



VOLUNTEERING SERIES

Skills-based volunteering: putting your know-how to good use

A FORM OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN RETIREMENT

Skills-based volunteering involves offering expertise, transferring knowledge and sharing know-how. Skills-based volunteers seek to use specific skills or professional experience as part of their involvement. In this way, they contribute to the growth and effectiveness of the organizations that host them.

When it comes to skills-based volunteering, the possibilities for personal and professional growth are endless. In fact, many not-for-profit organizations offer flexible, practical opportunities for volunteers, while at the same time contributing to the realization of their mission in the community.



The different types of skills-based volunteering

Volunteering can take the form of regular involvement (e.g., participation on a board of directors), or one-time involvement according to a precise, time-limited mandate (e.g., graphic production of posters or flyers).

The skills-based volunteer has the opportunity to make a difference, whether by contributing directly to the organization's mission (for example, a hairdresser offering services in a refugee centre) or by contributing expertise to the organization's management (such as accounting).

Here are some practical examples of how professionals can use their specific skills to support organizations and causes close to their hearts, while adding significant value.



- Writing or translating texts
- Social media management
- IT support
- Creating or running training workshops
- Coaching services
- Administrative tasks
- Mechanical, construction or horticultural work



THE BENEFITS OF SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEERING FOR RETIRED PEOPLE

- Feeling useful
- Sharing and putting your skills to good use in a no-pressure, more flexible environment
- Being part of a committed, supportive team
- Connecting with other volunteers
- Discovering how the community operates and how essential but often unknown services work.

TESTIMONY FROM A SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEER

"As a skills-based volunteer in the field of adult education, I've had the opportunity to participate in the development of projects that wouldn't have been possible in my regular job."

My most recent involvement was with a major hospital in my region. I had the opportunity to co-create and co-facilitate a workshop on storytelling in a healthcare environment, for medical and support staff. It was an innovative and significant project that was very well received. As part of this activity, I had the opportunity to put my skills to work by conducting research, developing the workshop in collaboration with the staff and presenting the workshop at a conference."

How can I become a skills-based volunteer?



1. Reflect

- Why do I want to volunteer my skills?
- What interests and skills do I have to offer?
- What would I like to get out of volunteering?
- How much time can I devote to volunteering?
- What sectors and clienteles might interest me?
- What causes are important to me?



2. Search

- Register on the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal's website at cabm.net and browse through the available volunteer opportunities.
- Search your network, talk about it with friends and family, attend neighbourhood round tables, discover local organizations.



3. Get in touch

- Apply for a skills-based volunteering opportunity
- Connect with the organization

What are the points to watch out for and pitfalls to avoid?

DEFINING ROLES AND TASKS

Taking the time to clarify the role, tasks and responsibilities entrusted to skills-based volunteers avoids misunderstandings, tensions and even conflicts. It is important not to take control of the organization being helped, but rather to accompany and support it.

NEED FOR SUPPORT

Understand the need to be supported by the organization in order to avoid feeling lost or ineffective, and thus better meet the organization's objectives.

DIFFERENT PRACTICES AND RESOURCES

Volunteering skills within an organization whose resources are perhaps more limited than those normally required, requires an ability to adapt and flexibility in the way you carry out your tasks. The practices of non-profit organizations (NPOs) can offer different and enriching perspectives to those of a previous workplace.

RESPECT FOR PROFESSIONAL SCOPE OF PRACTICE

If the volunteer is not a member in good standing of his or her professional order, he or she may use his or her previous professional experience, but without performing acts reserved for his or her profession. It is essential to comply with Quebec and Canadian regulatory frameworks.

SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEERING VERSUS PRO BONO WORK

Skills-based volunteering and pro bono work (for the public good) meet different needs and are governed by distinct principles.

Pro bono work remains within the scope of the individual's professional practice. This involves providing the same type of services, but free of charge or at a reduced price, following an unpaid services agreement, and the hours are included in the professional's work.

Skills-based volunteering is practised outside the usual professional framework and is not limited to the initial profession. It can be carried out outside working hours, and expertise can be shared in a variety of ways.



Resource

<https://www.cabm.net/volunteering/devenir-benevole-de-competences-1>

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This project for active retirement is part of a larger project, the Plan d'impact collectif – Réseau Résilience Aîné.es Montréal (RRAM) that aims to foster resilience, inclusion and social participation of seniors in Montréal.



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