volunteers can sign up with an online application and once approved (formal interview, screening etc.) can schedule their own shifts for organizations (Habitat for Humanity). The Cancer Society increased youth participation (where they fit in and how to complete their 40 hours of community service) by dedicating a website designed for youth. Simple functions like email increased

communications for newsletters and messages about the need for volunteers as well as keeping vital statistics for volunteers. Technology is here to stay and needs to be embraced to be useful.

Recommendations:

1. **Website:** One of the barriers to volunteering is a website that makes it difficult for volunteers to find and access opportunities or information about volunteering. The more a person must hunt and seek information, the faster they leave the site. It is recommended that the Township website be examined from the volunteer perspective and refurbished in ways that would enhance the attractiveness to volunteer. Everything 'volunteer' is in one place with cross references and links to specific events or facilities.
2. Here are some suggestions:
 - a. There should be a Volunteer Title banner on the top of the Home Page.
 - b. The Philosophy of Involvement Statement could also be on the Home Page, along with the endorsement from Council and an 'Invitation' to Volunteer.
 - c. The Volunteer Title could lead to additional volunteer resources such as:
 - a. An overview and benefits of volunteering with the Township
 - b. What is a 'volunteer'; what rights do volunteers have and what they need to give to be successful.
 - c. A list of Opportunities with direct link to application
 - d. Opportunity descriptions for all roles.
 - e. Process to volunteer; what is expected; what is involved.
 - f. Who to contact and who will be contacting the volunteer once an application is received.
 - g. Testimonials of satisfied volunteers.
 - h. Photos of volunteers in action in committees, events and project work. Use a variety of ages and situations to broaden the reach for potential interest.
 - i. Policies and Procedures could be housed here with password access to approved volunteers. Training and Orientation components could be posted in the same way.
 - j. Since Screening is important, an explanation of why it is done will help people understand the requirements.
 - k. General Volunteer Resources: the volunteer resources developed for this project for all voluntary groups to access.
 - l. Exit Interview: direct volunteers to complete an exit interview to gain information for improvement and/or support success.

Standard 13: Recognition

The Township of Minden Hills recognizes the value and benefit that volunteers bring to building community. Several awards were created, to not only acknowledge the contributions of past community leaders, but to keep volunteerism forefront in community life. In May of 2016, Council approved a revised Volunteer Appreciation and Awards Program. This program will focus on two existing awards (Gordon A. Monk Award and the Ross Rigney Awards) and the establishment of 4 new awards (The Good Neighbour Award being retitled to “Good Deeds Award”; “Arts and Culture Award”; “Sports and Recreation Award; and, “Trillium Award”). These awards will be handled by one Selection Committee rather than separate committees for each award. This is a very appropriate process given issues with volunteer recruitment for committees.

Since this ‘award’ recognition strategy was approved prior to the results of this project, the recommendations are slightly different than if recognition were being assessed without any immediate new directions. Comments about recognition in general may influence the evaluation of the existing award system.

Recommendations:

1. **New Awards Program:** Since the new awards program is currently in effect, it is recommended that the Selection Committee assigned to this task, also establish evaluation criteria to assess the viability of each award. This might include: keeping track of marketing messages and the process used to promote each award; how many applications were received; the quality of applications matching criteria for each; any comments recorded from the community about awards in general; difficulty in securing candidates. Since 3 awards are new in direction, an evaluation is a good way to assess and make changes for the next year. It is recommended that the Selection Committee consider (based on the results of implementation in 2016), if one or two awards might be sufficient and aimed differently. A youth leadership award to encourage youth engagement (could be a financial contribution or scholarship fund/bursary); a family volunteering award and perhaps the Good Deeds Award being more generic and open to all age groups.
2. **Recognition results from the Volunteer Survey:** In 2013, Volunteer Canada completed a recognition study which highlighted a move from formal award systems to more informal ways to show appreciation to volunteers. This includes simple thank-you when meeting volunteers; providing training for volunteers; recognition in newsletters/websites and acknowledgement immediately upon completion of task. Long-term pin and award recognition aligns with what volunteers of the past appreciated receiving. They also stayed for significant periods of time and were honored for the time given. Volunteers today are not staying for long periods of time and wish to be acknowledged differently. This

was apparent in the online survey results and is supportive of the Volunteer Canada Study on Recognition. Most of the suggestions were of an informal nature (listen to our ideas and thank us) but there are still some who appreciate a social event or activity. See Question 27 for results.

3. **Formal Recognition:** The Township hosts 2 formal appreciation events each year, one in the fall and one during Volunteer Appreciation Week designated by Volunteer Canada. From information provided by staff, combining staff and volunteer appreciation into one event may not have produced the results that were expected in 2015. However, if in the development of a Philosophy of Involvement Statement the Township decides that paid and unpaid human resources are a 'team' to accomplish community events, and if over the next few years, walking the talk is felt and seen, volunteers and staff may indeed realize the importance of a combined event. Currently, staff and volunteers may not see this team approach since it has not been officially and formally promoted. If only one recognition event could be realized, we would recommend doing something during National Volunteer Recognition Week designated by Volunteer Canada. This not only raises the volunteer profile locally but the Township gets benefit from National coverage around volunteerism. Volunteer Canada often put out calls for testimonials and events/locations and posts these nationally.
4. **Informal Recognition/Acknowledgement:** We recommend that staff review the recommendations from the 2013 National Recognition Study conducted by Volunteer Canada and find ways to implement more informal recognition (Appendix 9: link to the Volunteer Canada Recognition Study). This might include training all leadership volunteers on the importance of simple gestures like 'thank you' at the end of the task or during the task; a thank you card during Volunteer Week; the opportunity to attend a training session or be invited to take part in an evaluation of an event or program that the volunteer has been part of; a call if the volunteer has been absent sends the message they are appreciated and missed; and, a letter of acknowledgement to the volunteers' boss if appropriate of the skills shared by their employee. These areas are the new appreciation and acknowledgement desired by many volunteers. Volunteers completing the online survey want to know they are respected and appreciated for the support they give to the Township committees, projects and events. Each Committee should have an informal recognition strategy as part of their commitment to engaging community volunteers.
5. **Recognition in general:** this project supports the idea of scaling back on formal recognition and increasing informal recognition, over the next 5 years. Develop one annual event that brings people together to honor them, all volunteers and awards being presented by Council and balancing that with informal methods encouraged at the committee/group/event level.

Standard 14: Evaluation

This is the final standard developed by Volunteer Canada, an opportunity for assessing volunteer performance, gauging volunteer satisfaction and the overall impact or effectiveness of the volunteer services in meeting the mission/goal of the Township. In other words, how well are we doing to engage volunteers in the active work of the Township?

Audit Sheet 14 indicated that an evaluation has not be completed to date. However, as a long-range goal, this area can be accomplished when the other 13 Standards are developed and implemented. The online volunteer survey provided information about the satisfaction levels of volunteers with current volunteer roles and areas for improvement. These have been integrated into all recommendations of the report.

Recommendations and Questions to consider:

1. **5-year Volunteer Services Plan:** the results of this project be compiled into a 5-year Volunteer Services Plan with goals, objectives and measurable outcomes.
2. **Determine the impact/benefits and values of volunteer engagement (Philosophy of Involvement Statement) and how to measure success.**
3. **Evaluate volunteer success based on several factors:** conduct annual volunteer satisfaction surveys to see what is good and what could be improved; what accomplishments have resulted from this project? How would you measure the success of each community event (get committees to set evaluation criteria...did more community members attend? Did we get more youth and families to volunteer? How successful was our meeting with Cottage Associations? Etc.).
4. **Committee Terms of Reference:** use terms of reference and individual volunteer opportunity descriptions to set goals for each group/volunteer and let the group evaluate annually and report their findings.
5. **How might we measure community impact?** Are we getting more volunteers telling us about success? Are more volunteers coming to provide testimonials? Do we have a waiting list for volunteers? Are we getting people responding to our flyers/brochures and calls for volunteers? Are we getting more interest in Council Committee work? Have the numbers of attendees in our programs/services increased due to better volunteer engagement? Have any new programs targeted at specific ages, increased the number of volunteers of that age group?

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Summary: General Volunteer Engagement Questions

Appendix 2: Summary: Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement: Organizational Standards and Audit Sheets

Appendix 3: Potential Policies Volunteer Engagement

Appendix 4: Develop a Philosophy of Involvement Statement

Appendix 5: Volunteer Canada: 2012 Screening Tool

Appendix 6: Sample Template for Volunteer Opportunity Description

Appendix 7: National Occupational Standards for the Role Manager of Volunteer

Appendix 8: Ideas for Youth

Appendix 9: Volunteer Canada Recognition Study, 2013

Appendix 10: Volunteer Survey Results Survey Monkey Report